Sheehy Family Newsletter

September 2020 Volume 1, Issue 1

Introduction

This is the first edition of a Sheehy family newsletter. The ever-growing family tree has more and more branches and leaves and it is increasingly difficult to keep track of all of our cousins, nephews, nieces, aunts and uncles. The annual family reunion has helped us maintain our links with one another, although imperfectly because not everyone is able to attend. This year, though, we were forced to cancel the reunion due to the pandemic, so even that mechanism could not be used.

One goal of our newsletter is to spread knowledge about our family history. Several family members have information about our ancestors and the times in which they lived that is potentially of interest to many of us. The oral family history written down by Helen Sheehy Langley (The Sheehy Family: From Erin to Oregon) is a major source of inspiration. It is an entertaining and highly informative book, and well worth reading. Another source of excellent descriptions of the life of the Sheehy family in the early 1900s is the collection of stories by Mary Sheehy Heriza (Glimpses of Childhood: 1911-1924). Both of these books provide clear evidence of the importance of recording our family history to avoid the loss of facts and details over time.

This first newsletter includes several notes about previous generations of the family and their experiences, with the objective of providing new knowledge and context about our family history. Future editions of the newsletter will cover other parts of the family and will include related material to broaden our understanding of the lives of our ancestors.

A second objective of the newsletter is to provide more detailed background on selected members of the current generation of the family. We have some very interesting relatives who have done some fascinating things. This edition of the newsletter includes several short pieces introducing some of these persons more completely to the rest of the family. Future editions will add more stories about our contemporary relatives.

Finally, the newsletter will provide current news, such as reports on births, marriages, obituaries, new jobs, moves, etc., for members of the extended family. It will also include pieces by family members on their trips to ancestral homes and their impressions and thoughts, as well as other topics that could be of general interest.

The newsletter will be published at least once a year at the time of the annual family reunion. Any and all members of the family are encouraged to contribute.

~ Robert Sheehy, Son of Robert Sheehy and Dona (Storie) Sheehy

"Family and friends of the person leaving for foreign lands would come this far. Here was the separation. This is the Bridge of Tears."

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Family History

Difficult Choices, Difficult Times

It was the 1840s in Ireland. The English treated the poor Roman Catholic Irish as if they were not human. The Roman Catholic Irish were forbidden to openly practice their faith and were not allowed to own property. They were starving from the impact of the potato famine. They were dying by the thousands and leaving Ireland by the thousands. Some left by choice. Some left against their will to be shipped to the penal colonies of Australia perhaps for what would now be considered petty crimes—stealing food, speaking out against the English government, or perhaps something more serious--inciting insurrection, assault of an Englishman, rioting.

In Newcastle West, County Limerick, Patrick Sheehy and Mary Collins Sheehy decided to go. Patrick would give up his lease, either by choice or by force, to the property he farmed in Dromin Beesom, just outside Newcastle West. They would gather their children and little if anything else, and make the journey to the seaport at Cork. There they would gain passage on a ship to America. Patrick was a tenant farmer. He likely sold his livestock and farming equipment and everything else he owned to pay for his family's journey.

When the time came to leave, Patrick and Mary and their children, like many before and many after, likely said their goodbyes to the family and friends they left behind on the south edge of Newcastle West at what was known as the Bridge of Tears—where they crossed the river Arra at the beginning of their journey south to Cork and on to America. This was the last time they would ever see their home and their loved ones. Like their countrymen, they would arrive in America destitute. They were refugees. There is no other way to describe them. They would have been penniless and starving. While no record of their immigration has been located, they likely arrived in New York since that is where many of the ships from Cork arrived in the US at that time. The family likely included Patrick and Mary and their children John, Patrick, Jr., Daniel, Catherine, Dennis, Richard, and Thomas. There was an older son, Michael who may also have come to America, but this is unclear. Dennis, Richard and Thomas in later years reported to the US Census takers that they immigrated to America in 1849, 1850, and 1851. Family oral history states Thomas James was 18 months old when they immigrated. However, the discovery of Thomas James' baptism record in Newcastle West is dated in August of 1843. The first record of the family in the US is believed to be in the 1850 Census in Buffalo, NY. So, the family may have immigrated as early as late in 1843 and as late as the first half of 1850. Incidentally, it was common to know one's birthday, but not one's birth year at that time.

After spending some time in Buffalo, the family settled in the Monroe and Shullsberg area of Wisconsin. They would stay there until at least 1875. However, Thomas James followed some of his older brothers to Montana in 1865.

Sheehys at Bridge of Tears, Newcastle West

Like Patrick and Mary Sheehy, among the many thousands who decided to go, in the village of Ederney in County Fermanagh, James Gillogly and Ellen Burke Gillogly decided they would take their children and go. When it came time for them to leave Ederney, they traveled north to the port of Derry. There they booked passage on a ship for America. In this case, we know the ship was named Envoy. It was a type of sailing ship called a barque. A barque is distinguished by having at least three masts and square rigging. The Gilloglys sailed on the Envoy from Derry on May 31, 1847 and landed in St. Johns, New Brunswick, Canada on June 19, 1847. The family included James and Ellen, and their children Hugh, Bell (Isabel), Susan, Matilda, Christopher, Sally (Sarah), and Mary.

The trip would have been a trial for the passengers. Each adult was allotted 10 cubic feet of space, 7 pounds of bread, biscuit, flour or rice per week and 3 quarts of water per day. Children under age 14 were allotted half space and half food. Sleeping accommodation consisted of wooden shelving constructed in the 'tween decks. Single men were on one end of the ship, single women on the other end and families in the middle. Passengers had to provide their own bedding and utensils. The trip could take up to five weeks. The Gilloglys were blessed with a mere 20 days at sea.

They were not so lucky once they arrived in Canada. Smallpox had been detected on their ship. They were accordingly remanded to Partridge Island in the Bay of Fundy near St. Johns. The 24-acre island was the first quarantine station in the new world, where anyone suspected of having come into contact with a person suffering from any of a number of diseases, including cholera, typhus, smallpox, scarlet fever, yellow fever and measles, was required to spend enough time to ensure that they were not infected. Once on the island, everyone on the ship was inspected by doctors and then subjected to quarantine. Kerosene showers were mandatory, followed by hot water showers, and steam-cleaning of all clothing.

The situation on the island was terrible. Hospitals were overburdened and facilities were so overcrowded that there was little chance of avoiding contact with other residents who were ill. In June of 1847 alone, 35 vessels (including the Envoy) delivered 5,800 passengers into quarantine on the tiny island. Those who didn't live through the quarantine process were interred in one of the island's six cemeteries. Fortunately, the entire Gillogly family survived and was able to continue their journey to Bangor, Maine, where they ultimately settled.

Thomas James Sheehy and Rose Gillogly

There are descendants of the Gillogly family who live in Bangor, Maine to this day. However, Rose Gillogly and several of her siblings moved to Montana undoubtedly under the influence of her aunt, Matilda Gillogly Galen, her father's sister and Matilda's husband, Hugh Galen. There she met Thomas James Sheehy, a harness maker and a fellow Irish immigrant, who no doubt did some work for her Uncle Hugh, a freighter. They married in Helena on September 22, 1879. But that's the beginning of another story…

~ By Jim Sheehy, Son of Robert Sheehy and Dona (Storie) Sheehy

Family History

The Holbrooks of Detroit, Michigan

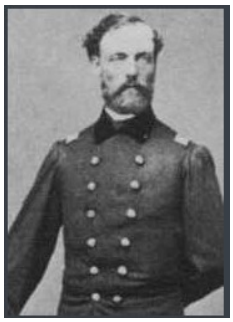
As many of the older members of the Sheehy extended family will recall, our family reunion began as an annual celebration of the birthday of our grandmother, Helen Merritt Holbrook Sheehy, who was born on 12 Aug 1885 in Montana and was 100 years old when she passed away in Oregon on 20 Oct 1985. The story of her romance and marriage to our grandfather, Hugh Francis Sheehy, and how they left Montana and settled in Oregon is expertly told in the book, "The Sheehy Family: From Erin to Oregon", written by their daughter Helen Sheehy Langley.

Grandmother's father (and our great grandfather) was Dewitt Clinton Holbrook, Jr., the son of Dewitt Clinton Holbrook, Sr., a wealthy lawyer in Detroit, Michigan. Dewitt Sr. (1819-1892) was a self-made man, who had left his home in Massachusetts at the age of 13 and moved on his own to Michigan, where he worked at odd jobs to earn a bare living for several years. He eventually settled in Detroit in 1836 and got a job as a chore boy in a law office. He educated himself in law by reading the books in the office and was admitted to the Detroit bar in 1843 as a lawyer. His law career was fabulously successful and he became quite prominent in public life, serving as county clerk and for several terms as Detroit city counsellor. In 1850, Dewitt Sr. married a young widow, Mary Ann Berdan (née May), who was born in England and had come to the US as a child. He adopted her daughter, Ellen Adelaide "Ella" Berdan, and the couple had four more children. The oldest was our great grandfather, Dewitt Jr, followed by a daughter Mary May, another son John Bulkley, and another daughter Mary Louise. At the time of his death, the estate of Dewitt Sr. was worth the equivalent of several million dollars in today's money. One of Detroit's principal streets is named after him, as well as a local elementary school.

Holbrook Residence, Detroit

Dewitt Clinton Holbrook, Sr.

Ellen Adelaide "Ella" Berdan (1847-1927) was the daughter of Mary Ann May and her first husband, Tunis Berdan, who died at the young age of 27 when Ellen was only about a year old. Ellen married Frederick William Swift in 1874 after the death of his first wife. Frederick was a successful businessman who had started out in the shoe business and drug manufacturing, and eventually was appointed Postmaster of Detroit. He was later involved in a range of businesses in the Detroit area. He served with distinction in the Civil War, participating in battles at Antietam, Fredericksburg, Vicksburg and Jackson, Mississippi, and spending three months as a prisoner of war after being captured at Spotsylvania, Virginia. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for extraordinary valor in a battle at Lenoire Station, Tennessee. During his service he rose from the rank of Captain to Brigadier General. He and Ella had two sons and two daughters. Both of the sons were business entrepreneurs, and the daughters both married successful businessmen (one after an earlier divorce).



Frederick William Swift

Dewitt Jr. (1851-1924) was an enterprising young man and was sent east to Yale University. He graduated in 1874 with a law degree and returned to Michigan to open a practice. After only six months, he left Detroit and moved west to Montana, where he developed a profitable livestock business buying sheep in Oregon and trailing them to Montana for sale. On one of his trips, he met Mary Josephine Wellman, the daughter of a farmer in Walla Walla, and they were married a year later in 1883. They settled on a ranch near Augusta, Montana, and two children were born there, a son Wellman and our grandmother Helen Merritt. Shortly afterwards, Dewitt Jr. suffered a stroke and the left side of his body was paralysed. He was unable to ranch after that and became a toll collector and weigh master on a new bridge in Great Falls, Montana. They had two more children there, a daughter Mary Louise and a son Dewitt Clinton III.

Dewitt Clinton Holbrook, Jr.

Mary Josephine Wellman

Walker House c 1910

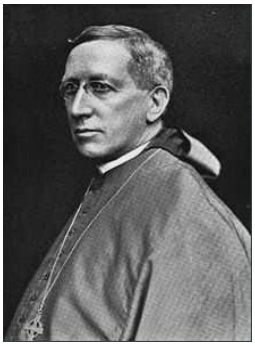
Mary May (1853-1931) married Franklin Hiram Walker, the son of Hiram Walker, the founder of the Canadian Club whiskey fortune. Franklin managed the firm along with his brother Edward after the death of their father. The Walkers were multi-millionaires and among the wealthiest American families at the time. Mary and Franklin had a single daughter, Ella Holbrook Walker (the first cousin of our grandmother). It was often the case in those days that rich American heiresses would marry European aristocrats with a noble title but no money. Ella followed that tradition, marrying a German count, Manfred von Matuschka, in one of the major Detroit society weddings of 1897.

Ella Holbrook Walker

After his death and a short marriage to an American capitalist that ended in divorce, she married an Italian prince, Alessandro von Thurn und Taxis, and acquired the Italian title of principessa. She owned Villa Serbelloni, a large 53-acre estate of prime property in Bellagio on Lake Como, which she willed to the Rockefeller Foundation upon her death in 1959. The Rockefeller Foundation continues to operate the property as a center for residency and conference programs aimed at fostering cross-cultural and interdisciplinary exchange.

John Bulkley (1854-1858) died in childhood at the age of just over 3 years.

Mary Louise (1857-1928) married John Hazen White, a recently ordained Episcopal minister, and moved to join him in Connecticut where he was a deacon. After a year, they moved for nine years to Illinois, where Rev. White had been named rector of the Episcopal church in Joliet. They then moved for six years to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he had been promoted to be rector of a major congregation, and was subsequently named warden of the divinity school. In 1895, he became the bishop of Indiana. The Whites had four sons and three daughters. One son died as a university student, one went into the ministry and the other two were in business. All three daughters were nurses and two subsequently married successful businessmen (one of whom became CEO of Ingersoll Rand).


John Hazen White

Helen Merritt Holbrook Sheehy

The children of Dewitt, Jr. and Mary Josephine Wellman all followed different paths. Our grandmother Helen Merritt (1885-1985) finished high school in Great Falls and taught elementary school at various rural locations near there for a couple of years. She then went to a teacher training college, Washington State Normal School in Ellensburg (now Central Washington University), for a year to get formal certification. She married our grandfather, who was working as a forest ranger in Montana, in 1907. They moved to Oregon and began ranching on Swayze Creek near Durkee in 1917. Grandmother's older brother Wellman (1884-1968) was a forest ranger in Montana and Oregon before moving to Alaska, where he spent most of his career. Her younger sister Mary Louise (1889-1986) married Corwin Waldron, a farmer who later became the city treasurer in Walla Walla, Washington. Her younger brother Dewitt Clinton III (1900-1962) graduated from Oregon Agricultural College (now Oregon State University) and made his career in the US Department of Agriculture in Oregon and Washington.

The sons of Dewitt, Jr. and Mary Josephine Wellman did not have large families, but the daughters both had several children. Wellman had twin sons, both of whom died shortly after birth, and Dewitt III had a son and a daughter. Mary Louise had five children, most of whom settled around the Walla Walla area. Our grandmother Helen Merritt had seven children, several with large families. She had 37 grandchildren, many of whom continue to meet, along with their own children and grandchildren, at the annual Sheehy family reunion.

~ By Robert Sheehy, Son of Robert Sheehy and Dona (Storie) Sheehy

Family History

The Origins of Our Sheehy Family in Ireland

The precise location in Ireland from which the Sheehy family emigrated to the United States and the year when they left Ireland had become unknown to our current generation. Oral family history held that our great grandfather Thomas James Sheehy was born in County Cork, Ireland, in August 1849 and came to the US when he was only eighteen months old, which implied that the family emigrated in 1850-51.

Significant detective work over many years by Jim Sheehy and other brothers culminated in a trip to Montana and the discovery in the state archives of the application of Thomas for membership in the Society of Montana Pioneers. The application included the key information that he was born in Newcastle, Ireland and that his parents were Patrick Sheehy and Mary Collins. Previous investigations by Jim and others had located the family in Wisconsin in 1860 and had identified the names and birth order of several of his siblings. Armed with this information, we were able to locate the baptismal records of Thomas and five of his siblings in Newcastle West, County Limerick, between December 1825 (his older brother John) and August 1843 (Thomas).

Newcastle West, 2016

Newcastle West, 1900

The oral family history proved to be close to the truth and helped us to fill in the blanks and pinpoint the origin and emigration date of the family. We now know for certain that the Sheehys originated in Newcastle West, County Limerick, and we can presume that they emigrated to the US sometime in late 1844 or early 1845 (i.e., when Thomas was about 18 months old). With this information, we engaged the services of a Limerick genealogist, who located records for an older brother (Michael) born in 1818, and was also able to identify the exact plot of land where the family lived in the township of Dromin Beesom near Newcastle West.

A group of family members visited Dromin Beesom and Newcastle West during a trip to Ireland in 2016. The Sheehy plot is just 15 acres of very poor quality bogland that must have required significant effort to drain and maintain when the family lived there. Today it is frequented mainly by ducks and duck hunters. At the time, it was likely used to grow potatoes and possibly to provide pasture for a milk cow. In any case, it is difficult to imagine how such a small plot of poor land could have provided sustenance for a large Irish family, much less when there was a problem with the potato harvest. And the years around the time of the Sheehy family emigration were very bad for potatoes.

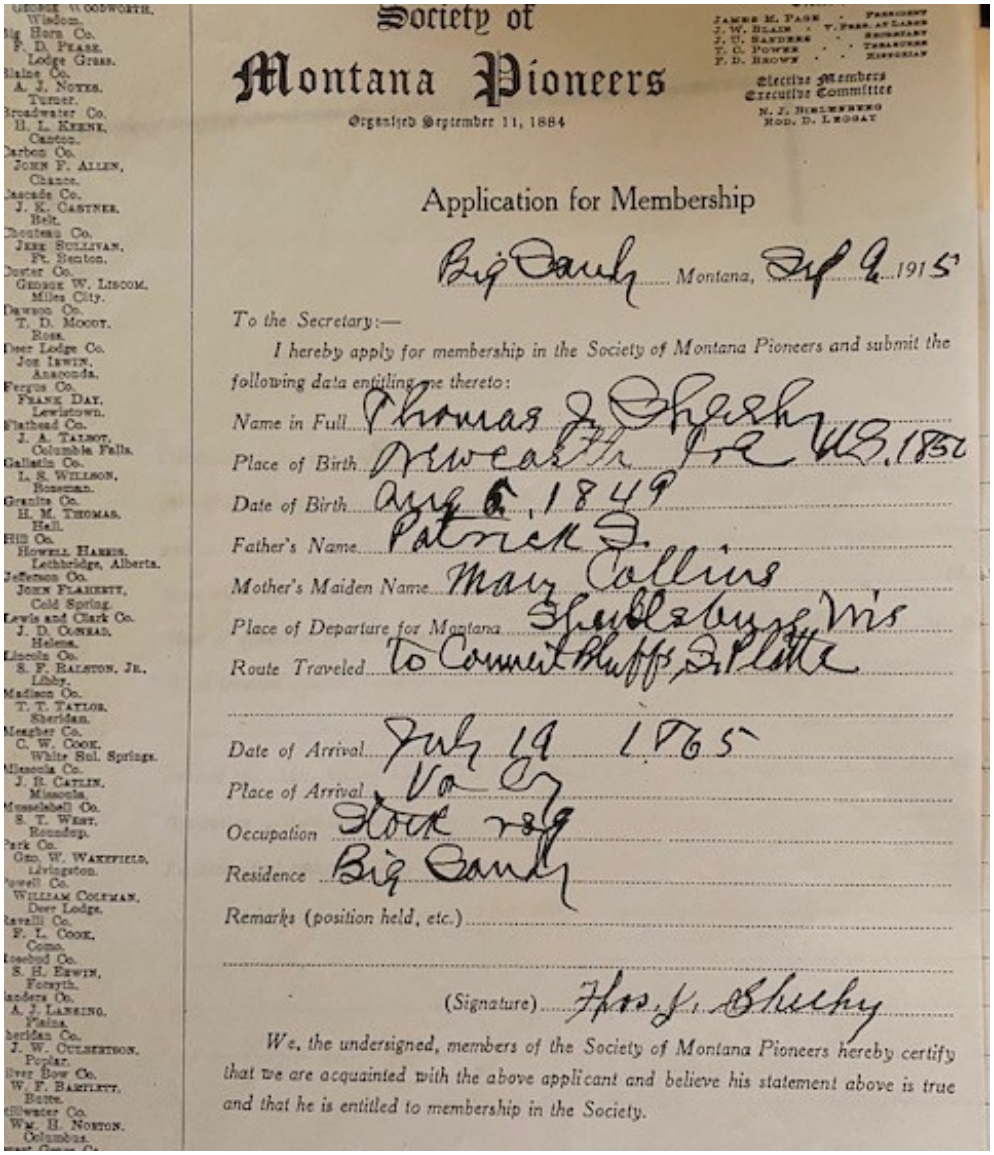
Sheehy Plot, Dromin Beesom: County Limerick

The Irish potato famine (1845-49) was caused by a blight that resulted in widespread potato crop failure at a time when a large part of the poorer population depended on it almost exclusively for nourishment. There had been a weak potato crop in 1844, but the blight hit very strongly in 1845, when one third to one half of the crop was lost. The following year of 1846 was even worse, with the loss of three quarters of the crop. The entire potato crop failed in 1847, still known in Ireland as Black ’47. The food shortage was exacerbated by continued large grain and other food exports by the British administration throughout the period. It is estimated that more than one million people died of starvation or disease during the famine, and another one million emigrated (a total of 20-25 percent of the population). The southwestern part of the country (including County Limerick) was among the worst affected areas.

The poor quality of the Sheehy land in the context of widespread crop failure makes it likely that the family was sufficiently on the borderline of survival that they were among the first to be forced to leave Ireland when the famine began. This may have saved their lives. There is some uncorroborated evidence that the older brothers, Michael and John, may have emigrated to the US as early as 1842-43. If that was the case, the family could have received remittances from the brothers to help finance the trip, and they would have known for certain that the economic situation in America was substantially better than at home. They likely left Newcastle West across the Bridge of Tears (so-called because of the numerous family goodbyes that took place there) on their way to a ship from Cork to the new world.

By the time of the 1850 US Census, the family was already resident in Buffalo, New York, probably working as common laborers in construction (this was the period when the Erie Canal was being expanded and reaching its peak use). By the mid-1850s, they had moved west to southern Wisconsin where both parents died, Patrick in 1856 and Mary Collins Sheehy in 1870. In the 1860 census, some of the brothers were reported as farmers and others worked in the lead and zinc mines. Our great grandfather Thomas James was a saddler's apprentice. From Wisconsin, part of the family (Patrick, Daniel, Dennis and Thomas) went on to Montana and others (John, Catherine and Richard) moved to Kansas. By then, all were engaged in farming and ranching. Their heirs are now scattered across the western US and around the world.

~ By Robert Sheehy, Son of Robert Sheehy and Dona (Storie) Sheehy



Society of
Montana Pioneers
Organized September 11, 1884

Application for Membership

Big Sandy Montana, Sept 9 1915

To the Secretary:—

I hereby apply for membership in the Society of Montana Pioneers and submit the following data entitling me thereto:

Name in Full Thomas J. Sheehy
Place of Birth Newcastle Co. Ireland 1852
Date of Birth Aug 6, 1849
Father's Name Patrick J.
Mother's Maiden Name Mary Collins
Place of Departure for Montana Shebleburg Wis
Route Traveled To Council Bluffs & Platte
Date of Arrival July 19 1865
Place of Arrival Va City
Occupation Stock raising
Residence Big Sandy
Remarks (position held, etc.)

(Signature) Thos. J. Sheehy

We, the undersigned, members of the Society of Montana Pioneers hereby certify that we are acquainted with the above applicant and believe his statement above is true and that he is entitled to membership in the Society.

Hugh Sheehy, Jr. and Faye Sheehy Hannah, 1932

Learning to Swim— A Composition about Faye Sheehy Hannah

Letter from my Mom excerpt dated August 8, 1980

Hope this finds you enjoying the summer and not too hot. Marge and I were celebrating the coolness today when we went to the pool. It was only 102°-instead of 115°! Shows what you can get used to, doesn't it?

In the meantime, I'm passing the time here by swimming a lot – practicing Arabic and French – taking care of my plants (imagine me with a green thumb) and planning our next 2 trips out of here. I'm on a diet that's working- am under 150# for the first time in 15 years and have a goal of 138# by the time I come home. I really enjoy swimming and can't believe I thought it was so difficult all those (46) years. Dave spent a lot of time helping me the last few months he was here, and I swim at least twice a week, so I can see improvement since he's been gone.

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Every summer my siblings and I took swimming lessons at the local high school. All of us knew how to swim well enough to play in the ocean on our frequent vacations to my grandparents' cabin. Dad was also a good swimmer and would take us on his shoulders into the deeper water where the waves were over our heads. I never wondered whether I was safe or not while riding on his back. Mom never went into the water on these outings. She sat on the shore watching the activities, handing out food and drinks as needed, and helping us build sandcastles. I always thought that everyone's mom sat on the beach while everyone else played in the oceans.

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"Saudi purdah hits Western Women"

Excerpt dated Summer 1979

Coordinated by a Government body, ominously entitled the Committee for the Prevention of Vice and the Promotion of Virtue, the campaign includes a ban on mixed bathing. A decree posted up in all hotels forbids women not only to swim if men are present, but even to enter the swimming pool.

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Purdah, according to Webster, is "the seclusion of women from the sight of men or strangers, practiced by some Muslims and Hindus." It is also "a screen, curtain, or veil used for this purpose."

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Handwritten notations on the article entitled "Saudi purdah hits Western Women"

Summer 1979

A woman's life in SA [Saudi Arabia] has never been free anyway, but this summer the rules about what she can and cannot do have reached a new level of severity. The shadow of Ayatollah Khomeini looms darkly over Western life on the Arabian Peninsula, thrusting women further into purdah. The new restrictions affect the female sex, but are especially irksome to foreigners. The Saudi authorities' commitment to discouraging foreign women from coming to Arabia and on penalizing those already there are clear; unaccompanied foreign women are herded together in cramped quarters [and] are seen as a necessary evil in the Kingdom's development.

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The priest didn't help. Mom went to him to talk about Dad's drinking, but the priest said she needed to be thankful. Dad was a good provider and had given her seven beautiful children. She had a relatively nice house, two cars, and a man of faith. What more could a woman want? As a good woman, she needed to suffer through the tension in the home, suffer through the arguments, and suffer through the verbal abuse. She had, after all, promised to honor and obey.

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Journal excerpt dated March 1977

And I ached with hard crying! For the loss! All the years, all the joys and finally the memories of pain – of angry silences – of growing apart – of hating- and then death of a marriage.

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Mom and Dad were divorced on March 8, 1977. Mom moved to San Francisco to take a temporary job and to live in a different town from dad. In the divorce, Mom had to leave behind three of her children: Helen, who was sixteen; Kevin, who was seventeen; and Julie, who was eighteen. They all lived at home at the time of the separation. Dad wouldn't give Mom a divorce unless he got the house and custody of the minor children. Maybe he thought Mom would never leave her children, but she could no longer stay and suffer for the sake of her faith.

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Journal excerpt dated March 1977

Whatever happens to me from today on I will feel. Good or bad, I want to know. I have had enough of calmness – of death in life. I promise myself these things: to laugh, to cry, to love, to be real, and to tell Roland how very sorry I am for hurting him. Amen.

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Faye Sheehy Hannah reflecting on her life

From March 1977 to December 1978, Mom stayed nearby, but her job was only a temporary position. With the exception of her car and her personal belongings, Mom had given Dad everything else in the divorce. She didn't have a solid financial foundation. I don't remember how, but Mom found out that a San Francisco company was hiring personnel to staff the oncology department of a hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The pay was great and was not as heavily taxed because it was foreign income. The three youngest children were no longer living with Dad, and Mom felt that their futures were much more secure. She headed off to Saudi Arabia.

***

Letter excerpt dated December 17, 1978

This trip to Nashville for orientation was predictably uneventful except that the first person in our group of twelve who introduced herself to me was an Irish Catholic, divorced mother of seven children. So much for being unique. She is a delightful Bostonian R.N. who lives four doors down in my apartment building.

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Circular excerpt dated 3/7/1399H

(Christian date: 5/30/79)

Subject: *Observations of the Director General of Scientific Research, Guidance and Expounding of Religious Law Departments.*

To: *Commander, Air Force*

[Regarding]: *The forbidden deeds spreading in our society including:*

---Foreign women of various nationalities go to the different markets wearing inappropriate clothes and eating in public.

---Wearing and showing crosses by some Christians.

---Hearing the loud western music and shameless songs in the supermarkets; and it is noticed that these supermarkets have interest in marketing dog food.

---The use of foreign names such as "supermarket, Twarm, Reem," etc.

---Gathering of people near the mosques and commercial stores at prayer time, publicly neglecting prayers.

---The non-presence of members of the Religious Guidance Group in certain market areas and streets such as Al-Farazdaq Street, officers' quarters and some new quarters such as Suleimanieh and Al-Nasim, etc.

---Some Korean workers knock at doors during working hours asking for water, but they may have bad intentions.

---Negligence of prayer by people who live near the mosques.

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Mom was no longer going to mass. It was by accident that I learned this truth when I was a sophomore in high school. While Mom drove over to the church for Saturday evening mass, I walked over with the assumption that I could catch a ride home with her. She didn't know that I was attending Saturday mass; usually I went on Sunday morning with my younger siblings. I was sitting near the back of the church when she walked in. She took one of the weekly pamphlets and then left. I waited for her to return, but she never did. Mom was home when I arrived back at our house. She had placed the weekly pamphlet on the kitchen table where Dad could see it. Dad never questioned her about whether she actually stayed for the service or not.

The following day, I asked Mom where she was going on Saturday evenings. She looked confused. I told her that I had seen her leave the church after picking up the pamphlet. She admitted to me that she no longer believed in the Catholic religion. During church services, she was meeting Joycelyn, her best friend, for pie and coffee at a local restaurant. She also said that I could make my own choice about attending services when I reached the age of eighteen. My eighteenth birthday fell on Saturday, and I didn't attend church on the following Sunday.

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Letter excerpt dated December 17, 1978

My housing is very comfortable, all the western amenities and a few outside additions that are western, only if you take a jaundiced view. For example, there is a high fence around Medical City village, where I live, and security guards at the gates. Middle Eastern men are never allowed, and Western men must identify themselves at the gate, at which time the guard calls ahead to see if the lady is expecting him. And if he drives a car, his license plate is copied down, as is his time of arrival. Departure time is 1:00 a.m., after which time the guards are empowered to "knock" on doors and "remind" the visitors to leave.

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On November 4, 1979, Iranian militants stormed the United States Embassy in Tehran and took approximately seventy American captives. This terrorist act triggered the most profound crisis of the Carter presidency and began a personal ordeal for Jimmy Carter and the American people that lasted 444 days.

It was three weeks before we could contact Mom by phone. All of the lines were busy or blocked between the United States and Saudi Arabia. Since Mom's face hadn't appeared on any news reports, we were relatively certain that nothing had happened to her, but we all knew that Mom frequently pushed the limits of the confining rules imposed upon her by the Saudi government. I knew, for example, that Mom had driven a car while out in the desert with her friends. Women were not allowed to drive vehicles in Saudi Arabia. I also knew that Dave was teaching Mom how to swim, so they had spent time in the pool together. With Mom's propensity for bending rules, we were all concerned that people who were angered by her behavior would target her.

Click...click…three rings.

Nette: Mom?

Mom: Nette. Is that you?

Nette: Am I happy to hear your voice.

Mom: We might get cut off, but I'm okay.

Nette: We have been so worried about you.

Mom: Honey, we could see an army coming for one hundred miles in any direction over this flat desert.

Nette: We were more concerned with your personal safety.

Mom: I'm following the rules.

Line goes dead.

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Mom had been in the Seychelles during the taking of the hostages in Iran. She was with Dave, a married man with whom she was having an affair. In California, we were all worried about her safety while she was off on a nine-day holiday with her lover. It was the most romantic trip that she would ever take in her lifetime. She went snorkeling almost daily, went to a beautiful orchid garden in Victoria, ate rich foods at elegant restaurants, and ended each day with a beautiful sunset and a glass of wine. She did make a note in her journal that "Hostages in Iran [were] turned over to Iranian government," but that was the extent of her initial acknowledgement of the hostage crisis.

Faye Sheehy Hannah in the Seychelles, 1979

As time went on, Mom continued to have affairs with married men. She even had an affair with a man who had recently left the Catholic priesthood. While she enjoyed the company of each one, I think she also counted on their inability to make a commitment to her. With the exception of the priest and two of the married men, they all went back to their wives. At the end of her life, Mom had maintained an eight-year relationship with a man name Bob, but she never remarried.

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Letter excerpt dated May 5, 1979

As if you haven't already figured out – I am really deeply involved with Mark. A couple of weeks ago, he gave me an ultimatum of sorts. [It] went something like this: stop pretending that we are playing a temporary game of loving each other – believe that he is going to be involved with me on a long-term, after-we-leave-here basis, and understand that he was not going to go away or conveniently disappear, so that I could end the involvement as I had the other involvements before I came here. I agreed to the commitment but told him that we had to live a while around our families in the real world (USA) before I'd feel completely comfortable about the commitment after our 2 years is up.

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Mom vacillated frequently with her commitment to Mark. When she came home for Christmas in 1979, she hadn't heard from Mark for several weeks. She wasn't very concerned because he was busy planning and executing a move to Missouri, where Mark would soon begin his new job. Mom decided to shorten her employment contract in Saudi Arabia as well. She and Mark were going to visit over the holiday then decide whether to pursue a committed relationship or not.

On December 17, 1979, Mom called Mark's stepfather to obtain Mark's new phone number and address. The stepfather told her that Mark had died on November 11th in a single-car accident. Mom returned to Saudi Arabia after the holiday. She signed a new employment contract on January 7, 1980 for another year of employment in the Middle East.

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Journal excerpt dated October 29, 1980

Stopped at 2 convents along the way and watched nuns and an old priest make icons. I want to buy one (+one for Roland) but the ones we saw were too big.

***

All seven of us went to Catholic grammar school. We wore itchy wool uniforms and went through the sequenced rites of passage from baptism at birth, to First Holy Communion in second grade, and on to confirmation in seventh grade. It never occurred to any of us to refuse these expected steps in our lives. By the time we reached high school, however, my parents couldn't afford private school. As a matter of fact, they ran out of funds for this private education before the three youngest children had completed grammar school. In 1970, we all moved from very restrictive Catholic schools to the public-school system. It was a shock to all of us and a disappointment to our parents. After twelve years of supporting the Catholic school and church, the priests didn't offer any financial help to enable us to continue our Catholic educations. Many other families received assistance, but our family did not. Dad was angry; Mom frequently said, "yes, I know."

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Letter excerpt dated March 8, 1980

I don't know why I feel so walled in - probably in part because Dave's been gone a month now, and for the first time since I came here 20 months ago, I don't have anyone to take me away from this place on the weekends.

Mark and I spent part of every weekend in the desert, and Dave and I spent time in the desert and lots of time entertaining friends at dinners. I really miss all that.

***

My family and I were all at Agate Beach having a barbeque and exploring the contents of the amazing tide pools. I was around eight or nine years old. I knew how to swim, but the current was too strong for us to swim safely. I don't know how she fell because I wasn't watching her at the time, but Mom slipped into a six-foot-deep alcove where the waves came crashing to the three-sided rock wall. She disappeared into the swirling tide. I don't know how he found her under the current because I couldn't see her, and I don't know how he braced himself on the wet shale without falling in himself, but in an instant, Dad was on his knees at the edge with his arm thrust into the water, pulling Mom to safety. She was soaking wet, but she was breathing easily within a few moments.

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Peace Corps application excerpt dated November 3, 2004

The experience which best encapsulates many of the cross-cultural issues one can meet was that of my life in Saudi Arabia, 1978-1980. I had to adapt to severe restrictions imposed on Western Women: lack of entertainment for women; inability to go anywhere alone; strange food; Muslim beliefs and customs with regard to women; and the need to work with and get along socially with health workers from twenty countries, each with their own customs and beliefs. I adapted to these conditions first by keeping my mouth shut and my eyes and ears open for the first six months, then by actively seeking to enjoy and understand everything and everyone around me. I learned market Arabic; I ate Indian curry and barbecued camel; I shared political beliefs from the US with those from all twenty other countries; and I learned to appreciate poetry, music and dance from them all.

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My Mom's name was Faye Sheehy Hannah. She had learned how to swim.

~ By Jeannette Benton
Daughter of Roland and Faye Sheehy Hannah
Granddaughter of Hugh Francis and Beth Critchlow Sheehy

Faye Sheehy Hannah entertaining village children with balloons

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Most of the reference material mentioned here is from the personal effects of Faye Hannah in the author's possession, including Faye Hannah's journals, letters, and collected ephemera such as Circular No. 13832 (May 1979) by Othman Al-Humaid and Faye Hannah's hand-written margin notes on an article titled "Saudi purdah hits Western Women" (1979). References to the hostage crisis in Iran are from "The Hostage Crisis in Iran." Jimmy Carter Library and Museum. 9 February 2006. Accessed 11 March 2007. https://www.jimmycarterlibrary.gov/research/hostage_crisis_in_iran.

Some names have been changed to protect the individual's privacy.

From Hereford to the Horizon

I was born on the 10th of August 1969 in Baker City, Oregon, joining my brother Mark on the family cattle ranch (the Nelson C-C Ranch) in Hereford, Oregon. The ranch had been homesteaded in 1882 by Thomas and Marietta Boyer. My grandfather, Robert (Bob) Charles Nelson married my grandmother Katherine Elinor (Boyer) Nelson and together they bought the ranch from Katherine's brother and operated it with my father.

My life started among the sagebrush, junipers, and cattle in the Burnt River Valley about an hour's drive outside of bustling Baker City. Mark and I grew up hunting, fishing, and roping in rodeos in the Western States Junior Rodeo Association county fairs and rodeos across the northwest. Mark was far more gifted than I at this thing they call rodeo, as he went on to compete at the Youth National Finals in Ft Worth, Texas, and the High School Rodeo National Finals in Rapid City, SD.

However, my interests as a young man were beyond the horizons of the Blue Mountains and the county line. I became a foreign exchange student and spent the summer of my junior year in high school living on a farm in Scharnhorst, Niedersachsen and then with a family in Hannover, Germany. That was how I became hooked on Europe.

Oregon State University gave me a degree in Finance with a minor in German but not until after I had spent 6 months studying at the University of Tuebingen in Baden-Wuertemberg. From OSU, I returned directly to Germany where I spent the first year of my working life marketing power tools for Bosch in Stuttgart. Life in Stuttgart was a far cry from working cattle in Hereford, and my total immersion in German life and work helped me quickly learn the language. Despite being surrounded by a strong local dialect (Schwaebisch), I managed to continue speaking the national language of 'proper' high German.

Although I wanted to gain permanent employment in Germany, work permission restrictions required my return to the US. I landed in New York in the autumn of 1993 and found work with the investment management arm of Commerzbank, one of Germany's largest banks.

I was soon joined in New York by a young French lady I had met at Bosch. Laura (Laurence Marie Louise Billard) and I spent a year in New York before I was accepted into London Business School to study for my MBA. In the late summer of 1995, Laura and I moved to London and thus began a significant new chapter of my life's journey. Twenty-five years later, I still call London home.

Two years at London Business School proved to be an exceptionally rewarding time studying with a class of 205 students from 42 countries and where each one of us brought our own rich and varied life and professional experiences into the classroom. Being fascinated by people from foreign countries and backgrounds, I found myself very much at home with those classmates, who remain friends to this day and who are once again scattered to the four corners of the earth.

At the end of my studies in the summer of 1997, Laura and I were married in Abbeville, France. A year after we were married, our daughter, Emilie Katherine Nelson, arrived on 14th of July 1998 at the Chelsea & Westminster Hospital in London.

Emilie was joined by her brother Edouard Kent Nelson on 11th January 2001. Edouard was born in Abbeville, France, the town where his mother was raised. The location of Edouard's birth was driven in part by the less than pleasant experience of Emilie's birth in a British hospital and in part by the practicalities of child care offered by Laura's parents as I commuted back and forth to Luxembourg on a management consulting project.

Emilie and Edouard In Japanese Dress

The children grew up in the big city of London but were surrounded by country-style pragmatism and reality. The real message is that they grew up not being spoiled and knowing how to work!

Late in the summer of 2005, I joined Shinsei Bank and moved the family from London to Frankfurt, Germany. For the next two years, we settled into life in Germany and the kids added German to the French and English already spoken at home. We spent two very formative and enjoyable years in Frankfurt before the opportunity arose to move to Tokyo and work in the bank's headquarters.

The summer of 2007 saw the beginnings of the financial crisis, and the family landed in Tokyo just in time to take front row seats to the economic melt-down. I was soon flying to New York, Denver, and Los Angeles to assess some of the bank's sub-prime exposures, and we began seeing cracks in Europe as well.

Being based in Tokyo but looking after business interests in New York and London meant a near 24 hour per day front row seat to the crisis with more than a few weekends derailed by the work.

But despite the obvious stress this had on all aspects of life, our time in Japan was priceless. Japan is steeped in history and holds endless treasure troves of culture and cuisine. The country's constant pursuit of perfection in service, manufacturing, design, and culinary expression yields endless opportunities to explore and experience that magical land.

I often say that if I had set foot in Japan as a young exchange student, the world would likely never have seen me again!

Alas, the financial crisis took its toll on Shinsei Bank and on the careers of many of us working in asset-backed finance. In the summer of 2009, we retreated to the relative safety of London where I re-entered management consulting. At that time, the children's mother and I parted ways.

Edouard, Matt and Emilie

Fast forward 11 years and Emilie is studying at the University of Bath and, in parallel, has completed a degree in Entrepreneurship at Harbour Space in Barcelona. She is the founder of her own start-up and will complete her degree in International Relations at Bath next spring.

Edouard completed the International Baccalaureate at Whitgift School in London. He is a keen hockey player and played for two seasons for County Surrey. He is in his second year studying Chemistry at the University of Durham and has collected a range of work experience from a summer on the Sheehy ranch in High Valley to an internship with a UK based renewable energy company, as well as working with me on my financial technology start-up. Edouard's career interests lie in finance, and he is a writer for the Durham University Finance Society.

In August of 2018, I married Anusha Gurudasan, a native of Sri Lanka who had lived in London over twelve years. Anusha was raised in Colombo and educated in Dubai and Sydney and, very much like me, made her way to London to work. She has built her career fighting financial crime with the UK's financial regulator, and after a stint at a large German bank, is now the UK Head of Financial Crime at Bank of America.

Anusha and Matt

In April of 2018, I founded a start-up to help companies monitor the external companies their businesses depend on. Two years later and I have a team stretching from Manchester to Ireland to Texas and investors from across Europe.

In the journey of life, the only constant is change. As we all weather the storms life throws our way, we must always remain thankful for our family, our friends, and the opportunities we find when we keep our sleeves rolled up and our eyes open.

~ By Robert Matthew Nelson
Son of Kent and Anita (Langley) Nelson
Grandson of Harland and Helen (Sheehy) Langley

The Bear

In 1962, the Pan American 707 Boeing jet drops through the rain and fog as it prepares to land on Annette Island, Alaska, after a 2-hour flight from Seattle, Washington.

Finally, the ground appears faintly below, becoming more defined as we descend until it reveals itself to be a world of small ponds interspaced with hummocks of brush and flat areas of peat moss, a bog or muskeg, as Alaskans refer to it.

There is no town and the only structures at the end of the runway are an old WW2 airplane hangar and a small building off to the side; then we are on the runway and quickly come to a stop.

We turn around and taxi back to the buildings and stop.

People are milling around; luggage is on carts, and there are a half a dozen Grumman Goose twin engine amphibian airplanes all lined up ready to take off. These planes will take passengers and cargo north to the other communities in SE Alaska: Ketchikan, Wrangell, Petersburg and Sitka, which do not have airports, only the water to land on. We soon leave for Juneau; our final destination, the capital of Alaska. Here I will finalize my employment papers and begin my summer job on a timber road survey crew in the Tongass National Forest.

Grumman Goose, Ketchikan, 1960

I found out later that many Grumman Gooses were built for the US Navy in WW2, and many were sold to civilian airlines after the war. They were the perfect airlines for Alaska. The Goose had both a little and a big brother. The big brother was called the Mallard and the little brother was called the Widgin. These two were not very common and I only saw one of each in all the years I worked in Alaska.

You might refer to the Goose as the Uber plane of Alaska because if you were working in some isolated camp and you heard one coming you could make a quick call on their radio frequency and say “Hello Goose overhead, this is Saginaw Bay, do you have room for another passenger to Juneau?” If the pilot did, he would say yes, land and pick you up.

This was my introduction to Alaska—rain, fog, planes and uninhabited landscapes.

Fast forward to 1965. It is June and I arrive in Juneau to begin my 4th summer working on a road survey area for the Forest Service. Our crew has a total of 5 crew members plus the boss, John.

This summer we will be working on Admiralty Island west of Juneau. It is the 7th largest island in the US, being 90 miles long and 35 miles wide and has the highest concentration of brown bear in the world.

There is one village on the island, Angoon, where we will live. It has a population of approximately 400 people, almost all of which are Alaska natives and members of the Tlingit tribe. We fly out in a Goose with our equipment and move into our quarters, an old run-down house last used by the Federal Aviation Administration.

We begin our survey about a mile from town off an existing road. The proposed location of the new road ran parallel to the bay in front of Angoon for the first 2 or 3 miles. Then it turns inland and enters the old growth forest of Sitka Spruce and Western Hemlock with a thick undergrowth of alder, devils club and blue berries. Favorite Creek, a major salmon spawning and bear feeding creek, enters the bay here.

Because of the danger of a bear encounter we are always armed and make sure there is a rifle with each group whenever the crew splits up.

Speaking of rifles, Forest Service rifles are serious pieces of equipment, not your Walmart plinking 22 caliber types. They use the 375 H&H Magnum cartridge which was developed by the British in 1911 for hunting African big game such as elephant, rhino, lions, etc., and will stop a charging bear, usually. With a short 18” barrel and open sights they are well balanced, easy to handle and quickly brought on target. The right thing to carry in brown bear country!

The rifle has the capacity to hold 4 cartridges, but for safety reasons, you cannot have a round in the chamber ready to fire. The chamber is kept empty and three rounds are carried in the magazine. To shoot, the rifle requires opening the bolt, pulling it back, and pushing a cartridge from the magazine into the chamber. Then it is loaded and ready to fire.

By the 1st part of August, we had surveyed to the head of the bay where Favorite Creek entered. In a normal year, the creek would have been full of salmon heading upstream to spawn and easy prey for the bears to catch. Now was the time of year when the bears began to gorge themselves on salmon to put on fat for their winter hibernation.

But this was not a normal summer as there had been almost no rain, so the creeks were very low and had insufficient water for salmon to swim and spawn in. The salmon were waiting in the bay for rain to provide more water, although an occasional one would come in.

We had not seen any bears, but occasionally as we walked along the creek, we would see wet bear tracks going into the brush or a half-eaten salmon still quivering laying on the stream bank. They were all around us watching.

John, the boss, decided that we would put in a temporary work camp inland, so we wouldn't waste work time in long walks from the bay every day. I was selected to help John locate the camp site and carry in needed equipment from the mouth of Favorite Creek.

This day we loaded our packs, took the skiff to the head of the bay, and began our walk up the creek inland.
Normal procedure when in bear country is to walk the stream and stay out in the open on the gravel bars, so you can see and be seen if there are any bears around. No surprises!

This we did for the first half-mile until we came to a large blowdown which blocked our route along the creek.

A blowdown, common in old growth forests, happens when high winds blow one or more trees over which then knock more trees down in a cascading effect. This results in a mass of tree trunks, limbs, roots, soil, etc., all jumbled on the ground. They are difficult to cross on foot. What to do?

A quick analysis indicated the best option was to go up the bank out of the stream, work our way through the blowdown and return to the creek when we got through it.

I was in the lead carrying the rifle on my left shoulder and had a machete in my right hand for clearing brush. I took off my pack and left it at the creek.

As I walked, I cleared a path with John about 30 feet behind me. I came to the first big blowdown tree and climbed over it near a small standing dead tree. I continued walking and brushing. I had just gotten to the second big blowdown tree when there was a roar from down in the creek about 50 feet away that even today when I think of it makes the hair on the back of my head stand up! (like it's doing right now!).

I instinctively dropped the machete, swung the rifle off my shoulder, pulled the bolt back, and pushed a cartridge into the chamber. As I turned around, I lifted the rifle to my shoulder ready to shoot. I hear John shout "get him, Tom!" Then I am facing John and the bear. I see John crouched down between the small dead tree and the 1st log trying to get away from the bear which had come up out of the creek and taken a swat at him as he ducked out of the way. The bear then saw me and rolled over the 1st log and stood up looking at me about 25 feet away.

As I looked down the rifle sights, I remember a part of my mind asking a question, where should I shoot the bear? In the head or the chest? My mind replied, in the chest; it's a bigger target. I aimed for the chest and pulled the trigger.

Claws and Teeth from the Bear (22 Cartridge for Scale)

The bullet hit the bear dead through the chest and knocked him down; he went rolling into the brush roaring and thrashing around with debris flying all over the place, still very much alive. My mind said: oh no you only wounded him, so now you're going to have a wounded bear in the woods while you're working? Not a good situation! I quickly reloaded and fired my two remaining rounds into him. I realized the rifle was empty and there might be more bears around. Luckily, I always carried one extra cartridge in my work vest, so I quickly found it and loaded the rifle. The bear was quiet now, dead. Perhaps 30 seconds had elapsed since the bear had roared. I walked down to John who was frantically throwing stuff out of his pack until he found the box of ammunition in it. We finished reloading the rifle.

We sat on the first log a long time letting our adrenalin rush subside.

Only then did I realize that the chew of Copenhagen I had had in my mouth was not there anymore. I had swallowed it!

We never saw another bear the rest of the summer.

~ By Thomas J Sheehy, son of Thomas W. Sheehy and Mary Margaret (Black) Sheehy

A Year in Review

At the start of my senior year of college, it occurred to me that I should start thinking about what would come next. There was a recurring idea that had haunted me for years. Against my better judgment, I finally caved to it and filled out an application to serve as a Peace Corps volunteer.

The day I submitted the application, I told myself I was just keeping my options open. I wasn't committing to anything. It probably wouldn't even work out. The Peace Corps is selective, and even if you do get invited to serve, it's not a done deal until you have passed the medical and legal clearance roadblocks. I was comforted by the fact that the odds of me successfully jumping through all the hoops were slim to none. If I could just reach the point where, for reasons beyond my control, I was unable to go, that would be great. I could rest easy knowing that I tried to join the Peace Corps, but they just wouldn't take me. Sure, if I made it through the whole process and at the end of it all they still wanted me, I'd do it. But what were the chances of that?

Nine months later I found myself boarding a plane with two suitcases, my Peace Corps-issued passport, and a little pocket book of French translations from my brother. My mental monologue as I navigated through airports and tried to regulate the overwhelming emotions I was experiencing was a rhetorical repetition of "Why do I always do this to myself?"

When I applied to serve as a Peace Corps volunteer, I said I would go anywhere and do anything –Oh, and I speak Spanish– I made sure to add. A day after I submitted my application, I received an email informing me that I was being considered for a position as a Health Extension Agent in Benin. "Health Extension Agent sounds perfect," I thought to myself, "but what the heck is Benin?" A quick Google search revealed that Benin is a tiny country in West Africa. "West Africa?!" And their national language is French. "French?!"

Maggie and Other Peace Corp Volunteers in Benin, West Africa

To be fair, I dug my own grave when I left it up to the universe to decide. All I could do was accept my fate.

My service started off with three months of intense training around the Peace Corps headquarters in Benin. This training consisted of French lessons, cultural diversity, sector-specific trainings related to the work the volunteer would be doing (health, in my case), and general workshops focused on health, safety, traveling, administrative tasks, reporting, etc. On September 5th, 2019, I swore in as an official Peace Corps volunteer and embarked on what was to be 24 months of service. The next day, I packed my things into a rusty old bush taxi, said goodbye to my host family, and moved all the way across the country to Pehonko, a village in the North. I started my work with my host institutions, the local health center and the social promotion center (roughly the equivalent of a Department of Human Services in the States). My job was to assist and work alongside the folks at these institutions. I assisted with vaccinations and pre-natal consultations. I helped organize and deliver workshops on nutrition, breast-feeding, and malaria prevention. I had a health club, an English club, and a girls club at the local school. I had a community garden. I was in the process of forming a committee with local stakeholders to build a community center for folks with handicaps. I was slowly but surely integrating myself into my community. My roots were starting to take hold. Pehonko and "home" were starting to feel synonymous in my heart.

Maggie and Franck, Pehonko, Benin

Then I got evacuated. I woke up one morning in late March to an email informing Peace Corps volunteers across the globe that our service would be terminated and we were to be sent home due to the developing Coronavirus crisis. Thus ensued a very confusing, sad, and stressful week of decommissioning. I had one day to pack up my house and say goodbye to the people who had become my friends and family. I barely had time to inform my work partners, who were understandably hurt and confused as the plans we made together were abruptly canceled.

As I left Pehonko, I felt like a plant that had been jerked up too quickly from the soil – coming up severed, my roots still buried deep. I felt broken.

About a week later, I was back in the States. Back where I started.

It was like someone had hit the reset button on my life. Once again, I was living with my parents. I was jobless. I had no idea what to do with myself. But day by day, I slowly reestablished myself into daily American life – well, the global pandemic version. I got a new phone number, as mine had been disabled while I was abroad. I allowed my world to narrow, and focused on what was right in front of me: reconnecting with my family, meeting my basic needs, and trying to gather up the broken pieces of myself and put them back together again.

It simultaneously feels like it was yesterday or a lifetime ago that I left Benin. The reality is that it has been five months. At this point, I would have been over a year into my service. I can only imagine how I would feel, coming up on the one year anniversary of my swearing in as a Peace Corps volunteer. My life as a Peace Corps volunteer almost feels like an alternate reality.

Readjusting to life in the US was not easy. I struggled to overcome the guilt I felt about abandoning my work, and friends, and life in Benin. I also struggled to understand the guilt I felt about not being happy to be home. On top of that, it was hard to adjust to a life that looked so different from the one I left – the reality of living during a global pandemic. Nothing made sense to me.

I remember talking to my parents one night. I had been home for a few weeks, and I was telling them how difficult it was to hear those well-intentioned words I heard from so many: “Aren’t you happy to be home?” It had felt so impossible to articulate exactly what I was feeling or why those well-meaning words seemed to cut when they were meant to soothe. That night it finally clicked. Finding the words to express how I felt was like finally finding the key to a door I’d been trying to unlock, and it turned out that that door was holding in a lot of grief and heartbreak. I was sobbing when I finally choked out the words, “I feel like somebody died. I’m so sorry that I’m not happy to be home and please know that it has nothing to do with you. I feel like I lost something really important to me and my heart is broken.” I remember my mom and dad crying with me, their empathy making me feel truly seen and understood for the first time since being back. I think it was right around then that I started to get my feet back under me. It finally stopped feeling like I was all alone.

The Utah Desert

Unfortunately, moving through hardship isn't like flipping a switch and being over it. In reality, it has only been within the last few weeks that my life has felt integrated again. For all those months, I felt like my life had no congruence. I felt disassociated and disconnected from reality – like I was watching my life instead of living it. But I finally feel like my life is mine again.

Despite the tough emotions I've been working through, my life hasn't been stagnant. I found a job shortly after I got home that is almost too cool to be real as a field instructor for a company called BlueFire Wilderness Therapy.

I didn't even know wilderness therapy was a thing – I only came across it due to a lucky combination of words on a Google search. After a whirlwind application and online interview process, I drove to Middle-of-Nowhere, Idaho for a hiring seminar based on very little prior information. I was a little sketched out when I showed up, knowing that the next 5 days of my life were going to be a total mystery. But I kept consoling myself with the reminder that the last time I did something like this, i.e. signed up for something with no idea of what to expect, it entailed moving to West Africa. So it'd probably be fine, right? Luckily, it was! At the end of the week, I was offered the job. Despite being really ecstatic about this new opportunity, I was blind-sided by the wave of grief that hit me when I was presented with the prospect of accepting a new job. It felt like my identity as a Peace Corps Volunteer was getting more and more difficult to hang on to. Accepting this new job felt like burying my Peace Corps experience, which is still a hard thing to come to terms with.

I started working a couple weeks later. As I'm sure you can imagine, this is not a typical 9-5 job. I work for two weeks straight, and then have two weeks off. BlueFire hosts several therapeutic groups based on age and gender. There is a young adult group, adolescent boys groups, adolescent girls groups, and a pre-adolescent boys group. Every group is unique. So far, I have worked with the young adults, the adolescent boys, and the pre-adolescent boys. There are always at least two staff per group. When our shift starts, we go out to the field and swap out with the instructors who are finishing their shift. We get briefed on the clients and any relevant patterns that have been affecting the group. We get advice on how to handle certain challenges and learn what strategies have been effective with this particular group. Then we set up our tents and get to work building rapport with the clients we'll be living and working with for the next two weeks. (My rapport-building party trick is braiding hair. Don't ask me why but it wins them over every time.) Our campsites are located out in the desert of Southern Idaho, and we live out there 24/7 during our shift. Our job as field instructors is to be with the group around the clock and make sure they stay on schedule with eating, sleeping, taking medications, therapy sessions, assignments, etc. We also work with the therapists to provide updates and progress on clients and work with them to develop a plan for the client. On top of this day to day stuff, we have what we call base days, expedition days, and adventure days. Base days are days we spend at camp. On these days, the therapists come out to the field and hold individual, family, and group sessions with clients. We have 3-4 expedition days per shift, and this is basically where we go backpacking. We pack up all our stuff and walk to a new site each day. Finally, we have 4 adventure days per shift. This is where we go rock climbing, kayaking, white water rafting, canoeing, mountain biking, bouldering, and a whole bunch of other awesome stuff.

Being a field instructor is one of those jobs where I'm always catching myself feeling awe-struck that I get paid for it. Don't get me wrong, it's not always easy. In fact, it's very challenging in a lot of ways. But I feel so lucky that despite the abrupt change of plans, and the heartbreak, and the feeling that the world is burning, I've landed in this little corner that feels perfect for me right now. I'm doing something that utilizes my degrees in social work and psychology, and I'm spending my time bumming around outside. It's everything I love, and I feel so grateful.

~ By Maggie Sheehy
Daughter of Jim Sheehy and Sally (Thomas) Sheehy
Granddaughter of Robert Sheehy and Dona (Storie) Sheehy

For more of Maggie's Peace Corp and BlueFire adventures, see: https://sheehyme.home.blog/

Recent Events

A Wrong Turn and a Stroke of Luck!

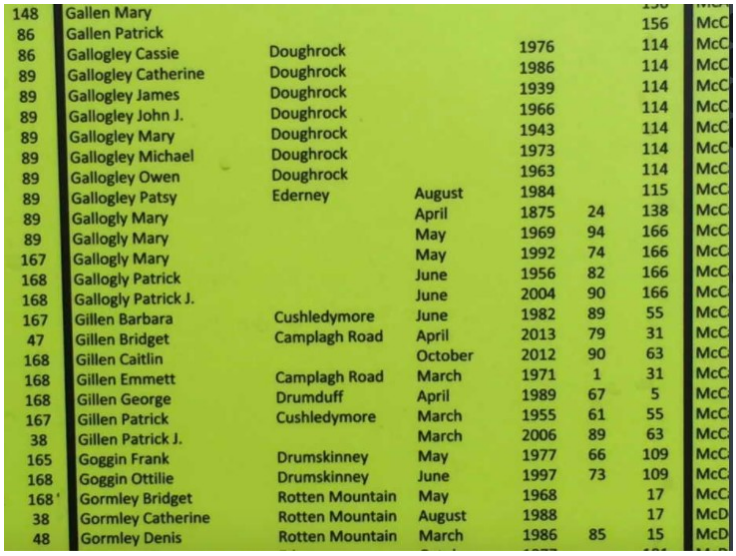
During genealogy research on the family of our great grandmother Rose Anna Gillogly Sheehy, the wife of Thomas James Sheehy, we discovered baptismal records for three of her aunts and uncles in the online Catholic parish records for Ederney, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland. As a result, a visit to the Catholic church in Ederney was included in the itinerary of a group of family members who travelled to Ireland in 2016. Imagine our disappointment when we arrived and learned that the church was not built until 1957 and no old records were available. A chance encounter led us to a small grocery shop around the corner owned by Catherine Gallogly (the original spelling of Gillogly), who told us that many members of the family were buried in a cemetery outside of town. She herself had married into the family and did not know much family history, but she gave us directions to the home of her brother-in-law, Micky Gallogly, whose family had been in the area for generations.

We decided that we should definitely visit the cemetery, but that it was probably not a good idea to descend unannounced on Micky, whom we were not sure was even related to us, with seventeen Sheehy family members in two large vans. Accordingly, we headed out of town in the direction of the cemetery, following the indications given to us by Catherine. Unfortunately (or fortunately as it turned out), none of us had written down the directions, and when we came to a fork in the road, we inadvertently made a wrong turn. The road became more and more narrow, and after a couple of miles, it was clear that we were lost. We decided that we would stop at the next house and ask how to find the cemetery.

St. Patrick's Church, Montiagh

The next place was a farmhouse with a separate large garage and barn, and a collection of automobiles in various states of repair. The owner was working on one of the vehicles, but was happy to explain how to find the cemetery. For some reason, perhaps recalling that Catherine had said that her brother-in-law had a passion for repairing cars, we asked halfway through our conversation if he was Micky Gallogly. And indeed he was. We had accidentally stumbled upon him by confusing the directions to the cemetery with those on how to get to his house.

That mistake proved to be one of the biggest strokes of luck imaginable. Upon learning that we were related to a Gillogly family that came from Ederney, Micky stated that all of the Gilloglys/Galloglys from Ederney were related and therefore we must be cousins. He dropped what he was doing and set off driving (extremely fast, by the way) to show us the cemetery, which turned out to be at a small church nearby (St. Patrick's at Montiagh). The cemetery proved to have a significant population of Galloglys and an interesting history. The church was completed in January 1839, and was the first Catholic church in the area. It was built entirely by volunteer labor, and it is highly likely that our Gillogly ancestors were involved in the construction and attended mass there until their emigration in 1847. Micky also showed us a nearby "mass rock", where the Catholic congregation would meet in the middle of a field for Sunday services before they were allowed to have a church of their own.



148	Gallen Mary					156	McC
86	Gallen Patrick					114	McC
86	Gallogley Cassie	Doughrock		1976		114	McC
89	Gallogley Catherine	Doughrock		1986		114	McC
89	Gallogley James	Doughrock		1939		114	McC
89	Gallogley John J.	Doughrock		1966		114	McC
89	Gallogley Mary	Doughrock		1943		114	McC
89	Gallogley Michael	Doughrock		1973		114	McC
89	Gallogley Owen	Doughrock		1963		115	McC
89	Gallogley Patsy	Ederney	August	1984		138	McC
89	Gallogly Mary		April	1875	24	166	McC
89	Gallogly Mary		May	1969	94	166	McC
167	Gallogly Mary		May	1992	74	166	McC
168	Gallogly Patrick		June	1956	82	166	McC
168	Gallogly Patrick J.		June	2004	90	55	McC
167	Gillen Barbara	Cushledymore	June	1982	89	31	McC
47	Gillen Bridget	Camplagh Road	April	2013	79	63	McC
168	Gillen Caitlin		October	2012	90	31	McC
168	Gillen Emmett	Camplagh Road	March	1971	1	5	McC
168	Gillen George	Drumduff	April	1989	67	55	McC
167	Gillen Patrick	Cushledymore	March	1955	61	63	McC
38	Gillen Patrick J.		March	2006	89	109	McC
165	Goggin Frank	Drumskinney	May	1977	66	109	McC
168	Goggin Ottilie	Drumskinney	June	1997	73	17	McC
168	Gormley Bridget	Rotten Mountain	May	1968		17	McC
38	Gormley Catherine	Rotten Mountain	August	1988		15	McD
48	Gormley Denis	Rotten Mountain	March	1986	85		McD

Galloglys in Cemetery Listing, Montiagh

Following our visit and chance meeting, we were determined to discover how Micky and the Sheehy family could be related. Initial investigations were fruitless, but a follow up visit during their trip to Ireland by Mary Jane Sheehy Eidson and her daughters Marni and Erin (along with cousin Jessica Hannah), gathered enough information to enable progress to be made. Further correspondence with Micky provided additional data. We have now confirmed that Micky and the current generation of the Sheehy family are third cousins (once removed). His great grandmother was an aunt of our own great grandmother, Rose Anna Gillogly. We also learned that Rose Anna's parents were both Gilloglys/Galloglys from Ederney. It appears that they were themselves related to one another, and we are continuing to explore whether there are additional links between Micky and the Sheehy family.

So—when you are next in Ederney, head out the Castlederg road, take a wrong turn, and stop in to meet the cousins.

~ By Robert Sheehy, Son of Robert and Dona (Storie) Sheehy

Back row from left: Sam, Dan, Tim, Robert, Micky Gallogly, Jim, Steve, Tom

Front row from left: Gloria, Patty, Lacey Gyllenberg (granddaughter of Eileen), Eileen Sheehy Gyllenberg, Kathryn, Susan, McKenzie, Emma, and Sally

Note: All last names Sheehy, unless otherwise noted

Renewal of Wedding Vows At Newtown Castle

April 2019 marked the 10th wedding anniversary for Ira Rigger and me. We had always promised to celebrate in a special way.

During my travels across Ireland, I knew it was the perfect place for us to renew our wedding vows. Our ceremony was at the Newtown Castle in Ballyvaughan, County Clare. Newtown Castle is a 16th century fortified tower house. Perfectly ancient with its limestone walls and big fireplace on the 3rd floor of the castle. Surrounded with our boys, Charlie and Colin, family, and friends, some near and some far, we renewed our vows and did a traditional Irish handfasting ceremony. Handfasting is an ancient Celtic ritual in which couples commit to each other by having their hands tied together with braid (or something similar) and exchanging rings and vows to symbolize the binding of two lives.

Our day was captured by Richard Sheehy of the Newcastle West Sheehys. Luckily for us, Richard is an amazing wedding photographer. We did receive a Sheehy family discount. Richard was able to help preserve the memories of the day with stunning photos.

A big thanks to Jim and Robert and to all who have worked so hard connecting us to our Irish cousins. We have made some amazing friendships with the Ireland Sheehys.

Ireland is full of magic and so much beauty. It was an amazing place to renew our vows. Wonder if we can go back and do it again in another 10 years!

~ By Marni Holloway Rigger, daughter of Mary Jane (Sheehy) Eidson and granddaughter of Thomas W. Sheehy and Mary Margaret (Black) Sheehy

Handfasting Ceremony

Newtown Castle In Ballyvaughan, County Clare

Marni, Charlie, Colin and Ira Rigger

In Memoriam

Elizabeth L. (Beth) Heriza
June 10, 1950 - July 23, 2020

Beth Heriza was born in Baker, Oregon, to Mary and Louis Heriza, the eighth of their nine children. She attended St. Francis Academy, where she developed an abiding interest in music and math. An accomplished pianist, she continued playing and learning throughout her life. She also played the viola, most recently in a viola-cello-piano trio with her sisters Clare and Celeste. In retirement, she studied calculus. For fun!

She earned an MD from Oregon Health Sciences University and completed her residency in pediatrics at UC Irvine. As a physician, she worked in chronically underserved communities—in migrant clinics in Fresno, CA, and Walla Walla, WA, and on the Navajo and Cherokee reservations.

Beth studied Spanish in the US and in Zacatecas, Mexico, and Antigua, Guatemala, developing enduring friendships with her instructors, Arturo Dorado, Jr. and Aura Rufina Espana Sinay.

From her father she inherited a love of small-scale farming and a longing for self-sufficiency. She left medicine to study horticulture at Clackamas Community College and the Arnold Arboretum in Boston. She oversaw production in commercial greenhouses in Santa Fe, NM, and, later, was the market manager of the Hollywood Farmersâ€™ Market in Portland. She and her partner Sarah created Hozhoni Herbsâ€”growing and selling plants at farmersâ€™ markets in the Portland metropolitan area.

She loved biking, walking, and college basketball. In 2016, Beth and her sister Mary K. walked the 500-mile Camino de Santiago and, in 2019, she watched every March Madness game with her brother John, fulfilling two longtime dreams.

Beth was independent, endlessly curious, very funny, so smart, without vanity, disciplined, deeply reserved and immensely kind.

She died at home two months after being diagnosed with an untreatable cancer, cared for by Sarah Laughlin, her partner of over 30 years. Sarah and three of Beth's sisters were with her when she died.

She leaves behind Sarah and seven siblings: John Heriza and wife Elizabeth, Celeste O'Dell, Alice Ierulli, Robert Heriza and wife Judy Brookhart, Mary K. Eilers, Clare Heriza, Tony Heriza and wife Jane Golden. She is also survived by her uncle, Richard Sheehy, many cousins, nieces and nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews, and innumerable friends and colleagues. Preceding her in death were her parents and an infant brother, Edward.

A memorial for Beth will be held when large gatherings are again possible, and her ashes will be scattered in the Elkhorn Mountains near Baker City. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests donations to Ethos, a Portland non-profit that provides children with music instruction and access to instruments. (http://ethos.org/support/)

~ By Celeste O'Dell, daughter of Louis Heriza and Mary Sheehy Heriza

Family News

We received good feedback on family happenings and important developments for this first edition of the newsletter, but are hoping for even more family news for next time! Please feel free to send news items to us at any time. We will keep them on file and include them in the next edition of the newsletter.

New Arrivals

Isabella Carol Jones was born on November 20, 2019, to proud parents **Jesse and Alexa (Servid) Jones.** Isabella is the granddaughter of Mark and Dona (Sheehy) Servid and the great granddaughter of Robert and Dona (Storie) Sheehy.

Kane Thomas Kleck was born on July 4, 2020, to proud parents Adam and Dena Kleck. Kane is the grandson of Tim and Gloria (Osborne) Sheehy. Tim is the son of Robert and Dona (Storie) Sheehy.

Academic Milestones

Jeannette Hannah Benton (granddaughter of Hugh Francis Sheehy Jr.) started her Master of Fine Arts program in Creative Non-Fiction at Eastern Oregon University. She is an instructor in English Composition at the same university.

Kaitlyn Kaiser (great grandaughter of Thomas Wellman Sheehy) graduated from Montana Technological University in Butte, Montana, with a BSN in Nursing. She began her nursing career on the front lines doing swabs for Covid-19 for the Missoula County Health Department, and is currently an RN at St. Patrick's Medical Center in Missoula, Montana.

Maggie Kaiser (great grandaughter of Thomas Wellman Sheehy) started her freshman year at University of Montana Western in Dillon, Montana.

Samuel Sheehy (grandson of Robert Clinton Sheehy) completed a Master of Science degree in Scientific Computing at University College London. He is a research engineer at EDF Energy (a subsidiary of Électricité de France) in London.

New Homeowners

Michelle Faye Benton (great granddaughter of Hugh Francis Sheehy, Jr.) and her husband, **Gene-Errol Ringpis** became homeowners of a condominium in the Los Feliz neighborhood of Los Angeles, California.

Meg Kleck, daughter of Gloria (Osborne) Sheehy and step-daughter of Tim Sheehy (son of Robert Clinton Sheehy) recently purchased the old Heriza farm property (100 acres) known as Dogtown in Baker County (once owned by Uncle Louie's parents). House plans are drawn up. Her mother informs that Meg is top of her class in the Electrical Apprenticeship Program in Central Oregon, the only female apprentice in a group of 300 applicants.

Lane and Cassie (Bloom) Porth purchased their first home in Durham, North Carolina. Cassie (granddaughter of Robert Clinton Sheehy) works remotely at Duke University and Lane is employed by Cree, Inc.

John Sheehy (grandson of Robert Clinton Sheehy) and wife **Claire Watts** bought their first home in Thonon-les-Bains, Haute Savoie, France.

Employment

Molly Bruggeman, wife of **Quinn Bloom** (grandson of Robert Clinton Sheehy), is a general practitioner in Puyallup, Washington. Quinn is working on his thesis for a doctorate in Sociology.

Orion Bloom (grandson of Robert Clinton Sheehy) is a Lt. Commander in the U.S. Coast Guard. He and his wife **Nina** (and daughters **Annie, Adalin and Noelle)** are stationed in Poulsbo, Washington.

Cody Bloom (grandson of Robert Clinton Sheehy) and his partner **Rachel Olney** have returned to work at Heath Ceramics in Sausalito, California. They live in San Rafael.

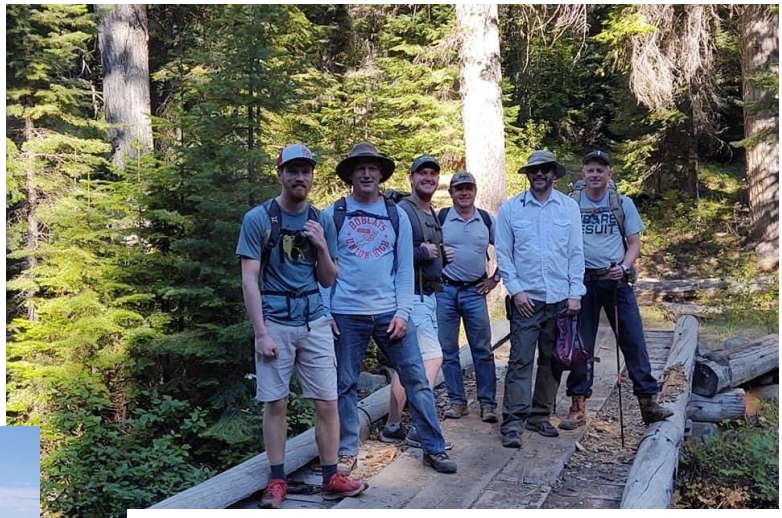
Hillary Hebert, wife of **Brian Sheehy** (grandson of Robert Clinton Sheehy), started a consultancy (HMH Energy Consulting, Inc.) to provide advice on energy-related legal issues in San Diego, California.

Updates on Jim and Sally Sheehy's kids (grandchildren of Robert Clinton Sheehy): **Tom Sheehy** just started a new job at Union School District teaching health and PE. Tom has a Master of Arts in teaching and a Bachelors in Exercise Science. His wife, **McKenzie Sheehy,** is working towards an English degree and hopes eventually to teach high school English at the Union High School. **Maggie Sheehy** is a field instructor at BlueFire Wilderness Therapy in southern Idaho. **Kathryn Sheehy** is a student at Eastern Oregon University, hoping to get accepted into nursing school, and works as a CNA at Heart and Home Hospice in La Grande.

Family Fun

20-mile Hike

Tim, Jim, Steve, Tom and Matthew Sheehy (sons and grandsons of Robert Clinton Sheehy), along with family friends Tom Colton (a distant cousin) and Todd Wyatt did a 20-mile single day hike from North Catherine Creek, up through Catherine Creek Meadow, across Cartwheel Ridge, and down Little Creek to High Valley, where Tim's wife Gloria hosted a barbeque dinner.



From left:
Matthew, Jim, Tom, Tom Colton, Tim, and Todd Wyatt

Backpacking Trip in the Wallowa Mountains

Eight members of the families of Steve, Jim and John Sheehy (grandchildren of Robert Clinton Sheehy) spent three nights in the Wallowas hiking and fishing with the objective of trekking from Wallowa Lake to Katy and Whitey Bloom's house in Halfway, Oregon. Stymied by a snowed-in pass, they eventually had to resort to road travel to reach their destination, but hope to try again next year. They report that the hospitality of Katy and Whitey Bloom made the trip more than worthwhile.

From left: Tom, Maggie, Matthew, Brennan, Steve, Kathryn, and McKenzie Sheehy

The First Ugly Lamb Feast

Steve was wondering what to do with his ugly lamb. He was describing the little beast as having wonky ears which stood up like antennae and he worried that it might drive down the bidding price of his remaining lambs which were about to make a one-way trip to the sale yard. I remember listening in with amusement on this conversation between Steve and Grandpa (Robert Sheehy, Sr.) back in the early summer of 2002. Mostly I remember Grandpa's pragmatic response: "Well, I guess you could eat it." And that was the conception of the Ugly Lamb Feast.

The first year, Grandpa showed Steve, Jim and John how to butcher the lamb. We hung the carcass at the Union Market for a few days, and then Grandpa and I cut up the entire lamb with a hand held meat saw. I don't remember how many hours I spent that first year prepping the meat all by myself, but it was a lot! It involved many different cuts in a variety of marinades grilled on a long line of barbecues in our back yard. The end product was a comparatively moderate spread with probably about 35-50 feasters of the Bob and Dona Sheehy line in attendance.

The Ugly Lamb Feast grew over the years to 100+ guests of family, friends, and neighbors, and eventually migrated up to Brother Bob's barn to become the starting event of the Sheehy Family Reunion each summer. A few days prior, a caravan of wine tasters (with underage designated drivers) would head to the Walla Walla wine country and bring back boxes of the good stuff, which freely flowed throughout the evening. We honed our technique for prepping the lamb (having learned from our early mistakes of taking on too much work), and paid Union Market to debone the entire lamb, which we then cut into bite-size portions and marinated according to favorite recipes.

It was fun thinking up Irish-ish names for the food cards which described each platter of meat. A couple of my favorite recipes are "Indo-Celtic Lamb Kebobs" (Indian Tandoori marinade), and "Dublin Town Leg o' Lamb" (sweet and spicy teriyaki). I hope you enjoy the recipes!

Indian Tandoori Marinade:

In a food processor, puree a 1" chunk of minced ginger, 4 minced garlic cloves, 3/4 t. ground cumin, 4-1/2 t. ground coriander, 1/2 t. Garam Masala, 3/4 t. cayenne, 1 T. salt, 3/4. T. turmeric, 1 t. sugar, 1-1/2 t. lime juice, 1 T. oil, 16 oz. plain Greek yogurt). Marinate lamb chunks for 24 hours, then grill to a perfect mid-rare. Rest meat before serving.

Sweet and Spicy Teriyaki Marinade:

In a food processor, puree a quartered medium onion, 3 cloves minced garlic, 1" chunk of peeled minced ginger, 1/2 -1 jalapeno pepper, 1/4 c. soy sauce, 1/4 c. honey, 2 T. canola oil. Marinate deboned leg of lamb for 24 hours, then tie and grill on a rotisserie until a perfect mid-rare. Rest meat before slicing.

PS - the lamb doesn't necessarily have to be ugly.

~ By Sally (Thomas) Sheehy
Wife of Jim Sheehy and daughter-in-law of
Robert Sheehy and Dona (Storie) Sheehy

Maggie and Sally prepping the lamb (and pork ribs) for the Ugly Lamb Feast

What's Next?

Newsletter Acknowledgements (and Next Steps)

This first edition of the Sheehy Family Newsletter was organized by Jim and Robert Sheehy. Contributing authors are Jeannette Benton, Marni Holloway, Matt Nelson, Tom Sheehy (the elder), Celeste O'Dell, Jim Sheehy, Maggie Sheehy, Robert Sheehy, and Sally Thomas Sheehy, with additional information on recent developments provided by numerous other family members. The newsletter was edited by Jeannette Benton and organized for desktop publishing by Sally Thomas Sheehy. A big thank you to everyone.

The next edition of the Sheehy Family Newsletter will be published at the time of the upcoming family reunion, tentatively scheduled for Friday and Saturday, June 25-26, 2021, at the Sheehy Barn in High Valley, Union, Oregon (Please mark your calendars). We strongly encourage family members who may be interested in making a contribution to the newsletter to contact Jim Sheehy (email: <sheehyjs@eoni.com>) or Robert Sheehy (email: <robert.sheehy@yahoo.com>) as soon as possible to discuss the proposed topic(s). The target date for completion of drafts for the second edition is May 2021.

The newsletter is being sent to all family members for which we have contact information. We would appreciate it very much if recipients could forward it to other family members not on our list. Please also let us know the email addresses of anyone to which the newsletter has been forwarded (with their permission, of course) so that we can include them in the distribution of the next edition.