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Jon Judy

It is a chilly Saturday in March, 2012, and I am waving my sign for the busy traffic along Cleveland Avenue in front of the Planned Parenthood in Canton, Ohio. I multitask by engaging the pro-lifer to my left in a debate disguised as a shouting match. Before she can even go there, because I can tell she is going to, I head off the inevitable question about how I'd like it if my mom had aborted me.

"Of course I'm glad my mom didn't abort me. I'm also glad she had a choice. That's how I know she truly loved me, because she didn't have to have me, but she had me anyway. So thanks, mom," I say as I throw my arm around the shoulders of the silent, embarrassed lady to my right. She freezes up a little before engaging my sparring partner in a much more civil debate. That's my mom, for you: as passionate in her convictions as I am in mine, but civility and kindness are among the strongest of those convictions.

That I should in many ways reflect my mother's influence may not be an earth-shattering observation, and yet I was nonetheless suddenly taken aback recently by the thought. Perhaps that's because I recently took a course this semester in the history of the education of women. Much of that education has traditionally taken place in settings outside of the classroom (McClelland, 1992, p. 174), and so I have been inordinately preoccupied as of late with the ways in which knowledge, skills, beliefs, and values are transmitted from generation to generation, from grandparent to parent to child. Had you asked me before that course if I was in some ways shaped by my mother, I'd have said of course. However, the degree of that influence was something I had not considered so fully before. And in considering her influence on me, I was led to consider the influences on her. My mother was raised by her mother and maternal grandmother. Both of them, like my mom, were single mothers and I married a single mother. I have to think that being the product of three generations of single moms was an influence in my attraction to my wife. But what were the social and educational forces that shaped that lineage? To answer

that, I turned my focus to my grandmother, who was a central figure in her family for roughly 80 years.

My mother's mother, (Emma) Pauline Rizer Carey, was of course a tremendous influence on my mother. Pauline's mother was, of course, a tremendous influence on Pauline as well as on my mother, as she helped raise her. My mother, as I've needlessly pointed out and am now pointing out again, was a tremendous influence on me, as was Pauline, my Grandma C, who lived with us and helped raise me in the absence of my father—Pauline was a regular caregiver for my step-daughter. In summation, considering my mother's influences naturally leads me to consider Pauline, who was a central figure in five generations of our family: (1) her mother's generation, in that her mother's influence was made manifest in Pauline and Pauline cared for her mother in her later years; (2) Pauline's own generation, as my grandmother became the matriarch to her siblings and their children, and so she therefore was central to; (3) my mother's generation; (4) my own generation, as she helped raise my brother and me; and finally, (5) Pauline Carey was also Grandma C to my five-year-old step-daughter who, 15 years later, just kissed me on the cheek as she left for work.

I've never been able to understand anything outside of seeing its influence on my own life, on me. So in my effort to broaden my knowledge and understanding of the history of women's education, I turned inward. My intent in this article is to look at what I know of my grandmother's education and to articulate its influence on my mother, myself, and my step-daughter in turn. If I am successful, this will make concrete some of the larger, more macro concepts in the history of the education of women and place them in a context that is simultaneously contemporary and traditional. If I fail, this will bear no resemblance to a scholarly work and will instead read like a love letter to my grandma. I can think of few people more deserving of love letters, and I can think of worse fates than being a failed scholar who wrote such a letter. So I'll risk it.

Pauline was born in Myersdale, Pennsylvania, in 1913. Her family moved to nearby Hyndman when she was two, not long before she was struck with polio. As a child, she could walk but with great difficulty and pain, manually lifting her left leg at times—the leg that was two inches shorter than the other—and then swinging it out in front of her. She walked two-and-a-half miles to school and back each day in this laborious fashion. Her older brother, Buck, accompanied her and helped as he could. Some days, Buck was more coercive and Pauline less cooperative. "I used to get a little contrary going to school. Buck would have to hunt me and get a hold of me and practically drag me there," she once told me. My clearest memories related to Buck are first of a faded post-war picture of him flanked by two smiling geishas and second of my confused grandma calling me Buck once or twice, near the end.

The school they walked to was the proverbial one-room country school, with all eight grades in a single classroom. There was a large stove in the middle of the room. "Kids that behaved themselves got to sit by the stove," Pauline recalled. There

was a sink in one corner that carried in water from a spring in the nearby mountains. Grandma's younger brother, Bob, once remembered that a similar spring served as the source for the baptismal font in their church. He told me of his memories of being dipped in the frigid mountain water, and I thought it so appropriate that the Christian baptism, representing as it does death and rebirth, should be as cold as a tomb.

Back to the school: I know two other details about that little room, not from Grandma but from two of her sisters. Younger sister Helen recalled the inkwells in the desks, and that, yes, boys did indeed dip girls' hair in them. Nonie, the youngest, recalled that the room was not level but rather sloped down a hillside. She remembered this vividly, because one day she lost control of her bladder, and she could only watch as a small, yellow stream ran down the length of the classroom. She laughed about it as she told me, but she seemed less amused when she remembered how her classmates mocked her at the time. Nonie laughed about most everything. She laughed about peeing in front of her classmates and about her first husband beating her brutally and about the cold shoulder her new in-laws turned to her when she remarried. To think, a White divorcee marrying their boy, a good orthodox Syrian. People did talk.

Grandma remembered her peers as being kinder than Nonie described them. "Kids back then weren't like they are today," she explained. And so no one made fun of Grandma for having few possessions. When the teacher asked her in fourth grade what she got for Christmas, the class was disbelieving, but not cruel or mocking, when she told them she had gotten nothing. Nor did they make fun of her for not having a coat that winter. Instead she wore a tan sweater with brown stripes to and from school. Fortunately, by this time the family was living in town, and she had far less than two-and-a-half miles to walk. But even if the weather was cold, the classmates weren't: "Not many kids had very much, you know. They understood you didn't have anything. Everybody was kind of friendly." She seldom seemed happier than she did when she recalled how they let her participate in their games of baseball: "I used to hit the ball, and then somebody would run for me. That's what I think of when I... Nobody ever made fun of me. Never." I was a shy, fat, awkward kid, and I envied her that.

Amidst the possessions Pauline left behind was a tattered notebook full of notes, verses, and signatures from her classmates. Their writings reflect the kindness Pauline recalled to me—page after page, they expressed their playful affections and exchanged inside jokes. "How about going to a baseball game?" one of her classmates wrote. Apparently, they knew her well. Perhaps the other children took pity on her because of her legs or maybe social norms dictated unkind treatment only to those who had violated some taboo or were products of such a violation. In the nineteenth century, a single young lady "alone with a gentleman, might not visit a theatre or a dance, without incurring a social anathema" (Mulhern, 1933, p. 373). So, maybe just a few decades later, they were extra cruel to Nonie, because she was one of three illegitimate children Great-grandma Rizer had after her husband died.

Pauline's father, Harry Rizer, passed when Grandma was just six months old, forcing her mother, Pearl Rizer, to move in with her sister and brother-in-law on a farm on Hyndman's outskirts. Later, Pearl found work running a boarding house in town. She also took in washing and ironing and generally did 'whatever she had to' for her children. I often wondered if the three illegitimate children that followed Grandma were byproducts of Great-grandma doing whatever it was she had to do, but I never asked. It really did not matter. As Grandma said, "She could have given us away." Whatever she had to do, she had to do. Sometimes it's hard to make ends meet and sometimes you need a little help getting through a lonely night.

Grandma got some help her senior year when her aunt Nora paid for her to undergo an experimental surgery. So instead of going to school, she went to Pittsburgh, and instead of Uncle Buck it was doctors dragging her along, or rather moving muscles from the backs of her legs to the front. Then they put her left leg; the short, twisted one, in a cast. Each day, they twisted the cast a little more, until finally her left knee faced forward. The surgery largely was a failure, but the knee adjustment, "worked pretty good. But it was painful. Good lord, it was painful. That's the year I was supposed to graduate."

Instead of going back to school, she went back to stay on Aunt Nora's farm, helping out as she could so that Nora and her husband, Ellsworth, had someone to rely on other than the occasional, random farmhand. She did chores around the house, cooked, and fed and slaughtered the chickens. It must have been a rewarding experience for her, if one were to believe *My Career Book*, a homework assignment she completed in 1932, her junior year:

The choice of a life career is most important, it is something that must be planned. Mere drifting into an occupation has caused many a failure. At the present time I have not decided exactly what career I want to follow but at the present time am more interested in homemaking. Therefore I have chosen this subject to write upon. (Carey, 1932, Preface)

The English-language snob in me wants to dwell on the comma splice, the comma-less coordinating conjunction, the repetition of the phrase "at the present time," the dreaded proposition at the end of the sentence. The scholar in me is struck by the themes in this project that are relevant to class discussions of which I have been a part.

There is no doubt that the most logical sphere for a woman is where she can best utilize her feminine knowledge and motherly instincts. The fact that over 90 percent of all women marry at some time in their lives is evidence that this most logical sphere is homemaking. Not only is homemaking a noble and worthy career to which any girl may aspire, but is a career devoted to the creation and maintenance of the very foundation of society. It is no wonder then that homemaking is considered the most important career for women, for through the ages the progress of civilization has been aided and abetted by the ideal home, which in turn was created and managed by competent and faithful homemakers.

For this effort, Grandma earned a B+ and an underlined notation: “Very fine.”

Grandma’s homework echoes some of the recurring themes in the history of education for women. For example, this view of homemakers as doing more than making homes but as being societal shepherds is one that has been appropriated by various educational movements, movements that may have viewed the world differently but somehow came to the same conclusion: Woman, get thyself to a kitchen. Colonial women learned their crafts—cooking, cleaning, making and administering medicines, sewing, household management, etc.—in the home, the lessons of their mothers substituting for a formal education. Women were taught what they needed to know, and what they needed to know was how to keep the home running. After all, we were an agrarian society; the farm and family were the factories of their day (McClelland, 1992).

But in the wake of America’s independence, the new nation discovered it had a new problem. Democracy required an educated population that could participate in governing itself. Mothers were no longer responsible for just running the home and teaching their daughters to do the same. Now, in what has come to be known as the ‘republican mother’ view of their duties, women “were told from the pulpit, the newspaper, and the popular journal that the success or failure of the American experiment rested on their shoulders” (p. 56). Mothers were expected to “raise their sons for independent participation in republican government” which required them “to become self-reliant, confident, and, above all, rational” (p. 57).

This new perception of the mother required a new approach to educating women. With the fate of democracy itself on their shoulders, women needed an education that encompassed the public sphere as well as the private. They needed to know how to run the home and how the world was run (p. 56). That meant a new understanding of women’s intellectual capacities; they were not as bright as men, certainly, but brighter than had been thought. And so more educational opportunities were opened to women, but their narrow life path was maintained. This is consistent with a larger, historical pattern: “[...] many of the major historical events which are often cited as improving the cultural and educational prospects for all people have, in fact, had correspondingly limiting consequences for women” (p. 14). Women could learn more because boys needed to learn more, but women were expected to use what they learned to serve the home. One can see echoes of this eighteenth century ideology in Pauline’s *Career Book* when she wrote: “not only is homemaking a noble and worthy career to which any girl may aspire, but is a career devoted to the creation and maintenance of the very foundation of society.” The very foundation of society? Not much pressure there.

Similarly, a perception of women’s role in preserving all of society was one facet of the nineteenth century “cult of true womanhood.” Now the family unit and the agrarian way of life were threatened by the Industrial Revolution, an era that could well have been dubbed the Industrial Revolutionary War, as it saw a new lifestyle invading and conquering an older one. Every war has its casualties; in this

case, one was the traditional family and its farming way of life. Men were pulled from the home and into the city, leaving mothers alone to raise children who were now growing up amidst seemingly unprecedented sin and vice. Thus the cult arose to right these wrongs. Like the republican mother, the true woman was expected to nurture her children, to guide them through a perilous world by giving them their start in an ideal home. And so again the education of women was widened while their course was expected to stay narrow: Their educations were meant to serve the home and church. Therein lies one distinction between republican mothers and true women. The true woman was usually upper-class and aligned with the church, keeping the holy relevant as men moved towards more secular lives (McClelland 1992). Nevertheless, both ideologies came to the same conclusion: Women have a very specific function, and belonged in the home. It is almost as though this was a foregone conclusion, and the ideologies developed to justify it, not to create it.

Yes, there are echoes of these ideologies in Pauline's work, but they are certainly diluted and must have been mitigated by the realities of her life. I mentioned that, as a scholar, the remnants of old ideologies in Grandma's assignment interested me. As her grandson, I was struck by the sad, vast distances among the life she said she wanted, the one she began with, and the one with which she ended up. The *Career Book* is illustrated with *Lady's Home Journal*-type pictures of a perfect bungalow and beautiful, stylish women shopping for their debonair husbands. "My idea of a home," the bungalow is labeled. The home I associated with Grandma, the one she had while I was growing up, was a bungalow nearly identical to the one in the picture, minus the beautifully landscaped yards and bushes. I'm glad she got at least one thing she wanted out of life. Her home life certainly never lived up to republican or true woman ideals.

In Hyndman, she lived with her single mother, illegitimate siblings, and Uncle Charles. Uncle Charles was better-known as Spoony. He split his time between the mountains, where he and his friends brewed moonshine, and his attic bedroom back in the family home. He spat his tobacco out the window of his room and in the winters it would run down the roof, come dripping off the sides, and freeze into brown icicles. He urinated in cans that he then baked in ovens. He said it kept the witches away. I doubt it was a tip one could find in *Godey's Lady Book* (1830-1878). On the farm, Aunt Nora had her own unique way of handling nature's call. She would stand out on the porch, waving to and chatting with passersby as she urinated over the knothole in the porch, her long skirt her only nod to modesty. That was the life Grandma began with, and the one she ended up with was also a far cry from the idealized life to which she alleged to aspire.

Uncle Ellsworth died, then Nora. And that left Grandma and uncle-by-marriage Simon Carey alone on the farm. Simon was Nora's brother, and he worked around the property. A single woman and a man 24 years her senior living alone together? I can only imagine what people said. Not long after Nora's death, Pauline left Hyndman for Canton, Ohio. Nonie and her husband, Jack, had moved there so

he could find work. They had one child and another on the way, and Nonie asked Grandma to join them to help out with the childcare. And so in 1943, thirty-year-old Pauline, with no high school degree and no husband, left her life behind to start a new one, one in an entirely different world.

Grandma's formal education may not have made her the woman the world wanted her to be, but what she learned at home served her well. First, she had the work-ethic she learned on the farm and from watching her mother do 'whatever she had to.' Second, she had learned to sew at home, so she had no trouble finding work in a factory making lifejackets for the war effort. She took the bus to work or splurged on a taxi when the weather was bad. Once there, she climbed the forty-four stairs to her third-floor work station—five days a week. That's two-hundred-and-twenty steps up, two-hundred-and-twenty steps down, every week, dragging her left leg behind her. Her legs had started—just started—to weaken, her left knee to turn inward. But after the war she stayed on at the factory, sewing dresses.

That Pauline's domestic education served as her entry point to the larger, public sphere is consistent with a path women have long followed into the professional world (McClelland, 1992). A "woman's chief duties, until well into the nineteenth century, bound her to the home" (Mulhern, 1933, p. 373), and even as that began to change, the progress toward progressive was slow in coming. As late as 1933, Mulhern may have inadvertently intimated some of the mixed emotions with which gains in women's rights were met, even by those sympathetic to the cause: "In the recognition of [a woman's] rights to property, Pennsylvania was one of the pioneering states, and it has probably had its share of the blessings and probable evils which resulted from woman's political emancipation" (Mulhern, 1933, p. 372).

Perhaps those 'probable evils' had to do with applications of 'political emancipation' of which the republican mother and true women would never approve. "Mary Bannister and her daughter," for example, "had been making and selling 'Sovereign Spirit of Venice Treacles' before 1721" (Mulhern, 1933, p. 382).

Elizabeth Warrnaby was evidently their most aggressive competitor, for she advertised, in the same year, her "Right and Genuine Spirit of Venice Treacle, truly and only prepared by her in Philadelphia, who was the Original and First Promoter of it in the City" (Mulhern, 1933, p. 382-3).

As unsavory as it might have been to their republican and true descendants, brewing spirits could be seen as yet another example of women moving into the public sphere using their traditional, womanly duties as an entry point. Grandma could recall in detail how Aunt Nora brewed moonshine on the stovetop, though she could no longer recall what was in the mash. She also liked the occasional dandelion wine. Using the kitchen and the household to venture into the business world in a socially approved way, went beyond alcohol. Mulhern (1933), cites numerous examples of businesswomen of the 18th and 19th century, noting how they were often an extension of the home. They include nurses, boarding house managers, restaurant and tavern owners, laundresses, seamstresses, and women who sold

medications, ointments, baked goods, and hats. I am reminded of Great-grandma and the boarding house she ran and of Grandma's years as a seamstress and lunch counter proprietor. You've come a long way, baby.

Before the war ended, uncle Simon Carey showed up in Canton; he had followed Pauline out from Hyndman. For years, I had understood that he had come for the express purpose of asking her to marry him.

"Grandpa must have really loved you," I once remarked.

"I guess."

"Did you love him?"

"Oh, he was alright."

Years later, she told me that Simon had in fact come to Canton to find work, just like Aunt Nonie and Uncle Jack, Aunt Helen and Uncle Dave, Aunt Eva and Uncle Bob. Nearly an entire hillbilly clan uprooted and re-rooted, first to save the free world and then to keep it stocked with steel and clothes. Regardless of his reasons for relocating, Simon did indeed ask Pauline to marry him and, obviously, she said yes. The question then, given her unenthusiastic recollections of him, was why she said yes.

I know Grandma thought her marital prospects were slim. She always felt out-of-place, useless, and insufficient. Now she felt that way and was in her thirties. If Grandma's memory and/or opinion were at all accurate, or the photographic evidence to be believed, she was no looker either. In fact, one can follow the photos of her life and see her getting prettier as the years went by, as she seemed to become more and more comfortable in her skin. But her marriage was before that gradual metamorphosis. Given the family history, it would be only natural to guess that Simon and Pauline married due to some unplanned, impending, joyous arrival, but the dates don't line up. No, pregnancy didn't propel her into a seemingly loveless marriage. The hypothesis I have settled on over the years: Pauline felt she could not "do better" than this much, much older man and also felt compelled to be married. It is just what was done and what is still done, for that matter. Teenage Pauline wrote that "over 90 percent of all women marry at some time in their lives," and apparently it was her turn. She had been taught to be hard working, she had been taught to be married and so she did both.

If Grandma's marriage did not live up to the pictures in her *Career Book*, it at least surpassed the quality of life endured by Nonie. Nonie married Uncle Jack when she was just sixteen. He was the most handsome man in town, and so she gladly went off to Canton with him. Shortly thereafter, they came back to Hyndman for a visit, and Nonie turned to big sister Pauline for advice. She didn't want to go back with Jack. He was cruel. And a drunk. And he beat her. What should she do? "Well you're married to him. I guess you have to go back with him," is the advice Grandma gave her. "But I wish I'd have said don't go back with him. But what did I know?" What she knew was what she had been taught, and what she had been taught was that a woman should get married, stay married, and make a beautiful

home. After all, “the creation and maintenance of the very foundation of society” depended on it. Nonie endured years of abuse—Jack once used her head to pound a nail into drywall—before she left him. Society’s foundation did not crumble. She would later remarry and stay married until more than six decades later, when Uncle Bill preceded her into death. Nonie said nothing, showed no reaction, just as she had said nothing and shown no reaction to anything for several years. In the late stages of Alzheimer’s, she was just fading away in a nursing home. Grandma always wondered if the beatings Nonie had suffered played some part in her disappearing mind. Unscientific evidence, of course, but enough to send Grandma on an occasional guilt trip.

Pauline’s own marriage was much less tumultuous and much shorter. A few years into their marriage, seventeen months after the birth of their daughter, Simon died of cancer. Pauline never did remarry. Now a woman whose professed aspiration was to make a home, had to make it, pay for it, and raise a little girl. Pauline’s mother came out from Hyndman to help her get it all done but all the burden was squarely on Grandma’s shoulders. Forget about the foundation of society, she had a family to support. She took Simon’s life insurance and used it as a down payment on a duplex, so she could bring in some extra income as a landlady. It’s yet another example of how a woman could move into the public sphere and a gutsy move for a single mom in 1948. It was also gutsy of her five years later to quit her job and buy a lunch counter, “What you would call a convenience store today.” For two years, she walked two blocks to the store and spent all day on her feet, cooking meals and selling miscellaneous goods. Twelve hours a day, seven days a week. Aunt Helen helped out. Yet more fruits of her education: The know-how to run a business must have come from the halls of Hyndman High, where Pauline served as the treasurer of some extracurricular club (None of us can remember what it was, but we do have a page of notations about dues collected and bake sale revenue). The cooking-savvy, on the other hand, that Grandma needed for that bake sale and to run a lunch counter, was a product of all those aunts and mothers who had come before her, who had, to paraphrase Grandma’s beloved Mister Rogers, “loved her into being.”

Two years of “Carey’s Cut-rate” was too much, and Pauline sold the shop and went back to the sewing factory, because climbing those forty-four stairs each day was so much easier on her body. By 1969, she needed a metal brace to support her left leg. By the time I came along almost a decade later, she had two braces. From my earliest memories of her, she walked slowly and laboriously, using two canes. When she moved in with us, in the late eighties, she had moved onto using a walker. She spent her days cooking and cleaning, sewing when she could. She watched TV: figure skating, soap operas, Mister Rogers. Baseball. Always baseball. And she read and sewed when she could. When she fell and broke her leg in the early 21st century, it led to a long, downward spiral. It felt like it was more than an old woman who had fallen. It may not have been the foundation of society, but it sure felt like it. It felt like the end of an era.

She had raised a daughter, helped put her through college, took care of her elderly mother, defied her legs on a daily basis. She had been a landlady and a shopkeeper and found a little money each week to give me when I was an undergrad. It wasn't much, but it paid for the gas so my wife and I could get back and forth to school. And she did all that without a high school diploma, something she always regretted. She had written to her old school to request her transcript in the 1960s, thinking she might go back to finish what she had started. She never did, but she would occasionally pull out that transcript and pore over it. So close. "I looked at that the other day," she told me once. "I have that paper. I only needed a half a credit to graduate in three years." It was as if all she had done, all she had learned, had no value. Not without the paper.

Beyond occasionally brooding wistfully over her transcript, Pauline often enthused about the importance of education. "You're going to finish college," my mother recalled Grandma telling her repeatedly during her childhood. "You can do whatever else you want, but you're going to finish college." Mom saw the value in college; she needed to meet a man, get married, have children, and make a home. That was the extent of her ambitions, her heart's desire. And she needed no degree to do that. Still, Grandma insisted. I like to think she saw some value in education for education's sake, but I think it's just that she had learned some difficult lessons. Some men die. Some leave. Some beat you. You can't put all your eggs in a man's basket. So perhaps the urgency with which Grandma approached mom's, my brother's, and my education was a product of pragmatism. But maybe there was something more to it than that.

Grandma's reverence for education may have been a consequence of a Pennsylvanian tradition of respect for learning. Only months after William Penn arrived at the colony in 1682, the first general assembly passed the "Great Law" laying out the laws of the land, one of which concerned teaching about said laws in the curriculum of "the schools of this Province and Territories" (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 3). The next year, educational intent was made more explicit by the second assembly, which decreed that the colony would offer free—to the needy—compulsory education and that all children must be literate by the age of 12 and taught a skill or trade (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 4). Although it would be an understatement to say that these mandates were not met for quite some time, the explicit articulation of intent was itself extraordinary in a time when education was the domain of the home and the church.

Not only were some early Pennsylvanians progressive in their view of the relationship between school and state, they were similarly ahead of their time in their views of the relationship between school and girls. By 1696, the state had not lived up to its educational goals, and Philadelphia Quakers petitioned the state governor to establish a free public school for all children, including girls. This inclusive approach flew in the face of much thought at the time about educating girls, and "indicated on the part of Quakers an attitude toward women that had an

important influence on education and social life” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 7). One nineteenth century writer said of the Quakers, “They have interested themselves in the education of women, and also in Women’s rights, which is the natural outgrowth of the liberty always allowed by them to women in preaching and in the conduct of church affairs” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 20).

Of course, Quakers’ beliefs about education were shaped by their religion—one was educated so as to enhance one’s relationship with God—and as such their beliefs do not all seem progressive through twentieth century eyes: “Not only were all games forbidden but balls, the theatre, works of fiction, poetry and music were classed together as disturbers of the emotions and therefore ungodly” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, pp. 14-15). Grandma certainly did not share these attitudes, whatever she may have thought about the value of formal education; she was a voracious reader (even if she favored quantity over quality, true crime magazines and books being favorites) and physical education, ballgames in particular, held a special place in her heart. She loved watching people do things with their bodies that she could never even attempt.

The Friends’ dedication to teaching girls continued on through the long years when the colony left its educational mandates unfunded and unenforced. By the mid-1700s, the Philadelphia Quakers had established the Girls’ School, further evidence of their progressive approach to gender equality, or at least a prototype thereof: Girls were taught, in addition to their rudimentary three Rs and moral instruction, “needlework of various kinds” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 30). One Philadelphian Friend, Anne Parrish, opened a school for underprivileged girls in the late 1700s. Later she founded The Society for the Free Instruction of Female Children, which was still later combined with the Aimwell School, a school that, “under the control of Quaker women, had done a splendid work among the girls of Philadelphia” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 99). Some came to see the Quaker community as given to dogmatic inflexibility and even hypocrisy in their approach to education, equality, and suffrage, but their dedication to at least basic learning was firm: “It can truly be said that no Quaker community in Pennsylvania ever became illiterate” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 34-5).

The Quakers were not alone in Pennsylvania in their progressive, religious-based approach to education. Their Scotch-Irish contemporaries believed the ability to read scriptures was essential to obtaining salvation, and so all children were taught basic literacy. A Moravian school founded in Germantown in 1742 grew to a boarding school serving 50 boys and girls, “among them two Indian Girls,” by 1747. Three years later, a co-educational boarding school was founded by Moravians in Nazareth, and in 1759 the girls of this school became “the nucleus for the famous Seminary for Young Ladies” in Bethlehem (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 68). In 1776 a girls’ school was founded by Moravians in Lititz. It would evolve into “Linden Hall, a girls’ boarding school which has made the name of Lititz known far and wide and which combines in a rare way the fine cultural and spiritual values of the

old Moravian education with the best progressive ideas of the present” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 69).

Eventually, educational opportunities developed outside of religious origins. In 1801, The Philadelphia Society for the Establishment and Support of Charity Schools was founded, and it went on to establish schools “for both boys and girls and these were the first schools opened in Philadelphia to which pupils were admitted without regard to religious affiliation, nationality, or race” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 99). Similarly, The Philadelphia Association for the Instruction of Poor Children operated boys’ and girls’ schools from 1804 to 1818. This movement toward more secular educational opportunities continued in Philadelphia, with the creation of the First School District of the State of Pennsylvania, a title that was still in place as late as 1928 (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 104). Although it did not provide a free education for all, the district did aim at providing a less expensive education for poor children, with the poorest boys admitted free of charge from ages six to fourteen and girls from five to thirteen (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 104). Certainly not gender equality, but nonetheless progressive in light of aforementioned misogynistic attitudes toward education.

Before the advent of accessible schools, children learned what they needed, or what their culture perceived them as needing, in their homes. Walsh and Walsh painted a picture of this process as it was experienced by children of Pennsylvania pioneers.

Under pioneer and rural life, parents and children were very closely associated. The boys worked with their father, accepted his judgments, imbibed his social and religious attitudes, and in general followed the pattern set them. The girls associated with and copied their mother in the same way. Moreover, the child’s time was fully occupied from the day he became old enough to assist in the simple tasks about the home until he took his place as a man in the labor of the field. There was little leisure for boy or man, girl or woman. (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 110)

As has been said, this family unit was imperiled during the Industrial Revolution. With dad away at work, “boys worked, went to school, played, or loafed, away from the father’s oversight and control. Many boys and even girls worked in factories when they should have been in school,” and the increase in leisure time that accompanied life off the farm resulted in “more temptations and, hence, more vice. Home ties were weakened and the old moral restraints on the young seemed to be breaking down” (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, pp. 110-111). Beyond seeing these social conditions as requiring women to step up to save the nation and the family, Walsh and Walsh (1930), asserted that these conditions inspired Pennsylvanians to demand better educations for all children so as to deliver them from these evils.

Not that the fulfillment of that demand went smoothly. An 1834 law designed to finally establish and fund a formal public school system in the state met with much resistance upon its passage. Walsh and Walsh explained that these rejections came from distinct segments of the population, including those who objected to the law

on religious grounds, those who were simply closed to new, untraditional ideas, and wealthy citizens who did not mind funding, through donations, the limited education of the poor, but did not want to be compelled to pay for the comprehensive education of all Pennsylvanians (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 122-3). The collection of citizens brought together only by their hatred of the new legislation was a motley, patchwork bunch, but it was by no means a small or disorganized lot. Almost half of the State's counties—475 of 987—voted to repeal the law, and a number of new legislators won office based solely on their promises to overturn it (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 121).

Pauline's home county of Bedford was not one of those voting against the law. In fact, only three of the county's 20 districts supported repealing, and in the end most of the state sided with them. The law was modified but not killed, and "The fight for the principle of state-controlled free public education had at last been won" (Walsh & Walsh, 1930, p. 128). Understanding just this truncated version of Pennsylvania's educational history helped me answer some of my questions about Pauline's life. How did a poor Appalachian girl with polio manage to very nearly finish high school? And why did she care so much about her own daughter's formal education when she knew firsthand that a woman did not need college to survive? Growing up as she did in a state with a rich history of caring about education for all and a county that overwhelmingly supported public education, it was perhaps only natural for Pauline to embrace learning. Furthermore, that natural tendency must have been encouraged by the events of Pauline's life. You're going to finish college. You can't climb stairs forever.

True to her goal, Kathleen met a man in school and married him right after. When he was drafted and stationed in Texas, Mom followed him. Like her aunt Nonie those long decades before, she followed her man far from her home, all her reservations and fears pushed aside. There she put her sociology degree to work by going door to door to the homes of poor, Mexican immigrants, preaching the gospel of Planned Parenthood. There were days she felt threatened. There were days she was threatened but she kept right on walking. One more thing she learned from her mother: You've got to keep putting one foot in front of the other, no matter how hard it is. And about a decade later, for all the usual reasons, my parents divorced. That was something else Mom learned from Grandma: It's OK not to follow him and you can raise them and pay the bills on your own. It can be done.

Mom also learned what she did not want to do from Grandma. My mother was always frank and open when discussing sex, an extension of her general attitude toward the topic—that it was simply a natural part of being a human—a natural and a healthy part, provided it was done right. No details have ever been offered, nor have I ever asked for any, but at some point Pauline had a boyfriend who sexually abused my mother. Years later, at my parents' wedding reception, he spent the evening trying to surreptitiously look up the dresses of female guests of all ages. As a little girl, my mother told Pauline what was going on. Pauline brushed

her off and said that's just how men were. My mother would only ever say of the relationship that Pauline was always very lonely, living, as she did, with only her mother and daughter and suffering from her physical impediments. Still, efforts at understanding and forgiveness aside, the man clearly scarred my mother. I don't think it was any coincidence that she went on to work for nearly two decades as a social worker in children's protective services, trying to save the kids of the world, or that she spent hours lecturing me when I was a boy about how to protect myself from abuse, and talking to me frankly about sex.

Perhaps she was too frank and too early. According to family lore, we went to visit Pauline later on the day my mother explained the birds and bees to me. Upon seeing my grandma, I excitedly asked, "Do you have a 'gina like mommy?" I don't actually remember that, but I've heard it so often and for so long that I feel like I remember it. *Do-not-vu* as opposed to *déjà vu*, I suppose. My mother's penchant for open discussions of sexuality was no doubt a product of my grandmother's upbringing. For as much sex as her community seems to have had, there was little discussion of it in tiny Hyndman, or at least in her home. When Grandma's father died, he left Great-grandma with Pauline and her two older siblings; brother Buck and sister Toots. Great-grandma would go on to have three more children to three different fathers and to raise a granddaughter, Charlotte, as her own. Charlotte's mother—Toots—died under mysterious circumstances. When I was a child, in the eighties, Grandma told me she died of pneumonia. In the nineties, she told me her sister died during childbirth. In 2010, a few months before dying, grandma told me her sister had indeed died in childbirth, but it was apparently the result of a botched abortion. Still, no one ever came out and said that.

"We didn't talk to kids about those things," Grandma explained, and waved off questions about why she was finally willing to discuss what had only ever been half-whispered rumors among the kinfolk. There was a lot about which they didn't talk. Grandma said the same thing about getting her first period: "[Mom] never talked about anything. You learned from other kids, you know." There wasn't much my mom didn't talk about. Once during my early adolescence, Mom paused while changing my bedclothes and looked up at me thoughtfully.

"You know," she said, "you'll probably have wet dreams soon."

"Mom!"

"It's OK. It's nothing to be embarrassed about. If it happens, just take your sheets down to the basement and put them by the washer. I'll take care of them the next day. Then just put on some clean sheets from the hall closet."

"Geez, Mom."

"I just want you to know how to handle it, that everything's OK."

"OK. Fine."

Some more thinking, and then: "And you'll probably start masturbating soon."

"Mom!"

"It's OK. It's natural. Everyone does it."

“God!”

“Do you want me to ask your dad talk to you about this?”

“I don’t want anyone to talk to me about this!”

“Well talk about it or not, it happens. Everyone does it.”

I didn’t want to hear about it, but, truth be told, it did make me feel better. And it was an experience that served me well nearly two decades later, while I was having a similar discussion with my step-daughter, Maranda.

“It’s OK. Everyone does it.”

“Really?”

“Of course. Don’t you think we know why you take such long showers?”

Looking up at us, smiling sheepishly, barely audible: “You knew about that?”

Later, her birth father would catch her masturbating and disgustingly chastise her for it. I don’t know to what degree, if any, she was inoculated from his shaming by our conversation. I think some conversations like that could have helped Pauline and Kathleen. I know they helped me. I hope they helped Maranda.

Grandma never could see value in her life, in the generations she nurtured and taught. After Simon died, she bought a car, modified it with a handbrake so she could use it, found a willing instructor, and learned to drive. Later, when Nonie’s daughter Sheila was herself struck with polio, Grandma taught her to drive. And she taught Mom. And mom taught me. She just didn’t see value in things like that.

“I feel so useless. I’d like to have a job,” she told me once when she was in her eighties. “I think a lot. I never did talk to people and tell them how I really felt. I never felt like I belonged. I never felt like I was up to par.” She said this to me as we sat in her bedroom, an add-on mother-in-law suite. By this age, she had long since been forced into retirement by doctor’s orders. Her left knee was completely twisted, her feet perpetually curled into balls of pain. Her knees literally inverted when she removed her braces. Twenty years of feeling useless because there was no official paycheck every two weeks to say she was contributing. When I was an adolescent, unbeknownst to her, I would listen to Pauline from the kitchen off of her bedroom as she lay awake each night.

“Why, God?” She’d ask over and over. “Why am I still alive? Why don’t you just take me already? Why do I have to keep living?”

Another lesson learned: It’s OK to ask questions. It’s OK not to buy official lines about God, the universe, and everything. Combine that with the reverence for education with which I was imbued, and you have got the recipe for a perpetual student. Eighteen years of post-secondary education. Only two degrees to show for it. And I’m still asking questions.

Speaking of asking questions, in 2007 Grandma asked me if I could look into getting her a high school diploma. I did some internet searching, made a few phone calls, sent a couple of emails, and in a short time the Bedford-Hyndman school board voted to award her an honorary degree. And why not? She was an excellent student, earning A’s and B’s in subjects like Latin, French, biology, history, civics.

This wasn't just the three R's. Throw in the life experience, and how could they have denied her a diploma?

I consider her formal education with some melancholy. The words of her *Career Book* aside, it had not been Pauline's desire to be a homemaker. She had wanted to be a nurse. I think of her excellent schoolwork. Then I think of how she cared for her cancer-ridden, bed-bound aunt Nora, changing and sanitizing the bandages and gauze used to plug the holes in her back and abdomen left by the radiation treatments. In his final days, she had to help Uncle Ellsworth urinate into a bottle. She cared for her mother as she left this life. The meals she cooked and served, the diapers and bedpans she changed, the colds and flus she nursed grandkids through. My grandma was a nurse and more. I don't care what paper she did or didn't have. The thing she lacked was not the paper but the chance; if they had given her the opportunities, who knows what she could have done?

But Pauline did care about that official paper, and was beaming with pride when the Bedford-Hyndman School Board called her with their decision. The family was gathered around, certain the news would be good. "What happened?" Grandma asked. "Did I get it?" When they told her the good news, she was relieved that she wouldn't have to do any more work to satisfy the board. The Hyndman paper reported that "Carey quipped that she 'thought maybe I'd have to go back to school now to do something' to earn the board's approval" (Maust, 2007, p. 1). The reporter didn't know Pauline. She wasn't quipping; she was prepared to work for it. She was always prepared to work for it.

That diploma hung on the wall over Grandma's bed, and she showed it off to every visitor. We threw her a graduation party, and the diploma and she were the center of attention. And every time they shuffled her from the hospital to another nursing home, the diploma followed, but it seemed to offer little comfort. I visited her one day near the end in her final nursing home, video camera fortunately in hand. "My braces are in that closet there. Sometimes I doubt I'll ever wear them again," she said. And she didn't. "What's the use of thinking about it?" she asked no one in particular. "What's the use of thinking about it? Sometimes it gets so painful that you can't hardly stand it."

When she finally died in August of 2010, a few months shy of her 97th birthday, the diploma hung on the wall over her deathbed. In the same room, Nonie occupied the other bed. She did little more than breathe, looking off at nothing and smacking her lips. Two sisters who left Hyndman, Pennsylvania, behind, traveled down roads sometimes interwoven and sometimes parallel, only to end up in the same nursing home, in the same room, one practically dead and the other actually dead.

Now it is a cool April night in 2012, and I'm the one lying in my grandma's old bedroom. My wife and I have been separated for a few weeks. I'm a couple months shy of 36 and I've moved back in with my mom. I'm still in school, still trying to find answers. I lie in bed and stare at the ceiling and turn it all over in my mind. I think of afternoons watching *Mister Rogers* with Grandma, of watching

baseball, of eating her food, of listening to her words and thinking of just how far she had come. It was not just the distance from Hyndman to Canton. It was a distance that could not be measured in miles but only in words: "Why shouldn't they let gay people adopt kids? Ain't their love better than no love?"; "I like that Barak Obama. I just hope nobody shoots him."; "That poor Susan Smith. Can you imagine the life she must have had to think killing her kids was the right thing to do?"

I try to comfort myself with this: I have no idea where I'm going, but at least I know where I'm from.

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