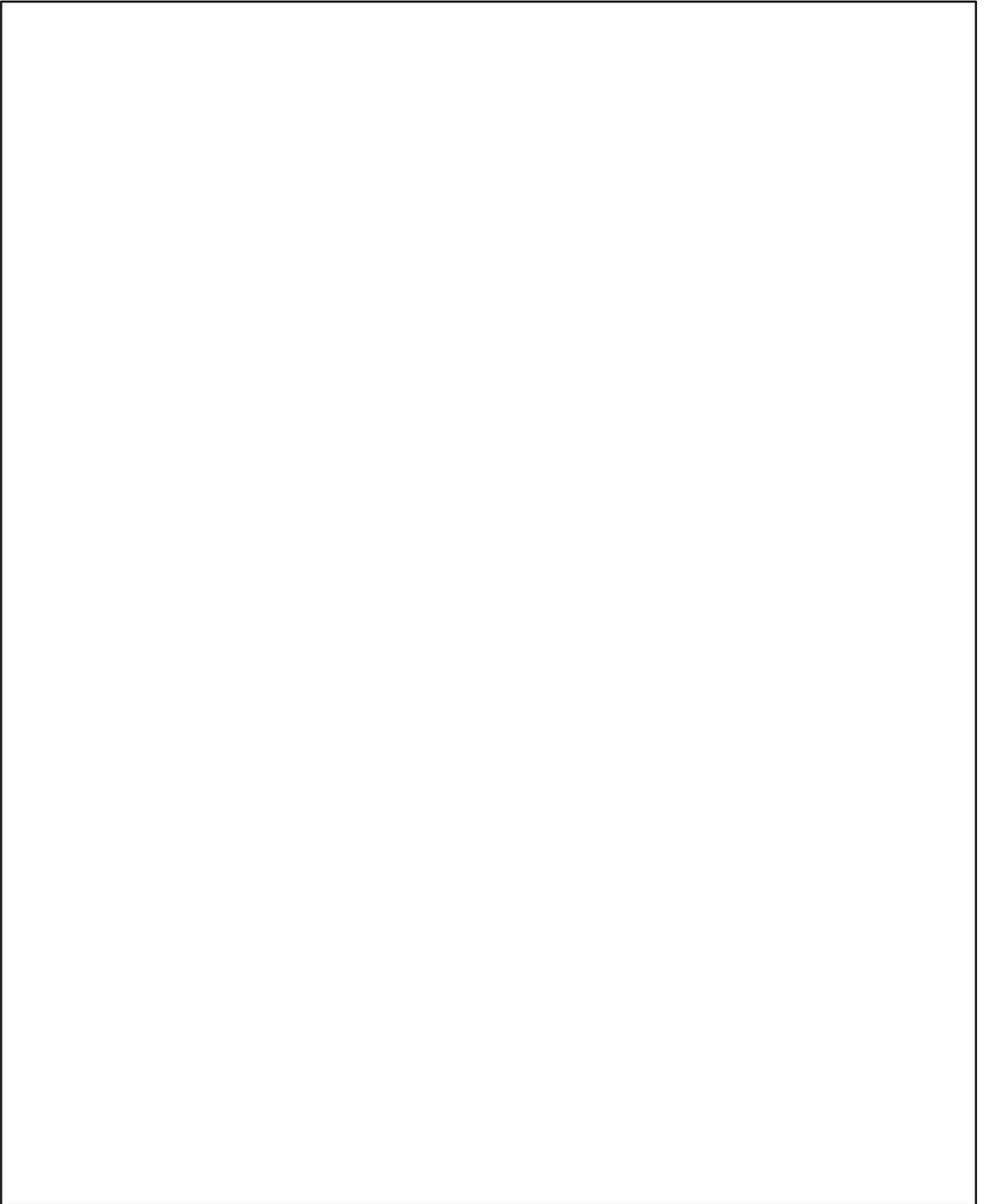


# WHEN GIRLS WERE GIRLS

QUICK FLASHES FROM A MEMOIR  
1930 - 2014

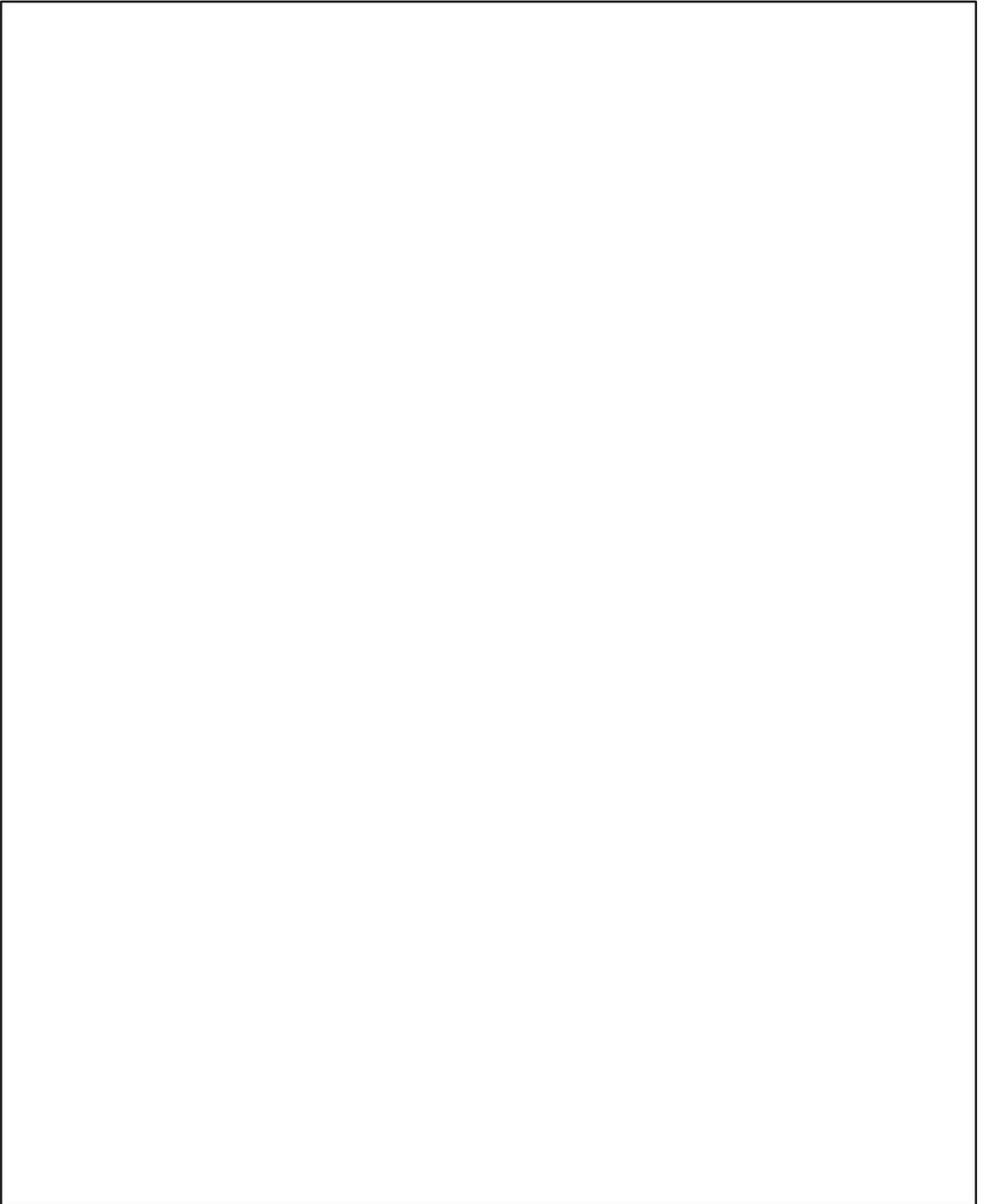
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SOLSTICE 2014





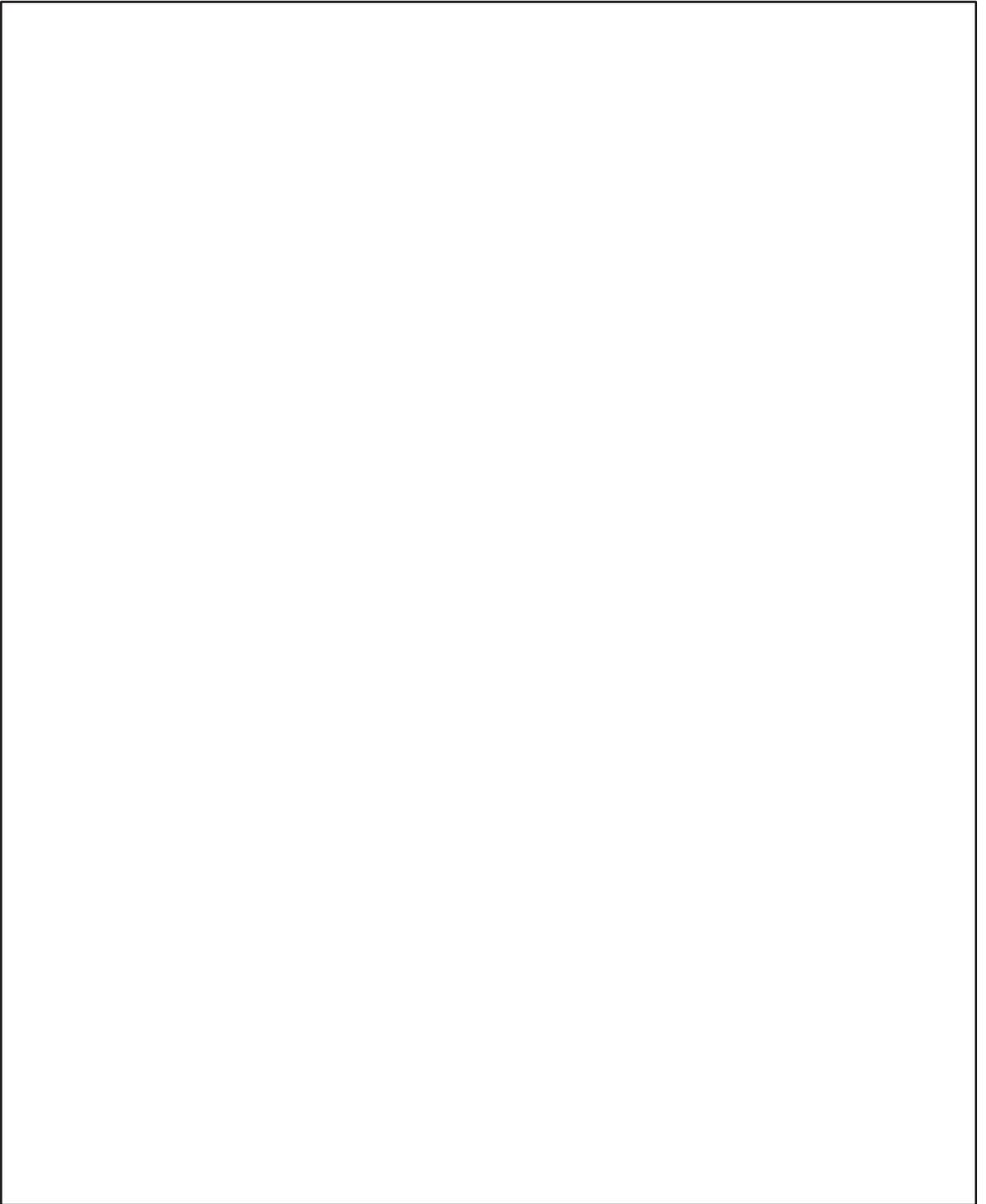
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*A Life Story told in a handful of poems . . .*



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## DADDY SHAVING

With a straight-edged razor  
I remember  
    my daddy shaving  
I loved the ceremony

Standing there in his Mormon underwear  
the kind I thought all grownups wore  
    sharpening the blade  
        on the leather strap

                                    Then  
down came the shaving mug  
    the disc of soap  
        in the bottom  
The brush swishing 'round and 'round  
    'til the mug was full of suds

Before brushing the suds  
    all over his cheeks and chin  
    he always put a dab on my nose  
        which tickled and smelled  
            funny

                                    Then  
the actual shaving began  
    swath by swath  
        carefully  
            slowly  
    'til all the suds  
    were gone from his face  
        and whiskers gone as well

My dad splashed water all over  
    and shaving lotion as well  
        I liked the smell of that

                                    Then  
off we were to the kitchen  
    to find some breakfast  
    to quench our hunger  
        after all this work

## JIMMY AND HAROLD

### I. Playing Doctor

At four years or so  
I guess all young kids play doctor  
once in a while

First

with Harold  
a cousin of sorts

We hid under my parents' bed and  
I found it  
kind of fun

First he showed me his  
and that was nice  
Sometimes I even touched it  
Then I showed him mine  
what there was of it

He didn't expect too much  
so I guess he knew  
girls were different

But playing doctor with Jimmy  
was another story

He showed me his  
It wasn't as nice as Harold's  
and I didn't want to touch it

My turn: He didn't believe me  
He thought somehow  
I was hiding it  
We must have played  
two or three times  
but he still would not believe  
He thought boys and girls  
were all the same  
maybe because he was Catholic

Anyway  
we gave that up and moved  
on to other things  
like talking about  
God and Heaven  
and stuff like that

### 2. God and Heaven

Me  
being Mormon and  
him  
being Catholic made this  
a little complicated  
for five year old kids

He told me  
if I were to get to heaven  
with him  
and other good people  
I would have to be Catholic

I told him  
it would be better  
if he got to be Mormon  
I wasn't sure how this could happen  
but I knew it could because  
that is what missionaries did -  
turn  
people  
into Mormons

I wasn't sure about heaven  
because Mormons  
don't talk much about that  
but I told him it would be glorious  
and we could get married  
and then go to the highest level  
where it was beautiful  
and everyone was happy

But just as he didn't think  
I had showed him everything  
when we played doctor  
He was sure he was right  
about my needing to be  
Catholic  
Five year olds can get very  
dogmatic about these things

### 3. My Father

Early on Sunday mornings  
before priesthood meeting  
before church  
I loved to get in my parents' bed  
(the same one Harold and I  
played doctor under)  
and talk with my dad

First he read me  
the Sunday funnies  
you know  
    Alley Oop  
        the guy in the cave  
        with the pet dino  
    L'll Abner  
        with Daisy Mae  
        chasing him  
        all over or  
        even  
    Popeye The Sailor Man

These mornings  
my mom was still asleep  
my brother was too old  
    for his parents' bed  
my sister wasn't born yet

This was a time  
I had my dad  
    all to myself  
This was a time  
for talk

One morning  
    after the funnies  
I told him about Jimmy  
    and how Jimmy said  
we had to be Catholic  
    to get to heaven  
Jimmy believed that  
    just like we believed  
    you had to be Mormon  
        Looking back  
seventy-five years or more  
I realize this was quite a  
dilemma for a five year old

But my father  
    even when I was so young  
    understood

*It's a matter of belief he said  
Jimmy and other Catholics  
    really believe what they say  
but we believe something different  
We have faith  
    in our belief  
        but  
        there is no proof*

How faith got in here  
    I didn't know  
but my father  
    being my father  
gave his blessing to me  
    to explore  
    to question  
    to believe  
what I would believe

4. Harold Again

As you know

I liked Harold

Two or three years later  
on a Tuesday

after school

I was playing on the bars  
of a fence

halfway between my house  
and the church

I was by myself

and I was having fun

Harold came by

Harold: *It's Tuesday*

*You are supposed to be  
on your way to Primary*

Me: *I don't go to Primary  
any more*

*I don't like it*

Harold: *But we are*

*supposed to go*

*Come on or we'll be late*

Harold went on but

I stayed

playing on the fence

## BEING A GIRL

Being a girl was nice  
It seemed girls were always  
    prettier  
    smarter more  
    fun  
I enjoyed being a girl  
    even a sick girl  
    then  
my dad would go down  
    to "Snappy Service"  
and get me a hamburger  
Such a special treat  
    since it cost a nickel  
    and nickels were pretty scarce  
    in those days

I did envy boys  
    in some ways  
I thought it would be wonderful  
    when in summer  
    out playing after dark  
with all the neighborhood kids  
    to dart behind a bush and  
    quickly pee  
Girls couldn't do that

    And then  
there were the jack-knives  
    which all boys had  
    which entitled them  
    to play Mumblety Peg -  
    not a game for girls  
This involved twenty-four "feats"  
    to be performed  
    all of them involved  
    the throwing of the  
    knife

Girls were allowed  
    nowhere near  
    when Mumblety Peg was played

Perhaps that's why so many  
    older women  
    carry a pocket knife  
Because now  
    we can  
    Then  
all boys had BB Guns

They went out into a back yard  
    set bottles on the fence  
    and practiced shooting  
The goal was to learn to shoot  
    so well that  
    they could shoot  
    a bird in flight  
I never heard of a bird getting shot  
    but who knows  
    This  
    was another game for  
    boys only  
    Now  
we girls of course  
    had our own games  
    games of skill  
    Jacks and  
    Jumping Rope

Both great fun to play  
    but neither involved  
    knives nor  
    guns  
Those were for boys only  
    Although  
    happy to be  
    a girl I would have liked to  
    pee behind a bush  
    play Mumblety Peg  
    and  
at least watch the boys  
    shoot bottles  
    on the fence

## PLAY

Christmas and

    Me  
    just turning five  
Behind the tree Santa left  
    a child-sized violin

My mother

    had the notion  
I should learn to  
    play the  
    violin

I couldn't grasp the notion of  
"learning to play"

In 1935 no one taught children to play  
all knew how to play with anything  
    that came to hand

Small stones found among  
    the litter in the backyard  
Sticks were good also  
    to build with or  
    for drawing in the sand

Some yards had a swing  
    a dad had made with an old board  
    and discarded rope

No one thought to try  
    to learn  
    how to swing

One just did

Of course girls did have  
    to learn  
    how to play hopscotch or jacks  
and boys mumblety-peg and marbles  
Learning these games meant  
learning the rules  
    and learning to play  
    by the rules

How did we learn these rules?

The hard way  
    by trial and error  
Something like this  
A game was going on  
    and we thought we were ready  
so we joined - before  
    we were ready

Unknowingly we broke a rule

*She's cheating, cheating*  
*Look at what she did!*

And you can be sure  
we never ever forgot that rule again

But playing the violin was different  
One needed to be taught  
One needed a teacher to teach one  
    how to play

My teacher was a good one  
being the daughter of the first violinist  
in the Utah symphony

Her name was Dearone  
    pronounced yes! Dear One

Even at five I was appalled to have  
to call her Dearone

    And  
I was appalled that her parents  
    had named her Dearone  
I knew of course that to my parents  
    I was certainly a dear one

But they had the good taste  
    NOT to name me that

We got off to a bad start  
Learning to play the violin  
did not go well

A year later I had  
kind of learned to play  
Silent Night

My dad took me to school with him  
He whisked me up  
violin and all  
and stood me on his desk  
in front of his high school kids

There I stood  
No one laughed  
even behind a hand  
There I stood  
exposed before the world

Shakily  
I began to play  
as each impossibly off key note  
drilled through my ears into  
my throbbing brain

I played on and on  
until mercifully I reached the end

Then they clapped  
The neighborhood boys would have  
laughed and laughed

But these high school kids  
were a polite crew  
who loved their teacher - my dad  
They wouldn't hurt him  
or me  
for anything.

How I got home that day  
I don't know  
but the undeserving applause stung  
deeper  
than deserved laughs  
I cried and cried and  
never played again

Where my violin went  
I don't know  
But I do know  
my mother's disappointments  
never ended

## FURTHER THOUGHTS ON PLAY

Now  
nearly eighty years later I wonder  
if that child's discomfort was augmented by  
resonance from a summer earlier  
when again she  
stood on a table above the boys' gaze:

She was not yet five  
The neighborhood boys  
aged six to eight maybe  
enticed her  
with a piece of hard penny candy  
enticed her  
to stand on the picnic table  
until the candy in her mouth was  
sucked away

That took about the same amount of time  
as playing *Silent Night*  
They told her to lift her skirt  
as they sat below laughing and snickering

She had no notion seeing a girl's undies  
could cause such titillations

Now  
I wonder why girls  
didn't band together  
older protecting younger  
from the boys' nastiness  
But girls never band together

The nastiness of grade school boys  
can't rival the nastiness manifest later  
in their teens  
when again they band together  
to proclaim to each other  
how far up Tessie's skirt  
they explored or  
was she wearing a bra  
when one of them touched her breasts

I still wonder why girls didn't band together  
but we never did

Could it be that in those days  
each of us  
desired to be  
the one  
boys wandering hands  
desired

Oh we finally did  
grow up  
and began to band together  
but not until years and years later  
too late to assuage our  
feminine miseries

Too late way  
Too late

## CARMA POEMS, ONE

I.

I remember Carma Rose from  
kindergarten

First off

adults whispering  
mouths covered

*Poor Carma Rose  
Her mother's dead you know  
killed in an accident  
Poor Carma Rose  
she has no mother*

Looking back

It seems there are  
two messages here

First

we must feel sorry for  
poor Carma Rose

Second

we had better be grateful for  
the mother we had  
whatever her faults may be  
Any mother was better  
than a dead mother

Carma Rose

came from a good family  
(what there was of it)  
Her father was a Dean

And they lived in a nice house  
on University Avenue

We were together

straight through high school  
then college  
and beyond

The bad thing about Carma Rose  
really is  
she was always there  
or more appropriately  
is always here

2.

In Third Grade  
huge sheets of white paper  
laid out on the floor  
We were making a kind of mural  
trees and  
animals

I liked drawing  
and this was lots of fun  
especially since Carma Rose and I  
were doing it together  
We were working on a huge tree

Happy

'til Mrs. Fisher came by  
*Oh, Barbara* she said  
*Carma Rose*

*is so much better at this  
than you*

*Why don't you just color things in  
let Carma Rose do the drawing*

3.

Carma Rose turned sixteen  
Remember she had no mother  
This was the only party I had ever been to  
    when no grownups  
    appeared at any time  
Oh we had food  
    music  
    and all that  
but it was strange to me her dad  
    (Poppy she called him)  
never appeared  
    to say Happy Birthday  
    to tease  
    to congratulate her or  
    to joke with the girls  
as my dad would have done

Having no adults around  
made it seem like  
                    we  
were supposed to be the grownups  
    At fifteen  
I was not ready for this  
                    and felt ill at ease all evening

Time to leave  
and I realized that the boys  
    were asking girls  
    if they could "walk them home"  
I had no need to have any one  
    walk me home  
since I often walked myself anywhere I  
pleased

                                    night or  
                                    day  
    but I was embarrassed  
                    to be the only girl to leave  
                    alone  
I tried to sneak out  
hoping no one would see me

Next day Carma  
    rushed up to me calling  
        *I am so sorry*  
        *If I had known*  
*I would have told Robert*  
        *to walk you home*

## WORLD'S FAIR

New York City 1939

Why we were in New York  
is a whole other story

The important part of this is

Me and my Brother

Me:

eight

My brother:

thirteen

Mom gave my brother

four nickels

for the subway

two to get there

and two to come home

She pinned another nickel

inside my dress so's

I could get home

if my brother lost me

He never did

Our favorite place

was the food pavilion

where there were lots of free treats

Bordens was my favorite

We got milk and cheese

and high up

near the ceiling

was a fake cow that kept

swinging her head

and every once in a while let out a large

MOO-OO

Also they gave out small cans

that had a cow on the outside

If you turned the can over there was

a small moo-oo

Heinz also had a pavilion

as did lots of other food companies

but I don't remember what we got

there

One place gave out

a slice of bologna

I liked that

Even though we had no money for food

we got

plenty to eat

Of course we had to go walk around

the large sphere with the very tall

skinny needle to one side

There were always a lot of people there

because it was important

but I don't know why

But the most fun part of the day

was riding the subway

going fast

and then slow

making lots of noise

I did so love going places

alone

with

my brother

## COUSIN MAMIE

Mom had a cousin named  
Mamie  
who she hadn't seen in years  
'cuz she lived here in New York City  
and never came to  
visit folks in Idaho  
My dad said that Mamie was kept  
by the Cardboard Box King

My mom didn't laugh with him  
when he said that  
I think she would have just liked dad  
to call him by his name  
which it turned out later was  
Jack  
but my dad kept calling him  
the Cardboard Box King  
laughing all the time

Mamie took me and mom to the beach  
where she and Jack had a cabana  
Of course I never saw Jack  
and didn't know  
what a cabana was for  
Truth to tell I had never been to a beach  
Mamie brought an extra swim suit for mom  
and I took off my dress  
and ran round in my underwear  
I liked the sand a lot  
but was a little scared of the water's  
moving  
it made me dizzy  
Mamie did go in the water  
but Mom doesn't like water  
so she stayed with me

The Cardboard Box King  
had a lot of money  
He took Mamie, mom, and dad  
to dinner and  
dancing at the Waldorf Astoria  
Mom and dad loved to dance  
so they had a great time  
I think that is when my dad  
started calling him Jack  
but I don't know  
'cuz I wasn't there

Dad said Jack had said  
*How can you have so much fun  
when you don't drink*  
My dad thought this was pretty funny  
since he and mom  
went dancing a lot  
and they always had lots of fun  
Being good Mormons  
they never drank a drop

I never did get to see Jack  
but years later when I moved  
to New York  
Mamie invited me for drinks  
in the lounge of the hotel  
where she lived  
I went up to her place first  
and couldn't figure out how someone  
could live in a place that was so  
devoid of anything personal  
I was just in the process of getting my place  
cluttered enough to be comfortable

Now  
I understood what  
    being kept  
by the Cardboard Box King really meant

My mom had another cousin  
living in New York  
who worked as a research librarian  
for a progressive journal  
She stayed in close touch  
    with me and Mamie  
    since we were the only family in town  
She told me how hard it was for Mamie  
    when Jack died  
and she couldn't even go to the funeral  
    because of the wife

Mamie had tuberculosis  
    and shortly thereafter  
moved to the sanatorium where  
she had been before  
    for treatment  
She didn't live too long after that

The Cardboard Box King  
had arranged everything  
    Mamie never had to worry about money  
    but she still never went back to Idaho  
    even to visit

## GARY

Gary was my friend in high school  
We both liked to paint  
and when the weather was good would  
bicycle out to the edge of town find an  
old barn or a falling down house and  
spend the afternoon  
    painting together

Gary was not as tall as me  
and was a little scruffy  
and lived in a trailer  
on the other side of town  
He was not  
according to my mother  
from "a good family"

We still went  
    painting

And Mom still worried  
hoping  
    no one would see us  
    together

## IN THOSE DAYS

In those days I almost didn't graduate HS because I couldn't DO the required 40 wpm and therefore had flunked the typing class required of all girls. What boys were required to do I don't know. Perhaps change oil in an old car? Who knows. Not I.

In those days . . . girls could be a secretary

take dictation

do typing be

a nurse be a

teacher

Very often these girls were old maids or widows in their forties or fifties. No matter what, girls never graduated from girlhood. When my mom was in her sixties my dad would say, Your mom won't be home as the girls have Literary League this afternoon. (At this point my mom had earned an M.S. in psychology and was working fulltime for the public schools in town.) However our family's social standing was based on my father - a university professor and dean as well as high standing in the Church. Mother had luncheons with her public school friends and with widows. To have real social standing in the community a woman had to have a living husband. A good dead husband will work in the next life but doesn't help in this life. To participate in a social life in this community, you had to have to have a good living husband to escort you to evening parties and to take you dancing. And no one had even heard of any of this same sex stuff. That certainly was not an option.

Looking at it thru my mother's window my prospects we were grim. No one wanted to marry me and from my mother's point of view that was my only viable route. Once, during a Sunday dinner, my dad said, *I noticed for the first time that there are NO women at priesthood meeting.* Notice, he did not say girls. This was in the seventies and marked a real turning point in his consciousness- raising. I doubt my mom ever felt such changes: all hope for me was lost by the time I graduated college. All hope for my brother had been lost before that. However, there was still my baby sister, six years younger than me. What a burden that must have been for her, a woman who only wanted always for everyone to be happy!

## WANTED - MORMON GIRLS

It was April in the late forties. My cousin Charlotte and I were both in college at BYU and we were stranded in Salt Lake because it was Conference time. This was before TV or computers, long before the internet and in that time the whole world of Mormons congregated in the city to hear the words of wisdom from the higher-ups of the church. It was pretty boring there in the middle of town with no transportation and many of the meetings were not open to girls. (Girls is what we were all called in those days no matter our age. In her sixties my dad would say *Oh it is the day for the girls' Literary League, so your mom will not be here.*) It was also a time before "shopping" became a major entertainment.

I don't remember the time or the place but it was Charlotte who found the classified ad, probably in the Desert News and probably under the listing Work for Girls. I am making up the wording but it went something like this:

*Mormon girls wanted for an exciting summer in Washington DC working at a Hot Shoppe, one of my family restaurants.*

*Appropriate housing as well as safety and salary will be provided. Please call Mr. Marriott for appointment.*

We called and eagerly went for our interview knowing, of course, that even if offered the jobs our parents probably would not agree

to such a plan. We met with Mr. Marriott in his room at the Hotel Utah, the place where everyone who was anybody stayed during Conference. (But as this point Mr. Marriott was not yet "anybody" in the Mormon hierarchy.) He was delighted with us especially when he learned our last names - Romney and Cannon. He would love to have girls from two such distinguished families work for him.

That evening I told my father about our adventure. That was one of the two times my father was actually angry with me. (The other time was when, as a teenager, I sassed my mom.) *I can't believe, he said, that you would have the poor judgment to go to the hotel room of a man that none of us knew or even had ever heard of.* My dad was never one for punishment but it was apparent that I had disappointed him and had earned a high level of disapproval. This was worse than any punishment could ever have been. I am pretty certain that Charlotte never dared tell her father about what we had done.

Just a note: The Hot Shoppes were an early business venture for Marriott - from which, as you know, an immense empire has been built. Our fathers both lived long enough to eventually hear of Mr. Marriot but I doubt that mine remembered the occasion when his daughter visited Mr. Marriot in his hotel room.

## HATS AND GLOVES

Those were the days  
of hats and gloves  
Women - even girls -  
to be really dressed  
always wore a hat  
even in summer  
at least carried  
white shortie gloves

Men  
always wore a hat  
When entering a house  
hat is left on  
in the entry  
upside down  
leather gloves placed on top

A woman's hat  
remained on her head  
all day  
inside as well as  
out  
even at work

It was a time of  
hose and high heels  
a time of hats  
and gloves

## OPENING WINE

I'm quite competent  
at opening a bottle of wine  
as are most of my friends

Why is it then  
if a man is present  
I hand it to him?

Generally  
this works out fine  
and no one even notices

Last time  
however  
I handed it to a man  
who had never used an opener  
like mine  
and one of the women  
had to  
help him

That gives me pause

Who will I hand the bottle to  
today?

## CARMA POEMS, TWO

1.

I loved to paint and  
in college became  
an art major  
    for a while  
In Still Life others loved  
my arrangements and thus  
there would be several of us painting  
my arrangement  
A kind of camaraderie evolved  
and we would talk about each other's work

Then sometime in my sophomore year  
Carma and I  
(she had dropped the Rose  
    Just Carma was more sophisticated)

Carma and I  
registered for Water Color  
She did very realistic detailed work  
    almost photographic  
    hard to do  
    in water color and  
the professor loved her work  
    implied the rest of us  
    should use her style as a model

Additionally  
    he awarded me a  
    "C" for my effort

2.

Don't get me wrong  
Carma and I did many fun things together  
We started a modern dance group  
    got a professor to sponsor it  
    and it's still going to this day  
We did weekly radio programs  
    we wrote the stories and  
    then got our friends  
        to perform them

Carma went on with her paintings  
    and then moved on  
to the history of costumes  
Her drawings were detailed  
    magnificent

I moved on  
using my broader brush  
    to designing sets for the theater  
        and spectacular décor  
    for dances such as the Jr. Prom

3.

Running away from college briefly  
I was in Boston  
    feeling out being away from Utah  
Carma was in Boston  
    with her husband  
He was studying law at Harvard  
but ended up being a professor  
    of religion at the college  
    we all attended

Sometimes people who get  
    way into religion  
    have the same look as  
        people who are on coke

This is how Carma seemed to me in Boston  
She tried everything to persuade me  
She was as dogmatic as  
Jimmy had been at five

*It is like an eggbeater*

Her analogy was  
    to know if it works  
    you have to use it

*If you just tried it for a while  
you'd know it was true*

4.

Carma still contacts me on occasion  
    when there is a reunion or celebration  
    she thinks may attract me  
I never go because  
I fear she'll still urge me to try  
    the eggbeater  
    to see if it works  
I have little interest  
    in trying  
    an eggbeater  
which had never worked  
    for me  
        anyway

## ABOUT MY FEELING

Uniquely discrete  
my feeling resides quietly  
on my left shoulder

larger than a finch  
somewhat smaller than a dove  
he just sits there  
unnoticed  
until he is hurt and

he falls down  
on his back  
to the floor  
wings and legs flailing  
falling into a  
classic two year old's  
tantrum

you remember  
your two year old's tantrums  
in the grocery store  
everyone staring  
wondering  
what on earth you have done to  
this adorable child  
transforming him into  
a monster

but my feeling's tantrum  
is invisible  
and silent  
to everyone  
but me  
and him

no one ever knows my  
feeling's been hurt  
no one that is  
but me

so  
I pick him up  
smooth his feathers  
tell him everything's ok  
and sing a little lullaby  
tell him everything will be alright  
which is a bit of a lie  
but  
part of him believes  
and at least he's calm enough  
to take his place  
snuggling on my shoulder

until he's hurt again  
and terrifies me  
by tantruming  
on the floor  
as always

## THE MOTHERLESS HOUSE

Jane lived alone with her dad  
her mom being long dead

it must have seemed normal  
living alone with her dad  
in that old house

a house with pull-down window shades  
no curtains  
a house clean enough  
and ever so neat

but with none of those  
places  
just a table and chair perhaps  
with some flowers  
inviting  
a corner that made you smile  
to have noticed it.

oh that big old house  
certainly had possibilities  
as my mom would have said  
It would have welcomed  
couches and chairs  
cushions  
rooms for you to sit alone  
or sit and visit with a friend  
or with your mother

There were no such spaces in  
Jane's house

so it seemed normal  
for Jane not to have a mother but  
the house suffered  
for Jane  
and for her dad  
the house was  
indeed  
a Motherless House

If I came upon Jane  
now  
with her motherless house  
it might be different

but I was only a teen  
and so Jane and I spent much time outdoors  
or in cold weather  
we would cuddle down in my house  
which was never without a mother  
even when we were in process  
of moving  
to another house

the curtains went up even before  
the furniture arrived so

I never came across a motherless house  
until Jane was my friend  
Jane who  
lived alone  
with her dad

## SUSAN

Awaking this morning  
I remember

Susan

                  One year  
we spent hours and hours together  
                  sometimes in the middle of the night  
                  just walking each other home  
A little like the never-ending math puzzle -  
                  I walked all the way with her  
                  then she walked half way  
                  back with me  
                  then I walked half of  
                  half way back with her

What we talked of those many hours  
I have no notion

What we said  
                  as we waded in the creek  
                  cold and rocky  
                  jeans rolled to the knee

what we thought  
during all those hours we wanted  
                  only  
                  to be with one another  
I do not know

What I do know is  
                  now  
I want to talk with her  
                  these sixty years later  
I want to know  
                  what she thinks  
                  about what we did  
and what we might have done  
had we known there was something  
                  to be done  
                  if perhaps  
two girls loved each other

We had no notion  
                  such a thing could be  
It was the fifties  
and we were Mormon  
                  and we were thinking husbands  
                  would magically come by before  
                  we graduated

Husbands came by  
                  for neither of us  
She joined the Navy  
I took a Greyhound Bus  
                  to the village in New York City

                  Now  
sixty years later  
I so want to talk with her

But on the internet  
I find  
                  she died five years ago

The obituary said  
    she taught English  
    and creative writing  
        and upon retirement  
took art lessons and began to watercolor  
    that she was a creative  
    and caring person

But what it mentioned only  
by not mentioning  
    was  
she never found that husband

And I wonder  
if she ever  
    found a woman  
    to love  
        before she died

And I am left today  
mourning another death  
        one  
I didn't even know  
    had happened

IF I HAD THOUGHT TO ASK MY MOM

Solstice 2014

for my mother's 110th B'day

If I had thought to ask my mom

then

I would know

if

her dad

my grandfather

sheep man

Idaho dry farmer

if

he was part of

the eradication

of

the wolf

I know he

and his four boys in

spring

summer and

fall

often spent weeks

out at the ranch

I know his wife and

at least two older girls

my mother and

Mary

both born on the cusp

of the century

stayed in town

It seems

they never visited

the ranch

even for a day trip

I don't really know

but it seems the ranch

was not a place for

a woman of refinement

or for her girls

I do believe there was

smoking out there

and some tipping

of stuff stronger

than

near beer

The religion was only fifty

or so years old

and some of the

rules were deemed

more suggestions

rather than

the outright

laid down

rules of God

Those were the days

when

even very good Mormons might

have a still in their root cellar

Now

a hundred years later

such a thing cannot be found

in practicing Mormons

A song taught to children

at Sunday School

Hark hark the Herald angels sing

morphs into

Hark hark 'tis children's voices

Oh how sweet

tea and coffee and tobacco

we despise

This confused me because

Harold was a cousin

Why would he have his own angels

singing about sins such

as tobacco and alcohol



SUMMERS HAVING PASSED ME BY . . .

November 19, 2014

I.

Summer having passed me by  
the yellow season's here  
Prince's Plumes  
and mustards in town  
aspens almost over  
in the mountains  
golden cottonwoods  
along all the creeks

summer having passed us by  
tomorrow

Cousin Charlotte's visits  
remember  
listening to lonesome trains  
whistling in your Idaho yard  
picnics in the mountains  
walks on country lanes  
riding worn out work horses  
whose only  
uncontrollable  
desire  
was getting home

Charlotte with your A's  
on the freshman themes  
I wrote

Such fun we had  
in those days!

Tomorrow  
summer having passed us by  
we will eat a sandwich  
some grapes  
by a lake  
pretend it is an old style picnic

We will watch the children play  
on the beach  
in this strange desert land

Though many summers  
passed us by  
there is no longing for  
those long gone  
nor do we either  
remember exactly when

You rescued my daughter  
in her escape from graduate school  
to climb in Yosemite

or when our ways parted  
so drastically  
left us with summers  
passing  
with no notes or calls  
just memories  
of our summers passing and  
of those long gone

II.

As your summers passed  
it seemed you perfectly portrayed  
    The Dream  
that same dream presented  
to all of us  
    girls  
in our generation

I never told anyone of the severe  
reprimand from your father  
    after Sunday School

It seems that somehow  
    In the midst of a lesson on  
“multiplying and  
    replenishing the earth”  
I had said something  
    about birth control

Your father made certain I knew  
the Lord had no such thing in mind  
as part of the “multiplying” lesson

No matter what I did or said  
my own father never  
spoke in such stern tones  
so I never forgot  
    the lesson your dad taught:

*Be careful what  
    you say or think in Idaho  
    so in Idaho*

I stuck to the straight and narrow  
whereas in Utah my path  
    had more latitude

Your summers seemed  
    to paint The Dream  
    in all its fullness -  
a long marriage to a good man  
    *‘til death do you part*  
assuring you and all your children  
a place in the highest kingdom  
Oh I know there were sadness’s  
    all along the way  
    but

this IS The Dream in its fullness

My dream was not  
    that one  
I was taught all good girls  
    got  
    that one  
whatever else transpired

Not True!

III.

My dream was fuzzy  
no one  
ever made my dream explicit  
no one said it could be  
this way or that  
There was no model and no mentor  
but I knew  
I did not want

JUST

The Dream

There must be  
something more  
something more  
my own

Even at eighty-four  
I have not the power to dream  
back to my own dream at eighteen  
That fuzzy dream  
for which I had no model

but my soul  
all of me -  
has found a home  
here  
in this sparse desert land

IV.

This IS  
perhaps  
my dream

Summers having passed me by  
the yellow season itself waning -  
the aspen almost gone and  
poplars blazing

Oh

all along the creek beds  
cottonwoods  
gently let go of wealth  
they've been hoarding  
all through the hazy summers  
passing me by  
cottonwoods  
creating a golden space  
to picnic or  
to play  
where golden paths beckon  
leading toward  
most pleasant  
golden  
meanderings

## CONFUSION

Living in a building where  
old people live  
there she is  
sitting in the lobby

She's pretty blind but  
gregarious nonetheless  
recognizing most of us  
by voice

She's a founder of the Red Hatters' Club  
and wears a Red Hat  
of which she has a multitude

She snags me saying: *Wait!*  
*Tell me this*  
*Where did they all come from*  
*so suddenly?*  
*Men marrying men and such?*

My response:

*They didn't come all suddenly*  
*They've been here all along*  
*since time began*

I smiled  
but had a slight tinge of guilt  
since I had said  
*they*  
rather than of my usual  
*we*

I leave her sitting there  
In her red hat  
wondering how  
our neighbors passing by  
will respond  
to her question:  
*Where*  
*did they all come from*  
*so suddenly?*



BARBARA  
NOV. 19, 2014  
JUST TURNING 84

