LOVE AND LEARNING ON THE G.I. BILL

As I Remember

(Cornell University, 1946-1951)

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In loving memory of my husband

Denton Winslow Crocker, Ph.D.

Cornell University, 1952

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As I Remember

By Jean-Marie J. Crocker

It was March, 1946--seven months since World War II had ended, three months since my husband Denton had been discharged from the Army, a month since we had been married. He was a graduate assistant in the Zoology department at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, teaching laboratory sections of freshmen, and with the support of the G.I. Bill was enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences Graduate Program that would lead to a teaching career in biology. He still startled when a plane flew overhead, for two wartime years in the South Pacific, from New Guinea to Japan, had not yet settled into the past, but his return to the academic scene helped define the transition for both of us. Although he was soon to be twenty seven and I had just celebrated my twenty third birthday, I think that we both reflected an open, youthful sense of expectation.

On August 21, 1944 Denton had written me from a newly cleared outpost in New Guinea where he was serving in a Malaria Survey Unit:

"Darling, I am now quite sure that the army's plan for education aid will apply to me and that means a great deal. We can be married without any worries at all and can even start a family whenever we want . . . ."

Earlier that summer, after considerable controversy in Congress, on June 22 President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had signed Public Law 346, The Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, better known as the G.I. Bill of Rights. The new educational leveler would provide tuition and meager living allowances to veterans in proportion to

their time spent in the Armed Forces, and since Denton had been in almost four years, we were assured of support for the time he would need to complete either a master's or doctoral degree, depending on his ultimate goal.

Less than two weeks after his Christmas homecoming to our seaside hometown of Swampscott, Massachusetts in December 1945, with no delay for re-orientation, Dent (the nickname which he preferred) was ready to take advantage of the opportunity. Glad to be wearing civilian clothes, with his honorable discharge pin--a small brass eagle--on the left lapel of his jacket, he headed first to Harvard in nearby Cambridge, where he was accepted for the spring term of Graduate School in a comparative physiology program. However, because Cornell University had been highly recommended to him by three members of his Malaria Survey Unit, former biology students there, he was eager to explore that alternative before making a commitment, and in mid-January he left by train for Ithaca in central New York.

He found the atmosphere at Cornell immediately congenial and the offer of a teaching assistantship in the freshman zoology course was an added inducement. The choice was clear; we would be starting married life in a new setting. Meanwhile, with my parents, I was proceeding with plans for our small home wedding on February 23. The only uncertainty was the question of finding a place to live.

When Dent returned to Ithaca to look for housing ten days before our wedding, people in the off-campus housing office simply threw up their hands in dismay. The end of the war had brought a flood of veterans to Cornell, almost 3,000 new and returning students, many with wives and children, with a need for housing. In response to the crisis Cornell provided various facilities for single students, and for married couples created "Vetsburg," fifty two-family homes at the edge of a railroad siding up the hill on Dryden Road in East Ithaca. These two-room units were for couples with one child; larger units to house families with two or more children were added to the complex later. We, of course, were not eligible--yet. Throughout the surrounding area couples were lucky to rent single rooms without even a private bath, or else had to board in the country, miles outside the Cornell campus.

Left on his own, Dent went to ten real estate offices, pursued every apartment listing in the phone book, and chased after the one apartment listed in the local paper, only to find it already rented. Next, hoping to tap into local sources of gossip, he visited every drug store and barber shop on the main street. Still no luck. Back at the hotel he confessed his frustration to the desk clerk, who confidentially shared an address he had learned of: a middle-aged widower was looking for a quiet couple to live in his home.

When Dent went to the house that evening, the owner, Jim Ridley, said that he didn't care much about the money, and as Dent responded that he wasn't particular about spending much either, they got off to a good start. The rent was forty five dollars month.

Triumphant, Dent telephoned me to say that we had the luxury of a whole house in downtown Ithaca, almost entirely to ourselves. Since Mr. Ridley might stay there at least part of the time, some lack of privacy for us as newlyweds seemed a bit of a

drawback, but Dent had accomplished the nearly impossible; he had found us a place to live.

From the bright lights, taxis, and hotel bell hops of our honeymoon in New York City, it was a seven hour train trip by coach through the Lehigh Valley to Ithaca. On the rainy evening of March 1 a cab deposited us and our suitcases at 408 East Marshall Street. There our trunk, an ancient one that had belonged to Dent's maternal grandparents, was waiting for us in the middle of the dimly lit front hall which held an ornate upright piano and an old-fashioned clothes tree.

The clutter of scattered papers, an overlay of dust, and dishes in the sink were evidence of our graying landlord, who was learning to live alone. He greeted us kindly, showed us through the house, and as he began to do his picking up, assured us that he would be spending most of his time at his daughter's nearby home.

So there we were--just married, in a stranger's house, in an unknown community, facing an unmarked future, and completely happy.

Dent alternated between exclaiming, "Sweetheart, we have our own home!" and "Oh, what have I brought you to!"

East Marshall, at the foot of the hill where the Cornell campus is located ("Far Above Cayuga's Waters," as the college's alma mater describes it), was a short side street off residential North Aurora, a ten minute walk to downtown. It was a treeless street of closely set frame houses that fronted directly

on the sidewalk with just room for narrow borders of skimpy shrubs.

As we saw in the light of the next day, the house itself was homey, furnished modestly in the style of the late nineteen twenties with sheer lace curtains, rag rugs, and lamps with fringed shades. The focal point of the living room was the cathedral shaped wooden case of the Philco radio set on a table, and in the dining room a glass-fronted china cabinet on tall legs held the Ridleys' special china, which Mr. Ridley said we were welcome to use. Upstairs were two bedrooms, an extra room with a chair and card table where Dent could study, and a basic bathroom with an old-fashioned claw footed tub, much too short for the ease of my six feet four husband! It was the ample kitchen that impressed me most with its looming combination wood and gas stove, a wooden ice box, and a 1920's Hoosier cabinet with intriguing drawers, racks, and bins for storage of food and containers. There, armed with Fannie Farmer's Boston Cookbook, I would begin to learn to cook and fulfill my image of a "real" wife!

After a couple days of cheerfully scrubbing, dusting, and clearing out space for our belongings, we were settled in and feeling quite at home.

Dent was working six days a week as a teaching assistant in the Department of Zoology at Stimson Hall with Professor Samuel Leonard, a well-known endocrinologist. Each morning, including Saturdays, he left the house by 8:30 wearing the conventional

white shirt, tie, and jacket, his dark wavy hair slicked back. He had a desk in the graduate student office with other young assistants, including Charlie Bond, Duane Warner, Bill Nutting, and later, Howie Evans and Ernie Nobile. We couldn't help but feel a secret pride to see his name, Denton Crocker, listed on the directory in the hall, an official confirmation for us of the goal we had set.

He was teaching four laboratory sections with a stipend of $375 for the term; taking embryology, sitting in on a chemistry course, attending staff meetings, and correcting papers. For that term the G.I. Bill provided a proportional payment of the $90 allowance for a married veteran, based on the lesser number of courses he was able to take because of his teaching duties. In addition, all tuition, books, and laboratory expenses were covered.

Dent responded to the demands of his new life with enthusiasm. As he wrote in his memoir: "Now, after four years of both giving and receiving orders, I had to become a negotiating civilian, a husband, a college teacher and, of course, a student."

Although lab teaching was time consuming, it was familiar to Dent, for he had done that as an undergraduate for his co-operative education job at Northeastern University in Boston, where he majored in Invertebrate Zoology. It was the rich array of courses at Cornell that presented new challenges. In the early nineteen forties Northeastern was a small university with necessarily limited course offerings. Now Dent had whole new fields opened up for him: Biochemistry, Comparative Physiology, Entomology, Geology, and many others. Among these his graduate committee suggested courses for a Master's Degree, with the understanding that he would most likely continue on for a Ph.D. Initially he thought that the Master's would be insurance for employment, if the lengthy years of study for the advanced degree became impractical.

The route to Stimson Hall, a 400 foot climb up a perpendicular flight of stairs and along a street past the Ithaca Gun Company, at first didn't deter Dent from coming down for lunch every day, and stopping along the way to listen to and identify the songs of the migrating birds, which he knew well from lifelong interest. Although he discovered various short cuts that took him only fifteen minutes, he soon decided to take a bag lunch to eat with his colleagues. Instead of trying new recipes for our noon meal, I ended up making to his order the unlikely combination of two peanut butter and cheese sandwiches on pumpernickel bread and another with marmalade; none to be cut in half despite my mild protests!

For my part, I, who until three months before had been commuting daily by train to Boston in high heels, hat, and gloves to work at a small publicity agency, was dedicating myself seriously to my new role as a housewife. In keeping with the lingering tradition of the time, my trousseau included two simple cotton dresses, one blue and one yellow, for morning wear, which, of course, meant housework--a variety of chores mostly new to me. In my pursuit of perfection I even starched Dent's underwear! But only once. Ever appreciative of my efforts, he did tell me that the starch was not only unnecessary, but uncomfortable! And so we stored the incident away among anecdotes of early marriage.

Dent praised my ambitious cooking efforts extravagantly and they were generally successful, although when I tried my Auntie May's "never-fail" recipe for refrigerator yeast rolls, we were amazed to come down the next morning and see that the dough had oozed out around the entire door of the ice box--the result of too warm a temperature inside. Probably we had once again forgotten to put the yellow and black card in the

window to signal the ice delivery man, a ritual unfamiliar to us, coming as we did from our more modern suburban family homes. It was another story to add to our collection.

The new experience of marketing gave me a self-satisfied feeling of maturity and I became a regular at the neighborhood Red and White grocery store, Colbert's, where I proudly introduced myself as "Mrs. Denton Crocker," probably much to their amusement! Aware that our G.I. allowance must be stretched to the limit, I wrote home of my efforts at thrift, recording the prices that seem astonishing today. Grapefruit, four for a quarter; oranges, thirty nine cents a dozen; hamburg, twenty nine cents a pound.

Wartime rationing of meat had ended in 1945, and it was generally plentiful. However, only a half pound of butter or one pound of oleomargarine was allowed, and I was glad to have my mother send me one of her stamps for still rationed sugar for the desserts I loved to make.

In a letter to her I noted another restriction. "We try not to eat too much bread, observing conservation of flour to help the terrible famine abroad. I guess I'll have to give up making cookies, etc." The devastation of the war had left much of the world at the edge of starvation, but our government was loathe to impose rationing again and depended on voluntary efforts at conservation which by no means contributed as much as the bounty of our country could have afforded.

"Your wife's coloring is unusual," Professor Sam Leonard remarked as he drove Dent home from the campus one evening. "That black hair with the blue eyes and light skin. What nationality is she?"

Danish, German, English and a dash of Irish, Dent might have answered, if he happened to remember that blend of family history. It was the professor's next remark, however, that we always remembered.

Knowing that we were just married, Sam, (or Dr. Leonard, as we then properly called him) a genial ruddy, middle-aged man, turned to my husband. "How the Hell do you do it? How do you ever find time to study? I don't think I could have done it."

For us, newcomers and cautiously respectful, his remark was a revelation that professors were human.

Sam was right. It was hard to give priority to studying. We made love with abandon, leaving the dinner dishes strewn in the kitchen in the evening, staying in bed till noon on Sundays.

The delight of being in love suffused every ordinary event and task. A brief, intense courtship during two furloughs before Dent went overseas had been followed by a more than two year aching separation. Now we resumed our courtship with the endless conversations, movie dates, window shopping, and aimless walks that we had missed, all illuminated by the fulfillment of desire.

Spring came, warm and soft, with bursts of showers and the lavish gold of forsythia. The annual procession of migrating warblers--red starts, black-throated greens, orange throated blackburnians, and more--flitted along steep-walled Cascadilla Gorge and perched on the nearby bordering trees, their jubilant songs clear above the rushing stream. As Dent pointed them out to me, it made bird watching seem easy!

Hand in hand, we walked everywhere, reveling in our new life together; the lack of a car seemed no deprivation. We loved the names of the streets--Seneca, Tioga, Dewitt. Everything delighted us, and we exchanged smiles with passersby, amused especially by a large, friendly man who regularly walked his incongruously small terrier, addressing her fondly as "Frances!" We walked down North Aurora to the stores and movie theaters that lined State Street or to catch the bus to the campus; and once when

we found a dollar bill on the sidewalk, giddy as children, we splurged at the College Spa downtown where we each had two ice cream sundaes, butterscotch, followed by hot fudge! Always on the way home we stopped at the bridge over Fall Creek to watch the dark flow of water and give each other kisses.

A walk in the opposite direction took us to the Renwick Bird Sanctuary in Stewart Park on the shore of Lake Cayuga. There Dent introduced me to the patience realistically required for bird watching. After the occasional quick reward of seeing my first cardinal, a scarlet tanager, and a mewing gray catbird, the less conspicuous birds high in the newly leaved trees eluded me, but Dent was attuned to their songs, as well as their subtle differences of flight and coloration, and kept a lengthening list of sightings.

Focused though we were on each other, we welcomed new friendships, and the companionship of Bob Roecker, one of Dent's buddies from the 31st Malaria Survey unit, who had returned to Cornell to complete his undergraduate work and stayed on to get his Ph.D. in herpetology. Bob, a big, bumbling, smiling young man, was our first visitor, arriving almost as soon as our luggage, and although I had never met him before, his boyish enthusiasm and good nature endeared him to me at once. Bob was our early guide to the people and places of Cornell, leading us on a long, up and down hike across the campus while he kept up a lively running commentary. Our friendship lasted a lifetime, and he always liked to refer fondly to the days on Morotai, when he and Dent had "trembled with patriotism" in their foxhole during the nightly Japanese bombardments.

Another early welcome was extended by Dr. Benjamin Young, Dent's advisor for his Master's Degree and later chair of the committee that oversaw his work for his Ph.D. A mild-mannered man in his late fifties, he was an invertebrate zoologist, but to Dent he seemed more like an affable businessman than a professor or scholar. He and his wife

Nola invited us for Sunday dinner at their home in tree-shaded Cayuga Heights adjoining the campus, where many of the established faculty lived. In that gracious setting, listening to their reminiscences of travels in Europe, we began to envision the kind of life the future might hold for us, well removed from the limitations of our G.I. benefits. With continuing thoughtfulness they gave us tickets to a symphony concert at Bailey Hall where Dent, usually an intent and appreciative listener, confessed to me later that all he could think about that evening was how white my arms were against the black of my dress!

I was invited to the Cornell Brides Club, which was open to the new wives of Cornell faculty and graduate students, and at the first meeting I attended I met Margaret Yoder, a lively red-head from Pueblo, Colorado. We were mutually amazed that a third of the women were burdensomely pregnant, yet gamely willing to play a get-acquainted game that required the players to roll a peanut across the floor with their noses! We sat that one out, and made plans to get together soon.

Margaret was the first artist I had known, and I can still recall her large water color of a night time cityscape gleaming in the rain. Her husband Don, a sandy-haired, amiable man, had been a basketball player at Wabash College in Indiana and was studying for a doctorate in plant pathology. Through them we met Bill Paddock, another plant pathologist, and his wife Liz, and we three couples enjoyed occasional dinners together, planned for five thirty to eight as “the boys” had to study.

A mutual friend put me in touch with Pebbie Chapin, a former Simmons College classmate, who was in Ithaca while her husband George completed his degree at the Agricultural College in preparation for joining his family’s farming enterprise in Cambridge, New York. George was the only veteran we knew who bore visible scars

from the war. During the Allied Campaign in Italy an accidental explosion caused him to lose his right hand, deafened him, and left his face badly scarred by black powder burns. He had a prosthesis and a hearing aid, and it was with some trepidation that I invited him and Pebbie to dinner. Afterward in a letter to my mother in which I described his injuries, I concluded, ". . . but he's so absolutely fine about it that you just wouldn't think of acting any way but perfectly normal with him."

That was the kind of gloss that we all put on the recent past as we faced the future with optimism and determination, whatever private struggles veterans and their families might have been enduring. The men referred to their service only casually, if at all; only years later would time grant a perspective that allowed for open recollection.

Although we loved exploring Ithaca, we were increasingly drawn to the wide green lawns and paths of the Cornell campus. Buses regularly circled from downtown up the hill along Stewart Avenue, to Eddy Street and Collegetown, and occasionally I would meet Dent at the office in Stimson, and we would have dinner in the cafeteria at Willard Straight Hall, the towering Gothic-style student center popularly known as The Straight, or go to a lecture or movie.

We heard talks by Professor Arthur Allen, a pioneering ornithologist and well-known popular lecturer, and by Professor Albert Wright, a herpetologist and authority on amphibians and reptiles, who spoke at the scientific literature class. J. Robert Oppenheimer, director of the secret laboratory in New Mexico that produced the first atomic bomb, was the Messenger lecturer that spring, giving a series of six lectures on "Atomic Physics in Civilization." Although Dent had been too busy to attend the earlier lectures in the series, we managed to go to the final dramatic one in which Oppenheimer declared the need for world atomic control.

At the end of May when Dent's parents came to visit they drove us about, and we saw for the first time the expanse of the surrounding countryside--great prosperous farms, fields bright with yellow mustard flowers, red barns with Dutch colonial roofs, and the clear blue lakes, Seneca and Cayuga, extending for miles. We stopped at Watkins Glen where the falls rushed through deeply cut and curved gorges, passed lesser Montour and Hector Falls, and close to home stopped at cascading Buttermilk Falls on the outskirts of Ithaca. The loveliness of the rural landscape, its breadth and contours so different from the scenes where we had grown up or traveled, bound us more closely to the setting of our new life together.

As June and the end of the term approached, Dent spent long hours studying for lab quizzes and final exams, as well as correcting myriad student papers, while I undertook the challenge of finding an apartment for the next year, hopefully on the hill nearer to the university and to the friends we had made. Although rentals remained almost impossible to find, on many sunny mornings I set forth optimistically to climb the long, steep streets from downtown in my search. After numerous disappointing rebuffs, I was successful!

Just a couple of blocks up the hill from Collegetown on tree-lined Bryant Avenue, Mrs. Dudley, an elderly widow, had a furnished basement apartment for rent in her well-

kept brick home. The sixty dollars a month rent was extravagant for our meager circumstances, but the location, just a seven minute walk to Stimson Hall, was ideal. We signed a one year lease which would begin September first.

"A perfect apartment," I wrote home exuberantly. "Living room, bedroom, nice kitchen (four burner stove, electric refrigerator, lots of cupboards), gleaming modern bath, and closed in sun porch."

We would learn later how little sun penetrated a basement apartment and how little heat from the overhead pipes warmed the floors in winter, but for the moment we were delighted with our find.

By the end of June Dent had passed the first two courses toward his degree. We packed the old trunk and numerous cartons with clothes, books, and a few new belongings, visited briefly at our parents' homes on the North Shore of Massachusetts, then headed for Woods Hole on Cape Cod where Dent, as part of his program, had been accepted for a six week course in marine biology at the Marine Biological Laboratory.

Faced with another housing challenge in Woods Hole, we were lucky again when we were able to rent a bedroom, study, and bath in the sprawling seaside home of a local scientist and his family. We ate our meals in the Mess Hall of the MBL, supplementing them with peanut butter sandwiches and ice cream cones as we walked around the village immersed in the sounds and smells of the ocean, the frequent mists, and the moan of the fog horns.

Dent attended lectures in the morning and field trips by boat to neighboring islands in the afternoon, followed by time to care for the collected specimens and

continue discussion of them. Further lab work continued for a couple of hours in the evening, or there might be a visiting lecturer.

Four years at Simmons College, where I majored in English, had not exposed me to biology or lab experience; now, eager to understand Dent's work, I was studying Ralph Buchsbaum's Animals Without Backbones, an introduction to the invertebrates. Often I sat at the lab table with Dent for a half hour or so after meals, intrigued to gaze into the microscope with his coaching and see examples of the creatures I had been reading about. Sometimes if there was room on board the boats setting out for field trips, I was welcomed to go along, so that too was a new experience for me as I trudged along after Dent, climbed the rocky shore, and looked into tide pools. It was another dimension of our companionship that pleased us both.

The invertebrate course had just ended when we received a telegram from Dr. Young, Dent's graduate committee chair, informing us that Cornell would be opening two weeks late due to the continuing influx of veterans enrolling and the shortage of completed housing.

The delay gave Dent time to continue a research project that he had started: an observational study of the inter-activity of hermit crabs that inhabited snail shells with a particular species of polyps growing on them. From early childhood I had walked along the beaches of Boston's North Shore collecting the whorled empty shells of periwinkles, but I had never seen a snail shell with the head, legs, and pincers of a hermit crab sticking out. These creatures were the subject for Dent's research. The shells were covered with what might appear to be algae, but were in fact attached polyps. In an example of mutualism the activity of the hermit crabs provided the polyps with fresh sea water and

the plankton within, while the specialized stinging spines among the polyps protected the crabs from predators.

With most of the instructors having left at the end of August, Dent was given an available, well-equipped research room adjacent to an aquarium with running water. He acquired chemicals, stains, dishes, and tubes, in addition to his microscopes and books, and in a final flourish inscribed the identifying card on the door as "Mr. and Mrs. D.W. Crocker," which made us both smile!

Stony Beach, where he collected and studied specimens, was a convenient ten minutes away, and together in chilly September weather we went to a tidal area where the hermit crabs were common. At half hour intervals Dent entered the cold water to count in a measured space the number of active versus inactive crabs whose movements influenced the feeding of the polyps, while I took careful notes for him. Also, in the lab I scratched numbers on the backs of snail shells, some with hermit crabs in them and some without, so that we could keep track of how many times they changed their shells. The completed detailed study revealed complex inter-actions and adaptations on the part of the polyps and the hermit crabs. Within the next year and a half Dent wrote up his findings for his Master's dissertation and received that first degree from Cornell in February, 1948.

At the end of September we made the long, slow trip from Boston to Ithaca through rolling green countryside; first by train to Syracuse, punctuated by the conductor's rhythmic calling out of arrivals and departures at Albany, Herkimer, Utica; then by bus from Syracuse to Cortland, and eventually to Ithaca and the apartment on Bryant Avenue. In the fading light of fall the apartment with its small rooms, few

windows, and dark furnishings looked less cheery than I had remembered. However, once some of our stored wedding gifts arrived by Railway Express, our enthusiasm returned. We set the Paul Revere silver bowl and candle sticks on the little dining table by the single window in the living room, put our pastel Luray pottery and candlewick glassware in the kitchen cupboards, and placed a deep blue taffeta puff on the four poster bed that dominated the small bedroom.

We became acquainted promptly with the conveniences of Collegetown, an active student community of somewhat shabby apartment houses and busy stores--Egan's Market, a drug store, two book stores, the Market Basket, an ice cream store. On the right hand side of Dryden Road heading up to Bryant Avenue was a delicatessen where we became enamored of their sharp cheddar cheese and Smithfield ham spread.

Food, however, would not be my interest for awhile. On a sunny morning in early October a bout of morning sickness signaled that I was pregnant. We were thrilled, but unfortunately it was not normal morning sickness; it was twenty four hour sickness every day for two months. Dent managed to fit my early appointments with Dr. Edward Hall, our obstetrician, into his academic schedule, supporting me through fainting spells on our bus trips to the office on Buffalo Street where what appeared to be half the population of Cornell, if not Ithaca, waited in various stages of pregnancy. The accepted remedies of the time failed to alleviate my early distress until they tried vitamin shots which finally did begin to give me some relief. "An inglorious beginning for something so wonderful," I wrote to my mother.

Dent fended for himself uncomplainingly and tried to encourage me with recommended offerings of crackers and dried toast, all to no avail. My nauseous condition was not helped by the aroma from the bags of apples that Bob Roecker had

asked us to store for him in our sun porch off the living room, since he had no space for them in his single boarding house room on Linden Street. Dubious though we were about how he acquired them, he assured us that it was common practice for students to help themselves regularly from the bounty of the Cornell orchards. Whatever the ethics of that gathering, I found it easier to accommodate to than storing in our little freezer a squirrel that Bob had shot for a future meal, carefully wrapped though it was.

Worse still was the day that he cooked a raccoon in our kitchen for his Sunday dinner, while I closed myself off in the bedroom in an attempt to remove myself not only from the pungent odor, but also from the whole idea of the project. After that, Dent had to refuse Bob any more culinary accommodations, although when I was able to cook again, we shared many good times with Bob over more traditional meals.

I had just emerged from the weeks of nausea when I was threatened with a miscarriage and ordered to stay in bed. Since we did not yet know any neighbors and, as part of lingering postwar shortages telephones were still not available for new customers, I was completely isolated,. Unaware of possible complications that would have required emergency care, I lay patiently in bed in the dark little bedroom, praying for the safety of my unborn baby, waiting for Dent to come home from work with his unfailing love and cheer. Again he had to turn his hand to cooking and dishwashing, in addition to teaching and studying, until my mother was able to come to help for a week or two. On a cold December night, with smiling pride and typical confidence, he brought home a luxurious baby carriage that he had been able to buy second-hand for a very fair price. It made the prospect of having the baby reassuringly real for both of us.

By Christmastime my health seemed secure. At the neighborhood florist Dent paid a dollar for a little table tree and bought a few dull red and green plastic balls to

decorate it, for there were not yet any imported glass ones from Europe available. From the foil lining of his Lucky Strike cigarette package he cut out a star for the top that we preserved for sixty eight years. After stockings and presents, dinner at the Hotel Ithaca completed the joyous celebration of our first married Christmas.

At the time of Dent's studies the Zoology Department had eight members, of whom two, Benjamin Young and Donald Griffin, a young physiologist, comprised his graduate committee. Other faculty members were Perry Gilbert, a vertebrate anatomist; Bill Wimsatt, a histologist; Sam Leonard, an endocrinologist who did groundbreaking research on the relationship between hormones and behavior; LaMont Cole, an early ecologist, who arrived in 1948; and a neuroanatomist with whom Dent had little contact. They were all relatively young, approachable, dedicated teachers and researchers.

Perry was a highly organized lecturer and occasionally Dent would visit his class just to try to latch on to some of his style. He lectured without notes and was famed for his ability to draw on the blackboard with both hands simultaneously. Dent enjoyed talking about various kinds of symbiosis with Perry, who gave him many references to appropriate literature. Perry's own research increasingly focused on sharks, and he later became director of the Mote Marine Laboratory in Florida, although he continued his affiliation with Cornell. Dent and I attended his retirement banquet in 1978 where the soup served was shark!

The chair of the department was Howard Adelmann, an embryologist. Dent recalled him as stooped in posture, a chain smoker with a gravelly voice, an intellectual, author, and accomplished pianist, who at gatherings at his home enjoyed playing music by Bach. Having studied in Germany with Hans Spemann, winner of the 1935 Nobel

Prize for Physiology or Medicine, Professor Adelmann spoke German fluently. He was the examiner who determined whether the graduate students had sufficient reading ability in that language to attain their degrees.

Although Dent was enrolled in the College of Arts and Sciences, a number of his courses were in the Agricultural College, for Cornell encouraged students to work across departments, disciplines, and colleges. Even so, he sensed some competition between the Zoology Department at Stimson and the biologists at the "Ag" College with whom he studied and who included Edward Raney, a recognized leader among ichthyologists, and William Hamilton, Jr., an ardent field biologist and researcher.

A year into his studies Dent was working toward a Master of Arts degree, which by the end of the second year would prepare him for teaching in a preparatory school or high school and give us the opportunity to move on to an independent life. However, such jobs, in addition to teaching, could require sport coaching or dormitory residency with the students, and would not allow an outlet for his growing motivation to do research. Convinced that a doctoral degree would lead him toward the goals he valued most, we talked over these possibilities together and were ready for the long haul. The support of the G.I. Bill made it possible to undertake the extended time; Dent began to lay out a plan for the required additional courses for the Ph.D. and to search for a topic for a dissertation.

Meanwhile I grew round and joyful as my pregnancy proceeded and I resumed normal living. A day after a snow storm we bundled up against the eleven degree temperature in the late afternoon and walked to Stimson Hall to pick up some materials Dent needed. Crossing the little bridge over Cascadilla, we saw snow covered trees and

enormous icicles hanging from the sides of the gorge, a fairyland set against the delicate pink of the sky as the sun slipped out of sight, and walking home in the starlit dark we thought the crystalline scene equally beautiful. We were happy companions again, going to lectures on campus or downtown to the movies, having friends over for dinner, accumulating a layette and furnishings for the baby.

Increasingly Dent's studies filled our days and evenings. The first Ag College course he took, the introductory course in vertebrate zoology known as Zoo 8, encompassed all disciplines except ornithology, with each class of vertebrates taught by its specialist, which included in addition to Raney and Hamilton, Robert Matheson, a distinguished entomologist and author of the text used; Dwight Webster, a promising young limnologist, and A. H. Wright, the herpetologist, soon to retire. Both the lectures and labs were new material to Dent and the lab, where one learned to identify a large number of species by studying preserved specimens, required much memorization. He made out 3x5 cards for each genus and species and using those I quizzed him many evenings. Fifty years later he could still remember most of them! Of the several Ag College courses available after Zoo 8, he took two in ichthyology, one in entomology, and one in limnology.

Dent's job as a teaching assistant in the freshman zoology course continued to help support us, and although it limited the hours he had available for his own course work, it was valuable experience. He was the only one of the Zoo1 assistants mentioned in the Cornell Student Guide, which said how helpful he was to students, and a further vote of confidence was Dr. Young's invitation to have him give a lecture on insects to sixty students when Dr. Young was ill.

In April the startling discovery of a tumor on Dent's chest required immediate surgery and a stay at the infirmary. Each day, wearing a scooped neck turquoise maternity dress that he liked, I walked down to visit him where he waited in his hospital bed, eager and handsome with the dark shadow of his beard. The surgeon's report that the growth was benign erased a fear that we had not really acknowledged. Almost carelessly grateful for that escape, we picked up our routine again and just a day after his discharge Margaret Yoder gave a small shower for me, where I received more items for the layette that I had been collecting eagerly for our baby, due on June 15.

Hovering over us was the recent threat of our landlady to evict us, so that she could raise the rent to $65 a month. With the OPA (Office of Price Administration) still controlling rents after the war, she could not put us out until we found another place to live, but with 300 applications expected for the 35 vacancies in veterans housing the prospects of being accepted after the baby's arrival were nonexistent. Undiscouraged and determined to call 306 ½ home, we cleared a tiny patch of ground by our entry and planted a few pansies and zinnias.

At the end of May I was typing a term paper for Dent on a typewriter borrowed from our friend Pebbie Chapin. On the summery evening of June 2 we were at the zoology department picnic at Stewart Park. In the early darkness of the next rainy morning I started labor pains almost two weeks early and we were in a cab heading for Tompkins County Memorial Hospital. Four hours later, at 10:52 a.m. on Tuesday, June 3, 1947, our first son, Denton Winslow Crocker, Jr., was born.

Adoring parents, we treasured every breath and motion of our little son, yet after my homecoming and the departure of the practical nurse, immersed in the new routine of feedings every three hours, distressing colic and crying, we both grew desperately tired.

Many a night Dent walked the floor with the baby to comfort him and let me get some rest, so that my milk would continue to flow.

"He's a real mogul," Dent chuckled, as he realized how the baby ruled our lives, and that was the origin of Denton, Jr.'s nickname "Mogie."

Dent was a supportive and loving husband and father, even washing diapers sometimes in the little counter-top washing machine that his parents had given us, but the atmosphere was not conducive to studying. On an afternoon when the baby's crying made it difficult for him to try to concentrate in preparation for an exam, I lay down on our bed with our little one and we both fell asleep, granting Dent needed quiet. Despite these constant interruptions, within that first month Dent got 93 on an Organic Chemistry test.

Concerned about money with our new responsibility of a child, when the chemistry course ended Dent applied for work on the Cornell grounds crew for the remainder of the summer, digging ditches and breaking up rock for road surfacing. He made about fifty dollars a week, a goodly amount in those days, but swinging a pick and shovel was exhausting work and looking back later he thought the time would have been better spent taking courses. He did always remember with satisfaction the camaraderie of the Italian workmen who soon accepted him as a regular guy and not just a soft academic!

As she had threatened, our landlady did indeed try to have us evicted. At the end of August the sheriff, obviously uncomfortable with his task of serving papers to a veteran with a young wife and new baby, came to deliver the eviction notice. He spoke

kindly and conceded that the OPA regulations would protect us, as they did. It was an unpleasant situation, but while we waited for a unit in Vetsburg to become available eventually, life was full. Our love was doubled with the joy of having our golden-haired little boy, Dent was progressing toward his degree, and our circle of friends was growing.

On a sunny day that fall when I was pushing Mogie in his carriage, I met Joan Smith, wheeling her baby son, Bobbie. We were delighted to find we were neighbors; she lived in a second floor apartment two doors up the street from us and our babies had been born just four days apart. She was a pretty, soft-spoken young woman with brown hair and blue eyes and her tall husband Julian, whose serious appearance masked a keen sense of humor, was an assistant professor in the School of Chemical Engineering. He and Dent were immediately congenial and the four of us became lifelong friends.

Also in the Smiths' building were Ricky Wicks with her husband, a student in the Veterinary College, and their baby. When spring came we three mothers gathered in the welcome sunshine on the front steps to visit to let our babies sunbathe after the confinement of the long winter. From the multi-storied windows of the Cosmopolitan Club across the street, Indian students hung their brilliantly colored turbans to dry after laundering, the great lengths waving in the breeze, while an overly meticulous neighbor not only swept her sidewalk clean, but proceeded to sweep her front lawn.

Other new friends were the Gottschangs, Elyse and Jack and their little boy Tommy. Elyse was a smiley, outgoing brunette, and Jack, lanky and energetic, was a vertebrate zoologist working toward his Ph.D. For the time being they were living in the country, caring for an ill woman in return for their rent. They were both California natives and could never get used to the chill of a northern spring, let alone the year that it actually snowed on Easter! However, they were perpetually good-humored and

enthusiastic, our little boys were best friends, and eventually we all were living in Vetsburg.

Dent received his Master of Arts degree in February of 1948 without fanfare, and the inscribed scroll was stored away in its protective tube while he continued his studies for his doctorate. Three professors had agreed to serve on the doctoral committee that would oversee his work: Benjamin Young, his master's advisor and an invertebrate zoologist, was chair of the committee; Edward C. Raney, an ichthyologist in his late thirties then, a dynamic personality and active researcher, was advisor for Dent's minor of Vertebrate Zoology, and Donald Griffin was his advisor for a minor in Comparative Physiology. It was he, working at the Huyck Preserve in Rensselaerville, New York, while still an undergraduate at Harvard, who proved that bats at night find their way about and locate their prey by echolocation. In the early nineteen fifties Professor Griffin went to Cambridge as a Harvard Fellow, subsequently becoming a tenured professor there, and later joined the faculty of Rockefeller University.

"He was one of the great American scientists of the 20th century," noted a colleague at Rockefeller at the time of his death.

Dent remembered Griffin as the very caricature of an intellectual-- lean, stooped, soft-voiced. In lecture he paced the floor with no notes, seemingly disorganized, but his incisive mind and clarity of thought rose above all that and he was the professor Dent most admired.

These three men, through examination of Dent's course record, reading his dissertation, and questioning him in his final oral exam, would determine his fate at Cornell.

Often a doctoral dissertation is a component of the research of the chair of one's graduate committee, but in Dent's case his chair, Dr.Young, was not doing research, so Dent was free to choose his own topic, as long as he could make a case for it with the committee. The next challenge was to come up with a research project that would lead to some significant result, would not take forever, and once completed would be an acceptable piece of research to the committee.

Always fascinated by animal adaptations and with his interest in ecology generated by Lamont Cole, Dent began to formulate a project. If he could find two closely related species, adapted to different environments, he could then study their differences in form and behavior and so discover those particular efficiencies that made them successful in their "chosen" environment, if not as successful as their counterpart species when in that other species' environment. After discussing this with LaMont, Dent began checking out crayfish locally for a pair of species in the same genus, living in the same general area, but restricted to distinctly different environments. He began searching the literature for what was known about crayfish and to verify that the work he was contemplating had not already been done by someone else.

It was a distinct disappointment when he came across an article in the American Midland Naturalist that essentially duplicated the study he was planning, but he made a quick turnaround. In becoming acquainted with crayfish species in the Ithaca area, he was soon aware that it wasn't known how many species of crayfish there were in New York State, what their distributions in the state were, or the reasons for these distributions. Life histories for these species in New York were not worked out and there were no keys to their identification. Finding the answers to these unknowns became his research.

And so again I was introduced to a group of creatures entirely new to me. Often known as crawdads or mudbugs, crayfish are grayish-brown, generally two to five inches long with a hard carapace or shell, and resemble small lobsters to which they are related taxonomically within a group called Crustacea. I learned that they are often found hiding under rocks or vegetation in brooks and streams where there is fresh water running, and both as scavengers and predators they play as important role in aquatic ecosystems. Eventually, as I went collecting with Dent, I would become familiar enough to occasionally hold one, grasping it carefully around its shell and behind its claws.

Dent learned early that the world's leading researcher on crayfish was Horton H. Hobbs, Jr., a professor at the University of Virginia who worked summers at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and who later was Senior Scientist in their Department of Invertebrate Zoology. In the fall of 1948, Dent traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with Professor Hobbs, a gracious southern gentleman, very generous with his time. He assured Dent that his project was worthwhile and that New York, New England, and much of Canada were a crayfish unknown. Encouraged and motivated, for the next couple of years, in addition to taking classes and teaching, Dent immersed himself in the project and the relevant literature.

The first challenge of his research was to get a sampling of crayfish from the major drainage systems in New York. In response to Dent's query, Ralph S. Palmer, senior scientist and zoologist at the New York State Museum in Albany, informed him that crayfish taken incidentally to fish collections made during multiyear stream surveys had been saved and were at the museum. He gladly loaned the specimens preserved in formaldehyde to Dent, each collection with its attached data in a cheesecloth bag. Since Professor Raney already had maps prepared for his own research of plotting New York

locality data for fish, as Dent identified crayfish species, he was able to record their collection sites on those maps. This was the initial groundwork for the thesis.

After more than a year of hopeful waiting, in July of 1948, #152 in "Little Vetsburg" became available for us. From Bryant Avenue, Dryden Road extended further uphill to far-reaching fields and the unused edge of the campus where in 1945, in a sea of mud, the white, box-like duplex units had been built to shelter the first married veterans returning to Cornell. A fresh breeze swept the treeless settlement that was patterned by the posts and ropes of individual clotheslines, and the distant hillsides were a parquetry of farmlands.

By the time we were next in the long line of applicants, grass had grown, the streets were tarred, and gardens flourished. The partly furnished apartments rented for $30 a month, a considerable relief from the $60 a month we had been paying at Bryant Avemue.

Each unit, about 15 feet by 18 feet, consisted of an L-shaped living room-kitchenette, its rear inside wall dominated by a space heater and hot water tank, plus a sink, an apartment-size stove, an electric roaster that served as an oven, and an ice box that we replaced with a small refrigerator. On the left wall was a sagging, green pullout couch that became our bed at night, while a table under the two windows on the right

served as both a desk and a dining table. In addition there was a little room just large enough to hold a crib and a storage chest, and next to that a tiny bathroom.

Multiple coats of paint, packing crates and bricks adapted for bookcases, and second or third hand furniture lent individuality to the small stark interiors. It was our turn to create a cozy living space, which we did with Dent painting the floor and the all purpose table, while I stitched wine and green striped curtains on a recalcitrant treadle sewing machine that he had bought at an auction. We planted blue morning glories on one side of the trellis at the entrance steps and tomatoes on the other, and with chicken wire Dent fenced in a play area with a sandbox for thirteen months old Mogie.

"Well, you can just think of it as camping out for awhile," Professor Leonard said encouragingly when he stopped by to see us. Actually Dent and I were so pleased with our decorating efforts that we found his well-meaning remark a bit disappointing.

Countless chubby babies in carriages and play pens, and unsteady toddlers, peopled the expanse of adjoining grassy yards, and we all were guided by Dr. Benjamin Spock's new bestselling book, "The Common Book of Baby and Child Care," in which he urged parents to trust their own instincts, not hesitate to pick up a crying baby, and he encouraged the innovation of giving fathers a greater role.

Neighbors were quickly friends. I remember the Wargelins, McEachrons, Mary and Tommy Tompkins, Bill and Jane Mohney, the Snyders , the Weddings and Pearsons. Royal Suttkus and his bride Jean, who was from Saranac Lake, lived in the other half of our unit. He was a student of ichthyologist Ed Raney and went on to Tulane University in Louisiana where he achieved some eminence in his fish research. If our homes were barracks in disguise, they were the last vestiges of war; only occasional reminiscences recalled the events of the recent past. Men who had survived battle or boredom were

home again to share their love and their work. In a time of such gladness the outer pressures receded. Although the Iron Curtain of Communism, as described in Winston Churchill's famous speech at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri two years earlier, had already divided Europe into East and West, we left the world of politics and a dubious peace in the keeping of others.

We were all economizing to survive on the G.I. Bill allowance. Even though we were in dairy country, instead of butter Dent and I bought cheaper white margarine in a plastic bag with an orange capsule that we kneaded until the margarine became a suitable yellow color and we transferred it to a container. For another saving Dent sat on the front steps with a sack of loose tobacco and rolling papers and made his own cigarettes.

During the summers of '48 and '49 he and Jack Gottschang earned some extra money working occasional evenings as runners, or sometimes clerks, for Chet Armstrong, a local auctioneer. After a particularly successful night Chet would take them to dinner at a restaurant, a treat that we reserved only for our wedding anniversary when we would go to Joe's Restaurant on West Buffalo Street for their famous pizza, a new and exotic treat for us.

Clothes were not an expense or even a consideration in our simple existence, although I had learned early from a friend visiting from Boston that the short skirts of wartime were definitely out and everyone was wearing the new longer fashions, inspired originally by French designer Christian Dior. Our mothers began to send me longer skirts and dresses for birthday and Christmas gifts, so gradually I connected a bit to the contemporary scene, even having my shoulder length hair that Dent loved cut to a short bob.

Although many couples had cars, including Margaret and Don Yoder, who had acquired a newly painted bright blue Model A Ford, for Dent and me our major economy was living without one. We walked everywhere, developing a comfortable harmony with the textures and contours beneath our feet, the feel and smells of the changing seasons. I could push the stroller down to Collegetown to get groceries, and with long-legged Jack, Dent hiked the now further distance to the campus, until he had the chance to buy a second-hand British Rudge bicycle that he treasured for years. We explored the nearby roads bordered with clover, buttercups, and Queen Anne's lace in summer, and in the fall with crimson sumac, yellow maples, and silvery explosions of milkweed down. Viewing the world through Mogie's delighted eyes, we visited the big, clean Cornell barns and fields where cows, sheep, and pigs ambled, ate, and nuzzled their young.

Healthy, prolific, hardworking, we all looked toward the future confidently, baby sat each other's children, and shared each other's concerns. Twice a month, while studying husbands watched over the children, a group of wives met in each other's crowded living rooms to hear speakers from the University or Home Bureau discuss topics ranging from musical instruments for children to fashion trends and holiday recipes for gift packages. Knowing that Europe had been ravaged by the war, we prepared boxes to mail to a needy Hungarian family with whom we corresponded for some months until the Communist crack-down there ended that possibility. We smiled over their urgent requests for paprika and packed clothing with a wistful wish to help. We outdid each other serving delicious cakes and coffee and afterward, while we chatted, the conversation inevitably turned to our common background of pregnancies, prolonged labors, and the aftermath of those trials, none of which discouraged us from adding to the baby boom.

Other than those gatherings our social life consisted mostly of our routine comings and goings as neighbors, with playtimes and birthday parties for the children.

At Mogie's second birthday party our little living room was so crowded with children seated at the table and watchful mothers behind them that Margaret Yoder had to climb in the window to take a snap shot!

We often shared holidays with the Gottschangs, who, like ourselves, couldn't afford time from study, or the money, for traveling home. In those days before the inter-state highway system it was a long, slow trip from the North Shore of Massachusetts to Ithaca, but once a year our parents drove out to visit us and two summers we went by bus and train for a refreshing short stay with each family, although Dent returned before me to continue working.

Outside of Vetsburg there were occasional department get-togethers and always a picnic for families at Stewart Park to celebrate the end of the school year. I remember particularly a party that jolly Sam and Olive Leonard hosted for the graduate assistants at their home, with abundant food and dancing afterward. Our friendship with Julian and Joan Smith was a constant even after we moved from Bryant Avenue, and we had a growing bond with Dent's colleague Bill Nutting and his wife Helen, who lived outside of town with their little girl. Dent, of course, had the additional friendships of his various colleagues on campus with their shared interests and inquiring minds. We especially

enjoyed Howie Evans, one of the lab assistants during our last two years, and his delightful bride Erica, who drove about in a pick-up truck with their pet goat, and early welcomed us to their home on Turkey Hill. Howie, a comparative anatomist, had a distinguished career as a professor at the Cornell Veterinary College.

Despite the optimism of the time there were occasional sorrows, most tragic being the death of a young husband and father who, while working in his vegetable garden at the edge of East Vetsburg, was struck by lightning during one of the severe thunderstorms that frequently circled Lake Cayuga.

There was alarm when an expectant mother was threatened with eclampsia, and sadness for occasional miscarriages. In contrast, a mother of two, upon learning of her neighbor's dismay at having an unintended third pregnancy, claimed that if it were she, she would jump up and down until it was terminated. That, of course, was in the years before women's reproductive rights.

On a lighter note, a couple who looked forward each spring to her parents' gift of five dollars that enabled them to go out for Easter dinner, was crushed the year that instead of money they sent their grandchild a big stuffed white bunny!

In contrast to other parts of the university, Vetsburg was a homogeneous, all white community, typical of neighborhoods in general in that era. However, from our frugal, yet more secure middle class background, we learned of the range of economic and geographic origins of this population of students--the Massachusetts country boy who had had to line the worn out soles of his shoes with cardboard during the winters of the Depression, the talented Texan whose hard luck parents had sat around the table drinking beer all day, and the city boy who boasted of stealing fruit cakes to help feed his brothers and sisters. Dent's Army years had acquainted him with the range of human

experience, but learning of it within the academic setting was enlightening for both of us. Our horizons were widened, a valuable result of the G.I. Bill

With Dent settled into a steady rhythm of work and study, I was a full- time homemaker and mother, as were the other women in Vetsburg. Our husbands and our children were our priorities. Even in our minimal quarters routine housekeeping took more time than one might imagine, since the only appliance any one could afford, or had room for, was a washing machine. Hanging clothes out to dry (no driers), ironing (no wash and wear materials yet), sweeping (a vacuum would be an unneeded luxury), and cooking in the cramped little kitchenette were daily chores.

Using a diagram from a magazine, I learned to do a fairly professional job ironing Dent's white shirts, but I was daunted by the domestic talents of many of my neighbors who had grown up in rural settings, schooled in the arts of sewing and the complexities of preserving and canning. I envied their skills. Unaided I had made curtains satisfactorily, but when I was inspired to make simple play suits for Mogie, and later maternity smocks for myself, I relied on competent Pebbie Chapin's patient instructions for the trickier parts of the tissue paper patterns. Pebbie and George had not started a family yet, and although she was working, she often found time to stop by to chat and encourage me in whatever project I was attempting.

Tempted by the abundance of produce in the area, Dent and I invested in the kettle, rack, Ball jars, seals and tongs needed to can tomatoes and peaches successfully, carefully studying the Cornell bulletins with their intimidating cautions about botulism. I remember clearly the humid, 90 degree afternoon when Mogie was an infant and Dent brought home a bushel basket of overripe pears that needed to be dealt with immediately,

inspiring us to make quantities of pear jam that night! We insisted that we liked it and even gave it as gifts, although truthfully we thought it was a little insipid!

Mogie, as we had nicknamed Denton, Jr., was a sunny-natured, affectionate little boy, an early talker with a fast growing vocabulary and an eager curiosity. He was a real companion whether we were taking walks, visiting with friends, or I was letting him help me make cookies. My day revolved around him and among my happiest memories were the times he snuggled against my side while I read to him, often from the new popular Golden books.

Evenings while Dent studied were my own time to read--Sinclair Lewis, Somerset Maugham, William Faulkner, and a new novel, "The Big Sky" by A. B. Guthrie, Jr.; or to write letters to family and friends. Expensive long distance telephone calls were reserved for holidays and emergencies, but a long, detailed personal letter could be mailed for three cents and delivered promptly! Joan Smith's invitation to go with her to the meetings of a women's writers group revived my desire to write for a wider audience. Motivated to write an essay about a rainy day routine with Mogie, I got up the courage to offer it to the group for criticism, and with their encouragement and suggestions for marketing, polished it up and received payment of one hundred dollars when it was published in a women's magazine. That small success kept my underlying wish to write alive through the busy years that lay ahead.

By the spring of 1949 Dent was in the midst of the unrelenting labor required to attain a Ph.D. degree, labor that stretched on seemingly without limit as courses, language requirements, and the qualifying examination led to the more stringent demands

of the thesis. At least there was reassurance in knowing that an advanced degree guaranteed professional recognition.

One might mock the false pride that afflicted some holders of the Ph.D. degree (piled high and deep, as one cynic joked), but most students and spouses took a positive, if unspoken, pride in an achievement that each year separated the less persevering or able. Besides one could not deny the leverage it contributed when the time came to bargain for a teaching or research job. For those who left the university for teaching jobs with "only the thesis to be completed", the degree commonly became a mirage. Too often the demands of work and daily living did not allow time for the concentration and time required to achieve the postponed degree and subsequent publication that contributed to the sum of new knowledge.

Now our times of relaxation were few. We rarely went together to a lecture on campus or made the trek downtown to the movies. Our Sunday walks were to Dent's lab in Stimson Hall with its clutter of specimens and the pervasive odor of formaldehyde. There were frogs and tropical fish for Mogie to watch and he could recognize the butterflies, beetles, and grasshoppers in the display frames.

Music was an occasional source of recreation when Dent tinkered with his little prewar radio in its ivory Bakelite case, trying to get New York's classical station WQXR. Usually we ended up only able to get a country music station in Wheeling, West Virginia! Then we splurged and for five dollars bought a simple turntable for the new long playing vinyl records, which came with a bonus LP. Dent chose one of his favorite compositions, Richard Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel," the beginning of a small collection.

With the coming of summer, when the unrelieved sun melted the tar on the treeless streets of Vetsburg, Joan and Julian Smith often invited us to go with them to

Treman State Park in Enfield to swim and picnic. On one such afternoon in 1949, as Joan and I stood at the water's edge watching our two year old sons splash around, we surprised each other with the news that we were both pregnant again and both due at the end of March. It was another close link in our friendship.

Happy, despite the twenty four hour "morning" sickness, I spent most of the end of the summer lying on the couch in the little living room, while Mogie played on the floor near me and Dent good-naturedly prepared simple meals for himself and Mogie under my direction and offered me dry toast and gingerale.

"You're a good helper, Daddy," Mogie said one morning after he had dropped an egg on the floor and watched Dent patiently wipe up the mess.

During this same time Dent was deeply involved in preparing for his qualifying exam. He would be defending his research proposal and satisfying his committee that he had sufficient background to complete his dissertation. The committee would then have the opportunity to make extensive suggestions on the proposed research and set out expectations for a successful project. Having easily passed the examination for fluency in French given by Professor Sam Leonard, Dent undertook further study of German with a tutor in Collegetown to supplement his earlier undergraduate courses. He then passed that language requirement with the examination by Professor Adelmann, who admonished him to continue reading German to increase his proficiency. In September he passed the qualifying exam for his doctorate.

He was ready to concentrate entirely on the research for his dissertation, except for the continuing responsibility of his lab teaching, when Dr. Young, his committee chair, who was going on sabbatical for the spring term of 1950, offered him and Bill Nutting the opportunity to teach the introductory zoology course. It was a compliment

and also would be a good addition to Dent's resume; he accepted, although it did necessarily extend the time he needed to complete his degree.

For all the couples in Vetsburg the elation of our early postwar existence had settled into the goal-oriented routine of persevering to complete the final demands of degree programs, raising our children, and beginning the search for employment. As veterans completed their studies, packed up, and moved away with their families, other waiting couples filled the vacant apartments. Dent and I, expecting our second child, were excited at the prospect of moving into the larger space of a two-bedroom apartment in one of the elongate, three-unit, gray barracks buildings that comprised "Big Vetsburg," further up the grassy slope beyond the settlement of smaller apartments.

We had the center apartment, number 344, for $35 a month. Dent's former student Ted Hoye with his wife Elaine and their two children lived on one side, and on the other was a couple whose three year old son told Mogie matter-of-factly that sometimes his father beat him with his belt. Since we personally lived by Dr. Spock's no spanking rule, we were dismayed, but Stanley seemed unscathed and liked to come over to play.

In mid-December when the moving day arrived, friends pitched in generously to help with packing, lifting, and transporting our accumulated belongings, and Bill and Helen Nutting invited us for a steak dinner so that I, now heavily pregnant, didn't have to get a meal. Concerned that Mogie might be upset by the change of surrounding, Dent had made fixing his new room a priority that day, placing pictures, books, and toys in a familiar arrangement. By Christmas we were well settled in, happy to have a living room large enough to accept a full size tree to decorate for Mogie's delight!

Now we had a separate kitchen with a real stove, the space heater was separated from the living room, and we had two reasonably sized bedrooms. During the wintry days that followed I sewed curtains for our more numerous windows, played in the snow with Mogie, and prepared for the new baby's arrival with occasional trips downtown to Rothschild's Department Store to supplement the layette of tiny hand-me-downs from Mogie's infant days. Still without a car, we relied on Atwater's downtown market to deliver groceries to supplement what we couldn't get at Buddy's neighborhood store across the bordering highway. Buddy's also carried memorably delicious nougat candy that was Dent's reward for marketing!

While we enjoyed our larger quarters, Julian Smith, who had been promoted to associate professor, and Joan had moved into their new brick ranch house on a large lot on The Parkway. I remember our first meal there with them that winter, a tasty chili for which Joan gave me the recipe that I still use. Fifty years later on our visits with them, we would take the same seats at their dining table, and Joan and Dent still drank tea, while Jules and I chose coffee. By then Jules had retired as Director of the School of Chemical Engineering, Dent had retired as chair of the Biology Department of Skidmore College, and our younger daughter had graduated from Cornell.

During the spring term of 1950, temporarily diverted from his research, Dent concentrated on preparing his lectures for the introductory course that he and Bill Nutting were teaching during Dr. Young's sabbatical leave. Bill was so nervous about the lecturing that he developed boils, but Dent proceeded confidently, although at first he wrote out his lecture notes completely, which I then typed. By the end of the term he achieved his objective of lecturing with no notes at all.

After a brief sampling of spring, damp snow was falling in the early hours of March 30 when my labor pains began and Jack Gottschang drove Dent and me to the hospital. Less than three hours later, at 2:57 a.m. our beautiful baby girl, Carol Helene, entered the world. As the Smiths' son Bobbie and our Mogie had been born four days apart, now our baby girls were born four days apart, and Joan was able to stop to see me when she and Diane were discharged from the hospital, both of us pleased at another happy coincidence in our lives.

It was an extremely busy time for Dent and me, since in addition to the lecturing he continued to teach labs and pursue as he could his research, while at home life revolved around the needs of the new baby and her not quite three year old "big brother." Carol had some colic, although not as severe as Mogie's had been. Nevertheless, once again Dent got up in the night to help, walking the floor with her, cradling her with the magic motion that would soothe her distress and ease her to sleep.

The pressure to complete the degree was building, for his G.I. benefits would soon run out. In his last year as an Assistant in the Department of Zoology Dent was paid $1200, but careful as we had tried to be, we had already dipped deeply into the money he had been able to save while he was overseas. There was not much more we could do to tighten our belts. We cashed the remaining two small wartime savings bonds that I had from my brief working days and continued to scrimp.

In June of 1950 the seemingly peaceful years ended when the war in Korea broke out, ending our isolation from the wider world as several Air Force reservists were immediately called back to active duty. The widespread fear of another world war involving Russia, as well as China, revived old anxieties and generated new.

The comfortable constancy of early friendships was ending. Neighbors and friends were finishing their studies and scattering across the country. Within the next few months the Gottschangs, expecting their third child, left for Ohio where Jack had an appointment in the biology department of the University of Cincinnati; the Yoders with their two little girls moved to Yonkers, New York, where Don would do research at the Boyce Thompson Institute; Pebbie and George Chapin had returned to his family farm in Cambridge, New York.

Partly filling the gap was our new friendship with Betty and King Johns, an attractive couple who lived two doors from us with their three year old son Bucky and a baby girl. King, who had been a second lieutenant in the Marines during World War II, was getting his doctorate in education and the four of us shared many interests. While the men were working and our babies napped or watched the world from their playpens, Betty and I chatted, often stopping to run after our little boys when they strayed too far on their tricycles or wandered away among the grassy yards playing Lone Ranger and Tonto. Now she and King hoped that he could complete his degree before he was called back to his Marine commission.

Dent, having completed the first phase of his research, the plotting of the locality data of the crayfish specimens from the New York State Museum, now faced the blank places on the maps that would have to be filled by further collecting around the state. That, of course, meant we would have to have a car.

Actually we did have a car--of sorts, a 1935 Chevrolet coupe that generous hearted Bill Nutting had left us that June of 1950 when he completed his Ph.D. and went to teach at the rapidly expanding University of Massachusetts in Amherst. Bill asked only that we send him whatever money we were able to get for it at the end of our use and its life, which four months later turned out to be twenty five dollars.

Having the car gave us an exhilarating sense of freedom, but it definitely had its limitations--having to be parked on a slope, then let coast to get the engine going, while Dent ran alongside to give it a running start before jumping in! And although age had not

scarred the exterior too badly, the passenger door was stripped of its interior lining leaving the rusted metal framework completely exposed. Nevertheless, equipped with waders, nets, collecting jars, preservative, and assorted ditty bags, Dent was able to make local collecting trips for the crayfish samples he needed and several times, with three year old Mogie seated between us and baby Carol lying on the shelf behind, we went on family trips to streams where I, with one watchful eye on the children, would help Dent work the seine, a large fishing net with floats along the top edge and weights along the bottom. Once we even ventured as far as Rochester, looking unsuccessfully for a species in the Genesee River, then drove home through the dark countryside with only Dent anxiously aware that we had no spare tire for an emergency!

Obviously we had to invest in a more reliable car for Dent's further collecting trips, and in October of 1950 we bought a green 1937 Dodge sedan for $350. He made

his last collecting excursion in the spring of 1951 with the support of a small department grant to defray costs and the help of another grad student, Al Gustafson. It was a several days trip that took him among other places to the northeastern-most corner of New York, Rouses Point. Always concerned about the family, he called me from that faraway point, troubled to learn that Carol was ill with a very high fever. However, reassured that our pediatrician had come to the apartment and diagnosed it as a case of roseola which should subside without complications, Dent completed the trip.

In addition to collecting specimens, Dent was exploring the related question of how species came to be in the stream systems they inhabited and was researching the literature on the glacial geology of New York, where he knew the answers lay. The write-up of his studying and conclusions was time consuming, but went smoothly. When he gave a rough draft to his doctoral committee member Ed Raney to examine, Ed returned it with an enormous number of corrections, not of fact, but of style. Dent continued to revise and polish successive drafts.

"It was a valuable education," Dent recalled later, "and I thank him every time I write anything."

Meanwhile a departmental staff artist did the necessary drawings for the thesis, which Dent later redid for the published version.

During our last summer at Cornell I shared the pressure of completing the doctoral thesis by typing the successive drafts as Dent brought them home. On hot July nights after I put the children to bed I often sat alone on the front steps to cool off, slowly eating an ice cream pop bought at a neighbor's home concession, while I waited for Dent to bring me more pages. The old portable typewriter sounded noisily until two or three in the morning, sometimes waking the baby, who cried with the hurt of teething.

Fatigue and tension grew with the additional chore of preparing and sending out resumes and job applications.

When the dissertation was at last completed, there remained only the final exam, an oral conducted by the three members of Dent's committee. Despite his decision not to attempt preparation for such an all-inclusive exam, he passed, troubled by only one question.

"Presumably I was now prepared to be a college professor," he wrote in his memoir. "All I had to do was find a job!"

The first opportunity was at the University of Vermont, which paid only $2200 a year, a discouraging, if not hopeless, prospect for a family of four. Then Dent learned of an opening at prestigious Amherst College in the rolling countryside of western Massachusetts, a two–year appointment to replace a professor who was going on leave to work with the Atomic Energy Commission. After his interview there Dent was hired as an instructor in the biology department at a salary of $4,000 a year, an impressive sum to us compared to the limitations of grad student economizing.

On a sunny morning in late August of 1951 I sat in the car parked on Dryden Road and watched proudly as Dent came out of the bookbinder's, smiling with pleasure as he walked across the street toward me, carrying the required three bound copies of his completed thesis. He was still trim and handsome at thirty two, and only a few threads of silver at his temples testified to the years of work and study. He handed the books to me, and we kissed each other with joyful satisfaction and a degree of amazement that our goal had finally been reached.

Dent's doctorate was not formally conferred until the following February 1952, and then it seemed almost a mere souvenir, as he was in the midst of teaching and chose

to forego the traditional ceremony and simply receive the document in the mail. After further collecting, research, and revision during summers in the mid-fifties, in addition to his painstaking redoing of the drawings, his thesis was published in 1957 as "The Crayfishes of New York State," Bulletin 355 of the New York State Museum and Science Service, the first of his several scholarly publications.

In those golden late summer days of our accomplishment we descended quickly from our brief euphoria to the practical details of packing and arranging for a moving van to ship our few belongings, while Dent began developing the courses he would soon be responsible for, Invertebrate Zoology and Ecology, and designing meaningful labs. In addition he would be a lecturer for segments of the introductory science course, Evolution, which included historical geology, paleontology, astronomy, and genetics, among others. Periodically in the midst of our busyness we teased each other with reminders that Dent was actually on the faculty at Amherst, or that I was going to be a faculty wife! To ready the children for the move we shared our enthusiasm with promises of discovering new places and making new friends.

Although we were eager to embark on the next phase of our life, it was an emotional tug to leave Ithaca and Cornell with all the memories of early love and learning. In cooperation with Cornell University, the G.I. Bill had provided the education, housing, and subsistence that prepared Dent for a career in teaching and research that would influence colleagues and generations of students. In addition, we had achieved a solid marriage enriched by two beloved children.

But it was time to move on. On a sunny morning the four of us settled into the crowded old green Dodge and with a lingering gaze at Vetsburg, headed east to assume

our place in the academic scene for which we had been preparing for five and a half years.