

WHISPER OF  
HOPE, CRY  
OF  
DESPAIR

VICKY BEDI



# Dad

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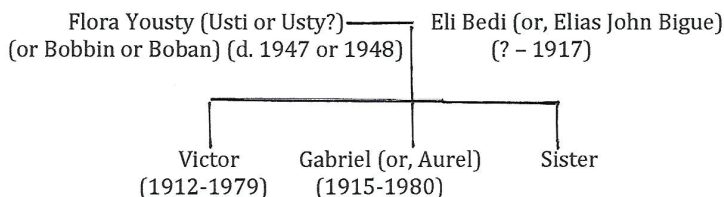
Dad in His Favorite Chair

Dad (Victor Bedi) was born March 27, 1912. He died  
March 13, 1979.

For many years we knew only of one sibling of  
Dad's—a younger brother named Gabriel. Later, we  
learned that they had a younger sister as well.

Dad's parents emigrated from France (mother Flora) and India (father Eli). I have seen Flora's passport. It stated where they were from and that they travelled through the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Bedi



The Bedi Family Tree

They settled first in West Virginia and later Madeira, Pennsylvania. Eli worked in the coal mines. In February of 1917, the following appeared in a newspaper:

15 Feb 1917

## BEDI, SHOT BY WIFE, LIKELY WILL LIVE

Wife Grows Hysterical While  
Confined In Jail From Worry  
And Fear Over Her Dilemma

### SHE CANNOT SPEAK ENGLISH

Eli Bedi, the Madera Roumanian, who was shot by his wife at Madera on Monday evening is hanging on to life with a tenacity that is surprising his physicians at the Cottage hospital at Philipsburg. It was not thought that Bedi would live through the night and while his condition is still critical there is a possibility that he will pull through and thus save Clearfield county the expense and disgrace of another murder trial.

Recent developments in this case do not quite bear out the claim that Bedi was shot in self defense. Authorities have uncovered a few things that tend to show that a charge of murder or attempted murder is warranted.

Mrs. Bedi is lodged in the Clearfield county jail with her two children and is growing hysterical from fright over her dilemma. The district attorney is searching today for someone who speaks the Roumanian language to calm her fears and restore her to a condition of mind and health that will enable her to give proper attention to her children who are young.

Bedi, Shot by Wife, Likely Will Live

19 Feb 1917

## ANOTHER TRIAL FOR MURDER IS LIKELY

Eli Bedi, Who Was Shot By  
His Wife at Madera, Died  
At Cottage Hospital Sunday

THE STEP-FATHER IS ACCUSED

Eli Bedi, the Madera man who was shot twice during the progress of a quarrel at his home over a week ago, died as a result of his injuries yesterday morning at 9:30 in the Philipsburg hospital. It is stated that his death resulted directly from the two wounds, one in the abdomen and the other in the groin. It is probable that as a result of Bedi's death there will be a charge of murder lodged against Mrs. Bedi, the dead man's wife, who it is alleged, fired the two shots. She is now in jail on a charge of aggravated assault and battery.

Coroner J. J. Pollum was notified of death of Bedi and left this morning for Philipsburg, where he will hold an inquest.

It is quite probable that as a result of the death of Bedi this county will have the unique experience of a woman tried for murder and that of her own husband. As before stated it is quite probable that the step-father of the woman will be implicated as it is alleged that he handed the revolver to her.

Another Trial for Murder Is Likely

20 Feb 1917

### **WIFE CHARGED WITH SHOOTING HUSBAND**

The coroner's jury in the case of Eli Bedi, who died in the Philipsburg hospital Sunday morning, following a shooting affray near Madera, convened yesterday afternoon at Philipsburg under the direction of coroner Pollum, who had previously performed an autopsy. The finding of the jury was to the effect that "Eli Bedi came to his death at 9:10 a. m., Sunday, February 18th, Cottage hospital as the result of one of two gun shot wounds, the shots being fired from a revolver into his body from a revolver in the hands of one Florence Bedi, his wife, in his home in the settlement of Booher, near the village of Madera, on the night of February 12, at 10:30 o'clock.

Wife Charged with Shooting Husband

Since my mother always wanted to uncover reasons to emotionally abuse Dad, my mother continually researched this murder. Mom always blamed my father for causing the murder. To her, Dad was no good. He was trouble ever since he “jumped out of his mother’s ass.” That was one of her favorite mantras.

In fact, I believe that there was a love triangle – Flora, Eli, and another man, who actually killed Eli. Flora’s children were taken from her and put on an “orphan train” and sent north to either a Russian Orthodox orphanage in Springfield, Vermont or in Weathersfield, Vermont. The sister must have been just a baby and was “adopted” by someone in the Virginia area. Gabriel and Dad, who was 5 years old, arrived at the orphanage in Weathersfield, Vermont in 1917.

Mom discovered that Flora (Yousty or Usti, or Usty; or, Bobbin or Boban) died in the 1947 or 1948 in Logan, Logan County, West Virginia. Mom accused Dad of not wanting to go to West Virginia and Pennsylvania because he didn’t want to find out the truth. In fact, Dad simply didn’t care – family wasn’t important to him. As far as he was concerned, no one wanted him or Gabriel as children just as Mom didn’t want him as a husband. Dad was alone. I didn’t understand the situation at all and spent most of my childhood living in a make believe world based on science fiction TV shows. Star Trek’s Enterprise became my home. Captain Kirk, Mr. Spock, and Lieutenant Uhuru were my friends and playmates.



It wasn't healthy but no one cared. Out of sight, out of mind was my coping strategy.

Mom, Dad, and I did go to Madeira, Pennsylvania when I was a preteen. I don't remember exactly what year we went but I do remember that Twiggy, the British model, was the rage and I spent time every morning painting freckles on my face to look like her! I was a blond like Twiggy and was as skinny too. The road in Madeira was a mountain dirt road with steep gullies, no guardrails, many forests, and many deer. Beautiful mountain laurel bloomed throughout the woods. I loved those flowers. The town was awful – almost a ghost town. The mines had closed years before; the buildings were falling down. The few remaining people there dug coal from their yards and heated their houses, which were still owned by the mining companies, with that coal. Everything was covered in coal dust and the air had an acidic smell to it. That was my introduction to Appalachia.

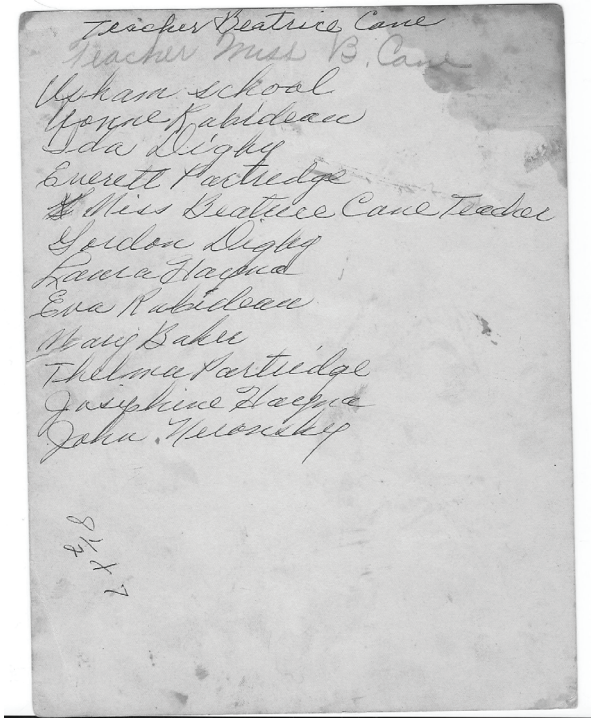
As I said earlier, Gabriel and Dad arrived at the orphanage in 1917. They both said that the orphanage nuns and priests beat and abused them. Dad told us how a nun beat him with the buckle end of a belt. She hit him in the face and head with it until he was bleeding. I never forgot that story. I was personally reminded of it when I was 5. Mom wanted Dad to punish me by using the buckle end of his belt. He looked at me and handed

the belt back to her; he simply said “I can’t.” Mom beat him instead.

Gabriel, Dad, and others from the Russian Orthodox orphanage in Weathersfield attended the same one room schoolhouse as Mom did. About half of the school children didn’t speak English. They spoke Russian, Byelorussian, Polish, Lithuanian, Italian, and Canadian French. The schoolteacher must have had a difficult time teaching because of the language barriers.



Weathersfield, Vermont Upham School Photo 1919



Verso of Upham School Photo 1919

The first teacher Mom recalled was a young woman who roomed at a farmhouse. Apparently she had many beaux and married soon. Another teacher was a man who was often late to the schoolhouse in the morning. One winter on a below-zero-degree day, the teacher was late so one of the boys was lifted up and entered the school through a window. He unlocked the door and let the children in. The boys started the woodstove for warmth. The teacher was fired after that incident. The last teacher Mom talked about was Mrs. U. She started teaching as

Miss C., married, and continued to teach. Mom liked her. They lived where the Wellwood Orchard is now.

When Dad became a teen, he and other teenage boys from the orphanage, were sent to work on various farms. The orphanage then didn't have to house or feed them. Dad said some farmers treated the boys well; other farmers had them sleeping in the barns, not giving them enough to eat, and being overworked. Dad never finished the 8<sup>th</sup> grade like Mom did.

Dad was a gifted machinist. He could read blueprints and turn ideas into products. I'm not sure when or where he started to work in the machine shops in Springfield, Vermont (a well-known machine shop town) but he worked there, in Essex Junction, Vermont, and in East Hartford, Connecticut.

# Mom

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Laura (Larissa?) Hayna

Laura Hayna was the oldest of 10 siblings. She was born in Herkimer, New York on September 13, 1913 and passed away on July 4, 2013. She wanted to reach 100 years but fell short by a few months.

Her siblings were Josephine, Steve, Frances, Helen, Nelly, Sophie, Pauline, Amelia, and Victoria. All but one lived into their 80s or 90s. Their parents were Constantine Hayna and Caroline Naruc Hayna.

Constantine emigrated from Russia in 1911 (?) with his cousin. They came into the United States via Canada and worked in mills in Kenosha, Wisconsin and later in carpet mills in Utica, New York. He had been an officer in the Czar's cavalry but fled before the Russian Revolution of 1917. I never knew him; he suicided in 1944. My mother and several of my aunts said that Constantine was miserable in the United States. He missed the Old Country terribly. He was an alcoholic and was a violent man. My uncle Steve said that he remembered being beaten by Constantine many times. My aunt Pally (Pauline) told me that the older daughters were sexually abused by Constantine. Not a father to want to remember.



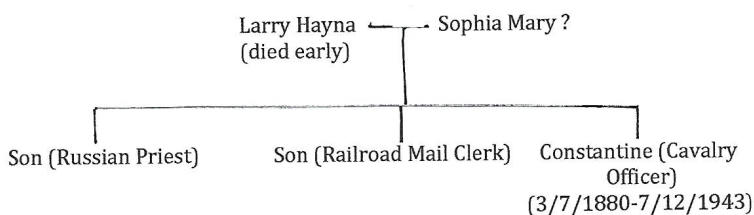
Constantine Hayna

Although Constantine lived in Russia, I believe he was German or Swedish. The photos of him depict a blond, blue-eyed man of average height and there is no reference that I could find of the name “Hayna.” However, “Hejna” is referenced by several sources as being the Polish form of the German name “Heine.”

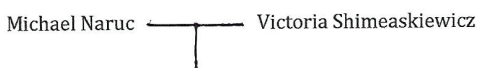
Gram (Caroline) married Constantine before he emigrated. In 1912, she and her youngest brother, Bill, left from the village of Vileyka, Belarus for Gdańsk, Poland (current names). They took a ship to Southampton, England where they waited for passage to America. Gram and Bill entered the United States via Ellis Island and met their cousin Benny in Brooklyn. Gram’s husband, Constantine, came to Brooklyn and took Bill and Gram to Utica, New York.

Other relatives remained in the Old Country, some tried to come to America but died; and others did come.

Here are the family trees as best as I can record:

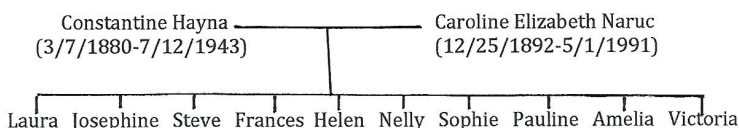


Hayna Family Tree



Boleslaw(d. in Poland) Sister (d. on Poland) Adolf (d. in Springfield, VT) Tony (d. in Flint, Michigan) Boleslaw (Bill, 3/17/1896-11/6/1979 in Utica, NY) Steve (d. in Detroit, Michigan) Augustine(d. In WWI in France) Caroline Elizabeth Naruc (12/25/1892-5/1/1991)

### Naruc Family Tree



### Constantine and Caroline Hayna Family Tree

Mom and Josephine (Josie) were born in Herkimer, New York. Gram, Constantine, and the two girls moved to Springfield, Vermont because they had heard that the machine shops in Springfield needed workers. There was a large Russian, Polish, and other Slavic peoples population in Springfield; Gram and Constantine likely felt it would be an easy transition. As an aside, Gram, Mom, and Josie did eventually learn to speak English; Constantine never did.

The family lived on South St. in an apartment when they first arrived in Springfield. After Mom began school, they bought a farm on Weathersfield Center Road in Weathersfield, Vermont. Mom transferred to a one-room schoolhouse there.

Mom spoke no English when she started school. All of Mom's siblings went to the same one-room



schoolhouse but the older siblings taught the younger ones English so it was easier for them. I believe only Victoria, Amelia, Pauline, and Sophie went on past 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Victoria graduated from Springfield High School; the others had to go to work to support the farm. Remember, high school was not free and the Hayna family was poor.

Mom said Christmas at the school was a big event. They learned to sing Christmas carols, made decorations from paper and popcorn, and had a party. At one party, each child received an orange. Many of the children didn't know what it was. My Aunt Nelly bit into it and found that it was juicy. While walking home, the dripping orange froze to her hand.

The Hayna farm was about two miles from the schoolhouse. The children walked cross country in the spring and fall but in winter they had to stay on the road because of the depth of the snow. The road was packed down by a huge horse drawn roller. Mom said that her Uncle Adolf would get home from work at the shop in Springfield, hitch up the sleigh or wagon with one horse, and meet the children coming out of school. Those that could rode back with him but others walked behind the sleigh or wagon in the tracks. Remember, the family had one pair of boots for all the children to share; they all had shoes and socks to wear. Walking in snow and mud must have been very difficult for them.

As the Hayna family grew in numbers, Mom often had to stay home from school to help Gram with the children. Mom said she did housecleaning, laundry (by hand), washed dishes, prepared meals, etc. Mom was the oldest sibling and Victoria, the youngest, was fourteen years younger. Gram gave birth to ten children in fourteen years and never lost any children in childbirth or childhood.

Most of the time Mom did go to school but she resented taking care of the house and her family. She felt that she had been denied her childhood.

All of the children shared one bedroom upstairs. There was no heat and only one double bed. Since 10 people couldn't fit into one bed, only a few were lucky enough to sleep in the bed. The others slept wherever they could—the floor, chairs, in the hayloft in summer. Mom never considered having a bed important. In fact, I didn't have one until I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and that was because my grandmother bought one for me. Until then, I slept on a mattress on the floor of the “summer kitchen;” Often the pipes would leak onto the floor and soak the mattress. I was cold and wet.

The Hayna family kept some livestock—3 workhorses, chickens, cows, and pigs. All of the children helped with feeding, watering, and mucking out.

In spring, Constantine would plow a field for growing feed corn for the animals. Mom and the other

children would gather the rocks turned over by the plow and dump the rocks onto a pile on the side of the field. The rock pile is still there. Mom and some of her sisters called the rock pile their tombstone. It represented hard labor and pushed children and adults to their limits.

Mr. Wellwood, a businessman from Springfield, bought the Chapman farm near the Hayna farm in the 1920's. He wanted to plant an apple orchard. Mom remembers him planting the trees and being very excited about the future orchard. Wellwood Orchard is still operating today. The original trees would be 90-plus years old.

Mr. Wellwood also had leghorn chickens on his farm. Mom, and later Josie, would go and candle the eggs to make sure that they were all right to sell. They were paid in cracked eggs. Gram said she couldn't use all of the eggs and Mom's sisters complained of eating too many eggs. But, cracked eggs and pig potatoes (potatoes too small to be sold) often were the only food available.

The Hayna farm provided a place for the family to live, food to eat, etc. but in many ways it took a toll on the Haynas. In photos of family members taken at that time, I see skinny, barefoot, sad people dressed in rags. They worked from dawn till dusk and never time to read, go to the movies, go for walks, etc. As adults, Mom and her siblings never could relax; their mantra was "Work, work, work."



Hayna Farm on the Weathersfield, [Vermont] Center Road [1919?]

Mom graduated from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade when she was 14 or 15 years old. She and most of her siblings couldn't go to high school. The high school was in another town, Springfield, and was tuition-based for non-residents of Springfield.

She first worked for the Aldrich family on their farm in Weathersfield. She helped Miss Jessie Aldrich cook and clean for the Aldrich family and their hired hands. Mom liked Jessie – Jessie taught Mom “home economics” and took the time to treat Mom as a person, not just as a worker.

Mom and Jessie prepared meals for about 12 people and did all the laundry including washing and ironing as well as other housework.

Augustus (Gussie) Aldrich, a brother of Jessie, lived on the farm and enjoyed hiking and taking photographs. He took many photos of Mom while she worked there but never gave any away. Mom and I would visit him in the 1950's and Gussie would show us a photo of Mom skiing on a hill behind the Aldrich house. That was her favorite photo.

I believe the time Mom spent working for the Aldrich's was the happiest in her life. But, she did work 6 hours a day 6 days a week and got paid 50 cents a day!

One day a friend of the Hayna family came to visit and told Gram that the spinning mills in "Lulu" (Ludlow, Vermont) were hiring. Gram took Mom, Josie, and Steve (the 3 oldest children) to Ludlow to get jobs. They were hired and worked there for several years. They didn't keep most of their pays—they gave them to their parents to pay for the bills of the farm. They did have to pay for a room, which they shared, in Ludlow and for their meals. Mom spoke of bedbugs and of being hungry at this time.

Mom often spoke of the dances they went to in Ludlow and Plymouth. After work on Fridays they'd go to their room and get ready for the dances. There were several dance halls in the area and they attracted big name bands and soloists. Mom did see Benny Goodman and his band as well as others.

They'd get rides in cars or trucks from the boys in the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). She said that getting to the dances was easy but getting back from the dances was tricky because the boys would be dead drunk after the dances! Once, Mom said, the driver of a dump truck was taking the dancers back home and hit the dump handle instead of the gear handle – everyone slid out onto the road!

Mom also worked in garment factories and shoe shops. All jobs were insecure at this time (this was the 1930's). You worked where you could for whatever they'd pay and you sometimes went to work and found a sign stating "Closed." They lost wages and often had to hitch rides back to the farm.

Mom was very religious. She had been baptized Catholic and was a strong believer. Mom belonged to the Altar Society and was the president for many years. She also belonged to the Catholic Daughters. Mom never forgave me for not being a strong Catholic. In fact, I left the church while at college. She never forgave me for that.

As an adult, Mom had very few friends. People unfamiliar with her reputation of ranting would come over for coffee and Mom would go over to their homes but once they experienced Mom's rants, they separated themselves from her.

My kindergarten teacher, Mrs. D., was one of these temporary friends. Mrs. D. was a wonderful, child-friendly, happy, rotund person. I liked her very much. Mrs. D. invited Mom and I over to her house one day. Mom felt secure and comfortable enough to start telling Mrs. D. how awful Dad was. As usual, Mom worked herself into a rage. I could tell that Mrs. D. was becoming uncomfortable. I tried to get Mom to leave (please remember that I was five). Mom became very angry with me but we did leave. We had to walk on Main St. to get home. When we were out of Mrs. D's sight, Mom seized my hand so hard that her thumbnail stabbed the palm of my hand. I was crying and bleeding. A stranger tied my hand in his handkerchief. I think that Mrs. D. heard about this but, whether she did or not, Mom was never invited back.

Another example of a short-term friendship for Mom was when Mom and Mrs. L. were Girl Scout leaders of the Brownie Troop I belonged to. There was a third lady, whose name I don't remember, who was an assistant leader. At first, all three ladies would meet for coffee but as time went on, Mom was excluded. Mom couldn't understand why. I asked my classmate and friend, Mrs. Lovelace's daughter, about this. She said her Mom didn't like associating with argumentative people. I never told Mom.

Mom always preferred her sisters as friends. She didn't realize that they didn't like her behavior either.

Mom's daily ritual included telephoning Frances, Josie, Vickie, and or Nelly. Mom did most of the talking. It was always a subset of her incantation repertoire—things that her sisters had heard many times before. They told me that they'd often put the phone receiver down and let Mom rant. They also called each other after Mom's first telephone call and talked between themselves so Mom would get a busy signal on the telephone. Mom's phone calls became evasive maneuvers for my aunts.

Gram, Mom, Frances, and Josie met almost every night at Gram's to play cards, watch TV, and socialize. Gram was a widow, Frances' husband had his own entertainment, Josie's ex-husband lived in California, Mom preferred Gram and her sisters to Dad and I. Neither Dad or I cared—with her away it was quiet at home.



# Dad and Mom

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Mom and Dad were married June 26, 1937. I have to say I never understood why they married. From the time that I was old enough to remember, Mom beat on Dad physically, nearly murdered him with a knife twice, and abused him emotionally. Dad rarely fought back. I don't think either of them knew right from wrong since Mom clearly was mentally ill and Dad was an abused orphan.

My best guesses as to why they married are: (1) marriage was what was expected by society at that time; (2) they were better off financially as a married couple; (3) an abuser needs a victim and vice versa; (4) no one else would marry either of them.



Wedding Photo of Laura and Victor Bedi 1937

In most families, or so I am told, wedding anniversaries are celebrated with cards, gifts, and parties. My parents never celebrated theirs. In fact, I had to look up the date of their wedding; I never knew it.

I only saw Dad kiss Mom once. And that was after a big argument. I don't remember what they were arguing about but I do remember that Dad actually defended himself verbally – an unheard of situation.

Dad always bought Mom and me candy and cards for Valentine's Day. Mom always presented her candy to me in a big show of ridicule. I didn't pay much attention

to that; after all, I was the winner of all the candy! For Mother's Day, Dad bought Mom candy as well. Again, I got the candy. For Mom's birthday in 1978 (the year before my father died), Dad gave Mom a book about plants. I never forgot that she received a bill for it after Dad died in March 1979. She was really mad! She wanted to return the book but I begged her to keep it. I still have it. Actually, I think I had to pay for it.

When I was about five, Mom bought a new bedroom set for she and Dad. It was a maple set from Ethan Allen—quite pricey. Dad didn't like it—twin beds! Apparently, Mom never told him that was happening.

As I became older, I began to be aware of Mom's anger with Dad and others. Examples include Mom always ranting about when Dad asked her soon after I was born when she was going back to work. To be honest, I don't think Dad knew much about pregnancy and childbirth. Mom had nine younger siblings so she did know something about it. Dad had no experience. Another example is that she constantly nagged Dad about his hiding money from his paycheck. He may have been, I don't know.

One day, Mom threw her wedding ring at Dad in mid-rage. It hit the wall. Dad was beside himself and had me crawl around on the floor to find it. The ring was OK but the diamond had fallen out. I spent fruitless hours looking for it. Mom put the ring in the silverware

drawer and that's where it stayed for years. Dad stopped wearing his wedding band at the same time.

The two horribly outstanding facts about Mom's abuse were: (1) She repeated every episode word for word thousands of times. They were incantations to her. (2) She screamed them at the top of her voice many times every day. We lived in a war zone. The battles used mostly words but knives, frying pans, and dishes were all used as weapons. Neighbors did complain, but no one did anything about it.

Both knife attacks were similar. I was less than five years old both times. Mom had been screaming at Dad for hours. Same stream of incantations; nothing new. I don't know why she was so angry but she worked herself up into a real rage. She picked up a carving knife and went after Dad. He kept telling her to put the knife down; to stop. She didn't. She chased him out of the house and down the street.

For the second attack, Dad ran to the Police Station. Two officers returned with Dad to the house. I remember that they came into the house and stood in the kitchen with Mom at the table and the knife on the table. Dad was sobbing in the living room.

I was so afraid that I hid in the bathroom. Finally, I came out and stood by Mom's chair. I remember one of the officers saying "You have a beautiful little girl to think of. Do you want her to be hurt by this arguing?"

Mom picked me up and held me—the only time I remember her doing that.

The officers succeeded in getting Mom and Dad to talk to each other. Mom put the knife away but Dad was a broken man. His eyes never showed happiness or even life again.

I remember few vacations taken as a family. We would sometimes go to Utica, New York or to Brooklyn to visit Mom's relatives. We did go to the Maine coast once and stayed two nights in a cabin. Dad loved the ocean. He would sit in an Adirondack chair and watch the waves for hours. I gathered seashells and driftwood. Mom crocheted. It was fairly peaceful except for when we were in the car. I later referred to the car as "Mom's pulpit"—she preached all of the time in the car.

Another vacation ended before we arrived at the vacation spot, Lake Champlain. The car broke down near Rutland, Vermont and had to be towed to the garage. It was a hot July Day. I was in my bathing suit and was running around the garage with my swimming ring (which was yellow with a duck's head attached). I thought we'd still be going to the lake. When the car was repaired, we returned home. When I asked why we were going home, the answer was "Your old man didn't get the car ready so it broke down. We spent the vacation money on the repairs."

Both of my parents discovered “antiquing” in the 60s. They loved to go to auctions and buy old furniture, dishes, farm equipment, paintings, etc. They ran an ongoing barn sale in our 1865 year-old barn. It was filled with antiques. On weekends, there was a steady stream of customers.

The house was also full of antiques. There were only paths through the living room and piano room. When the stacks of boxes filled with antiques became too high for us to watch TV, Dad would move them into the barn for pricing.

Other relatives also loved antiquing and flea markets. Several had profitable businesses doing that.

I remember one day when I was 15 or 16. Mom had been raging as usual while doing her chores and Dad and I were frightened and overwhelmed as usual. Mom opened the cellar door, went down a couple of stairs, and leaned over to reach for something on the stairs (we stored cleaning supplies there). I looked at Dad and he caught my eye; I moved close to Mom’s back while she was bent over, and was ready to push her down the stairs. I looked back at Dad; he had a hopeful look on his face; and then I shook my head and backed away. I couldn’t kill her. Dad nodded. He understood. I wish I had done it; I regret that every day.

Another of Mom’s rants was about how she was going to leave him when I graduated from high school.

She didn't need him, she'd say. "He was a liar, thief, and no good ever since he jumped out of his mother's ass." He was the cause of his father's murder and the reason why Gabriel and he were orphans. Mom could make him, and others, feel worthless. Dad was afraid that she would leave him after my graduation, but she didn't. I think she was addicted to abusing him and couldn't leave that.

While I was away at college, I didn't have much contact with Mom and Dad. I stayed away as much as I could. I missed home and my cats but I hated the war zone. Mom would call every week and tell me about the arguments she had with Dad but I didn't pay much attention. Attending college showed me that other people lived differently. Some married people actually loved each other and some parents valued children. New concepts to me.

I graduated from college in 1975. I couldn't find a job so I returned home and worked as a church organist and started my own music studio. Dad retired about then; he had a problem with nerves in his face and often was in excruciating pain. Mom continued to work.

One August day Mom called the house. She never called from work but did that day. She asked what Dad was doing. He was burning tires and rubbish in the backyard. She said she'd come home. I went to tell Dad that she was really mad. The fire department came

in response to neighbors calling about the fire. Those burning tires really gave off acidic smoke.

Mom got home and was furious. Not because the neighbors had complained or that Dad tried to burn tires. She was angry the fire and smoke were near the pear tree and that the crop was lost. This time, I agreed with her anger but, since this incident would be added to her repertoire of rants, I asked if Dad was incapable of making decisions anymore. After all, he did have nerve damage in his face and head. Might that cause problems?

Mom slapped me so hard that I fell over. When she started to look for something to hit me with, I ran. The fact that I was punished when I showed compassion affected me for years. I had always thought that empathy, understanding, and compassion were good personality traits, not evil ones. To Mom, they were evil. I had been slapped before by Mom, but this episode showed me the violence she was capable of. I still loved her but now I feared her and learned to always be alert.

Dad had several surgeries on his head and face to help with the pain he endured. Mom, nor I, ever went with him to doctors' or surgical appointments. His brother Gabriel always went with him. I didn't know that I should go with him; Mom's example to me was not to go. Later, when Mom needed surgeries, I never stayed with her. I'd drop her off and go to work. Hospital staff thought I was a terrible person. I didn't know that I should have stayed. When I needed surgeries, Mom



never went with me either. I relied on my friends to help me. This is one way of how abuse carries through generations. I didn't know right from wrong anymore than my parents did.

Dad died in March of 1979. He hadn't been well all winter and looked weak. Mom never paid any attention to his health unless it was to use his health problems as weapons in the ongoing verbal war criticizing him. The evening before Dad died, he brought up wood from the cellar for the woodstove. He dropped the wood into the wood box and collapsed into a chair. I was there and asked him if he was OK. He said he just had to catch his breath and was OK. I remember that he looked up at me with those empty eyes and I got scared. I went over and knelt by him and grabbed his hand. Mom came into the room and yelled at me. She said if he was short of breath, it was his own fault. He never took care of himself and was paying the price just like she had told him he would. The next day Dad died of a heart attack. I was 27; his death was the first major death I experienced. Dad, I am so sorry.

# Gram

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Gram and I in the 1960's

Caroline Naruc Hayna (Gram) believed her birthday was December 25, 1892. We never knew for certain. Gram said that she had been told that her birthday was on Christmas but, although she was Catholic for most of her life, she did attend the Russian Orthodox Church in Springfield and in the Old Country. So her birthday might have been in January when the Russian Orthodox Church celebrates Christmas. She died May 1, 1991.

Gram was the only girl in her family. Gram's family was fairly well-to-do since her father was a mason. He was highly respected by the Jewish community and had close ties with them. Family lore tells of his Jewish friends telling him when bandits were planning to rob his masonry building. He stopped them by being on guard that night with a rifle.

Gram married my grandfather in the early 1900's. It was an arranged marriage. Constantine was much older than she. As stated earlier, Constantine emigrated from Russia in 1911 (?) with his cousin. Constantine didn't feel safe in Russia since he had been an officer in the Czar's cavalry. His two brothers stayed behind. Constantine and his cousin came into the United States via Canada and worked in mills in Kenosha, Wisconsin and later in carpet mills in Utica, New York.

Gram remained in her hometown of Vileyka until 1912 when she and her youngest brother, Bill, came to the United States via Gedansk, Poland and Southampton, England (where, supposedly, they just missed being on the Titanic), to Ellis Island, New York. Gram's brothers Adolph, Steve, and Anthony also came to the United States but I don't know when. Her brother Francis was enroute to the United States during World War I and went missing in France.

Uncle Bill and Gram were very close. He became an automobile mechanic and stayed in Utica, New York for all of his life. He loved Utica. We would visit him

often there. One Thanksgiving, Mom, Gram, and I loaded up the station wagon with the cooked turkey and all the fixings and drove to Utica from Springfield. It took 4 ½ hours. I remember smelling the food and wanting to eat it then and there. When we got to Uncle Bill's and heated up the food, the entire neighborhood showed up. It was one of the best Thanksgivings ever. Of course, I didn't understand a word being spoken—Russian, Polish, and Lithuanian; I never learned any of those languages. But we communicated with smiles and stuffed bellies. In hindsight, I realize that my father was left alone in Vermont. I shouldn't have let that happen.

Uncle Bill helped Gram and the Hayna family financially. He's send money to them to pay the farm taxes, etc. He was a favorite of mine too. Not just because he gave my dollar bills and hamsters (which always got away). He was simply a nice person but never could understand why I wouldn't eat borscht. Yuck!

My Gram was a fantastic cook. She worked at a restaurant in Springfield. It was a lunch counter place where breakfast and lunch were served. The owner, Mr. G., was Italian. Since Gram didn't speak Italian and he didn't speak Polish or Russian, they communicated in basic English. The restaurant was on two floors—street level was where the customers were served; the lower level was where the cook stove (which burned wood) was located. There were stairs to get up and down between the two floors but there also was a dumb waiter which

was used to send the cooked food and baked goods up to the customers. Gram said that when she couldn't get the wood in the stove lit, she'd call up the dumb waiter for Mr. G. to come down and help.

Mr. G. was a generous man; he would let Gram bake breads and pies for her family using the restaurant supplies for the holidays of Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. At the time, most of the Hayna family still lived on the farm and were poor and hungry. Bless Mr. G.

Gram was also friends with Mrs. G. They would go shopping in Claremont, New Hampshire. Claremont had many stores and they had a good time there. Of course, language was a problem, but friendship won out. They could go to Claremont because Uncle Bill had bought a car for the Hayna family but only Gram learned how to drive it. Gram had "guts;" she'd try anything! She did end up in a brook once because the brakes failed. Oh well.

Constantine, Gram's husband, suicided in 1944. Gram sold the farm after that. She couldn't run it and Victoria, the youngest child, was already 21 so family help with the farm was not available. Gram bought a house on Pearl Street in Springfield and lived there with one of her brothers, Adolph, and several of her adult children.

Later, Gram lived in various apartments on Valley Street in Springfield, Vermont. Valley Street was the Slavic neighborhood. While riding my bike to Gram's place, I heard Russian, Polish, Lituanian, and other languages being spoken and smelled delicious meals being cooked. I pedaled past two bakeries, one Polish and one Russian. I loved the cookies and sweet rolls from the Polish bakery but the breads from the Russian bakery were to die for.

When Springfield built the first Senior Housing building, Mom applied for Gram to move in. She was the first tenant—Apartment 101. She lived there for the remainder of her life. Gram liked it because many people from Valley Street moved there. She did not like the laundry because it was on her floor and open 24 hours. It made her floor noisy. Although there were many services available to the residents (such as rides to appointments and to stores; free food from the USDA, etc.), Gram and many others did not take advantage of them. Mom and several of my aunts took her wherever she needed to go. Most of the Slavic residents were very independent and didn't trust the government. In fact, they despised the "Yankees" (English folk) for using the services. Discrimination went both ways, I'm afraid.

Discrimination was common in Springfield for both nationalities and for religions. Regarding nationalities, whichever ethnic group was newest to Springfield was discriminated against by the others. The Slavic

nationalities were replaced by the French Canadians who became the primary residents of Valley Street in the 1960's. They were replaced by Laotians and Vietnamese whom various churches in town sponsored. I don't remember any violence but I do remember backbiting and name calling. I do remember that our house (the Bedi house) on Pleasant St. getting hit with hundreds of tomatoes from our own garden by the neighbor's two teenage children. The white house was orange from the damage but no windows were broken. The neighbors' parents were appalled and made their children help scrub the house clean. We never experienced anything like that again.

Religious discrimination mostly was between Roman Catholics and Protestants which paralleled the nationality discrimination. Most of the Catholics were Russian, Polish, French, and Italian; the Protestants were mostly English. Even I in elementary school (1950's) experienced it. We were tolerated but not welcome in society.

My memories of Gram are mostly positive; she taught me how to sew and crochet, I watched her cook and helped by peeling apples or potatoes, etc. But, after my Aunt Pauline (Pally) told me the family history of child abuse and incest, I felt only anger at Gram.

Gram died in 1991 and Pally told me about the abuse and incest in 2013. I had always suspected abuse but Pally verified it. Pally said that several of the oldest

children were abused by Constantine. Steve had told me that years earlier—he hated both of his parents because of this but I wasn't ready to accept this knowledge. I hated Gram from that point on. How could a mother allow this to happen to her children? I have researched child abuse and intergenerational abuse for years but I will never understand how someone could do this. But, after Pally told me about the familial abuse, I understood why Mom beat me and hated me. This knowledge helped me accept her for who she was.



# Me

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I was born May 2, 1951 in Springfield, Vermont. I wasn't due until July so I was very premature. I weighed less than 5 pounds and dropped in weight for the first few weeks of my life. I was in an incubator at the hospital for awhile. Being a "preemie" caused many health problems. I was born with an incomplete heart (i.e., a "hole" in my heart). Now, surgeons repair that condition soon after birth. In the 1950's they monitored the situation for years (14 in my case) and prescribed daily dosages of penicillin to prevent infection. Mom, Dad, and I would go to the Boston Children's Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts several times a year so my condition would be monitored. I remember at the last visit the doctor said since I lived to be 14, I probably would live a normal life. Mom was disappointed; she had been referring to me as a "hopeless cripple." Now she had to change her story.

The good part of my health problem was that Mom gave me piano lessons starting when I was 4. The old upright piano came from my Aunt Olga and Uncle Gabriel. They wanted it out of their house. It cost \$2. And cost \$5. to move it. My teacher was Mrs. S.M. She was a delightful little old lady who always wore a straight

wool skirt, a frilly blouse, and lots of antique jewelry. Her husband and she lived in Springfield in a Victorian house. The house had beautiful bric-a-brac trim outside, beautiful floor to ceiling windows, and oak flooring and woodwork. I loved going there; it was so light and airy despite the heavy velvet drapes. Mrs. S.M. kept a pet bird in their dining room; it chirped and whistled during my lessons. I liked that bird.

I am a gifted musician and learned to play easily. I have perfect pitch and can sight read music better than most people can play after they've practiced. I liked playing but I had a hard time to read music at first. I didn't know my ABCs so I didn't understand what I was doing. Mrs. S.M. figured it out; she taught me my ABCs and how to read numbers up to 20. After that, I was fine.

I had to switch music teachers when I was approximately 12. Mom wanted me to major in music so I could teach music lessons at home (since I was at that time still a "hopeless cripple"). So I took lessons from a well-known pipe organist Mrs. R. Mrs. R. knew the repertoire I needed to learn and helped me with that but she was not very friendly. I practiced every day and made progress but I never related to Mrs. R. as I did to Mrs. S.M.

We lived on Pleasant Street across from the Catholic Church in Springfield, Vermont. We were Catholics and we went to church every Sunday and Holy Day. Gram was a housekeeper at the Rectory so we knew the

Monsignor, the senior housekeeper, and the assistant priest very well. There were also 4 nuns from the Victory Noll nunnery who lived in another house on the street. Since there were only older children on the street I spent a lot of time visiting people in both places.

St. Mary's Church is a beautiful building—Vermont white marble outside, oak woodwork and pews, stained glass windows, stone carvings of the Stations of the Cross, painted and gilded beams, and a high vaulted ceiling. There was an Estey pipe organ in the choir loft. Estey organs were built in Brattleboro, Vermont and were really nice although the trumpet rank of pipes on this organ was much too loud for the rest of the organ. Still, that organ was great. Every Sunday when leaving the church, I looked up at the organist playing. I was enchanted with the organ. When I was 9 I told Mom that I wanted to learn to play that instrument. Mom said that she knew I wanted to play the accordion and I'd be starting lessons. I remember that I looked at her and said "I don't want to play the accordion, I want to play the organ!" She was furious. She had told her entire family that I wanted to play the accordion and she wasn't going to back down. When we arrived home, I was slapped into submission. So, I learned how to play the accordion.

Again, a good thing came out of this. I took lessons from Mr. W. in Claremont, New Hampshire. I did well and went to a competition in Manchester, New Hampshire when I was 13 or 14. I did well there but

most importantly I met my future accordion teacher R.M. He was there as a judge and said that he would take me as a student. His music studio was in Bridgeport, Connecticut so we travelled every other Saturday to Bridgeport for my lessons.

Later, I took piano lessons from R.M. as well as accordion lessons but he limited himself to teaching me only technique (the physical strength and dexterity needed to play well) since he didn't know the repertoire I would need to major in music. We left that to Mrs. R. Mrs. R. found out about this indirectly. She asked me why my playing and become so much better. I told the truth and Mom had to do damage control. Mrs. R. kept me as a student but the relationship between she and I was downright frosty.

When I was 15½ I started to play Requiem Masses at St. Mary's on that wonderful Estey organ. Those masses are daily masses and I played nearly every day except Sunday. I started to be a substitute organist for the 3 Sunday services when I was 17. I also took some organ lessons from Mrs. R. (I paid for them myself). I never really became good at the organ; I played (and play) all right but my arms and legs are too short and I never felt secure playing the organ. Too bad—I really loved it.

I sang in the church children's choir from 6<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. I also sang in the Junior High and High School choruses (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grade) although I mostly accompanied the school choruses. I was quite good at the piano.

I graduated from high school in June 1969. Some of the boys in my class went to serve in the Viet Nam War. One boy went to West Point. Many of my classmates went to vocational-technical school; some got married; others went to work; some, including me, went to college.



### Vicky's High School Graduation Photograph

Since I was a C student in High School and had SAT scores only in the 300's, I couldn't go to any top-ranked college. I went to the Northern Conservatory of Music in Bangor, Maine. It wasn't an accredited college but it was a music college. The Conservatory was very small (approximately 80 students) and had no dorms (female students had to live at home or at the YWCA or one

particular boarding house). Classes were primarily held in a beautiful old mansion on Union Street.

The Conservatory was a very strict school. An example of this was the dress code. No jeans were allowed. Men had to wear dress slacks and button shirts. Women had to wear dresses or skirts with pantyhose. We could also wear pantsuits which were fashionable in the 1970s. Bangor is not a tropical paradise and we froze in pantyhose. Most of us wore tall boots to try to keep warm.

Although I didn't care for the dress code, I loved the Conservatory. I was a music education major and my primary instrument was piano; my secondary instrument was organ. I attended the Conservatory for 3 years. My grade-point-average was 4.0. I had found myself scholastically! Halfway through my junior year, it was announced that the Conservatory was bankrupt and that we would have to go to another college. I was devastated. The Director of the Conservatory had brokered several options for students; we could transfer to another school hoping that they would accept our credits from the non-accredited Conservatory or we could go to the University of Maine in Gorham, Maine and graduate under the charter of the Conservatory. I chose to transfer to the Director's alma mater, Westminster Choir College in Princeton, New Jersey.

Westminster was and is a great college. It is not part of Princeton University although when I attended we

used the University's bookstore and graduation was held in the University's chapel. The bookstore was about a mile away from the campus of Westminster. When we had to go to the bookstore we walked. If we had to go later in the afternoon or in the evening, women students would go with male students from Westminster. It wasn't safe for women. This situation was comical to us since at least 50 percent of Westminster students were homosexual. The 70's were a strange decade societally.

All of my credits from the Conservatory did not transfer and, instead of entering Westminster as a junior (which would result in my losing only one year of credits), I entered as a sophomore. That was devastating to me. I was in debt already because of college; I couldn't see how I could afford to go to Westminster. The Director of the Conservatory spoke to a wonderful generous lady in Massachusetts. She gave me \$3,000. a year for two years to help me with my college costs. I always sent her a photocopy of my grades and thanked her because without her financial help, I wouldn't have been able to attend Westminster.

I did well scholastically at Westminster although my GPA dropped to 3.5. After my first year there, I received enough work study hours and scholarship money to minimize the amount of school loans I had to take out. When I graduated, I only owed \$10,000. I was in my late thirties before I paid off my school loans.

The devastation of losing two years of credits wasn't only monetary for me. I became very depressed. I went to counseling because of it and survived but I was angry and very bitter. I was not a happy centered person. I believed that my mother had been right—I was a liar, thief and no good. I worked very hard but had lost the hope I had gained while at the Conservatory. These were dark days.

At Westminster I continued to major in music education but my primary instrument became voice. When I had auditioned on the piano at Westminster, I did not play well and was not accepted as a piano student. I auditioned in voice and was accepted. That was fine; I enjoyed my voice lessons and learned much about voice. Also, Westminster had two Symphonic Choirs which sang with major orchestras in New York City, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. Taking voice lessons strengthened my voice for the repertoire we sung.

I graduated Cum Laude from Westminster in May 1975. The ceremony was held in the chapel of Princeton University. Mrs. Ford, President Gerald Ford's wife, was our speaker. She gave a truly inspirational speech especially meaningful for the women. I appreciated her confidence in women. This was the era of women's rights.





Vicky's College Graduation Photograph

As we marched out to the triumphant music, I tried to catch the eyes of my parents as other graduates were doing. Parents were waving to their offspring and most were videotaping the occasion or at least taking photographs. My mother was arguing with my father about something; neither saw me. Again, I was hoping that my parents would be interested in me; would love me; would respect what I had accomplished. As usual, it was not to be. Why did I believe things would change? What a fool I was. Looking back on my life I realize that I always hoped for change in my parents' attitude towards me but I was always disappointed. I was abusing myself.

Growing up in an abusive family not only means ongoing personal fear and fear of the future, emotional tension resulting in stomachaches, and insecurity. An abusive family situation also means not learning “normal” behavior, not knowing right from wrong, not knowing cultural expectations.

I was terrified of loud noises since my mother screamed instead of spoke. I remember I refused to learn Russian because, if a language had to screamed, it wasn't worth learning. I understood Russian but I refused to learn to speak it. Because of the loud volume of speech around me and at me, I spoke rarely and very quietly. People thought I was shy; I was afraid. When my mother would start arguing with my father, I hid in my room. I always had the window open a little (I used it a few times to jump outside out of range of my mother's wrath) and had a place cleared out under my bed (when I finally had a bed) to hide behind things. I was too afraid to even go to the bathroom; I pooped and peed in the wastebasket and cleaned it up later.

When I was about 4 years old, I remember my mother was folding laundry and putting it away in the bureau in my parents' room. I wanted to get dressed so she told me to put my underwear on. I didn't know front from back so I hesitated. She took the pair out of my hand and said the front was where the leg openings were higher. So I finally knew front from back. Mom had been nice about it so I asked her about socks; which went

on one foot and which went on the other (that is, right and left). She lost her temper and threw them at me and told me I was stupid. There was no difference for socks. I sat there and bawled while she finished dressing me. I never asked a question like that again. I was becoming aware that I couldn't trust her and that I had to fear her to survive. Is that what 4 year olds have to learn? I believe children of alcoholics and drug users experience the same fear and learn to compensate for it. If that is true, there are many survivors like me in the world today.

Another example of a fearful event was when I was caught giving one of the cats some meat from my plate at suppertime. Mom jumped up, caught me by the arm and swung me over to the cats' dishes. She grabbed the back of my head and slammed my face in the canned cat food bowl. She said I could eat there from now on. Dad was there and, when she calmed down, told her that I should eat at the table. He talked to me later and told me that I needed to learn not to get Mom angry so I needed to be careful what I did. I pretty much kept a low profile for the rest of my life. Being a "wallflower" doesn't begin to describe it. I became invisible.

I rarely had friends over from school. I never could tell what kind of a mood Mom would be in so visited friends at their homes, at school, at catechism class, at parks, etc. Not that I had many friends. I didn't know much about clean undies, brushing my teeth, washing my hands. Few friends wanted to be near me. Undies

were changed and bathing took place once a week and I brushed my teeth once a day with a toothbrush and peroxide (I didn't know about toothpaste). I learned about bras and deodorant from my gym teacher; I learned about periods at school. My Dad bought my sanitary pads. It was an interesting learning curve to say the least.

One friend who was always there for me was Flag. Her mom put up with me nearly every weekend in Junior High and High School. Mrs. D. was ill much of the time; she had problems with her back. But she let me stay over with Flag, fed me, took me to school dances, and gave me a taste of reality. She did get angry sometimes. I remember her asking "Why doesn't your mother send you with food?" or "Why can't Flag stay at your house sometimes?" We all knew the answer. Flag also explained things to me. I remember we had both entered science projects into the School Science Fair. Flag was academically brilliant; I was not. She got top honors and I got honorable mention. I asked Flag what honorable mention was. She very diplomatically explained that I had incorrectly answered some of the teachers' questions. My project had been plant pollination and I had told the teachers that there only needed to be one corn plant in a field for it to be pollinated and bear vegetables. This was way before plant genetics had been engineered. At the time of my project, it took two to tango. So much for my knowledge.

Flag and I (my nickname at that time was Bean) were referred to as “les jumelles” in high school. That translates to “the twins” from French. We were approximately the same height, wore thick eyeglasses, had similar haircuts although the colors were different (I was a blond; Flag was a brunette), and were nearly always together. We supported each other through high school. Flag, I want to say thank you; I never would have survived without you.

Flag and I drifted apart during college. Flag went to Tufts University and later to Suffolk University Law School and became a lawyer. I went to an unaccredited school, the Northern Conservatory of Music, then I transferred to Westminster Choir College. I worked for years as a church musician and taught piano and voice privately. When an economic recession occurred in the 1980s, I lost half of my students. I decided to pursue a Master’s degree in Music Theory with the goal of being an academic professor. I was accepted on a probational basis to the program at the Hartt School of Music. It was a probational acceptance because I had done marginally on my graduate admissions exam. After the first year at Hartt, the probational status was removed. I was a 4.0 student for most of my time there and was an Associate Professor teaching music theory. I was beyond happy. I had found myself scholastically again and had discovered that I wasn’t stupid. It was unfortunate that I was 29 years old before I discovered that I was worth something.

My bubble burst in 1983. My advisor advised me to follow position openings for Music Theory professors in the Chronicle of Higher Education. Very few positions required only a Masters degree; most required a Doctorate and there were hundreds of applicants for each position advertised. I was in debt again and couldn't justify paying for more education on such a chance so I looked for any kind of a job in Vermont near home. For a while, I picked and packed apples at an orchard. I reminded myself that there were many people in the same situation as I was. Many doctorate holders were driving taxis. I finally was hired to work at Readex Microprint. I received minimum wage (\$3.15/hour) but I had health insurance. I worked there 7 months in 1984 until I was hired by Dartmouth College to be a cataloger in the library system. I started with an hourly wage of \$7.50. I had died and gone to heaven. I was in a scholastic environment again and my investment in my Master's degree was paying off! Success!

I worked at Dartmouth from 1984 to 1991 as a cataloger of musical scores and sound recordings. Catalogers create online (and at that time, printed card) records for patrons to use to locate materials in libraries. We did considerable research before creating a record for each individual title. I was hired because of my Bachelor's and Masters degrees in music as well as my reading knowledge of French and German.

A problem being a cataloger at Dartmouth was that catalogers couldn't advance occupationally unless they had a Master of Library degree. Dartmouth paid \$1,000. per year for employees to go to graduate school but wouldn't guarantee those employees a professional position upon graduation. I was aware what had happened to my predecessor so I attended graduate school part time and kept my position as music cataloger. Upon graduation I spoke to my supervisors and other librarians at Dartmouth. They all suggested that I leave Dartmouth, obtain professional experience elsewhere, and return later. I left to become director of a public library and later moved onto a position of director of technical services in Howe Library in Hanover, New Hampshire. I obtained the professional experience but never returned to Dartmouth.

Professionally, I seemed to have the "seven-year itch;" I stayed at Dartmouth for 7 years, worked at Howe Library for 7 years, and worked at the National Center for PTSD for a total of 7 years. I worked at other libraries and businesses as well but these three institutions shaped me professionally.

My time at Howe was very rewarding. I decided early on that Howe needed a decent online system; wrote the proposal; obtained financing; implemented to system; trained staff and volunteers; managed workshops; etc. It was a crowning victory. The downside was, I didn't get along with people well at all. I alienated my fellow

staff workers as well as town management and didn't have a clue I was doing that. After 7 years I was asked to leave or be fired. I was devastated. In my defense, I was menopausal (men, you have no idea how lucky you are not to experience that) and my mother was out of control. I spent these years in therapy with a psychologist and a psychiatrist. I took my meds for anxiety, learned relaxation therapy, and dealt with life as best I could and that wasn't very good.

My mother began to need much more assistance at this time. She had several surgeries for her gall bladder. Then, she developed ITP (Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura). This is an immune condition resulting in the body attacking its own platelets. The result is too low a level of platelets in the body causing bleeding and other symptoms. Mom's arms and legs were often completely purple. She was on prednisone and endured painful treatments for years. Mom didn't want treatment, didn't take her meds regularly or with the correct dosage, and argued constantly with me, her doctor, the nurses. We all were fair game. At this time we lived in a log home with multiple floors; my room was on the top floor. Mom couldn't climb stairs but she could sit on the stairs and "butt-climb" them to my room. She'd block my path past her and would scream and hit the walls with her cane. I was afraid she'd hit me so I slept in my car in the garage or under my bed with a hammer to defend myself. I was a nervous wreck for these years. When we interacted on the main floor where the kitchen and



bathroom were, it was always strained. I'd wait until she fell asleep before I'd take my shower and I often bought takeout meals for her and I to eat.

A typical afternoon after work for me was coming home, going into the house, and finding Mom glowering at me. She had been rehearsing her tantrums all day; she was flushed, shaking with anger, and ready to attack. She'd throw books, kettles (a frying pan was her favorite weapon), magazines, anything within reach. She'd berate me for being a liar, thief, and no good. After all, I stole her money, her jewelry, the house, the car, etc.; I isolated her from her family. What good was I?

She'd call priests and lawyers and tell them how bad I was and how I was abusing her. They'd do research and call me and tell me what she had been telling them. I finally hired a lawyer who specialized in elder law. He was a Godsend and helped me through these years of fear. I was terrified of her. She got into debt because of running up other expenses and I had to pay the bills. To do this I had to cash out my retirement funds. It cost thousands to keep her out of debt. I spoke to my lawyer and he said that because I was the legal guardian I was responsible for her debts. I wanted to leave her; to run away. But, I am a responsible person. By now I knew she was mentally ill. I feared for my life, my reputation, and was trapped because I was the only caretaker available. I had to take care of a person who was abusing me!

At the suggestion of my lawyer, I managed to have Mom examined by a psychiatrist. The results were that she was suffering from side effects of prednisone and other medications that she was on but also that she was obsessive-compulsive and had paranoid-schizophrenic tendencies. We worked with the specialists for ITP and managed her meds better but Mom would refuse her meds often and, since the elderly have rights, we couldn't force her to take them. At one point I wanted to have her admitted as a patient in an institution for the mentally ill but I couldn't afford it and the state could not help since, if she did take her meds properly, she was within sane parameters. Catch-22.

I had gotten a position in March 2000 as an indexer at the National Center for PTSD in White River Junction, Vermont. I was a librarian, had Dartmouth connections since I had worked there as a cataloger, and had working knowledge of mental health issues. Working there gave me compassion, understanding, and a goal for my life—to help the mentally ill. Somehow I needed to do that. I am so grateful to the NCPTSD professionals. You saved this liar, thief, and person who was no good. Without you I would have suicided; I came close several times.

My supervisor at the Resource Center for the National Center for PTSD, taught me how to index materials for inclusion into our online catalog, PILOTS, and how to select materials, perform research queries

from veterans, reporters, politicians, medical personnel, and psychologists and psychiatrists doing research. I loved it from the first day. I had been an excellent cataloger at Dartmouth College and indexing was similar in nature. Helping people from all walks of life really helped me gain a different perspective of myself. I found that I believed in myself. Also, in the process of doing research on PTSD and related mental health issues, I learned about why certain people are more likely to suffer from mental illness; what mental illnesses are and how they are diagnosed; how mental illness affects patients and their caretakers; what treatment options are available and what treatments are being developed. The knowledge I acquired helped me to become patient with my mother and to stop asking why she treated myself and other people so badly. I no longer blamed her; I now believed the cause were her illnesses.

Dealing with her was still difficult but I wasn't desperate and hopeless anymore. She did notice the change in our relationship and began to fear that she was no longer controlling my reactions to her tantrums. This was a revelation to both of us. I now realized that I no longer cared what she thought about me; that I didn't love her; that I didn't trust her. She was ill and needed me as a caretaker and I was capable of being that. During this time Mom actually began to say that she loved me and that I should never forget that. I didn't sneer at her after she told me that but I did look at her with pity. We both realized that although I forgave her I truly had no

emotion for her. No love, no hate. It was too late—the abuse had taken its toll on me.

Having become more confident in myself led me to decide to move to Florida in 2003. I wanted to move to Florida was that I hate snow and New England winters. Another reason why I wanted to move was that I was exhausted from dealing with mental illness at work and at home. I needed a break from the intensity of it. I liked Florida when I had visited over the years and went to interview for a few library positions. I became Assistant Director at a public library in Volusia County. I loved the weather, beaches, wildlife, and Florida life but Mom had moved with me. She was failing physically faster than I had realized and wanted to move home to be closer to her sisters. They rarely had visited or even telephoned her when we were in Vermont and New Hampshire so I didn't expect them to do either when we were in Florida but Mom did. After awhile, I felt that it would be better for her to be back up north and that I really wasn't thrilled about my job, so we moved back to North Springfield, Vermont. It was a good decision because 6 months later Mom had a series of mini-strokes and had to live in an assisted living facility.

I sold the house in Florida and purchased a house in North Springfield, Vermont. The new house was very nice—it was small, had a 2-car garage, overlooked a brook, and had a nice parcel of land to garden on. The bad part was that it was on Main Street and opposite the

industrial park. There was much truck traffic. The house was near the road so it sounded like the trucks were very close; and they were! The evenings and nights were quiet but the days were full of noise.

A fence was installed and I planted a row of tall shrubs to block the noise. It was very nice. Of course, over the years (I lived there for nine years) the industrial park grew, as did the traffic. Evenings were still quiet but days were very bad. The shop across the street added an extension to the building and the parking lot was opposite my big window in the living room. When cars entered the parking lot in the mornings, headlights shone into the house unless I kept the heavy drapes pulled and car doors opened and closed.

I loved my house and enjoyed gardening and the brook but I was getting older and found that I was having difficulties take care of Mom's issues, the house, working fulltime, etc. My health had never been great but I had problems with both of my feet and had surgeries on both; my gallbladder had been removed and I suffered ongoing intestinal issues (chronic diarrhea); I had nerve problems because of potassium absorption; etc. I wondered how long I could stay in my little house with the big garden.

As I said earlier, Mom lived with me in North Springfield for only 6 months because of her mini-strokes. She had some strokes on Halloween. We had gone shopping and she was too tired to go out to eat

so I drove directly home. When I parked the car in the garage, she didn't try to open the car door and get out. I asked her what was wrong and she just muttered to me. I sat back into the car and looked over at her. She was muttering and picking up her left hand with her right by the sleeve and letting it drop back down. I knew that she was having a stroke. I drove to Springfield Hospital where the staff helped Mom. She had started to convulse in the car but I had gotten her to the hospital soon enough to prevent major damage. All the same, she couldn't be taken care of by me anymore. I was relieved. I did succeed in getting Mom admitted to an assisted living facility but it took a month. Mom stayed several weeks at the rehab building and for two weeks I took her to adult daycare for the days. At night she was with me. During those two weeks she'd leave the water faucet running, or would dry her clothes either on the gas heater or in the oven. One day, I left her home alone since I couldn't find anyone to stay with her for a half hour while I went to the grocery store. Big mistake. She had burned her washcloth in the oven and the smoke alarms had gone off. She was quietly sitting in a chair in the living room and calmly asked me what all that noise was. Fortunately she left for the assisted living place a few days later. The facility was literally down the road. I hoped people (her sisters and friends) would visit her there since it was close by. Few people came to visit; maybe 5 a year.

I visited daily but only for a few minutes. I did take her out for a ride once a week. She could walk, at first with a cane, later with a walker. We'd go past her family farm in Weathersfield or to Wellwood Orchards or to Allen Brothers' Farm Stand and then to lunch. Sometimes the rides were peaceful. That is, she'd fall asleep. Other times, the rides were repeats of her preaching from her automobile pulpit. She still berated me and called me names then. I nearly deliberately crashed the car twice—I just couldn't take much more.

Mom wanted to come home and wanted me to quit working. She believed that her social security allotment of \$975. a month plus her \$52. a month pension would be enough for us to live on. It was awful. Mom was miserable. It is so difficult for the elderly to be in care facilities. They want to believe that they are capable of doing all the things they did before and they can't. Even though I didn't like my mother I did love her by now. I did the best I could with what I had but felt guilty every day.

I worked in Chester, Vermont for a while which was nice at first I worked on great historical projects there and enjoyed it but later those projects ended and I really wasn't challenged by the new projects. So I found that my old indexing position was open at the National Center for PTSD. I applied and went back. Unfortunately, Chester was 11 miles away; the National Center was 35. I found the commute to be too much for me. I sold the

house and purchased a condo in Brownsville, Vermont. It was 11 miles to work!

While working at Newsbank in Chester one day, I was paged. I didn't hear the paging but the Office Manager realized that and came looking for me. My mother had been taken to the hospital with major strokes. A Vice President gave me a ride to the hospital and told me to call her for further help. Mom recovered but no longer could stay at the assisted living facility; she had had to go to live in a nursing home. She hated that and wanted to come home to stay with me but that was impossible. I visited her early everyday for a few minutes; some days were OK most were not. She was bitter and hurt that I wouldn't do what she wanted.

In June of 2013, I had torn retinas in both eyes. I noticed a "veil" coming over my left eye while in a staff meeting on a Thursday morning. I had been warned about the possibility of detached retinas by my optician for years because of my terrible eyesight, pale eyes, and premature birth so I knew what had happened. I got an appointment with my optician's partner the next day. He knew the surgeon at Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center and got me in for an appointment on the next Monday. I had laser surgery on my left eye that afternoon and had surgery on the right eye 2 days later. I couldn't drive for over a week. During this time my mother started to fail badly. I couldn't visit her because



I couldn't drive or get people to drive me. Mom really didn't understand. Her mind was rapidly leaving her.

I could finally drive on June 30<sup>th</sup>, five days before my mother passed away. I did go to visit her each day except for July 3 and 4. Mom wasn't very coherent but twice she apologized for being so "rough" with me. I told her it didn't matter anymore. She realized that although I had forgiven her, I couldn't forget what she had done and how I had felt. I live with the damage child and adult abuse causes everyday; I never can be separated from it. I think she truly was sorry but I didn't and don't believe her and her apologies had no value since she had apologized before and immediately was hurtful towards me.

I didn't visit her the day before she died or on the day she died. An aide was with her when she passed but I experienced the strangest thing. I was working in my garden the morning of July 4. I stopped and said to myself "she just died." I went in and the phone rang. The nursing home staff called to tell me of her passing. I was abnormally calm and peaceful. The war was over.

The funeral was sad. My friends and some cousins were there to support me but very few of Mom's contemporaries were there and none of her siblings. I cried then not because she was dead but because the chance for her to realized what she had done was dead

too. At that time, all I wanted was for her to realize that she was wrong in treating Dad, myself, and other people so badly. Her passing ended that whisper of hope; it became the cry of despair.

# Epilogue

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Looking back on my life I realize how conflicted I was regarding my feelings towards my mother. I wanted her to love and respect me but gradually realized that she couldn't. Her experiences as an abused and neglected child had shaped her into a person who was incapable of love or respect. Her experience of parental guidance consisted of fear and retribution thus shaping her parenting style. Also, her parents' demands of working excessively hard and without question molded my mother's demands on my father and myself. I thought for years that my mother was learning disabled and mentally ill. Perhaps these two conditions were brought on by overwork. If a child works that hard, they have no time to observe the world around them and learn from others.

I also realize how much I valued the few happy times in my childhood while realizing that those happy times were also tainted with fear and apprehension. I always wondered not if, but when I would be hit or berated again. I always had to think before I said or did anything to avoid retribution. Now I am perhaps too impulsive and blurt out inappropriate words. But it feels better that way. Unfortunately, I also believe that my experiences

have made me unlovable and unworthy of love or even respect.

In the third paragraph of this book I originally that I had found empathy and calmness. I changed “calmness” to “acceptance:”

I realized that I still have not found calmness in the five years since my mother’s death. I wanted to believe that but it’s not true. Although her death ended the chance for her to realize what she had done to my father and I, it didn’t give me calmness. I am still searching for calmness and for something that I can’t identify.

In conclusion I must say that as I look back over my life I am satisfied that I not only survived but succeeded. I love my friends, cousins, pets, and nature. I am an outstanding musician, artist, seamstress, and I am a charismatic outgoing person. My mantra growing up was “I’m still standing.” Now it is “I’m still moving forward.”

