

Cathy Burriss Gray – Aug 2014

A long short history of my life since college.

Now

I am living in Philadelphia, well a small suburb called Narberth, about 20 minutes from Center City, Philadelphia, with Gary (class of 63). We celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary in December of 2015.

Our son Jacob lives in Philadelphia with his family. He is the senior director for the Wharton Social Impact Initiative at the University of Pennsylvania. His wife, Abby, recently received her PhD in Education Policy and works for the Consortium for Policy Research in Education at Penn. They are a busy family with their children Lizzy (7) and James(2), and India,(19) Jackson(16) and Mason(14) from Jacob's first marriage.

Our daughter Abbey Davenport is an extraordinary artist (proud mama), and lives in Portland, Maine with her partner John Goleeke and her son Aiden. John is a supervisor at a company that handles tech problems of all sorts for Dell, Apple and IBM. When Abbey is not making her art she works as a secretary for a disability insurance company. Aiden(14) is a budding thespian. We travel to Maine often to see him in his latest play or musical.

Then

Gary and I were married in 1965. After Gary graduated college we went into the Peace Corps. We trained in Vermont and were stationed in Brazil working in community development. It was one of those pivotal experiences for me, seeing our country differently from abroad and again upon our return.

When we came back in 1969 it felt as if everything had turned upside down. While we were gone Martin Luther King and Bobbie Kennedy had been killed, Watts had exploded in riots, and students had been shot at Kent State. The US we had known when we left appeared to have disappeared. We settled in Philadelphia where Gary got his masters. I got a job with the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and returned to finish my undergraduate degree on a full Peace Corps scholarship from St. Joseph's University. Our first child, Jacob, was born in the middle of my Senior year. Juggling nursing, classes, and studies, I got my degree that Spring.

When Gary turned 26 and could no longer be drafted we decided to move to upstate Pennsylvania where we had purchased a 140 year old farm house and 24 acres with another couple from the Peace Corps. They had a child about Jacob's age. We moved into the farm house together, planted two huge gardens, raised chickens and rabbits for food. We made crafts — macrame, weaving, bottle craft, wooden toys. All the neighbors called us hippies. Perhaps we were. It was our version of the back to the land movement. We sold our crafts in Philadelphia to stores and in an open market every weekend in the summer.

After 3 years our two families went separate ways. Gary started the Children's Museum of Northeastern Pennsylvania in the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton area. I worked for an emergency service covering mental health and child welfare services after hours, and volunteering as an advocate for women's health care consumers, and pregnant with our second child. After Abbey was born I started to be more active as an advocate eventually serving as president of the board of the regional health care agency and giving testimony before the US Congress.

After the Children's Museum was established and doing well, Gary was recruited by the director of the Capital Children's Museum in DC to be program director there. At the same time the health care agency I had been active with was part of a group establishing a national office for Title X and Title V providers of health care to mothers and children. We decided to move to DC. Gary worked at the Capital Children's Museum, I with the National Family Planning and Reproductive Health Association organizing and running regional and national conferences, writing the newsletters, working with consumer advocates nationally, and eventually doing fundraising.

My job began to require me to travel way too much with two kids. When a Director of Institutional Advancement position opened up in Philadelphia at an independent Quaker School we decided to move. It was a relief not to be traveling so much. Gary had left the Children's Museum and had started his own instructional design and video production business (Davis-Gray, Inc) with a friend we had met in Wilkes Barre. I enjoyed being able to see my kids in the halls at work and attend their school events, both big and small.

During this time Gary and I were very active with an improvisational dance company, going to dance workshops most Friday nights and often attending weeklong dance retreats in Arizona, Crestone Colorado, Bermuda and Puerto Rico. I sang for a number of years with the Mendelssohn Club before the my work made it too difficult to continue.

I worked at Friends Select School for 9 years, and then took a job at Haverford College as director of major gifts. While there I got my masters degree in 1997 at Bryn Mawr College in clinical social work. After graduation I got additional training in various modalities including Gestalt therapy.

Now

Ever since then I have been very settled and happy as a psychotherapist with a private practice. I teach at the Gestalt Therapy Institute of Philadelphia and recently finished a 5 year commitment as president of the international Association for the Advancement of Gestalt Therapy. Gary has since closed his business and has also taken additional training. He, too, is now a psychotherapist, and happy in his new role.

I love my work. I see individuals, couples, and groups and run supervision groups for other therapists. I am not yet ready to retire, but slowing down. This year I hope to cut down to 3 days seeing patients and supervising, and continue to teach.

I have begun a more serious Buddhist meditation practice. I still struggle to exercise regularly. I always have a writing project that I am working on. I enjoy my women's group that has been meeting for 21 years, my reading group that meets once a month, my Gestalt group, and my support group. Our grandkids and grown children and their partners are a source of delight and wonder. I feel blessed that some live close by and that we are still able to drive to Maine to visit the others. Quiet evenings at home, taking long walks in the early morning with Gary, times with friends, and occasional trips punctuate our days. I am enjoying life.

Reunion

Having moved around so much in my life, I particularly appreciate connection with you who knew me from the beginning — well at least since 4th grade. I have snapshots in my memory of good times with many of you, from grade school, from junior high, from high school. I was often lonely growing up in the country, although I also loved it there. School was a place filled with ideas, friends, activities, and excitement. I am looking forward to the reunion - to being with you again - to reconnect or perhaps just to connect for a few moments.

Cathy Burriss Gray – 2004

Personal narrative!

I don't even know where to begin. Gary and I are still married. It will be 39 years in December. Our daughter, Abbey, is separated from her husband, and lives in upstate New York with her son, Aiden (4). Our son, Jacob, lives in Philadelphia with his second wife, Abby, and their brand new baby girl, Elizabeth Catherine, born August 8. He also has joint custody of his three children from his first marriage, India (8), Jackson (6), and Maison (4).

My mother is healthy and alert and living by herself in an apartment just 5 blocks from our home in Narberth, PA. She is currently recovering from having broken both her hips in July. Her stubbornness and independent spirit has served her well in her recuperation. Perhaps I get my stubbornness from her - or should I say my determination. Oh ok, stubbornness.

I have a private psychotherapy practice and teach at the Gestalt Therapy Institute of Philadelphia. This summer I taught at the summer residential training program in Italy. It was my first time living and traveling in Europe. I loved it. I adore what I am doing and can't imagine retiring any time soon, although I would like to figure out a way to travel more.

I am an avid reader, write some professionally and as well as just for fun, and study Ken Wilbur and other modern philosophers with a small group I started. Gary and I dance in an improvisational dance workshop. He attends weekly, I go whenever my schedule allows. About once a year we dance with them in week long workshop at the Zen Center in Crestone, Colorado or in other locations. I am a part of a book group and a women's group. In both groups I enjoy sharing with other women thoughts about our lives and the world, and exploring ways to support each other and continue to expand the range of what is possible for each of us. I love to take long walks and to sit and meditate in the woods, to play with my grandchildren, to sit on our back deck and drink coffee in the mornings, to explore ideas and share my life with friends, and to entertain, particularly if I get to cook. I recently began singing again with a large chorus (110+) at the Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church. My life is richly textured and fulfilling, sometimes challenging and painful. At 58 I am clearer about what really matters to me and feel more secure and comfortable with who I am.

A Loveland memory from 1950/60 era!

Many of my memories are kind of fuzzy, but others are like little snapshots of moments that remain vivid and clear. I remember singing with the dance band during an assembly and at one point forgetting the words to the song, continuing to move my mouth, feeling mortified and hoping that people would think that there was something wrong with the microphone. I remember the fun of practicing and anticipation of Rag Day skits and the discomfort I felt in the way in which they created in-groups and out-groups. I think often of Miss E. and the amazing choral experience she provided me. I remember Latin class, but nothing that was taught there. I remember writing a play together with Marlene Swanson and thoroughly enjoying the creative collaboration. I remember myself as reserved and serious, not often allowing the passion and playfulness to be evident, nor the times of fear, hurt or sense of aloneness. As I write this, I wonder how others saw me. I am looking forward to being with you and hearing about your lives now, and sharing our memories of Loveland.