



**MY LIFE...A MEMOIR**

By

**BERNA LEWIS**

December 2011

“It is not the years in your life  
but the life in your years  
that counts.”

~Adlai Stevenson

## INTRODUCTION

The inspiration for writing these memoirs was a class I attended at the Central Area Senior Center in Seattle near where I live. We had a small class. Our instructor was Virginia McNulty who was an author, well educated, and well traveled. Time went along so fast for about two months. Then the class was discontinued. I did learn enough to start writing these family stories primarily for family members to be put in pamphlet form; some close friends can have them too. I hope they will interest the children, grandchildren and eventually my great-grandchildren.

Thanks goes mostly to Barbara Lavert, a champ for pulling the whole project together. A couple of grandchildren helped. I am blessed to have these people in my life.

The writings are just mine with what memory I have left. The process made me sad at times - I could have been kinder; I have more to write. Joelle and Chuck Graham, a nephew and wife, sent me some pictures. They included 2 Christmas messages I had written so I'm going to include them. They sort of give a little of the history on our children. Their source was my sister, Beatrice Graham, whom I was close to. Beatrice had some of my parents' letters which gave me a new view of my mother. I wrote that memoir in letter form because I'm able to truly express my feelings about her now.

These stories are part of my swan song of my life. I want my family to have more information about me, perhaps secrets to some. I hope to give them a small part of family history that was influenced by The Great

Depression as well as World War II; a bit of interest in genealogy also helped. Aspen helped by coming to the Senior Center with me. Through it all, Jill was always supportive in all my Center activities.

Berna Lewis

May 2011

## A MEMOIR

Born January 3, 1917, I thought my childhood was a very happy one. The tyranny of the 1930 Depression presented problems. I received a picture of my parents and the last four children from Beatrice's estate in 2010. I was so surprised at the lovely clothes they were wearing.

In the early thirties we found our world changing. My father ran a

lumber business. I have always thought he probably gave too much credit because the business went into bankruptcy in 1932. Mother ran a furniture store. Both folks helped a registered funeral manager with a business 20 miles



Back row from left: Shirly, Mom & Dad.  
Front row: Beatrice, Donna & Graham

away by doing funerals in our small town. The boss did the embalming. Maurice, the oldest son, took their place in the furniture store. Just 20, he stayed home and helped finance us all. That work ended too for Mom and Dad.

Then came the period of our taking the Federal jobs. My father, another brother and I worked in the CCC organization and other Federal jobs. In a year I worked in 3 different jobs. My father, too, worked as a

local employer of a nearby CCC camp. Things got better with 3 of us helping the family.

My life changed again. I got accepted into the University of Wisconsin Nursing School in 1936. I had to go to the U.W. for one year, then enter a dormitory for 29 months while I had some classes in the school and worked in the state hospital. It was hard but the discipline was good. I was not the best student but I had learned to work hard early in life. We had a good social life there. It didn't cost much and I did get through. I started dating again; it was a great part of my life.

This will be a bit of backtracking into a year I had in New York City in 1933-1934. I worked in a home taking care of 2 children and going to my 3<sup>rd</sup> year of high school. I got this job because a neighbor's daughter lived in New York and was the wife of a University of New York Professor of Theater and Speech. I took care of their 2 girls when I was home from school, doing fairly well in school and most of the time the girls and I had a good time. Eventually, the professor became a lecherous man, which I resisted, and right away made plans to go home. I did have an affair with my mistress' brother even though I knew he wasn't for me, as he had a very lovely fiancée. We were two lonesome people, kinda lost souls.

The school year ended with my leaving right away, and I was able to finish high school at home the following year.

So, after I finished nurses training, I worked and rented a room near the hospital. I wanted to work with children but did private duty instead. I had all the work I needed and found life good. I was dating a very

handsome man from my home town. We planned a wedding for August of 1940, got married and set up housekeeping in a very modest apartment on the campus. George was in his 2<sup>nd</sup> year of engineering studies. He quit after a semester and got work as I was pregnant.

Berna Lewis

## **Sherman Austin Fleming**

Sherman Austin Fleming was born June 10, 1886, the youngest of ten children in a farm family near Pepin, Wisconsin. This is my beloved father. A brother died in infancy.

His mother seemed to be a very compassionate lady, a good neighbor and a good wife too (see obituary). She was French Canadian, raised in Presque Isle, Michigan. She married John Fleming at fourteen. At that time he was working in her father's saw mill at Nelson, Wisconsin but eventually became a successful farmer. A child died young. Nine children survived to adulthood.

Dad went into Pepin right away to become a telegrapher on the railroad. He started his career as a telegrapher and ended his working years as a station master, which included towns along the Mississippi River. In between, he managed lumber yards and worked the Alaska Highway stationed in White Horse. Along with these work ventures, dad helped raise 10 children.

I imagine dad worked hard growing up being in a big family and on a big farm. I've been told his mother raised pigs to send him into Pepin to high school. At that time, there were just 3 years and he graduated with the 3-year diploma. I can see him helping with the pigs.

I remember Dad singing at Christmas. We had a new baby and he said "hang up the baby stocking". Once when we had a cow, he would take a bunch of us, including the neighbors, to where the cow was tethered



and let each of us take turns milking her. We also owned a Shetland pony for a while and my big brother delivered milk in our little town.

The working years were Depression years in which there were no jobs. Sometime on the way, Dad got into the lumber business. Right in the early part of the Depression he helped build a big building downtown in Pepin which had in it living quarters upstairs. There was a furniture store & office, a showroom, also an office for the lumber yard. The lumber was stored below.

During this time Mom and Dad worked as a team. She was the furniture store manager; he, the lumber. Together they managed the funerals in Pepin. They did most of the work even to furnishing the music. Mom was the pianist. They both lost these jobs and that started the period of struggle to put food on the table. Later, Dad managed a lumber yard at Bay City. Twice during this period he went to Alaska to work on the Alaskan Highway. When the war was over, he found jobs before he returned to the railroad.

Not all of us were home at the same time. The 3 oldest of our 10 went to college for several years before the Depression changed our financial status. During these tough years, several of us worked for the government, including Dad. The men worked at Civilian Conservation Corps camps. I worked on several different projects after I got my 3<sup>rd</sup> year of high school working as a nanny in New York City. I came home for my fourth year of high school. Then I worked the next year for the family. We all tried to keep together. Dad found this a better time because we had income coming in from several sources.

Dad and mother met when he stayed at the Saddler Rooming House in Pepin; they married in June of 1906. She was seventeen; he was twenty-one. Mother was the quieter one. She was the youngest of five. Dad was very gregarious. He loved children and enjoyed the big noisy family we were.

Dad also loved the outdoors so we went on many picnics. They were fun but not very fancy. He was a willing worker, too. The Depression was very hard on him in several ways. He wanted to provide but there was no work. Our government really helped us out.

My relationship with Dad was special in that I was needed for the second half of the ten. He rewarded me for helping (Saturday afternoon movies). Dad always thought I was able to control my life. We did practice being good Methodists. Mother helped in this, frequently playing the piano or singing in the church choir.

My father's faith in me encouraged and sustained me. He meant so much to me. Yes, I loved my father. The great thing was his full acceptance of me in every way. He encouraged me in my goals, especially in nursing and seemed to accept my marriage as well, never doing anything to me to make me feel inferior. Maybe that gave me confidence in myself. We liked going home and he loved the children.

Dad tried politics by being mayor of our small city. He ran for a county judgeship but was defeated.

His death was sudden. Not expected. He died in the car while trying to get it going in the snow. Dad was 71 by then. He was at peace but he

was missed. His death left a big hole in my life and I still think of him often.  
I hope he would approve of the way I've lived, too.

Berna Lewis  
February, 2011

## Dear Mother:

This is a personal Memoir to write to you about some of my feelings. In a way, it will help me feel better about my behavior as your daughter.

I haven't always been as kind and compassionate as I could have been. It is especially painful to remember your vulnerability when you were old and widowed.

I will start by thanking you for making my childhood happy. You helped earn the money needed. You were a faithful wife. You gave birth to ten of us over twenty-eight years. We did enjoy brothers, sisters and the small town advantages. The problems came along regularly but you faced them with some equanimity. Your piano playing inspired all of us to take interest in music and I am still so enjoying music in my life.

I would have housed you in the big house but it never happened. We did have two lovely get-togethers in Madison before Dad passed away. He and Lennie and Donna brought you down to Madison in the fall of 1957. Lennie took Dad to a World Series game in Milwaukee; they enjoyed it a lot. While they were gone, we women had a baby shower for the neighbor lady. Later, you and Dad joined George and me at a park in Northern Wisconsin and loved seeing the others that came too. I produced a picnic for you all. That was the last time I saw Dad.

I know Maurice's death (my oldest brother) was hard on you. He had such a struggle with his life. He was never happy with Adele but Bobbie was a great joy to us. Although Bobbie was handicapped, his Mother took such good care of him. She was so loved by her family. Their divorce was

such a blow to us all but quite understandable as Maurice's symptoms of bipolar increased with time.

I must make a few comments about your strengths. You were a very hospitable hostess. When we visited Richard Fleming in California (dad's nephew – son of your cousin Mabel), he remembers how good you were to his family the fifteen years they lived in Pepin. Remember Uncle James was killed in a fire when the 3 boys were very young. Richard remembered your kindness to them, remembered your taking in a hobo that worked on the big house on Main Street. Your mother stayed with us off and on. You always welcomed other family members.

For a while when I was in high school, I would come home from school and wash the lunch dishes. I would then go downstairs where you were watching the store. We would plan supper together. I may have even gone across the street to the grocery store. I would then get supper for our gang. You were so patient with me.

You did spank me one evening. One spanking in 18 years isn't bad, huh? I wasn't watching Margie good enough. I probably improved my babysitting skills right away.

I want you to know that I noticed how good you were to your mother. You never criticized her. You handled that relationship very well.

Now through the letters you wrote Dad when he was in Alaska, I have quite a different view of you. You wrote every day. You did very little complaining. You were holding your end of the bargain of marriage to the best of your ability. You were the dutiful wife.

Thank you, again, Dear Mother Goldye. I think I may have acquired some of my best qualities from you. I do honor your memory.

Berna Lewis  
March 8, 2011

P.S. Remember this. Dad and Maurice joined the Masons Organization. You were asked "How does Sherm like the Masonics?". Your reply "I don't know. He doesn't talk in his sleep."

## GEORGE, MY BELOVED

George was born in Roseburg, Oregon on February 11, 1916. His parents had one boy before George. Ralph later died at about eighteen months old. Catherine Maud Rugglos was married to Everett Lewis. They had five more children. One girl only.



We started going together in the fall of 1939. I was finishing up a 3 ½ year course in nursing; he was in his first year of civil engineering school. He did quite well in a tough English Freshman course. As I remembered, his grade was good. George's professor said anyone that got an "A" in his course could make his living writing. George's grade wasn't that good.

We romanced for about 10 months before we married. I was 23. He was 24. I graduated March 12, 1940. By our wedding day, I was a Registered Nurse, doing private duty then. I got pregnant right away. George got another semester of school in. He then quit college.

I had a few days of bleeding. Doc Williams put me to bed. Here I was a trained nurse with a new husband who had to wait on me. I quit bleeding and had a normal pregnancy.



George worked hard as a bus driver in Madison, Wisconsin, working the extra Board. He took great interest in the Union and was the organization's president for several years. George was a good worker in every way.

Meanwhile, we worked on the community projects together. He finally headed a group of men who put in a \$2 million dollar sewage and water system there. He was able to make extra money attending meetings since he enjoyed the project. It made for better health in the area because the sewer and water systems were not good. In the end of our last years there, he and the town Sheriff bought land for a park. Then, in about 1958 he received the offer of a full-time American Federation of State & Municipal Employees job and took it. It had financial benefits over the mechanic's job, but it was hard on our marriage. George was gone so much of the time, including dinner and evenings. I was very unhappy, which was my own fault. I decided to go back to work. Somehow, I felt left out of an interesting life as a nurse. I did a lot of crying. George said about his job "Both of our lives got harder but mine became more interesting." I went back to nursing two nights a week. It, along with church, got me back into being a decent wife and mother. We camped for years for vacations. The children seemed to enjoy our trips too. George and I played cards with friends. They were often over for evenings.



Our third house was a seven bedroom on Regent Street. We hoped to educate all five kids at the U.W. It didn't happen. However, both girls got to be R.Ns. They are still working.

George retired in December of 1978 but went back to work for six months so he could retire at 62. He had 27 years of retirement in which he got to be quite a good carpenter. He had a good workshop, was very good fixing things around the house. We settled into a modified mobile house in North Carolina on land that belonged to Mark. George and I managed the taxes and kept the land up some. We also traveled by motor home throughout the United States, into Mexico briefly. George and I made two trips to Alaska.

My George died of kidney failure on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005. He was quite ill for five weeks.

## What I liked about George~

He was affectionate.

He had a great sense of humor.

He loved his home.

He played with the boys.

He liked the outdoors.

He attended church with me

He was a good gardener.

He loved our dogs.

He was an excellent worker.

He was a good husband and father.

Berna Lewis  
April 10, 2011

## **THE WEEK THAT WAS...**

The worst week of our marriage was the fourth week in October of 1957. It began the weekend before with my husband, George, and our oldest son going deer hunting. We lived in Madison. They went to the Pepin area where each of us was raised. While they were hunting, Loren got his cornea scratched on a bush. Also, father was ill – sore legs – so George called him. There didn't seem to be any worsening of his condition but he had suffered with sore legs the past month. George made the decision to have Loren's eye checked out on Monday in Madison.

On Monday the boys were back but we were informed of my father's death that day.

We made plans to attend my father's funeral on Wednesday. I was very upset. I made a cake to take and it was just a disaster. My emotions were in high gear. We made plans to leave the children home and had a neighbor in to watch them. A sister and her husband joined us to go to the funeral. It was about 230 miles away. We went in the morning and came back that evening. When we returned, we found our five-year-old had gone to a nearby store with a neighbor boy. They were on the opposite side of a busy road. Our Gregg had looked in the wrong direction and a car drove into him, putting the ornament partly in his left temple. His clavicle was broken so he was put in a Figure Eight support bandage. I think he was just bruised here and there. The wound on his temple had to be repaired in

surgery. He had blood in his ear and could not wrinkle his forehead for you.

We did no celebration for Thanksgiving that year. The neighbor helped us with care of our children.

The consequences of the accidents of the two boys was not serious. Loren's cornea healed and left only a small scar. Gregg was not handicapped at all. He got a settlement of money that was invested for him. George had to report that it was all right each year until he was 21

years old. Ironically enough, he gave it to us for a house he bought from us. It was the down payment. He said "you know, mother, if I had been crazy about cars, that's what I would have spent the money on".



Back row from left: Gregg, Nita, George, Loren & Mark  
Front row from left: Joan, Berna, Aspen & Jill

The worst of times didn't last. Loren, now 70 and doing well with seeing. Gregg is 59, a normal guy. We were lucky. Huh?

P.S. This is information I've heard since I started this Memoir. Our middle son has recalled to me that he was very worried about his little pal after the accident. He thought Gregg might die. I am afraid I was the one just muddling along, not thinking of much of anything but Gregg.

## THE PROFESSOR'S TOY

Yes, I was asked to be a nanny to two girls in New York City. I had to give up high school because of the bad Depression of the thirties. We had lived next to the Professor's wife's family in Pepin, Wisconsin. The mother and I were good friends. I had 5 sibs to help raise.

We had moved back to Pepin. I worked for the family (the Professor's girls) as they spent the summer of 1933 there. I even went to a vacation spot in Minnesota for one week. We then drove back to New York City by car, a pleasant trip for me.

We arrived in New York City in time for the girls and myself to go to school. We had an apartment on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor; we had to use the stairs. It was a lovely place in the Bronx, just below one of the New York University schools. The Professor taught speech and theater in the main school in Manhattan. The family sold the car.

I walked to school. School hours were 8 AM to 2 PM. I was a junior. My work at home was to care for the girls. I didn't have to do much housework. I can't remember my Mistress ever disciplining me. I took the girls to the Bronx Zoo and to a nearby park. I managed them all right, becoming quite fond of them.

We ate late so I was doing the dishes late but it worked well. The brother of my Mistress helped me some. We had a short romance but I knew he was engaged to a lovely lady in Pepin. We were just two lonely people. I believe he graduated from NYU that spring.

I had a girlfriend who helped me get certificates so I could receive a physical by her Doctor without charge. I found a dentist who worked for the Federal Government and paid him 25 cents a visit. He fixed six cavities for me. So I passed Physical Education after I met these health standards.

Life was good for me until the Professor started to come to my room. He touched me in places he shouldn't have. I told no one but I immediately started planning on leaving as soon as school was out. I imagined further invasion of my privacy. The Professor talked about putting me through college. This did not fit my plans to go to Nursing School, a goal I had when I was very young.

A great social experience happened to me that spring. A group of young people got together about once a week. I think it was Saturday. We hiked and played games as I recall. It was a very nice group, very innocent teen-agers reaching out to each other. We enjoyed each other. We found common ground. We behaved ourselves.

The day to leave came. I packed all my possessions in a cardboard box. My Mistress gave me three dollars which I put in my shoes. I had food to eat. I left at night riding five different bus lines to Wisconsin. I made it o.k. I was free to carry on my own life. I think getting through a year of a New York High School might have helped my getting into the Nursing School at the University of Wisconsin. I did graduate in March of 1940 with a certificate. I got 60 credits towards a B.S. Degree of 120 credits.

## FISHING

We are on our way to our fishing hole.  
We'll have to get out the old fishing pole.  
We plan on fish to eat every day.  
A pure optimist stance, wouldn't you say?

Will the mosquitoes be bad?  
Will fish be elusive? How sad.  
Will sun bumps come out, an itching hand?  
How about the beauty of lake and land?

What should we tempt the fish with now?  
Will commercial bait or worms the fish allow?  
The Walleyes are particular about the boat speed.  
To catch them we must know their need.

The AV refreshes when clean and cool.  
The water is clear like a spring pool.  
The ducks are varied with young in tow.  
The colors and sizes intrigue us so.

Wish I could share with people I love a lot.  
The joy I feel in this spot.  
Years of coming, an annual event.  
Renewed and revived, a life re-spent.

Some go to spas to experience this.  
Others from golf get this assist.  
My mate and I truly agree.  
Fishing in Rainy Lake is the place to be.

## FISHING IN CANADA

Yes, we did fish every year in Canada. After we started to, we camped. We carried our 15 ft. boat on the end of our motor home. Some of the time, family members joined us. George was the chief fish cleaner. He made wonderful chowder too.

We planned an overnight trip to a small island near camp. We hoped to get some Walleye which was the best fish to catch because it has fewer bones than the Northerns. We caught many Northerns, few Walleye. Fishing does have its rules and regulations for each fish it seemed.



George would fillet the Northerns. He would take a bunch of bones out. They were a little coarser meat than the Walleye were.

We were a bit lax in our planning as we only took a can of tuna along. The logic was we would have fish to eat early in the day. We had a night in our little tent, then we got up early to fish. We were trolling the island back and forth in our usual manner, using worms from commercial boats. I felt a tug on my line. It seemed like a substantial tug. I urged it on beside the boat. It was a 10 lb. Northern! George got it in the net.



## **DEAR FRIENDS,**

Once again, the Lewis' have posed together that they might send out greetings to their friends and relatives across the land.

Gregg, now a first grader, seems to be the extent of it and Pa and Ma can begin to look forward to grandkids some day. He seems to like school but is all boy and must get into trouble now and then because after about a week of school, he came home one day to tell us that his teacher was "sassy" to him.

Jill, who is just beginning to show signs that she will one day be a lady, has had a wonderful year. She is mostly happy and loud and takes, usually good naturedly, a surprising amount of bossing from older members.

Mark changed schools this year and is now going to East along with his older brother and sister. Ever the athlete, he has so many friends interested in sports that he sometimes forgets that he has a home. He has also taken over a Sunday paper route which gives him some financial independence.

Joan, the young lady (usually) has plans made for becoming a teacher and is studying her second year of French. Since all teachers are either "old bags", "crabs", or something, it is somewhat surprising that she would want to join that force. However, it has been noted that she is using these terms less often and less intensely.

Loren, who will soon be able to tell the "Old Man" to sit down and then enforce the order, if need be, has reached the senior year at East and will by spring have acquired about all the knowledge that's worthwhile. He

has majored in Math and Science in a college prep program and for the first time this year has had time to take some shop courses which lightened the load somewhat and made school more enjoyable than in any prior year.

Berna and George, who are still working on this family raising project, are (modestly it is hoped) proud of their success to date. George became an employee of the Wisconsin Council of County and Municipal Employees Union in February and that change, while very interesting and challenging, has given rise to the need of adjustments and changes in the Lewis family life. Berna, along with her other duties, has found time to take over the duties as Superintendent of the Junior Department of the Bashford Sunday School.

*The years go by, the changes come  
But always Christmas remains the same.*

The Lewises

We greet you  
With Xmas happiness to share,  
This gang of four,  
You see here in the chair.

Joan's now a young lady  
of seventeen.  
Good times and boys fill her head,  
it would seem.

Mark, a freshman,  
is shooting to the sky.  
if he keeps on growing,  
he'll be one tall guy.

Jill, in grade six,  
is a busy young thing.  
French, choir, and violin,  
to her busy hours bring.

Gregg is our active boy  
of eight.  
He thinks the three stooges  
are just great.

The son who isn't shown here,  
we must mention too,  
He's homeward bound for Xmas,  
from off the deep blue.

The man of our house  
has been busy, you bet.  
A vacation for Xmas,  
he might even get.

About the woman of the house,  
we now write.  
She who keeps busy with household chores,  
from morn til nite.

May God bless you all,  
relatives and friends,  
And the blessings of Xmas,  
never come to their ends.

*THE GEORGE LEWIS FAMILY*  
Christmas 1968



**2021 29<sup>th</sup> Ave S, Seattle, WA**

Christmas Letter 2009

Dear Ones,

We wish you a beautiful holiday season and a fabulous new year. Mother Berna Lewis and I have had quite a ride this past year. We have happily settled into our new home at 2021 24<sup>th</sup> Ave S Seattle, WA 98144. Our phone is still the same at 206 324-3669.

Mom celebrated her 92<sup>nd</sup> birthday at the beginning of the year. She has had her share of health issue but not enough to keep her down long. She has made many trips out of the area this year. In April we traveled with friends to Bowen Island BC and participated in an international peace retreat. It was inspirational and fun. In May we went to Leavenworth to celebrate Zach's completion of a Masters of Divinity. In June she traveled to North Carolina to see friends and proved she had made the transition to Seattle living with verve. We traveled to Minnesota during July to visit Joan and her family and from there we attended Belinda's wedding in Madison. It was beautiful event with the a grand finale of a rocket blast designed by the bride. All but one of mother's kids went on a tour of past residences in Madison with lots of hoots and laughs to tell the grand kids present.

August 22 Jasper and Kit were married in Clear Lake the wedding party arrived by pontoon. Aspen joined the party from Argentina singing for the couple. The week before was spent in our time share a beautiful estate at Nice Calif. We enjoyed the pools in the dry heat and the great grand children that joined us there. Then in Sept. after learning that her sister Bea Graham was failing Mom flew to Minneapolis. With help from daughter Joan Mom went to see her sister in Milwaukee. After 4 days and 14 visits with Bea, dinner with son Gregg, Joan and Mom returned to Woodbury and Mom flew home. In October we got news that Dad's only sister had passed after a prolonged illness. Mary Coccuzo was an important part of our lives. Joan, Mother and I went to Boston area to participate in the celebration of her life and transition. In between travels Mother Berna has rested up for her time at the senior center dancing, playing the auto harp, and conducting BP clinics; all just an excuse to have a great meal with wonderful friends. She also has greatly enjoyed the fellowship of the times at her new church St. Clement's.

As you can tell I was along on a few of Mother's travels. I was thrilled with the

events particularly that involved my kids. We so enjoyed time in Leavenworth with Tony and Karen Getsinger, Zach's parents who have been so generous with us at Thanksgiving celebrations. We spent a weekend enjoying Hans and Carine's hospitality the couple that the kids rent from who offered their beautiful house to us all for celebrating Zach's accomplishment. We especially enjoyed the concert that Zach arranged for us with his band of troubadours Thanks son!

Jasper and Kit's wedding was made all the sweeter by the family that traveled across country to attend and the wonderful efforts of Mike and Kathy Cassidy Kit's warm, hospitable and talented parents. Aspen has been a wonder venturing forth into the far reaches of South America giving us blow by blow accounts of the cultural challenges. She has survived and thrived through the experience. She returns in a matter of days.

My life has been full. It was sad when I learned of the fire that consumed Cliff House in Twisp at the end of June. The land is still there and was the attraction always. Blessing- no one was hurt in the fire. I was so pleased to sell Lavender Hill House to a delightful couple at the end of May. Goat Hill House, our current residence, has evolved into a wonderful city farm retreat for Mom and me. The 4 chickens now a flock include barred rocks, road island red, and an americana; they give 2-3 eggs a day. We like eggs. The mini goats our blackberry managers Richard Conlin and Jacque O, seem to thrive and appreciate any attention. I'm considering breeding Jacque but have not committed yet. Copper and Gucci the small terriers and house critters keep us all on our toes. Copper required Board Certified ear surgery this year and Aspen was his able nurse while we traveled. Gucci had a significant corneal abrasion requiring one of those dish collars it was his biggest traumatic event in 6 years. The most recent critters to join the scene are 2 canaries who needed a loving home. They please us with song.

Jas has been dutiful with two visits since August. The first to celebrate an honor for me and the second for Thanks Giving holidays both with his new bride Kit; we love that she has joined our family. During the visits Jas has been willing to help with goat hoove trimming, part of the animal husbandry required. Hans visits often with no farm duties required. I love to have the children here anytime.

We hope this sharing finds you well and happy. We wish you the very best in the new year and know the highest and greatest Good for you now and in the future.

With Love from Jill and Berna Lewis

## ASPEN PLAYS NEW YORK!

Just a brief update on recent family accomplishments. Granddaughter Aspen (Jill's daughter), performed in the play GHOST IN THE MACHINE for a two-week October run at the Theater for the New City in the East Village, NYC. Aspen, a 2011 graduate of Williams College in Literary Studies, has performed at many venues in the Seattle area, as well as abroad. She is also featured in the soundtrack of the off-Broadway musical "Momma Don't Hurt Me So Bad." As an actress, Aspen played Carmen Diaz in "Fame, The Musical", "Lady Croom in Arcadia" and Deena Jones in "Dreamgirls".



A young man (Peter Drivas) visits memories of his deceased girlfriend (Aspen Lee Jordan) in "GHOST IN THE MACHINE".

# FAITH

I want to add a special “thank you” to the leaders and members of the following churches who have helped me on my spiritual journey: The Pepin Methodist Church, Pepin, Wisconsin, for 18 years; The Wesley Foundation Methodist Church on the campus of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, for 14 years; Twenty years later, the Bashford Methodist Church on the East Side of Madison; Bethel Methodist Church, Midland North Carolina, for 30 years; and currently, St. Clement Episcopal Church of Rome in the Mount Baker neighborhood of Seattle, 3 years. I am very happy at the latter. It is truly a wonderful community.

Berna Lewis

November 2011



## **THE SENIOR CENTER**

First of all, I came here three years ago. Coming to live in Seattle after living in rural North Carolina was not a new idea. My daughter had invited my husband and myself to come live with her several years ago when we visited her. I had lived in Midland, North Carolina three years alone before I came here.

My girls, both nurses, were determined to get me to a place where I could have transportation. They knew I would have to be around people to be happy.

The Center was formerly a nursing home. Its rooms are quite spacious, with two rooms perfect for fairly large events. These rooms overlook beautiful Lake Washington with its many islands. Two floating bridges stretch out on the lake. They take cars to Bellevue, which is a big city in itself. An open porch stretches along the entire lakeside of the building.

The staff is very big now. Some parts of it change quite often but the replacements are good workers, especially those working the kitchen.

The Center members are pleasant. They are here mostly to learn something new. The fellowship seems genuine; we are all in this old age together. We need each other too. There are volunteers along the way as well. The Center offers many opportunities to learn new things if we have a little money. It also takes a little confidence.

I started coming regularly in April of 2008. I joined the bunch of guitar players learning the autoharp. We do have fun. Our teachers have been outstanding, great musicians. I joined a book club as well. Later, some of us started going to a “memoir club” which has been very interesting. I think I’ve learned a lot here. It’s nice to get to know classmates through our writing and I think I can share some rather bad experiences now that I know them so much better.

Berna Lewis  
May 19, 2010