

## Part 03 Naples Summer

Mom Dick and I spent this summer with her relatives, the extended Merrell family in Naples. Grandpa and Grandma Merrell still lived on the road where they originally purchased a home in the 1920's on something like 30 acres of land. At that time, there were homes for Ross, the old one for Aunt Helen, one for Dale and family, one for Norman and family, Harold's house and several others. That summer was an idyllic time -at least in my aged memory. We were in a state of limbo between Seward and Boston. I didn't think of it that way at the time, of course, yet I was aware that I was in a state of suspended animation, a blessed state before the story, sort of living out sunshiny days and peaceful, cool mosquito-free nights, fishing, wandering around the corrals, chasing chickens, collecting eggs, and visiting relatives. Anticipating that I was about to embark on another great adventure, sort of nervous but curious. A state of quiet comfort, not having a clue about what hellish thing was about to happen to me. Turns out that it was as heavenly as it was hellish but the hellish stands out fiercely here.

As soon as we hit Naples, mom and dad sold the '53 Chevy to a dealer I Vernal where Ted Handy -Mabel's husband- worked, as I recall it. They ordered a brand spanking new 1956 Chevrolet Bel Aire and made arrangements to pick it up at the factory in Dearborn in the fall after we had settled in Boston. I guess we mooched rides that summer as we needed them from Grant whose house we also populated.

Dad then headed to SLC to climb on an airplane and take off in the direction of Nova Scotia, by way of Boston. He was about as excited to get there as Harvard apparently were to have him. I'll tell you something about Nova Scotia here. Remember that this Nova Scotia business is taking place for dad at the same time we've set up housekeeping in Naples with grandma and grandpa Merrell. We were separated for about 9 weeks that summer.

## Nova Scotia

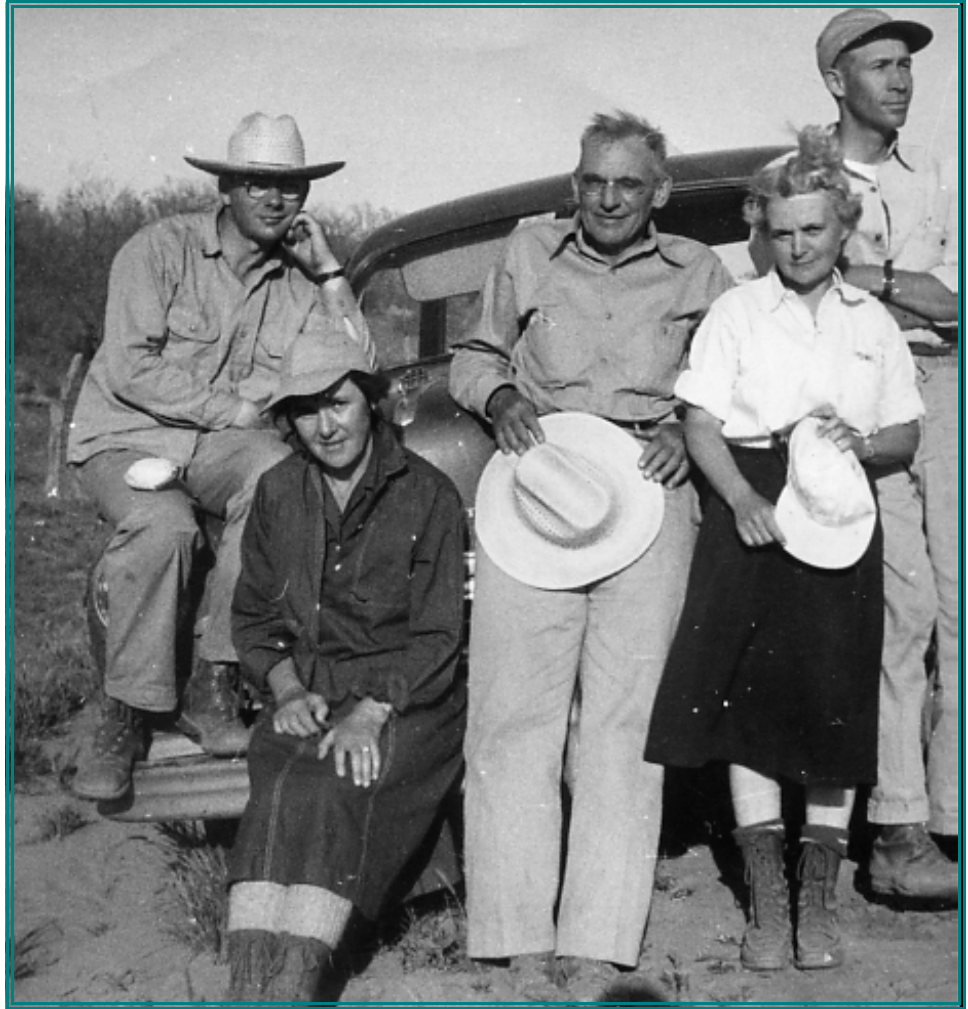
Nova Scotia is one of the "maritime provinces" (I learned that in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade) of Canada, located on the eastern seaboard. See the red star over "Halifax"? That's the principal town of Nova Scotia. The province is probably the smallest of them all and I can't make out precisely where its boundary line is located. Nor am I sure where the expedition worked but this at least orients you to dad's location while we were back



in Naples basking in the hot sunshine, not having had that experience in Seward. Years later, 1967 to be precise- your mom and I spent two weeks in Quebec above the "M" in Montpelier, as part of our idiotic Peace Corps training, worthy of a Monty Python skit.

The objective of this exploration was obviously dictated by the geological era of the strata the chose to work in. Did you ever think of that? That paleontologists actually choose what sort of specimens they are going after by choosing strata of the particular age of the specimens they want to collect? They don't just sort of start poking in rocks anywhere. They use stratigraphic maps to find the strata with the type of specimens they are interested in. Trilobites will be found in the earliest ages like the Cambrian and Ordovician. The only thing I can say for sure is that they worked in strata that were ancient when dinosaurs roamed so they were in the Paleozoic era, and probably in something like the Pennsylvanian, Silurian or one of those later segments of the Paleozoic. Obviously, then, they weren't hunting dinosaurs. What they were after was as much plant and animal. We saw some of the specimens they collected but I don't recall much about them.

The members of this small expedition which was personally headed by Dr. Romer, included himself, his wife Ruth, Arnie Lewis, Dad, Nelda who was Dr. Romer's factotum, and a guy whose name I can't remember now but will later and will try to come back and put it in. Dr. Romer is the one in the center, Ruth to his left, Nelda to his right, Arnie on the right and the other guy on the left, dad obviously taking the photo. Notice how they

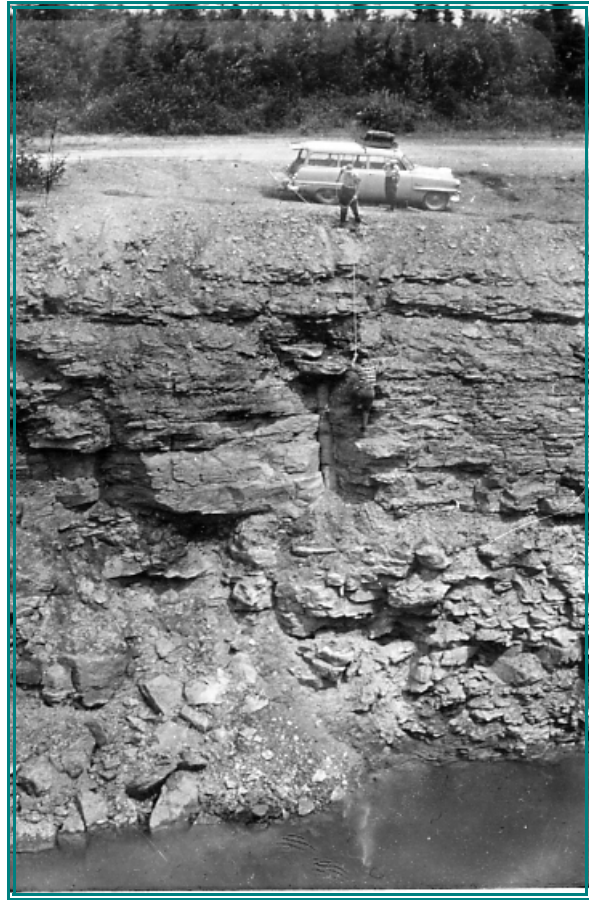


are outfitted, heavy boots and work clothes. That wasn't an affectation. Every one of these men and women got on their hands and knees and dug. It's hard dirty tiresome work -I can tell you personally from working on Dry Mesa for 3 months in 1972!- so you dress for your comfort as much as possible.

Nelda was a quiet old-maid who took care of Dr. Romer for many years. There is some correspondence from her in dad's files and I remember her kindness well. She would talk to us kids without patronizing us, sort of like a distant aunt who had some interest in us but who was not really connected with kids. I liked her. You'll see her again in the photos in the Harvard sections below.

In this shot from the expedition dad is hanging from a rope as he descends to a lengthy fossil tree trunk that was exposed when this channel was opened as part of a mining operation. He's hard to see here but he's wearing a plaid shirt and is just to the right of the top of the trunk. I don't know the process they used to actually remove these segments, only that they did. As I remember, the matrix (rock holding the fossils) was a gray shale and that supported by the multitude of horizontal lines you see here.

Arnie is standing by another trunk in this photo:



You can tell that it's a different specimen than the one dad's going after. They somehow got these things up on the level ground, bandaged and transported back to Harvard.

So that's what he did that summer while we were spending the summer in

Naples with grandma and grandpa Merrell and mom's other relatives. This is probably obvious but I mention it to be sure you think about it. The reason that we stayed in Naples was that we had no where to go in Boston until dad was back. He would help us find a place to live with mom and so on, so we really had no choice but to wait there in Naples, but it was a grand time.

### Swimming in Town

Now this was a big deal. I was simultaneously terrified of and fascinated with the prospect. Seward? We didn't swim. Even the ocean was too cold, though the rivers flowing from glaciers fed First Lake where a few hardy souls -probably drunk teenagers- ventured to "swim". Insanity. On one campout down the bay at Tonsina we waded in one of those glacier-fed rivers and nearly froze. Then we staggered down to the ocean and in contrast it was like taking a warm bath. So, no, I had never swum in a swimming pool, and had scarcely even seen one.

This municipal (I guess it's called since it was city owned and operated?) was located in the park in the center of town. The Fieldhouse which was also in the park, sat on main street, the swimming pool north a short walk. It was not a large pool but it was properly outfitted to handle the job. There were two restrooms with showers, and two sets of lockable baskets for storing one's clothing. The cost for entry was something like a quarter and in return for the coin, you were handed a substantial safety pin to which was attached a key and heavy duty metal tag that had a number stamped into it. That was your assigned storage basket and you had to wander around to find it which really wasn't hard once you saw the order in which the baskets were numbered.

Then you took off your street clothes, however many they were, and stored them in the basket. The key on the safety pin was pulled out of the lock on the basket and fastened to your trunks wherever you wanted. Next was a mandatory shower though it was really just a rinse. Soap was not used but I suppose it took off the top layer of dust and dirt that covered some of us. After the shower we could finally go into the pool area. It was surrounded by a tall anchor fence, open to the sun and elements. The walk around the pool was probably 15 feet wide so it accommodated a large number of people.

After going through this one time, I became intoxicated with going into "town", i.e. Vernal -remember that I'm out here in rural Naples- to swim. But there was in fact a major problem. I was terrified of putting my head under water. The

idea that I would voluntarily immerse my head that way made me shiver. What an insane idea! Why would I want to ever do that to myself? But it was inevitable, wasn't it. Entering a public swimming pool with a bunch of other rowdy kids was a formula for a mini-disaster. And sure enough, it happened.

Mom and several her sisters had taken the lot of kids to the pool for the afternoon - more for peace for them, than for the opportunity to swim for us I'd opine (and wouldn't blame them). We paid our quarterses, stowed our clotheses, showered lightening fast (cold), and wandered out to the pool. The adults saved money by sitting outside the fence at picnic tables that were shaded by tall trees, where they could chat and keep a lazy eye on us kids, a delightful way to spend an afternoon for all of us.

I waded in the shallow end of the pool but was nervous as a cat about the deep end. There were a lot of kids there for the same reason we were. At some point, things got out of hand. We were playing some sort of game, being a little rough, not intending on dunking anyone. I don't remember who did it, a cousin or a city kid. In any event, some one grabbed me or pushed me down into the water, completely covering my head, the first time in my life.

I was properly panicked. It is disorienting to be under water for the first time, and disorienting to be surprised. I had no skills but since I was in the shallow water I could find the bottom and stand up, which I did as fast as I could. Then I staggered to the edge of the pool and clung there coughing to clear my throat and trying to regain my equilibrium. Nothing came of it in the end but mom said years later that she was proud of me. She had seen what happened and was worried about drowning, but was happy that I had handled the experience as well as a kid can. My fear of water was to be resolved in the next two years.

### Rodeo and Highway Patrol

When we lived on the farm in Vernal we went to the annual rodeo one time and I loved it. I lived around large farm animals from the beginning so they were familiar and I liked them. I rode horses alone from about the age of 5 so had a fondness for their strength and oddly enough, for the smell of them. The rodeo took place again that summer so we got to go.

This photo of the rodeo is from the Vernal website and shows a rider calf roping which was always exciting. You can see that the lasso is around the poor guy's neck and that the highly-trained horse sees and responds to the rider by stopping so fast it must be like hitting a wall. You can see his legs are stiff and pushed forward and in the next split second the calf is confused, lying on the ground, at which point the rider flies off the horse to the calf and uses the short length of rope -it's called something like "pegging string"- that he has in his mouth to immobilize the calf by tying two of its legs together - can't remember which ones! The instant he completes the knot in that rope, he thrusts one of his hand straight up in the air. That's the signal to the time keeper and judges that he's finished. The times are ridiculously short something like 10 seconds from the time the calf and the rider are let loose into the ring.



Figure 5 Photo from Vernal website

We went one evening with Grant and some other cousins and had a great time but something didn't go right. I don't remember what it was but when we got around to going back to Naples which was probably 4 miles away, we couldn't find Grant or any other adult who lived out that way. It was pitch dark now but we weren't bothered. None of the Naples cousins were around so Dick and I had no choice but to hoof it home. Walking long distances was normal so we didn't find it difficult to do. We just wished we didn't have to do it especially during the night. But things are what they are and they are dealt with as best one can, so we headed back to Vernal.

We got out on US 40 and headed south, knowing our way home. After some time, a car pulled up behind us. We were not allowed to hitch hike which meant that drivers of cars who stop might not be nice. I knew that dad had hitchhiked around a lot so had a sort of ambiguous understanding of the whole business. In this case, the prospect of getting a ride outweighed the fear of the driver. Pure laziness.

Well, the driver of this vehicle was a middle-aged Utah Highway Patrolman in

his brown uniform. We stopped when he stopped and were instantly worried. Dad had taught us an anxiety about dealing with lawmen so we were nervous about whether we would be hauled off to jail for some sin we had committed. I couldn't think of anything I had done other than stick a piece of gum under one of the bleachers but I worried.

He came over and started to chat with us. He was like one of my uncles. He commented that it was pretty late for a couple of kids to be out alone on the highway. How were we doing? He asked. He asked where we were going and where we had been. After we explained that we had been to the rodeo and lost our family who lived in Naples, we had to walk home which is what we were doing. I wasn't sure whether he'd believe us or not but he didn't look mean or threatening.

In the end, he told us he'd drive us home if we'd show him where it was. He knew the Merrell family since there were a lot of them, but didn't know which house to take us to. We got in and I loved the fact of getting to ride on a real highway patrol car. The officer had a side arm and full uniform, with the impressive wide, flat-brimmed hats. He smoked so the car smelled of cigarette smoke and leather, a really nice combination of smells. He took us to grandpa's house, pulled in, let us out, and drove away. No need to get out and talk to the parents.

Looking back it's apparent that he was simply doing his duty although I felt like I had been breaking some sort of rule. He was protecting two little kids (13 and 14) who were on the major highway of the area and he knew what things happened - which we didn't. It was prudent of him to get us safely home, particularly since he obviously didn't have anything on his dance card at the moment.

What's most illuminating about this little story is the fact that mom wasn't frantic. I don't specifically recall the reception we received but it was not angry. I expected that we'd get lambasted for getting separated from everyone else because the others were already home. But it didn't happen. That suggests how safe it was and how trusting she was about our abilities to get home. We had been independent in Seward and this tided us over this hump in the road.

The final act to most of the trips into Vernal was a trip to a soda fountain, the old fashioned kind in a Rexall Drug store. These stores always have a particular smell that is compounded of soaps, perfumes, deep fat fryer, etc. which is wonderful. Stepping inside was stepping into a never-never land where things were pleasant, lighted and peaceful.

We'd walk up to the counter that was lined with stools -there were no



booths in this narrow drug store- and find seats together. If Laurel was with us, there would be some not-so-subtle squabbling between two of us about who got to sit next to her. It wasn't evident that she was aware of this competition but we certainly were. When the counterman -called a 'soda jerk'- came to take our order, he'd ask each of us in turn. Our orders from headquarters were explicit and the same each time: a 10 cents root beer.

He'd leave and go to a large freezer that had ice cream as well as two sizes of heavy duty glass mugs. The mugs were kept there so that the glass was below freezing. That way the drink stayed cold longer and no ice was needed. He'd pull the mugs full and bring them over 2 or 3 to a hand and set them down before each of us. The aroma immediately hit our noses. It was a delicious smell and to this day I still prefer Hires Root Beer to any other. The others are close but somehow they fail the taste test.

We paid the man for our drinks and he returned to his work while we worked on them. The neat thing about the mugs was that they were so cold that they actually accumulated a skin of frost, like on the inside of a window on a winter day. We'd scratch it off with our fingernails as we sat without much talking, relishing the foamy, odoriferous cold drink after the swim in the hot weather. After finishing, we'd get down from the stools and then go to wherever our ride was, Grant, mom or Mabel, and go back to Naples.

### Laurel, Bears and moon beams

I am not sure of the details of the land swaps that took place and who did what to whom, but when we went there for the summer, Grant was in the nice house that had a basement and running water. Grandma and grandpa lived in an adjacent rectangular house, covered in tar paper, with three rooms in a row and no water so they had a privy. Somehow it was my understanding that Grandpa and grandma bought the property with both houses but somehow Grant, not they, ended up in the larger, nicer house. They didn't complain, however, because it was a far cry from the log cabins they had both lived in for years.

When you went into grandma's house through the front door, you entered the living room. Their bedroom was to the right and the kitchen was to the left, a door leading to the back yard. Mom slept on the couch in the living room but there was no place for Dick and I to sleep in so we slept over at Grant's house. They were about 100 feet apart. Dick and I would either sleep on the covered front porch that had a half-height wall around it, or we'd sleep on the lawn. We'd only

take a blanket because we didn't like pillows and find a place to lay down wherever we wanted.

The summer nights in farming country have a sweet charm. There was no manufacturing or industry so the only smells were ones of nature. We could sometimes smell fresh cut hay, or smell the horses in the barn, or clover. Whatever the scent was, it was sweet and lovely, totally different than what we experienced in cool, Seward with its seaweedy, fishy smell. The finest nights were those when there was a full moon. There were no street lights and few houses - across the street was a field that extended for perhaps a mile north without houses that we could see. That made it an isolated feeling place, although it obviously wasn't. But it created that sense.

Running and chasing around in the dark on the lawn in the bright moonlight was exhilarating. There were a few bushes to hide behind and a large catalpa in the front yard. But the ultimate excitement for us pubescent boys was to have Laurel in Grant's house.

Grant was married by now and his wife, Francis, had two sisters, both of whom spent time in Naples that summer. The older one, Maria, was my age and I dated her 4 years later when I went to SLC to work for Uncle Grant in a commercial construction project. At the time, however, she was too old for me and intimidated me, but her younger sister Laurel was totally different. Laurel was probably 12 years old, just a year younger than Dick. She was a knockout. Pretty face that smiled a lot, blonde hair and a zest to play and do things.

During at least one full cycle of full moon, Laurel lived with Grant and Francis and that was perhaps the highlight of the summer for me. She obviously slept in the house but was allowed to play outside in the moonlight with us until late in the evening. During those evenings, we played hide-and-seek and "No Bears out tonight." The thrill of playing with this pretty girl, outdoors, in the sunlight, late in the night about blew my circuits. Seward? Nothing like that would have happened given the climate and so on. The thrill was not just the games. It was compounded of the excitement, at that age, of being close to a pretty girl who was friendly and easy to play with. I had never experienced that before and was undone.

Laurel remained a sweet memory for many years after we left for Boston.

### Grandma's eggs

One of the reasons that grandma and grandpa bought this large property that had two houses, corrals, fields and a chicken coop was to produce eggs to

supplement their meager income. Their little country store enterprise apparently never really got off the ground so they sold it and then purchased this other place, Grant somehow ending up in the house. It just occurred to me that the reason he ended up in the house is because he was just getting married and everyone would agree that newly weds would be happier in a plumbed, finished house than in a tarpaper shack.

There was a largish chicken coop out by the corral where grandma kept several dozen laying hens. I wasn't there long enough to know whether she bought them as chicks in boxes through the mail like she did in 1946 etc. but she had a bunch of them. On the east side of the coop was a set of nesting boxes. These were supplied with a thin layer of straw to create the sense of a nest to stimulate the hens to lay, which they did. I don't know how they knew which box belonged to whom but they seemed to know. They walk over the wall of cubbies and jump, flapping madly to get to their particular box. Then they'd chuckle a bit as they settled down.

Collecting eggs is actually a pretty benign project - with most of the hens. Grandma would give us a basket in the morning and tell us we could go out and collect the eggs if we wanted. She didn't send us out but she knew we'd be thrilled at the chance. We'd take the basket and head out to the corral and chicken coop. After letting ourselves through the fence, we'd go into the chicken coop and start collecting eggs from the nests. As long as there wasn't a chicken in the nest this was easy. Just pick up the eggs and put them in the basket - carefully. But grandma had a rule we did balk at a bit. We had to check EVERY nest. The reason was pretty simple: if eggs were missed, they would spoil and she wouldn't be able to sell them. So we knew we had to get into the boxes that were occupied, which was a different deal entirely in some cases.

You would go to the box and reach under the chicken. It would flap its arms a bit and complain loudly but usually they didn't really do much. It was warm under the chickens and you felt their soft feathers with stiff spines over the straw. You had to push to the back of the box which would upset the hen a bit more but generally it was a simple task. There were, however, several brood hens who had raised chicks, who were older. They objected strenuously to anyone reaching under them. They would crow loudly and flap their wings in a threat display I suppose. Neither the noise of flapping was the problem however.

The problem was that these girls would actually attack your hand, pecking vigorously enough to puncture the skin. The injury wasn't serious but the noise and flapping was unsettling to kids who hadn't been raised to just shoo the hen off the

nest. So we would usually let those girls sit and tell grandma when we handed her the basket of eggs which hens she'd need to go check. She'd go out with us and she would just swoosh her hands at the hens, scaring them off the nest. For some reason our swooshing didn't have the same effect.

### Francis' Custard

Francis was -and still is I know since I talked to her a couple of months ago- a nice lady. She and Grant were madly in love and playing house so us little kids were practically an irritation, but she never showed it. One of the nicest things she did was to use grandma's excess eggs. Since grandma sold eggs for cash I'm not sure how she ever had excess eggs but she did. More likely, she just offered them before selling them in case Francis would use them. She would. She make large pots of custard, let it cool, and then spoon it into bowls for us, as much as we wanted which was an unusual experience for me.

### Cottontails & single shot .22

Grant had the large ranch on the Greenriver south of town and went out each day to work it. He'd leave early in the morning, practically before the sun was up. We'd ride out several days a week with him, standing in the back of the jeep or sitting the back of the pickup. Byron and Tom would go with us some days so we'd spend glorious days exploring the ranch, walking along the river, fishing for catfish, or hunting cottontails.

These rabbits were plentiful in the region so were easy to find. They'd be out in the daytime so we could always locate several. We were given a single shot .22 rifle and a box of "shorts". The rifle was not heavy and was easy to load so we had a great time. The only problem was that we'd get impatient with each other, wanting to take a turn with the rifle, convinced that we could do better than whoever had the rifle. Obviously none of us was experts but we would sometimes bag a rabbit which we'd take back to the house to be cleaned so that grandma could cook it later.

### Grant's MIA lawn party

Grant was a teacher for one of the classes of teenagers and during the

summer her had a big party for them. The thing took place in the evening and by the time it was over, it was dark. The festivities took place on the front lawn with some incandescent lights. Dick and I felt it was our lawn so felt entitled to participate. Grant disagreed, however. So he'd nicely chase us away and we'd nicely run over to grandma's place, but we'd return. In the end, he got pretty brusque with us, which was unusual for him, so we snuck as close in the weeds as we dared to watch what was going on. After the kids had left and the lights removed, we dug up our blankets and took possession again of the lawn.

### Fishing in canal

The road in front of Grant's house was paved which impressed me. There were no houses directly across from the house. There was an enormous field that extended for perhaps a mile with a fringe of houses along the roads that were its boundaries. Otherwise, it was just grass, weeds, marsh and a few scrubby trees along the stream that cut through it. But just on the other side of the road was a large irrigation canal that ran parallel to the road.

This canal was perhaps 8-10 feet across and several feet deep. It flowed swiftly and was stocked with trout during the summer so it was always a challenge to find one of them. We got fishing gear from Grant who was an avid fisherman and went across the road. For bait we used worms that we dug in his yard in places he knew they would be, though I didn't understand how he knew where they would be.

We'd take out gear and bait and walk across the hot tarry-smelling road - paved with native asphalt that actually softened in the heat- to the strip of weeds and grass on the verge of the road. The descent to the canal was perhaps 5 feet so we'd get down by the canal and be invisible to anyone on the road. We'd bait our hooks and throw them out into the water which quickly pulled them downstream. After not getting a bit, we'd pull the worm up for inspection and throw it back out. This cycle repeated until the worm was water-logged and fell off, or until the rare instance when one of us would get a bit.

Tom or Byron fished with us sometimes which made it more fun. Dick and I tended to squabble too much so these two leavened the deal so that we had a good time. They tended to be better fishermen than we were which puzzled me because I had actually caught a lot more fish than they had. The difference was probably in how we set the hook when we got a bite. I think I sort of ripped the pole upward, tearing the hook out of the mouth of these small fish while they were

more careful. The fish were 6 - 8 inches long so were tender.

We'd take a lunch with us sometimes to eat when we got hungry, which was usually as soon as we got down by the canal. After an hour or so of not catching anything, we'd get bored, throw the rest of the worms in the water, take our gear and go back to Grant's place, satisfied enough that we knew we'd be back soon. If we did catch a fish large enough to cook, we'd give it to Francis who would take care of it, but that was a rarity. Usually we returned without anything to show for our efforts, other than the contentment at having been fishing which is indeed its own reward. Catching fish can actually spoil the experience of fishing.

### Closure

Somewhere in the middle August the time had come to prepare for the odyssey across the US. The summer had been lovely and I didn't want it to end but it was inevitable. The fun on the ranch was over, Laurel was history, swimming trips into Vernal were no more. I was anxious about the trip across country. I knew we were going clear to Boston on the east coast. We had looked at maps so we knew that Boston was clear over on the Atlantic Ocean, a place we had never seen. It wasn't fear really, but it was anxiety compounded of more things that I realized at the time.

At one level, the anxiety was simply uncertainty about what I was going to encounter over there in this historical town of Boston that stood out in American history. It was understandable that a young kid will be anxious this way. But at a deeper level, the anxiety was enforced by the unconscious understanding that I had been unceremoniously uprooted. Remember. I was 14 years old and 5 of those years -more than a third of my life- was spent in Seward. Imagine that you had lived somewhere for a third of your life and then were uprooted against your own wishes, and that you were being taken away from all family and friends, to a location that was intimidating. Then factor in the trauma of puberty that we all experience whether we understand it to be trauma. Would that create anxiety? Yes, so my anxiety was a compound of various things.

We had to pull ourselves together and get on our way to find Boston way over there, a daunting prospect.