

## UP THE RUN

### Our Home

When my parents bought the house in September 1946, my mother was pregnant with my brother, Sam. He was born in December; four months later she was pregnant with me.

*Our home* on Boggs Run had five rooms. When addresses were assigned, ours was 514 Boggs Run Road.

Starting in the basement, there was a concrete slab under the two rooms that were our living room and kitchen. The living room was in front, facing the road; the kitchen was at the back of the house, near the hill. In the basement area under the kitchen, there was a wall of shelves for the Mason jars of canned goods. Our electric wringer washer sat in that area.

These two rooms probably comprised the original house. Three more rooms were added before we lived there.

The other part of the basement was dirt. At some point, someone had dug out a floor next to the concrete floor under the living room at the front of the house - but no concrete was poured. This area of ground was dug out just enough to accommodate the big coal furnace. Over that area, a bedroom was eventually built. The support for the floor of that room seemed to be the three foot thick wall of dirt that remained around the periphery in the furnace area.

Perhaps the fourth room was built at the same time this third room was built. Or, maybe it was built later. But there was no digging out of the basement for room number four. This area, that was eventually a throughway that served as my bedroom, was built about a foot to a foot and a half off the ground, so it was level with the other three rooms in the house. There was essentially no support for the floor, beyond the outside corners that were supported by rocks and concrete blocks. In time, the center of the floor in this room sagged - majorly - and someone had installed car jacks on the dirt beneath the floor to hold it up.

Finally, a fifth room was added to the house that would be *our home*, and it came to serve as my brother's bedroom. It was built at the back of *our home*, attached to my room. There was no foundation and it was built very close to the ground. Rocks were strategically placed under the frame during the construction and the floor did not sag. It was probably the nicest room, when first built, because it had a wood floor and wallpapered walls. However, there was no heat supply. My brother had to walk through my room to get to his room. I don't remember this room ever being cleaned.

Facing *our home*, on the left side, front to back, were the three bedrooms. On the right side was the living room, with the kitchen behind it. There were no interior doors separating the rooms, and my room was open to the kitchen.

For several years after my parents bought *our home*, there was an outhouse; of course, there was a pot in the house. Before I started school, they built a bathroom inside, in part of their bedroom, which was room number three at the front of *our*

*home*. Half of the partitioned area became a small closet, and the other half a small bathroom. It was not large enough for a tub, so they put in a metal shower stall. There was also a sink and toilet. The bathroom opened to my parents' room, which adjoined my room. A curtain was hung up for privacy; still there were no interior doors in *our home*.

Although some of the houses on the run had septic systems, *our home* did not. Pipes were used to carry the sewage directly from our new bathroom to the creek in front of our house. The same creek we played in.



**Sam & Linda in the yard; Hess and Fisher Homes in the background.**

My earliest memory is being in *our home*, then a wood bungalow, with white-painted siding. Each room in the house had a door to the outside. I had a little fold-up cot in the space that was my room, next to the sewing machine and dad's hunting rifles.



**Linda in the front yard. Our home in the background before "remodeling."**

We had very few blankets, sometimes not enough money to buy coal, and *our home* was often very cold. I learned to sleep face down, with my arms under me; I still sleep that way.

At a very early age, I learned that numerous rat families resided under *our home* - and in *our home*. For all the years I lived there, rats were a common nuisance - but just a fact of life. They had extremely easy access via Sam's room because his floor was so close to the ground. There were also numerous holes along the edges of the floor that were blocked off with tin cans. But the rats regularly chewed through the floors and it was a challenge to keep them out. Before I went to bed at night, my dad would survey the room for rats and shoot them if he found any. At night, we would often hear the Mason jars crash and break on the basement floor, as those resourceful rats found a good source of food.

The mice were another issue, but they, too, seemed like a natural part of *our home*. They ran and squeaked all day and night inside the walls and ceiling.

These were the common sounds of *our home*. They weren't ominous or unusual. We felt secure and contented in *our home*.

We had an electric wringer washer in the cellar and it had to be plugged in before each use. For some reason, the concrete floor was chronically wet. On the ceiling, directly under the kitchen, there was an electrical outlet. I don't know if it was the cord to the washer, or if it was the outlet itself that was faulty, but each and every time it was plugged in, a tremendous shock was received. I dreaded having to plug it in but that was a part of our life and no one seemed concerned about it. Dad was certainly no handy man, and he apparently didn't consider it a problem since there had been no loss of life via electrocution.

I was probably in school by the time the outside of *our home* was remodeled. Uncle John Clarke was a good carpenter and he helped my dad and Uncle Bill McCormick replace some of the exterior doors with windows. They also made a little entryway at the front of the house. Finally, Uncle John put on green cedar shingles, and the trim was painted white.

Over the years, my dad had other spurts of interest in the appearance of *our home* and he put up a metal garage and made a brick path from the bridge to the back door. On the inside, he adjusted the carjacks under my floor and then put in a Masonite floor there, as well as in his and Mom's room. When I was a teenager, some linoleum was laid over the Masonite in my room, but their floor was never covered.

At that time, my mother decided make my room nice. She painted the walls lilac and she made curtains for the two windows. My small cot was replaced with a twin size Hollywood bed and I got a little white chest with a few drawers. Mom found a little vanity and she made a ruffled shirt for it that matched the curtains. The highlight was a brass vanity stool with a white plastic seat.

Still missing was a door between their room and mine, a door between my room and Sam's, and a door between the kitchen and my room. And a door to the bathroom.

We got an oil furnace at some point, replacing the coal furnace. While an infant, I sustained burns - and scars - on my leg when I crawled over the grate in the living room, made very hot by the burning coal.

Eventually, we got carpeting in our living room and a black, sectional sofa. The walls in the kitchen were refinished in a plaster texture paint and painted yellow. Dad bought gray-speckled tile squares for the floor and proceeded to glue them down with the black tar-like adhesive. For all the years we lived there after that, the black tar oozed up between the seams of each and every tile. The tiles were constantly smeared with the black, sticky substance and had to be cleaned with an SOS pad.

Mom was no housekeeper. Once a year, at Christmas, she cared about having the house clean. She may have wanted it to be clean the rest of the year but it just never got very high on her list of priorities. She was always busy, always involved with good causes, always trying to make life better for her family, friends, and community.

Dad was the only son of the four children in his family. His parents had nice house and took good care of it. But Dad was never concerned about the appearance or cleanliness of *our home*. In fact, he made fun of people with clean houses, which I may or may not describe later on. - However, Dad was extremely proud of his garden and he took great care of that. Otherwise, he was interested in working hard all week so we could go to the family camp - "the farm" - from Friday night until Sunday. It was near Littleton, Wetzel County, and the 400 acre property was owned by my Cunningham grandparents, my dad, and my great-uncle, Herbert Floyd "Foxy" Cunningham. I wrote about 'The Farm' years ago:

<http://www.lindapages.com/family/farm.htm>

When I was in high school, I saw the houses of my friends and I wished *our home* was nicer - and cleaner. After I was ten, I did most of the housework and cooking because Mom had started her career as a nurse. But it was more than I could do by myself and sometimes I felt resentful. After all, Dad was a slob around the house, and Mom could not stop helping the less fortunate long enough to stay home and scrub the floors and wash the sheets! But my brush with resentment was short-lived because I always knew that my parents were the very best kind of people and always had their priorities in the right place.

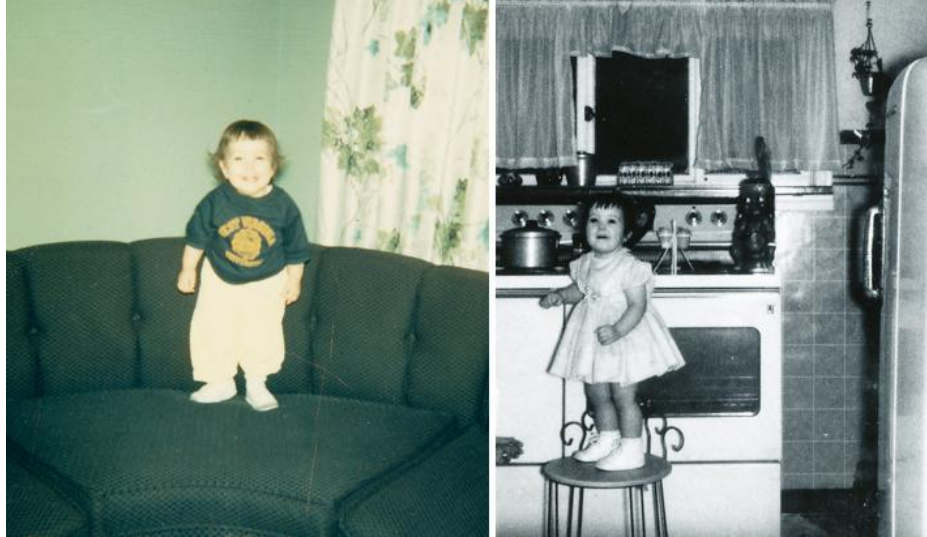
In the summer of 1966, I was a student at the school of practical nursing at the hospital in Glen Dale when my parents decided to buy a mobile home. By then, my brother, Sam, was in the Navy and my parents had a 16 month old baby girl, Lori.

They should have put the trailer in the garden area of our property, but they had to sell *our home* and property in order to have the money to pay for the trailer. They had an agreement to buy a lot from Mr. Garvick, who lived further down the run, but that fell through at the last minute. We ended up in Allendale, after buying a lot from my great-uncle, Foxy, aka my step-grandfather, since he was married to my grandmother.

We all felt sad because this was not what Mom, Dad or I wanted! We never wanted to leave Boggs Run, and it all seemed to happen so fast. Suddenly, we were in Allendale, and my boyfriend, Pat O'Shaughnessy (later murdered in Vietnam), was

making us a huge telephone pole and putting it into the ground. Then, we stood there and watched the trailer come down the dirt road. This was our new home....

It was never my home. It was never my dad's home. It did become home to Mom, to Lori, and then to Lisa, who was born to my parents nearly three years later.



**Baby sister, Lori Cunningham, before the move to Allendale.**

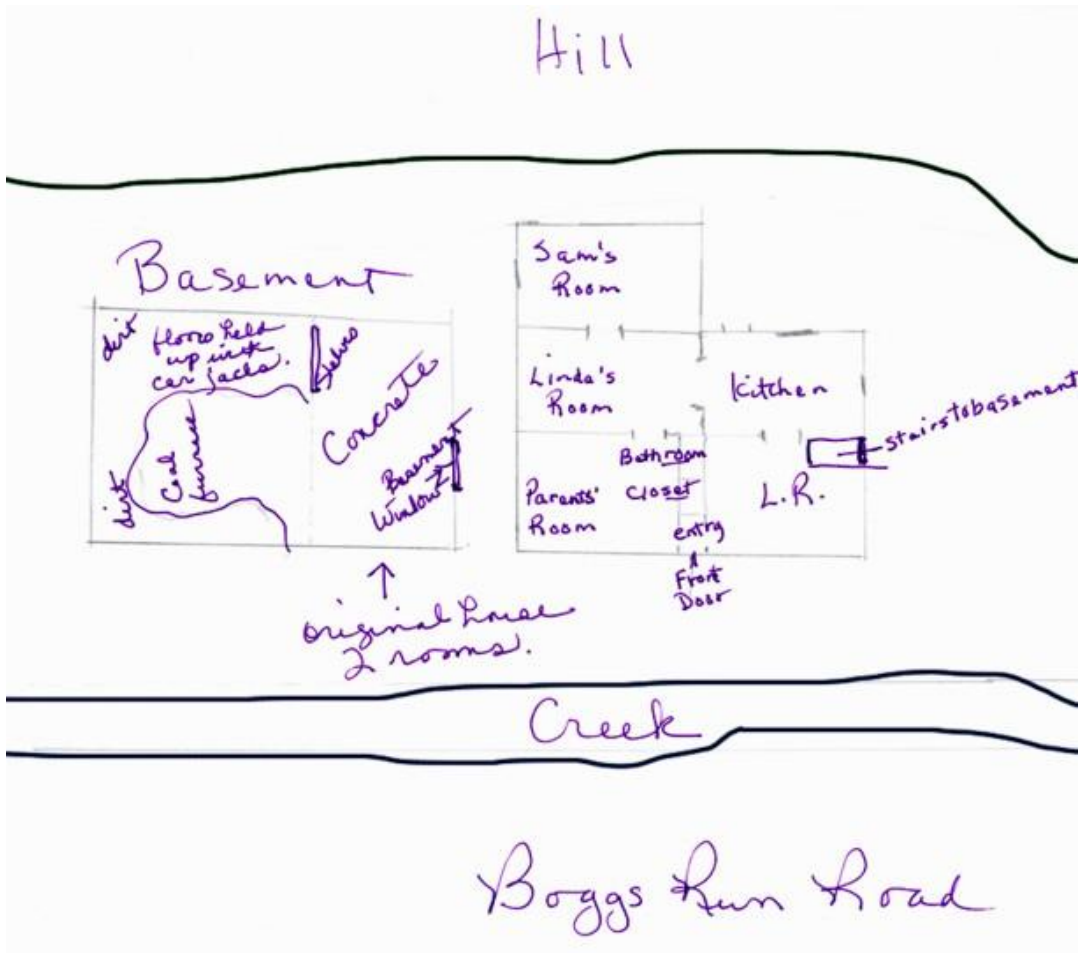
Perhaps the move to Allendale affected me so much because I had a blissful childhood on Boggs Run, and many of our closest relatives lived near us. Everyone was alive then, and old age, infirmity and death had barely touched us. And our move coincided with other losses: the loss of my youth, and the loss of friends and cousins, who had always been part of my everyday life, as they went off to college - or war - married, and sometimes moved away.



**Grandfather John & Grandma Mary Cunningham, with Dad, Aunt Helen McCormick & Aunt Ruth Clarke. We all lived on Boggs Run.**

I got married in 1969 and then spent almost twenty years living in Pittsburgh. For the past twenty years, we have lived in Louisiana. Over the course of these forty years, I have had five brand new houses, but *only* the old bungalow on Boggs Run ever felt like home.

This is a very poor sketch of our home:



The Southworth-Orum page of this website contains photos of the Boggs Run house and property that became our home.

[http://boggsrun.com/southworthpix/arles\\_gallery/index.html](http://boggsrun.com/southworthpix/arles_gallery/index.html)



**Taken about 1980 or so, about 15 years after we lived there. It shows our remodeling of the old house: picture windows added & green cedar shingles, shown here repainted red.**