

"Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

Mary Oliver



Ocean City, NJ
1955

Betsy Anne Storm

Where It All Began: Ambler, PA

Interestingly, because my father had suffered through the mumps as an adult male, it was thought by the medical community that he would be unable to father children. By the time I joined the family on October 8, 1953, my mother had already given birth to my sister, Leslie Jean Storm (at right, on Dad's lap) two years earlier. Thus, the belief that mumps in adult males always caused sterility was happily disproved. Thank goodness, or I wouldn't be here now.

Born in a hospital in Norristown, PA, I grew up in the small town of Ambler, 16 miles north of Philadelphia. The area was quite rural at the time, and we had a large leafy yard with woods and a creek behind the house. There were few children in our "neighborhood," which was really nowhere near settled enough to earn that moniker. Leslie and I played mostly with each other, as today's play dates were unheard of in the 1950s. We had one neighbor, Janice, with whom we often put on shows in the brushy area between our houses. Our stage was a large plank of wood – no frills.

Our dad, who was not celebrated for his handyman skills, nonetheless built us a simple tree house right behind our home. Nestled in a tall and mighty pine, our tree house, like any such getaway, was the ideal spot for reading comic books. I favored Archie and Veronica, Little Lotta, Richie Rich, and other classic comics, which cost 12 cents each. Paired with a five-cent candy bar, those treasured comics and our stash of books and games provided a splendid way to spend a lazy summer afternoon.

Looking back, I am thankful for the way I grew up. There was ample room and plenty of time to roam, explore, and watch life unfold. My then tomboyish ways led me to endless hours of stomping through the creek, collecting caterpillars and ladybugs, and climbing trees. Our TV time was strictly monitored by our mother, who often admonished us – rightfully – to "go play outside!"

Our home at the corner of Morris Road and Butler Pike dated to 1810. A classic stone farmhouse, it was lovingly maintained by my parents as well as by previous owners. Early on, the house was white with green

shutters. Its appearance was further enhanced when it was painted taupe and trimmed with black shutters in the 1960s.

There were three floors and as many fireplaces, one each in the dining room, the living room and my parents' bedroom. Leslie and I reveled in having free reign, for the most part, of the third floor, including our own bathroom. As a young girl, my room was decked out in a floor-to-ceiling Winnie the Pooh theme. Back then, children's bedroom décor was individualized, as opposed to mass-produced, and made by hand. Mom sewed the curtains and bedspread while I colored oversized posters with crayons and watercolors to festoon the walls. I treasured a set of hand-sewn Winnie the Pooh stuffed animals, as well as a collection of handmade "Addams Family" character dolls.

Perhaps because it was situated on one of Ambler's busiest intersections, our house was often known by and commented upon by people we didn't know. One of the home's best features, a generous back porch that ran the length of the house, was the site of many festivities. An especially memorable bash was the pig roast that lasted into the wee hours. Apparently, it took far longer to roast that pig than either Mom or Dad expected.

Both Leslie and I were voracious readers, with favorites being the Nancy

Drew mysteries and another series focused on Nurse Cherry Ames. Children didn't have nearly as many outside-of-home activities in that era, but for several years, we participated in weekly ballet lessons. For as long ago as I can remember, I loved to draw, paint and make art projects, such as linoleum block printing, decoupage and batik fabric dyeing. From age 7 onward, I collected penguins. (In 1986, the complete menagerie was displayed in the children's department of the Wilmette Public Library.)

On Saturdays, our local movie theater was the place to be. For \$1, a kid could see a movie, buy two full-size candy bars at the next-door drugstore, and still have plenty of money remaining for a soda and popcorn. Today, the Ambler Theater has been gorgeously restored to its former glory.





This needlepoint design depicts our three-story stone house in Ambler, PA at Morris and Butler.

late 1950s, for under \$1, one could enjoy a large if rather plain hot meal purchased with only a handful of coins.

Our Ancestry: an Irish, English, German Melange

Before I go further, I should let you know where the branches of our family tree took root. We descended from families in England, Ireland and Germany. With a bit of research, undertaken only recently, our family has been traced back three generations. My father was the third William John Storm. His mother was Maria Feldpausch. Great grandfather William Storm was married to Elizabeth (“Lizzie”) McCarty, born in Ireland. It would be wonderful to share more details with you – such as how my grandparents and great grandparents met and married – but these relationships never were discussed. I only wish I had asked. My mother’s father, Herbert Fromm, was German, and his wife, my grandmother, Eleanor (née Baldwin) was English.

Starting at age 12 and for a few years afterwards, I attended art classes in the summer and began taking the train downtown from Ambler to Philly to attend Saturday sessions at the Philadelphia Museum of Art during the school year. This activity was a high point of my week. Dad met my train at 30th Street Station. We’d often have lunch at a restaurant that would delight a child of any era – the Horn & Hardart Cafeteria, also known as “the automat.” These eateries featured prepared foods that were on display behind small glass windows with coin-operated slots. Menu classics included fresh pastries, baked beans, fish cakes, and macaroni and cheese. In the

Jean Fromm Storm, My Mom, the Sparkler

Jean Muriel Fromm was born on August 10, 1929, the first year of America’s Great Depression. Mom was an only child; a situation she wished had been different. Whenever Leslie and I fought (often), as siblings do, our mother reminded us of how fortunate we were to have each other. And of course, she was absolutely correct. Mom attended Germantown High School in Philadelphia and continued on to Millersville State College with thoughts of becoming a teacher, but never graduated. She later said that she lacked the patience to teach, which was a good call on her part. The marriage of Jean and Bill took place in 1950. When our parents honeymooned in New York City, they stayed at the exclusive Waldorf Astoria Hotel on Park Avenue. My mother was stylish, beautiful, elegant, sassy and sarcastic. She was also tons of fun to be around when she was in a good mood. As adults, Leslie and I speculated that Mom might have suffered from undiagnosed depression or some kind of a mood disorder. She was often unpredictable.



Mom posing for a pet store trade magazine.

However, she was a fabulous cook and giver of lively, animated dinner parties. Our Mom was not a naturally maternal woman (and in fairness, one had not raised her), but she clearly enjoyed the particular gifts and personalities of each grandchild – Katie and Colin Storm Bartlett and Nick Young, Leslie’s son. In addition to being a highly regarded newspaper reporter, Dad wrote many freelance articles for trade magazines. Mom was his most frequent



Jean and Bill Storm at Betsy’s 1977 wedding to Michael Bartlett.

model. She was also a talented seamstress who made my wedding gown out of a linen tablecloth trimmed in lace when I married Michael Bartlett in 1977. To finish it off, my grandmother, also gifted with a needle and thread, embroidered the bodice with pink and lavender flowers.

My parents expressed openness to all kinds of people. We grew up with no notion of prejudice. For example, a few times a year, while

taking one of our classic Sunday afternoon drives, we traveled to a picturesque area outside of Philadelphia called Bucks County to visit Uncle Lou and Uncle John. One day, driving back to Ambler from our uncles' impeccably beautiful home, I mused, out loud, "Hey . . . I know who Uncle Lou [my grandfather's brother] is, but who is Uncle John? How are we related to him?" I remember Mom explaining to Leslie and me that, well, some people are just made differently. She said that a certain number of men or women preferred to have partners of the same gender. With great composure and in matter-of-fact fashion, she was telling us that some people are gay – though that word did not exist in when this conversation occurred. Looking back I am proud of her nonjudgmental nature.

Mom and Dad also invited new ideas, and they were rather sophisticated for the '50s and '60s in small-town America. Jazz was a particular passion of Mom's, and we were exposed to artists such as Ahmad Jamal, Ramsey Lewis and Miles Davis on a regular basis. Some nights, after dinner we'd drift into the living room and Mom and Dad spontaneously broke into dance. Our kitchen radio was often tuned to "Fridays with Frank" and "Saturdays with Sinatra." Mom was a huge Sinatra fan, but later in life turned her affections to Tony Bennett instead. I came to love him, too. I've seen him perform at the Ravinia Festival – what a thrill.

Our parents were very comfortable, financially. Happily for us, we were regularly exposed to museums and live performance. My first Broadway show was "My Fair Lady" at age 10. For Leslie's 14th birthday, we saw the Supremes, a top Motown group of the time, at a local college. On a real high note, Mom treated Leslie and me to a thrilling evening, the Philadelphia stop on Simon and Garfunkel's farewell concert tour in 1969. We were all huge fans. Forty-five years later, Paul Simon remains one of the artistic geniuses of our time.

A very bright woman, Mom expressed a good deal of curiosity about the world. She and dad traveled quite a bit, including several cruises and Europeans journeys. She continued to exercise the travel bug after marrying her second husband, Rick Riley, after my Dad died in 1993. Mom's feisty side benefited me on more than one occasion. The first time was as I barely muddled through a mandatory home economics class in ninth grade. I am a terrible seamstress; seriously, the sewing on of buttons continues to elude me. I was in danger of failing the class because my project – a simple A-line dress – was nothing short of a disaster, especially the pathetic mangled zipper. Worse yet: After our projects were completed, all the girls were supposed to model their dresses in the annual spring fashion show. Yikes! After observing my increasing fear of failure, Mom finally told me to figure out a way to surreptitiously slip my dress out of school

and bring it home to her for a rescue effort. She said she'd complete the dress for me. Always a clever woman, mom explained that she'd do just a good enough job on it so I could receive a "C" in the class. Otherwise, she reasoned, the teacher would be suspicious.

Other gifts: My strong Presbyterian faith originated as a child. Although we went to First Presbyterian Church of Ambler only sporadically, I found church a calming experience that made me feel loved, happy, and safe. Sometimes we attended the Catholic Church with Dad, which was really confusing because the mass was still in Latin (which Dad didn't explain or acknowledge). Importantly, Mom demonstrated the value of volunteerism. She was active in the Women's Club of Ambler, as a volunteer at the Ambler Library, and with the Little Brothers of the Poor, among other groups.



Bill Storm, phoning in a story to the rewrite desk at the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, as he often did.

When Mom was director of volunteers for the Red Cross office in Flourtown, I spent time as what was called a candy striper at nearby Chestnut Hill Hospital. I also read to residents at a state hospital for people with severe disabilities.

Bill Storm, My Dad and My Hero

The definition of a self-made man, Dad began his journalism career, unwittingly, by tossing newspapers off a delivery truck at age 12 in West Philly. It was the height of the Great Depression, and money was extremely tight. Born in 1917, William John Storm grew up in either West Philadelphia and/or nearby Upper Darby. His parents died while he was still in high school. Upon graduation, Dad set to work immediately for the *Philadelphia Bulletin*, where he was employed until his retirement.

Like many men, Dad took a leave from his job for a few years to serve in the military. He found himself in an unusual environment, to say the least. Dad didn't do physical battle, and I wouldn't be surprised if his poor eyesight precluded that fact. Instead, he was assigned to the Horn Island Chemical Warfare Quarantine Station, known as the Horn Island Testing Station. It was a U.S. biological weapons testing site during World War II that had been acquired solely for that purpose by the U.S. military. Located in Mississippi, the facility closed in 1946 after the war ended. My father rarely spoke of his years in the service, perhaps a holdover from the fact that the project was completed in secrecy.

Before marrying Mom in 1950, Dad was married to a woman named Kate. I don't know her last name. Sadly, she died in about 1949, while pregnant, from spinal meningitis. Not long after in July 1950, Mom and Dad met on a blind date. The attraction was immediate; they married five months later in December 1950.

According to Mom – and Leslie and I certainly observed this aspect of our Dad's nature – he was quite the sport. He knew how to treat a lady, mix a dry martini, and live the good life to the degree he could afford to (we all loved that backyard swimming pool he put in). In his understated manner, he always knew how to have fun. On their first date, Dad took Mom to a play and to dinner at a lovely restaurant called the Stockton Inn



Dad, at far right, reporting from the scene of a train wreck in Philadelphia. He said he always dressed in a suit to demonstrate respect for the people he interviewed.

Only hours after Ray's capture, police arrested another one of the six long-term convicts who escaped with Ray — Donald Ray Caylor, 34, who was spotted in a street in Oak Ridge, Tenn., 20 miles east of the prison. This left only one escaper at large — Douglas Shelton, 32.

Two others were captured yesterday: Larry Hacker, 32, Hamilton, Ohio, serving 28 years for armed robbery and safe-cracking, was the reputed mastermind of the escape; Earl Hill Jr., 34, Erwin, Tenn., convicted of murder and rape, was a former cell-mate of Ray's.

Another fugitive, David Lee Powell, 27, Chicago, was recaptured Saturday. He was serving 100 years for murder.

Jerry Ward, serving 20-40 years for bank robbery, was shot and captured as he scaled the prison wall. He had been the last man to go over with the help of a 26-foot ladder fashioned from sections of 1½ inch water pipe.

Gov. Ray Gannon said earlier he had kept U.S. Attorney General Griffin Bell briefed on the search and that Bell had kept President Carter informed.

Immediately after his capture Ray appeared tired but alert and wide-eyed. His hair was wet and matted and his clothes, a black sweatshirt and black pants, were covered with sand and mud. His face also was smeared with mud.

He was examined by a medic and placed in a prison hospital. Prison Warden Stanley Lane said this was "routine procedure."

Lane said Ray would be placed in "administrative segregation" for three days while a hearing on the escape is conducted. "It is not solitary confinement, but his movements beside the prison are sharply restricted," the warden said.

Ray's capture came a few hours before 100 Tennessee National Guardsmen were scheduled to join the expanding search. Gov. Blanton, who at one point speculated that Ray might even have escaped the country, later canceled the order calling up the guard.

At the height of the search, some 100 state and local police, guards and FBI agents, aided by bloodhounds and helicopters, were pressed into service through a search area 25 miles around the prison encompassing the towns of Wartburg, Oliver Springs and Caryville. Caryville was the scene early yesterday of the theft of a car and of clothes and money from a second ve-

'Got Prisoner'

Continued From First Page

up in these woods."

The reply: "We're letting a man get away from us. But it's your ballgame, Stensmyr."

We were joined at the roadblock by several locals, men who accidentally had come across our group as they headed home.

"Horse" in this area, is often not a nice place. There are many trailers and poor-looking homes — this is Appalachia — and police speak knowingly of moonshine operations going on in these hills.

But it also is beautiful.

Although the view was denied on this night, the hills break against the sky with a covering of poplars, oaks and pines. It had been warm all day yesterday (as it was warm and sticky last night) and the ground was wet — residue from a late-afternoon thunderstorm.

Shortly before 2 A.M., there came an urgent conversation over the radio.

"We've just seen him. We've spotted him," said someone on one end of the radio.

Came the reply: "If you get close up, put a couple (of shots) through the trees at him." The idea, it was explained to us, was to scare, not injure, Ray.

Then, several minutes later, at exactly 2 A.M., came the radio message telling us the still hot suspect

William J. Storm

William J. Storm, on the scene at the capture of James Earl Ray, has covered the broad spectrum of human drama during his 30 years as a reporter for The Evening and Sunday Bulletin. He has been on the scene, witness to fires, murder investigations, aircraft hijackings and prison riots among others.

When Dad was one of only two reporters present when assassin James Earl Ray was captured, he was honored with his photo on the front page of the newspaper.

in New Jersey, which still operates in the style of a circa 1710 home.

Leslie was born in November 1951. Mom, Dad and Les lived in Philadelphia in a one-bed room apartment until I came along in 1953. We then moved to our first house in Ambler on Marion Avenue. It was a great starter home in a neighborhood overflowing with young families. The cost of the ranch house was about \$11,000. Leslie and I enjoyed the company of many built-in playmates.

Appendix

Pages 24 -25

Family photos

Page 26

Bill Storm's obituary and Avon Breast Cancer Walk

Page 27

Wilmette Life article on holiday gift wrapping

Page 28

Chicago Sun-Times article about blended families

Page 29

Our family's Heifer Ark Plaque

Page 30-31

Anti-violence articles, including the *Chicago Tribune*

Page 32

Scrapbook collage of Colin and Betsy's trip to Spain

family forever



*Katie and Evan Brown, 2012;
Betsy Storm with Colin Storm Bartlett,
Wilmette, 1985*

*Finn Brown after dyeing Easter eggs with
Nanny, 2015, and Wyatt Brown, just
chillin' with the family,
St. Louis, 2014*

*Truffles, our beloved Cavalier King Charles
Spaniel; Christmas 2009 (front) Katie
Bartlett Brown and Dorothy Lindsay,
Jennifer Bartlett Vorda (dark shirt) and in
back, Shannon Bartlett and Betsy Storm*



THE GANG: Betsy Storm (center) with her daughter Katie Bartlett (left), stepdaughter Jennifer Bartlett and dog Truffles. | AL RODRIGUEZ/SUN-TIMES

TAKING THE FIRST STEPS

FAMILIES | Mother's Day gives stepmoms a chance to connect with reluctant kids

BY PAIGE WISER
paigew@suntimes.com

It's called Mother's Day, not Stepmother's Day, but should there be a distinction?

As blended families get more complicated, so do holidays like this. Some churches get around the question by honoring all women on Mother's Day. Card companies have invented "other mother" and "like a mother" categories.

Women like Betsy Storm make it so easy. Her kids are in their 20s. Her stepkids are in their 30s. And while she divorced their dad decades ago, they're still "one big happy."

"My stepdaughter who lives in one will join us for a Mother's Day

celebration at my daughter's house in Palatine," Storm says. "And if my stepdaughter's mom were going to be in town that day, we would all be celebrating together. No doubt about it."

It may seem unusual, but Storm refuses to give up on the people she most cares about. "Last week, for my stepdaughter's birthday, we all celebrated here at our house," says Storm, who lives on the Near West Side. Her husband and ex-husband were both at the table. "To have blended our family so well over the years has helped all of our children to feel the joy of a larger family," she says.

Many divorces don't often have such civil endings, says relationship expert Janet Rae. Both kinds of moms

have expectations on Mother's Day. "However, most often the stepmother is overlooked," says Rae. "I know this from personal experience as well as clinical experience."

When there still are bruised feelings from a breakup, a birth parent might make kids feel like they have to choose a side. So the biological mom gets brunch, and the stepmom gets 24 hours of awkward. "The child is torn apart, and damage is done," Rae says.

To preempt any problems, Rae has a simple solution: Make Mother's Day about the children.

"The birth parents and the step-parents need to think of the needs and what is in the best interest of the child," she says. "Come to an under-

standing that perhaps on Mother's Day, the child visits with the birth mom, and that is what is correct. But if the birth mom also helps the child either make or purchase a card — flowers, whatever — for the stepmom, it will help the child feel more comfortable to love, as well as it will help that child not feel like they are betraying their birth parent."

Storm says continuing closeness doesn't just happen. "Not having an ongoing relationship with my stepdaughters was one of my worst divorce fears," she says. "I'd come to love them very much over the years."

She regularly hosts her ex-husband and her stepdaughters for dinner. She makes it a habit to keep in touch by phone,

send cards and gifts, and serve as a confidant on an as-needed basis.

"And when I remarried five years ago, my stepdaughters — who had been the flower girls at my first wedding — participated as the ushers at my second wedding," Storm says. "Talk about a new-style Hallmark moment."

Debbie Nigro is one of the founding partners of www.firstwivesworld.com, which is devoted to the 30 million women who transition through divorce in the United States. And she has a message for them: "Take the high road," she says.

The degree of difficulty has many variables: how the relationship ended, the age of the children, the distance between the two families, the personalities involved. If the kids don't want to honor their stepmother, you can't force it, she says. But at the very least, you can teach them about respect.

"Matters of the heart are difficult, especially when someone gets hurt," Nigro says. "I don't think anyone goes through divorce without feeling great emotion."

The first five or six years after her divorce were tough going, she admits. But the best thing biological mothers can do is forgive. "It took a long time to get mellow, you know?" she says. "Time heals. You have to think about your children more than yourself. They're the reason you're a mother."

Supermom Storm says her situation is possible for many people, but "certainly not for everyone," she acknowledges. Her advice? "Look for the best in everybody and keep your eyes on the prize," she says. "A bigger family and more people to love and be loved by. Who doesn't want that?"



chicago 2013

Produced by Betsy Storm/The Story of You betsystorm@gmail.com