

## **Claudette Upton**

### **Side 1:**

[1/1] Helen Reed, my mother, has always taken risks. The risks of going to Machupicchu, Peru, were not unusual. She gave no thought to being in the center of the cocaine region when tramping about the mountains. [Helen Reed]

[1/8] Her death was a shock. A year ago I knew she had slowed down. She tired easily. This fall she declined rapidly.

[1/30] Andy Reed and I had time to accept her death in the last two weeks. [Andy Reed]

[1/35] Growing up in West Asheville...a rural idle picnicking on Hominy Creek. A tree house built by dad.

[1/44] Haldee Reed taught us to live by truth and honesty above all. Mother said, "If you can't say anything nice, say nothing at all." [Haldee Reed, Helen Reed]

[1/60] Beyond that we were taught to respect others. This was the era of separate water fountains in Pritchard Park, Asheville, of the lunch-counter sit-ins in Greensboro and here. I was involved in the Student Committee on Racial Equality at Enka High. When I was 12, mother removed me from school for three days to attend a trial revealing political corruption in Madison County. I learned the lengths people go to protect their own interests.

[1/80] At that time, I was acting secretary to the Principal, since I was making good grades, spending half my school day in his office. When mother discovered this, she transferred me to David Millard Middle School in Asheville. My parents paid city tuition for me. When eligible for High School, I chose Enka High which had less snobbery among schoolmates.

[1/100] You went from Enka to Duke. What subjects? English...tried German, but switched to Spanish. My mother spoke Russian with my grandparents who lived in West Asheville.

[1/118] We knew English was not the only language. What do you do now? I'm a science editor in Washington since 1978. Doing freelance editing. My new job will be as editor of a medical journal in Vancouver. Are all your siblings language experts? Yes...Andy writes short stories, Ron...poetry and edits an environmental magazine. [Andy Reed, Ron Reed]

[1/144] Was your mother the dominant force? No, my father. I'm more like him...a romantic. He was raised by a sharecropper in Georgia and became a self-educated dye chemist at Enka after starting as a custodian. He had a sense of humor; an earthy worldview. He could face facts. My parents balanced each other. Mother was a rationalist. In time my mom and I came to accept each other. [Haldee Reed, Helen Reed]

[1/160] Have you been abroad? Yes, to Alaska, Europe, cooking at a research camp in Canada. Now live in Point Roberts, Washington.

[1/178] We vacation in England in alternate years to visit husband's father. Also go to Caribbean.

[1/191] Claudette Diana Reed Upton is my full name. Upton was my previous husband's name.

[1/195] Tell me of major turning points in your whole life. First, on trips with the Liberal Religious Youth I encountered real prejudice against blacks among southerners...1962-1965. John Wood and I had to take a stand for blacks at bus stops. Asheville had not shown the vicious prejudice I found among others from southern regions. The LRY here had Ron Reed, Ann Young, Lillian Poultney, Steve Chemic and John Wood. I was active. [John Wood, Steve Chemic, Ann Young, Lillian Poultney]

[1/237] We were the baby boomers and so had a full class. I was drawn to these activities because we did not fit in Asheville.

[1/250] I had, and still have, two close friends from that time: Libby Israel and Judy Crawford. I could talk to them of Vietnam and racial justice. I still see them. [Libby Israel, Judy Crawford]

[1/260] What was your best time? Going to the beach after high school graduation with these two girls. We were "on our own." I still like being alone, though my husband is my best friend. Being alone is a luxury. I don't like restriction. Do you lead busy lives? Yes, I work at home, my husband has an office ten miles away. We're both involved in politics, environmental movements, an organization of editors. I will commute to Vancouver.

[1/298] To return to turning points, I was in love at 26, but my lover crashed his plane and died. Three years later, I married a friend with boys 12 and 14. He died 3 years later of primary liver cancer. I remarried in 1987. My mother warned that she had not said life would be fair.

[1/325] Returning to the UU Church. Do you remember the YMCA? No, but I have images of Mrs. Cornell teaching in a big room with tiled floor. Toys and crystals growing in water. It was not a spiritual thing. It was a way to be accepted at public school with mates and teachers...we had Sunday school, too. That is why my parents joined the UU Church.

[1/367] What is your assessment of your Sunday school experience? On Vermont Avenue we met in an undecorated, windowless room, where my father taught about Egypt and Akhnaten. We studied "The Church Across the Street" in junior high. Gus Young, I believe, taught us about a new religion every month. For two weeks we read, then visited a church, then reacted for a week. [Augusta (Gus) Young]

[1/400] We went to AME, Presbyterian, Catholic, Congregational churches. It bred tolerance.

[1/430] Learning the history of UU. I appreciated knowing the background of everything. During high school we were rebels though we had little to rebel against.

[1/450] George Cornell challenges us to read a Bible chapter each week, and to react to it. There were eight of us: Tom Takaro, Loni Campbell, Mary and Steve Chemic, Ron Reed, Kathy

Moser, Bobby Lewis, Ann and Joe Young and Lillian Poultney. [George Cornell, Tom Takaro, Loni Campbell, Mary Chemic, Steve Chemic, Ron Reed, Kathy Moser, Bobby Lewis, Ann Young, Joe Young, Lillian Poultney]

[1/490] None had read the Bible. It was a challenge. My favorite was Revelations. We were 16. After our copious criticism Mr. Cornell told us to write our own ethics. We were fascinated, never missed a Sunday. Came back in the afternoon to carry on. Nothing like this in school. I had National Forensic League but it was extra-curricular.

[1/531] Mr. Cornell was not afraid to talk of any subject...race, sex, whatever. He respected us as intelligent kids.

[1/537] John Kiely and Barbara Kiely were our LRY advisors. They were sophisticated... Canadian and Scotch... urbane. I sought Barbara. She was an activist...taking us to meet black kids in their Sunday schools. [John Kiely, Barbara Kiely]

[1/580] We were taking a stand on race. Are you involved in church now? No...I avoid the Dutch Lutherans in Point Roberts.

[1/609] The UU Church stands for something in this city.

## **Side 2:**

[2/1] I've heard young people joined in 1971. Did you? I was at Duke in those years.

[2/12] Did Duke live up to your expectations? Not until my final year. There were so many required courses. It was not a challenge. I had an appalling GPA. Took a leave of absence in 1967. My father stopped speaking to me. We fought all summer. Mother was sure I'd go back.

[2/44] Father wanted me to spend the time in NYC, but I went to Durham. One day he called and took me to dinner in Durham. I knew he'd forgiven me.

[2/60] Durham is not a college town. We had to find a way of life. Chapel Hill was too far way until we got cars. One night we went to a KKK rally outside Durham (1966). They stoned us. My letter home about it was read by Rev. Gross from the pulpit.

[2/85] I was interested in psychology, but not in statistical and lab studies of animals. Duke used the medical model in its psychology. So I did English. I had read Freud at age 14. I wanted a humanistic psychology. I've told you what I know of the church. I next returned to my father's memorial in 1974.

[2/117] Were you a feminist? Where were you in 1968 Democratic convention? In New Mexico on an archeological dig.

[2/122] Rev. Dick Gross? He was an awkward, stiff man. I babysat for them. His wife, Goody, was a wonderful minister's wife... warm. His call was intellectual. He wanted to do pastoral role,

but had the wrong personality. She was a toucher. The Gross children, Monica, 8 and Wolfgang, 10, were my charge The Gross girl adored me, hung on me. I adored her. [Rev. Dick Gross, Goody Gross, Monica Gross, Wolfgang Gross]

[2/162] I knew there were problems, but it was unfair to Gross. People were spoiled by Dan Welch's warmth. [Dan Welch]

[2/192] Gail Cornell is someone to talk to. Now named Gomez. She was older and could tell you more.

Thanks.