Hannah, Sarah Shaw. Collection.
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Rome, May 1976

On Bob's Suggestion

The Linns were a New Jersey family. What I know about them is from my mother. Her grandfather was Andrew Linn, son of Judge John Linn, who had moved to Ohio and was a farmer. (His is the portrait still in existence.) His daughter was Susan Catherine Linn. (Her sister Sarah Linn was the one for whom I am named.) S.C.L. went to and graduated from Grandeville Female Seminary (later Denison University). She became a teacher and returned to Newton, New Jersey to teach in the boy's preparatory school where William Travis was head master. They married, both forty years old. But they had five children: May, John Linn, Rose, Joseph, and William III. When May, my mother, came of school age, her father insisted on putting her in the classes at the school, so she had a standard classical education: Latin, Greek, French, German, mathematics, etc. In time, grandfather left his job at the school, for what reason I do not know. Perhaps he was too strict a disciplinarian. (I still have the note of apology written by Mark Hanna). He then became a Presbyterian home missionary and the family started its trek west. (Before his marriage he was in Flint, Michigan and organized the public schools of that city.) In organizing new churches, he would start from scratch, stay five years and move on.

When the family was in their teens, they were situated in Pembria, North Dakota. Always a believer in education, the three oldest ones were enrolled in the first class of the University of North Dakota. Because they had so little money, [1] but grandfather knew some of the railroad officials, they

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[1] Mother often quoted an exasperated exclamation of her sister, "Why do we have to be educated poor. Why can't we be just plain poor."

were allowed to ride the caboose of the morning and evening freight trains each day with the proviso that they did not tell they were going free - a promise the three of them kept in spite of many devious inquiries. They three graduated as members of that first class. It was during two of these summers my mother became the tutor for one of the North Dakota farmer's families. In 19 , I met a son who had become one of the biggest wheat growers in North Dakota. He remembered mother with great pleasure. Mother always regretted that she had limited their reading to religious periodicals. Who knows what else was available.

After this the family moved to Portland, Oregon to be caught in the depressions of '93. Mother, in desperation became a third grade teacher in the Portland schools. She often told the story about one of her students. Mother had been having great trouble keeping order in her room. One of the little girls transferred to another school when her family moved to the other side of town. The little girl came back to visit. Mother asked her how she liked the other school. Her reply was, "Oh, we like it. Miss so-in-so (the other teacher) makes us mind." Mother said she became a disciplinarian over night. Finally, mother's principal, whom mother staunchly supported, lost his job. So mother quit too. Shortly thereafter she saw an advertisement for a mathematics teacher at the Montana Agricultural College at Bozeman, Montana. So, mother went to Montana. She loved the country. She enjoyed teaching and her students -- many of them older and very eager to learn. She was eventually made head of the department but quit three months later to marry my father.

My mother had been brought up very strictly in the church. Two services each Sunday, mid-week prayer meeting. Black was black. White was white. There were no shades in between. She always sang solo or quartet in

church. She had considerable voice training in Portland. So, in Bozeman she continued in church work, was the soloist at church weddings, funerals, oratorios, even an opera performed there by the music department. She was also a member of the camera club and enjoyed camping out with horse packs through Yellowstone Park.

It was at this time that her sister died back in Portland. Rose had had rheumatic fever as a child. Untreated properly, she died in her early twenties as the case history used to be. Mother said Rose was considered very beautiful with a peaches and cream complexion -- a long list of devoted admirers.

Mother also had a very fair complexion, blue eyes, originally reddish hair. All the family was fair. They were also short in stature and in later life inclined to be well rounded. Grandmother Travis (S. C.L.) looked not unlike Queen Victoria. She was a very calm person, I believe. Grandfather Travis was a spare man with flowing white beard, meticulously clean my mother said.

Her brothers got into the newspaper business. John worked for the Portland Oregonian. Joe worked for a San Fransicso paper, became a foreign correspondent. He was supposed to be able to interview a person without taking notes and produce an accurate report. He was sent to Hawaii to get the story on the sugar trust and was almost consigned to a leper colony for his trouble. He spent most of his life abroad in the Far East from Japan to Indonesia. He finally died in Florida, never keeping much touch with the family.

John became city editor of the Oregonian. For seven years he was managing editor of the Seattle Times. He had two sons, Jack and Jim. Jack graduated in Forestry at the University of Washington. Jim graduated from the University of Oregon, went into the Air Force, was stationed in England

during the war and flew bombing missions. Surviving this, he returned to the States and several years later was killed in the West Virginia area when his plane ran into a storm. Jim left no children although he was married post-war. Jack had two children but no grandchildren.

William III became an architect, spent his life in San Francisco -- the Mill Valley area. His only son, William IV, lives in San Rafael, works for the highway department as a draftsman, I think, and has no children.

My father's father, Thomas Shaw, came from Ayr in Scotland with a sister. The first I know of him was that he was a professor of agriculture at Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. He had married Mary Janet Sidey, the daughter of a well-to-do farmer at Woodburn near Hamilton, Ontario and lived on a farm nearby. They had four children, May, Robert Sidey, William Thomas and Florence. William had polio as a child, so he was lame for the rest of his life. My father said when his brother was recuperating, he was allowed to practice marksmanship through the window of his bedroom, so all the others had to keep away from that side of the house. Uncle Will grew up to be a zoologist and always took extensive camping trips (pack horses) every summer in the Far West where he finally located.

As a boy, Dad used to go swimming at the whirlpool area of Niagara Falls. His pal as a boy was an Indian lad. By the time my father was of college age, his father was on the faculty of O.A.C. Aunt May, I believe, graduated from the college. Also my father. Dad took the highest grade in an exam which covered his four years, for which he received a prize: a volume of complete Shakespeare plays. He always said he would have liked to be a doctor, but such was not to be the case. He always had a remarkable hand with animals, a quieting influence. He often told the story of being sent to the

railroad eight to ten miles away to bring back a new bull. Everyone around the yards was scared to death of the animal. Dad decided the bull was lonely and afraid, too. In the end, the bull trotted home behind my father like a puppy dog.

Dad had his farm accidents. As a young boy he fell in the hay mow and almost severed his nose. The story was that his mother sat up all night to hold it in place. Years later a belligerent cow with calf got him down and further scarred his nose. This was the root of his trouble in later years.

Upon graduation, Grandfather Shaw required Dad to return to the farm to pay off the mortgage on the place which Grandfather had incurred by signing personal notes for friends who failed to pay up. It was the depression years of '93. Part of the help they had putting up hay were unemployed glass blowers from Buffalo. In five year's time, the mortgage was paid off. By this time Grandfather Shaw had gone to St. Paul, Minnesota to head up the Department of Agriculture at the University of Minnesota. In some way, he met Jim Hill [Heil ?] of the Great Northern Railway. It is probable that Jim Hill used him to encourage farmers to settle along the railroad. It was through some of these connections that Grandfather found the opening at Montana Agricultural College and sent Dad out there.

Grandfather and his two daughters continued to live in St. Paul. May married a veterinarian, John Reynolds, and had four children: Gardner, Janet, Robert and Margaret. Uncle John Reynolds died comparatively young. Aunt May lived into her eighties. Florence, who never went to college, married a John Robinson and had one daughter, Florence Mary. He turned out to be a poor selection. I think he was in the insurance business, not a great salesman. He was treasurer of the church sunday school and absconded with most of their money. As his world collapsed, he jumped off the bridge

between St.Paul and Minneapolis. I have always felt sorry for the man. He must have been nagged constantly for money to have stooped to such a petty theft. Certainly his wife spent the rest of her life getting money out of my father and Uncle Will to keep her home intact and the taxes paid. And her daughter liquidated the house at her death and claimed it all.

The two sisters lived side-by-side and Grandmother Shaw lived with Cousin Florence, not making the happiest time for her. Grandmother Shaw was a genteel woman, dressed as I remember her in black silk. Grandmother Shaw taught me how to knit. She was always knitting pieces for bedspreads whenever she visited us. I remember she always put her work away Saturday night and never touched it on Sunday.

Grandfather I barely remember as a very stern man with side burns. He died in his seventies of a stroke. Grandmother outlived him by many years. The family had an English indentured servant, Liza, who ended spending her whole life time as a servant to the family. Hence Aunt Florence never "lifted a finger." Aunt Mary's burden was her youngest daughter who was injured at birth and was sub-normal. It was a great tragedy in earlier days not to face up to the problem. It was ruinous to the rest of the children as well. Her eldest son, Gardner, became a doctor, an X-ray specialist, at one time at Ford Hospital in Detroit. He died in his fifties, perhaps from the use of the X-ray. Janet, who loved horses, became an expert stenographer (did not go to college) and for years worked in the main office of Martha Crillwater [?] Hospital in Detroit. Robert, a very handsome youth, finally became a teacher and moved to the West Coast. My mother relished a story about him that was typical. One of his girl friends became ill. In a "sentimental journey" way, he married her days before she died. Her family presented him with all

the bills for her illness and funeral! Afterwards he married again and had at least two sons.

I write this in all honesty and candor -- in the hope that those to come will have more charity toward others. It has always been interesting to me to see what makes people "tick," what influences come to bear, some unforeseeable, others preventable. If only each person would be more open, less excitable, take time to ascertain the facts.

In Bozeman, my mother lived at the hotel and cherished her freedom. She was befriended by a Mrs. Marshall who was head of the Art Department. Mrs. Marshall was from Virginia, a very gracious lady. She was very kind to my mother. The latter never knew her past, but was convinced that Mrs. Marshall was from the famous Marshall family of Virginia.

In the West in those days, it paid to be extremely gracious to those with whom you came in contact. It need go no further. Mother often said that one was always equally considerate. You never knew when your waitress at table would be the governor's wife the following day.

Mother was a blithe spirit with much joie de vivre, a gallant soul in time of trouble. At the same time, she was very strong minded. Over the years she developed a very pragmatic philosophy of living. It is really surprising that in spite of her tight Calvinistic upbringing, she became more liberal each year. As she grew older she used to regret her errors, she called them the "if onlys" of life. I now know how she felt. In only we were wiser. How she would have enjoyed the foreign travel I have been privileged to make.

Dad was a very reserved man, a born pessimist, but a very kind man who had an appreciation for other people's shortcomings, although he could

be quite vindictive on occasion. He was very strong physically although of average height and slight build. He could out work anyone on the farm. They used to say he could get more work out of his helpers because they kept up with him to hear his stories! He was a very thrifty Scotchman in personal and public business.

When he went to Montana, he had a difficult time at the college. Not all welcomed his arrival. At one time Dad carried a gun after he was convinced an attempt was made to have him accidentally shot.

Dad and Mother apparently were discreet about their courting. After all, Dad was 29 and Mother 35. They were married January 2, 1901 in Portland, Oregon, and set up house keeping in Bozeman. Apparently, Grandfather Shaw again interposed with the offer of a professorship at Michigan Agricultural College at East Lansing. Dad accepted and they moved to Michigan in the summer of 1902, living on Bringham Street in Lansing. There my brother was born November 13, 1902. My mother had a hard time of it with a severe case of childbed fever. I have always held it against Dr. Hagadorn and his unsterile procedures. She had the same infection with three children and lost the fourth.

The following year, they moved to the campus in East Lansing taking residence at #5 Faculty Row. This was a house originally built as a model farmhouse, two rooms on each floor, the dining room and kitchen in the basement! The house had been added to by each successive tenant without much planning, six more rooms. The last occupant was Ella Kedzie who had a room at the back for a studio. The house was furnished simply -- we just didn't have the money. Not until I was grown-up did I realize that the development of taste is quite closely tied with finance. If you have just so

much money and make a wrong selection, you still have to live with it whether you like it no not. There is no easy way to develop selectivity.

My second brother, Thomas, was born fourteen months later. My parents were so proud of the two boys.

A little girl, Sybil, was both in 1908 but died at birth. My father was convinced her death was caused by the doctor's attempt to correct a face presentation. My mother was terribly torn physically by the event. It was twenty years before she had the necessary repairs made. The loss of the baby was very depressing to my mother.

Then on January 27, 1911, I was born at #5 Faculty Row. Mother was then 45 years old. Again she was happy with her family. But not for long. My brother Thomas died in 1914. What was the cause? I do not know since it was a subject no one talked about. In later years, Dr. Conrad said she thought it was angina. The tragic part was that Tom had been sick and seemed to be recovering. He asked for some cocoa. Mother demurred but Dad said, "Oh, get it for him." Shortly thereafter, he died in convulsions. Mother always felt it was her fault.

This tragedy had long lasting effects on the family. Bob and Tom unfortunately had been put in the same class at school. When they played baseball, Bob pitched, Tom caught. They were like twins. So, Bob had to live with the loss each day.

This also had an effect on me, although I was too young to remember the event. (I have one dim recollection of my brother and the rest in the living room. I was under the keyboard by the piano.) But mother could not give me up. I was not sent to school until the spring of the second grade when I was seven. Looking back, I think it made for shyness for many years. My playmates were limited to two families on campus -- the Bessey children

(Dr. Bessey in Botany) and Ellen Johnson (Dr. Johnson, head of English Department). My mother had a dim view of the selection, with reasons, I later learned.

An interesting side-light: My mother had me read the Bible to her every Sunday while she was doing the dinner dishes. In the course of the years, we read both the old and new Testament several times. Her favorite character was, I believe, St. Paul. She was comforted by his struggle with his doubts. Fifty years later, I have visited the place in Rome where St. Paul was imprisoned and later beheaded.

But to go back to my father's work. He came to M.A.C. to find the barns and animals in dreadful shape. He worked himself to get conditions cleaned up. My mother said he often felt he would never "get the smell of manure off his feet." But she was a firm supporter. She was determined to build-up his confidence and did so by making him head of the household, subjecting all decisions to him, which was right to do but went too far in the end.

Slowly, my father rose in the ranks from professor to Director of the Experiment Station, Dean of Agriculture, Acting President three times and finally President from 1928 until his retirement in 1941.

Our childhood was uneventful. We went to the old Central School in East Lansing on Grand River Avenue. At that time the first six grades, sewing room and cooking lab occupied the first floor of the building, the high school the second floor, the chemistry-physics lab in the basement. In the sixth grade, I was advanced six months to be in the seventh grade, which was a big mistake because I was only 16 when I graduated. Dad decided I should stay in high school another year, so I took a few courses in the newly opened high school on Abbott Road, now Hannah Middle School. Still too young! I entered Michigan State College in the fall of 1928.

Perhaps the most saving thing for me was that I had a horse when I was 12, a roan gelding to go with by brother's standard bred. A couple of years later, a woman riding by our house saw our well-fed horses and asked us to buy her little black mare since she could no longer keep it. So, I acquired "Fly." In the beginning I rode with my brother. He had been in the cavalry in R.O.T.C. I was put through the same rigorous training in cross country riding. Later, I rode alone and thoroughly enjoyed the freedom. Mother worried about my being alone, so later I road with Margaret Morgan, whom I disliked thoroughly. Now, I can understand why Mother worried.

My brother also entered M.A.C. in 1921. He was totally obedient to my father. When the military commandant wanted him to take advanced military with a promise of being cadet-colonel, my father didn't want him to do it because he would have to go to summer camp. When his name came up for editor of the college paper, my father had him remove his name from the slate because at the time my father was acting president. Too great a price!

In the meantime, we had acquired a cottage at Bear Lake in Manistee County and would go there for the entire summer in our first car -- a Dodge touring car. It was an all day trip. My father was a great fisherman. Bob and I spent hours each day in the boat with him, often unhappy hearing from afar the other youngsters happily cavorting on the beach. Forty years later I was glad I knew something about fishing regardless of the price.

In the spring of Bob's junior year of college, he was stricken with a mysterious fever -- a very high fever followed by terrible sweats and chills. It probably was undulant fever (Malta fever), very debilitating. It was never diagnosed but he gradually recovered. That fall I returned from Bear Lake ill. I went back to school but couldn't do my schoolwork. Finally, one afternoon, when I returned home, I lay down on the bed. Mother took my temperature

to find it 105.8 degrees. For a week it did not go below 104 degrees. It was typhoid fever. We never knew where I got it.

When Bob graduated, Dad decided he should go to graduate school at Cornell. He earned his M.S. there in 1926. But Dad wanted him home to sell off the family farm (160 acres on North Harrison Road). He plotted the first 25 acres, even working with the engineering and grading crews to ready the subdivision. The sales were well under way when the Depression struck. No one had any money.

About this time my brother met -- through Miss Conrad -- Katherine Kinsler from Austwell, Texas. She was the dietician at the Woman's Building (Morrill Hall) cafeteria. They were married September 16, 1931. I was the sole representative of the family at the wedding. Texas was a long way away then. They came back to live in a house they built on the new subdivision.

To go back. I had two memorable trips with my mother. In the spring of the year I was in third grade, Mother and I went to visit my Aunt Sarah in New York City. She was a secretary in a law office in New York City and lived in Jersey City. We were gone two weeks. I still remember my introduction to row housing, passing the fire station each morning seeing the harnasses hanging from the ceiling ready to slip on the horses' backs when a call came, a boat ride up the Hudson River, having the Woolworth Building pointed out as the tallest building in the city and my mother's receiving a box of hawthorne from my father. It would be forty years before I should return.

The year after I graduated from high school, 1928, mother and I went to see her brothers on the West Coast. We stopped in Mill Valley, California with William Travis, his wife and son, William IV, went on to Portland, Oregon to visit Uncle John and Aunt Myrtle Travis. We made a sentimental

stop in Bozeman, Montana and stopped to see Grandmother Shaw, Aunt Florence and Aunt Mary in St. Paul. We returned to find Dad named the President of M.A.C. Three times he had been named acting president. It became a joke in the family to watch the "ebb and flow of deference," those foolish persons who faun upon the incumbent. I think Dad was right for the times. His Scotch thrift got him and the College through the Depression. He was very proud that he never failed to met a payroll, even during the bank holidays. Later he started the policy of expansion which my husband was to carry on.

My college days were quite routine. My father thought that I should know science, so obediently I became a Biological Chemistry major electing zoology, entomology, anatomy, physics and six courses in the Home Economics department in food and nutrition. It was long hours of lab work. I experienced the cruel world of sororities. Finally, I joined the group my brother wanted me to, not fitting nor adjusting -- an ugly duckling. I dated practically not at all. It would have taken courage or foolhardiness to have approached our household. The latter variety I didn't like.

I was naive and knew it, but had no chance to learn otherwise. Perhaps it was just as well. I'm not sure how I would have handled dormitory living. I didn't smoke, which in those days was queer. I didn't use cosmetics. My mother had such a fair complexion she didn't need any. She didn't want me to use any. So deep was my loyalty, I didn't until the summer she died. When I came from the North to see her, she said, "Sarah, you will have to do something for your face." I didn't know how to manage my hair as all girls do now-days. It should have been easy because it was naturally curly and auburn red.

Miss Elisabeth Conrad came into our lives at this point. She was my father's selection for Dean of Women. She occupied the house next to us. (When Dad became President we had moved to #2 Faculty Row, a big, white, rather spacious home.) Not until I went to Washington, D.C. did I appreciate her background. She came from an old Virginia family who were connected with the Washingtons, Lees and Custis's. She did much to try to help and guide me, although I was torn by loyalty to my family. But many of the things she tried to teach me have not been in vain.

After graduation, Dad wanted me to take a Master's Degree which I did. It was in the same major with a thesis on nutrition using white rats. These degrees were of no particular use to me. But at least it was an introduction into a great many areas of education. I could listen intelligently in later years. But I cringe even now, as I recall my oral exam -- not a success to say the least.

After graduation, I did not seek a job. Times were hard. The family felt I should not be taking a job from someone who really need the income. Besides they wanted me with them. I became Dad's chauffeur with my extra time. I worked in A.A.U.W. and in KAO alumni and building association. I was once the alumnae delegate to the Theta convention in Asheville, North Carolina. The biggest experience for me was in getting financing and supervising the building of the Theta house on Oak Hill Avenue. Again, I shudder to think of the decisions I made which were wrong!

About this time, there was a vacancy in the office of the Secretary of the College. One day at table my father told us he had decided to recommend John Hannah for the job. I pushed back my chair and said, "Dad, if you do he will have your job in a year's time." I had no influence. This John Hannah, after taking the secretaryship came often to the house. Mother and I always

excused ourselves and withdrew to another part of the house. Insidiously the process continued. The first time he asked me out was to go to the circus! In 1937, when school was over, J.A. took Vincent Vandenberg, who had just graduated, with him to Alaska. I was asked to think about engagement while he was gone. He brought me back the gold nugget necklace. Even now, I have no idea how I had courage enough to tell my mother I had plans to marry. It would not have made them any happier it I had devoted my life to them, I tell myself.

J.A. and I were married the following June 22, 1938 on the lawn of #2 Faculty Row. We went to Alaska, driving to Seattle and taking the inland passage to Ketchican. Then we stopped in St. Paul on the way back at the International Baby Chick Convention. There we learned Julia and Vince were engaged!

We set up housekeeping at 915 Rosewood, another house in the new subdivision. The adjustments were difficult. I still had strong ties to my family. The following year, after Fred Jennison died and named J.A. executor of his estate, Matilda Walker, Jenison's housekeeper came to us. I really had not had time to call my house my own, nor learn to cook, a baby was coming, and I had to adjust to full time help. I had been brought up with my mother's philosophy of democracy. Matilda didn't understand me. Incidentally her pay, top for the time, was $10 a week, board and room. In the four years she was with us, pay rates doubled.

Mary was born October 28, 1939 -- such a big experience. There had been no babies in our family in my memory. My mother was an ardent opponent of child study clubs, convinced the mothers involved would be better off to take care of their children instead of talking about them. So, I had

no benefit of child psychology books. That and having the old family doctor, Dr. Briegal, were a handicap. Again, the if onlys.

In 1941, my husband was named to succeed my father. We decided to return to the campus but to live across the street in #7 Faculty Row, now Cowles House. Some renovations were needed. We moved in the weekend of December 7, 1941 -- Pearl Harbor Day. On December 24th, Bob was born.

Within two years, Matilda decided to leave us. From then on, during the war, I had college girls who lived in for help. Summers we put up huge amounts of frozen foods -- six bushels of peas stands out in my memory! We had acquired our first forty acres in 1940 and Juniper Lodge became our permanent summer place.

Tom was born May 16, 1945.

My parents on retirement moved to the house on 1201 North Harrison which they had built, the first house of their own. My mother was now 76 and suffered from arthritis so it was hard for her to get about. Dad had made no real preparation for being retired. He puttered about with his orchard and yard but really did not have anything to occupy his mind. I went over to see them every afternoon with the children and phoned every night at nine o'clock.

In 1947 my mother became ill. By mid-summer it became obvious that she had cancer of the liver and she died September 24 of that year.

David was born April 18, 1948.

My father became very, very lonely. His housekeeper was impossible, but when we tried to change the arrangements, he wanted her back. He was a creature of habit. He came to see me on campus every morning but never stayed very long. There seemed no way to ease his life. In the end, he died as he always said he wanted to -- out on the farm. He was pruning his grapes

on a cold winter day, February 8, 1953. So ended a generation. And the telephone didn't ring at nine o'clock anymore.