



The Heavenly Havens Gang



Linda Havens photographed the rainbow that provides the glorious background for this book's front cover. The image appeared near Denali Park in Alaska when Linda and sister Patricia Havens Shea were vacationing nearby. Linda also shared the spectacular photo of clouds passing through snow-capped mountain peaks on a rare summer's day when Mt. McKinley was not fogged in and could be admired in all of its splendor. To read about how Linda, Pat and other members of The Heavenly Havens Gang enriched Ann Hauprich's life long before she became an author, kindly turn the page...

Shining the streetlights on The Heavenly Havens Gang

It is rare that I stroll beneath streetlights in the quiet village I now call home that I don't return in my mind's eye to the carefree summer evenings I once spent playing with a favorite cousin on the sidewalks of an inner city neighborhood in Albany, NY.

As the hours before dusk fell and the streetlights began to glow above the sidewalks leading to and from Linda's girlhood home on Livingston Avenue, we'd skip merrily along, giggling as we decided which games to play before that night's vacation pajama party could begin.

More often than not, my sister Pamela – who was born the year before Linda and me – would be with us. Rather than creating a “three's a crowd” dilemma, we were more like The Three Musketeers, ever on the lookout for adventures and instinctively watching one another's backs – though that wasn't the term we used in those days.

The time between when supper dishes were washed, dried and put away and the time when we had to wash our hands and faces and put on our PJs was precious. There was no mistaking the hour. No wristwatch was required. When the streetlights came on, our outdoor playtime was over.

And so it was we made the most of every minute during the late afternoon and early evening hours when we had no homework because school was out for the summer in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Ironically we often opted to play educational board games such as “Go to the Head of the Class” and SCRABBLE when stuck inside due to inclement weather. Mostly, however, activities designed to reinforce the 3-Rs were replaced with fresh air friendly games of tag as well as “Hop Scotch”, “Red Light, Green Light” and “Mother, May I?” Skipping rope to silly rhymes I regret I've long since forgotten was also part of the fun as twilight neared.

Linda was usually the first to notice the streetlights were starting to turn on. “We'd better get home,” she'd announce, and though we'd all have loved to have remained outdoors a while longer, we knew better than to question the House Rules.



Top photo shows Havens sisters Patricia and Linda (fourth and fifth from left) flanked by Hauprich cousins Ann, Pam, Char and Tim ca 1955. In photo beneath Tim are Patricia, Linda and Virginia welcoming brother Robert. That's also Patricia holding sixth Havens baby Jacqueline. Beside them are Linda, Virginia, Robert and Joanne. At bottom are toddler Patricia flanked by her father, her Grandpa Bopp and her Aunt Caroline Bopp.





While many of the author's early memories revolve around summer vacations helping cousins stay out of the Havens Family Dog House, recollections of Christmas Past also abound. Below are Linda, Patricia & Yes, Baby Virginia, there IS a Santa Claus with stockings hung by the chimney with care. Honing their musical skills at bottom left are cousins Ann and Linda as Hauprich siblings Char, Tim and Pam look on. Front row opposite are Char (holding three-month-old brother Francis) beside Tim and Pam with Linda, Pat and Ann behind them.



To break curfew would surely land Linda in what her family called The Dog House. As I recall, there was a “Family Dog House” plaque on the wall where cartoon-like canine figures bearing the names of my Aunt Irene and Uncle Bob and their children – who would eventually number seven – were posted. A verse printed on the plaque proclaimed: *“To get in, try some shenanigans. To get out, obey the rules.”* And sure enough, if a member of the household broke a rule, a colorful wooden canine on which his or her name was printed would be placed inside of the foot-long “Family Dog House” for the equivalent of a modern-day Time Out.

While being disobedient – or, for that matter, being a Tattle Tale — was no laughing matter in the Havens home, I always admired my Aunt Irene and Uncle Bob for striving to humor their stress in creative ways when ever possible.

They also relieved tension by speaking *Igpay Atinlay* (translation: Pig Latin) when they were talking about things they didn't want us to hear and had a witty comeback for just about everything.

In fact, when the TV sit-com *Roseanne* first aired in the 1980s, the first thought that popped into my head was: “Oh, my gosh! Roseanne and Dan are *almost* as funny as Aunt Irene and Uncle Bob!”



COLORFUL KODAK MOMENTS

Posing in Easter bonnets on Livingston Avenue in Albany, NY in the mid-1960s are Havens sisters Linda, Virginia, Joanne and Jacqueline as brother Robert, Jr. cuts a handsome figure in the middle. Portrait of all seven siblings above was taken about a decade later after the family had moved to a large house on Colby Street. Clockwise from top are Robert (Bob), Virginia, Patricia, Joanne, Colleen, Linda and Jacqueline.

Best of all, they were equally inspiring and uplifting when it came to being stellar examples of faith in action, practicing what they preached, weaving the Beatitudes and lessons learned from the Parables into the fabric of their daily lives.

To read more about the ways this remarkable aunt and uncle brought added sunshine into our world, please turn the pages to read why it was important for me at age 60 to finally pen *A beloved salute to a beloved WAVE* as well as sharing why there was *Nothing “square” about Uncle Bob – the ORIGINAL “brake” dancer.*

The legacy of The Heavenly Havens lives on through their son Robert, Jr. as well as through daughters Patricia, Linda, Virginia, Joanne, Jacqueline and Colleen. The deep roots that can be traced to my Aunt Irene and Uncle Bob have strong vines and sturdy branches that are sure to endure and enrich this world for generations to come.

A belated salute to a beloved WAVE

I'm still not sure if my Aunt Irene accompanied my cousin Linda to Canada in October 1980 or if my cousin Linda accompanied my Aunt Irene to Canada in October 1980. I do know that a photo I snapped of them against an autumn background stands out as much for what it didn't capture for posterity as for what it did.

As I sit at my keyboard 35 years later, I realize not only that I'm more than twice as old as I was when I chided them to smile for the birdie, but also how deeply I regret that I didn't cherish that Kodak moment more as it was unfolding.

If it were possible to hit a rewind button, I'd have found a way to commend and otherwise recognize my mother's older sister for sacrifices she had made in the service of our country less than a decade before Linda and I were born.

I did know that Ruth Irene Bopp Havens had served with the WAVES during World War Two. I also knew that some kind of a related reunion was taking place in October 1980 in Toronto – no easy commute from Albany, but close enough to where I was then residing for me to merit a visit.

My failure to take advantage of that landmark occasion to record the military memories of my aunt ranks high on my list of *if onlys*, but as a childless 27-year-old with a rare weekend off from editorial duties, I had other things on my mind – selfish things I'm too ashamed to include in this chapter.

When and why had Aunt Irene enlisted in the division of the US Naval Reserve known by the acronym WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service)? What qualifications led to her acceptance? Where had she trained – and what did that entail? Where was she subsequently stationed? What were her responsibilities? What was the most challenging part of her experience? What were some of the most important lessons she learned – and how did she apply them to her later life?

On a broader scope, I also wish I'd asked how good conduct was rewarded and what happened to WAVES who made waves? Why was it important for WAVES to reunite after so many years? What were some of the bonds that kept them close even after some, including my Aunt Irene, had become grandmothers?



Images of Ruth Irene Bopp Havens in her WAVE uniform were taken during World War II. Top right shows the veteran with daughter Linda in Canada in 1980 while author Ann Hauprich and cousin Linda demonstrate their closely knit relationship in a photo snapped a few years earlier.

Surely Aunt Irene and her graying sister servicewomen could have shared enough stories to fill a book – if only I’d had the presence of mind to document them.

While I missed out on a golden opportunity to get to know about my Aunt Irene’s patriotic past that long ago October weekend, I’m grateful for an endearing and enduring gift my now late aunt bestowed upon me prior to her Canadian departure.

The gift I carry close to my heart is that of an image of a grandmotherly face with a smile so broad it accentuated her girlish dimples. The reason: She had just waved to The Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader of Tibet, who was staying in the same luxury hotel where her reunion was being celebrated.

The caption beneath my imaginary keepsake photo reads:

Aunt Irene WAVES at The Dalai Lama.

How I like to think he saluted her wave!NOTE – Since penning the opening lines of this belated tribute, I learned from my Mom that her sister Irene had completed her basic training in Hunter College, a division of Columbia University in NYC. Aunt Irene was subsequently transferred to Cedar Rapids, Iowa where her stenographic studies raised her shorthand and typing skills.

She was next stationed in Washington, D.C. residing in barracks that had been constructed as temporary shelters on either side of the Reflection Pool that faces the Lincoln Memorial.

While serving in our nation’s Capital, my Aunt Irene had a chance to work on a computer – then still a primitive instrument. What an experience that must have been!

Aunt Irene reportedly rose in the ranks from a new rookie to become a yeoman First Class. As the time of her honorable discharge from the service neared, she was offered the chance to become a Chief Petty Officer, but chose to return to civilian life where Cupid led her to become the faithful wife of Robert Havens and the mother of their seven children – three of whom recently shared some additional insights.

First-born Patricia recalls hearing that her now late Mom took a train from Iowa to Canada, but isn’t sure if the tracks brought her through Minnesota into Manitoba or through Wisconsin into Ontario. Either way, the trek might explain why Aunt Irene was motivated to attend a reunion of WAVES on the other side of the US-Canada border more than a quarter of a century later.

Second-born Linda remembers her Mom’s favorite spot when visiting the Capital in later years was on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and how proud her Mom was to learn that she would be among those to be recognized as part of the Women In Military Service Memorial when it was dedicated on October 18, 1997.

The unique landmark in Arlington National Cemetery honors all military women past, present and future who served in our nation’s defense during all eras and in all service branches.

Third-born Virginia muses that her mother “always loved D.C.” where she especially enjoyed the colorful, fragrant cherry blossoms and gazing upon the face



Top group picture shows a uniformed Ruth Irene Bopp in D.C. during World War II with brother Paul and parents Catherine and Valentine Bopp who had journeyed from Albany, NY. Inset photo captures a romantic moment in courtship with future husband Robert Havens, Sr. Picture of Irene below is believed to have been taken with her parents prior to her departure for the military.

of “good old Abe.” Virginia notes that her Mom worked as a stenographer in the NYS Taxation Department during part of the 1970s and 1980s, but wishes she knew more about her Mom’s clerical experiences B.C. – Before Children.

Readers with memories or memorabilia they’d like to share about their years of service with Ruth Irene Bopp Havens or any reunions they attended together are encouraged to contact Ann Hauprich at annhaup4@aol.com or Snail Mail them to the author c/o Legacies Unlimited, PO Box 336, Ballston Spa NY 12020. It would be an honor to pass them along to her descendents who at last count included 13 grandchildren and 20 great-grandchildren and one great-great grandchild.



Uncle Bob Havens was the ORIGINAL “Brake” Dancer

BREAK DANCING – A style of acrobatic dancing originating in the mid-to-late-1970s, often performed to rap music by teenaged males, in urban streets and characterized by intricate footwork, pantomime, spinning headstands, tumbling and elaborate improvised movements.

BRAKE DANCING – A style of innovative driving originating in the mid-to-late-1950s, often performed to sounds of cheering youngsters, by young fathers in station wagons meandering along deserted rural roads and characterized by agile ankles, funny facial expressions, dramatic decelerations and other improvised movements.”

Decades before the first “break dancers” were introduced to M-TV audiences, my Uncle Bob Havens had mastered a homonymous form of entertainment. He was the King of Brake Dancers.

Although Uncle Bob’s fancy footwork was never captured on video, his talents earned critical acclaim from the live audiences who experienced his impromptu performances live and in person.

While I was never lucky enough to secure a front row seat, it was always a thrill to shake, rattle and roll in the back seat with my sister Pam and the Havens cousins who were closest to us in age—usually Pat, Linda and Ginny.

Bear in mind that in the 1950s, motor vehicles were as scarce as hen’s teeth on country roads and that the make and model driven by my Uncle Bob resembled an armored tank. There was never any danger that this World War Two veteran or his passengers might come to any harm as he demonstrated a style of rhythmic and patterned movements that today might well have landed him a spot on *The X Factor*.

Such a controlled setting would, of course, be necessary in the modern world. But “Driving While Brake Dancing “ was no more of an offence a half a century ago than “Driving Without A Seat Belt.” The phrase “Click It Or Ticket” had yet to be coined.



Clockwise from top: Central Dairy driver Robert (Bob) Havens, Sr. waves while preparing to make a delivery to an Albany home; blissfully unwinds by a city fence; and demonstrates how he built the muscles seen in photo taken while relaxing with wife Irene and firstborn child Patricia.



When most fathers in that bygone era boomed “Don’t make me have to put my foot down” in an attempt to quiet squabbling or whining kids in the back seats of their cars, it foreshadowed some form of disciplinary action. But when Uncle Bob announced from behind the wheel of his car that he was about to put his foot down, cheers would erupt, replacing any tears or jeers that had been coming from the rear of the vehicle.

In hindsight, Uncle Bob should have been awarded a NYS Department of Motor Vehicles citation for creating a solution to the “Driving While Distracted” problem that has . . . well, driven parents to distraction since around the time the first Model “T” rolled off the assembly line.

But it wasn’t until years later that Uncle Bob’s OTHER dancing talents were discovered. Only this time he opted to share the spotlight with his nimble-footed wife Irene as his Square Dancing partner. The picture of them in country western attire that accompanies this story speaks volumes, but memories from their eldest daughter, Patricia Havens Shea, their youngest daughter, Colleen Havens, and my youngest sister, Mary Hauprich Reilly, provide even greater insight into this colorful chapter in the lives of my aunt and uncle.

Patricia recalls her parents first began “do-se-doing” while camping in Massachusetts in the 1970s: “A square dance club happened to be camping on the grounds and invited other campers to join them. Mom and Dad gave it a try and were hooked.”

Upon returning to the Capital Region, they joined a square dance club in Scotia and took lessons there. “For a couple of years, they were dancing their feet off,” says Patricia, who was so inspired by the fun her folks were having, she and her husband Frank joined a different club and occasionally square danced with my Aunt Irene and Uncle Bob.

Square Dance Fever did not end there, however. “At some point, our son Frank square danced with a 4-H group. My mother’s older sister (Caroline Bopp Dangler) and her husband George also took up square dancing,” remembers Pat.

Though as a young teen the prospect of being a part of square dancing activities involving her parents did NOT make City Slicker Colleen a happy camper, she now views the experiences from a far different perspective. “The first time I saw my parents allemande left together was at a beginner’s fun night at The Wakonda Family Campground. That was all it took to get them started. In addition to motivating them to start taking lessons in nearby Scotia after we returned home to Albany, they ended up becoming seasonal campers in Massachusetts because the head square dance caller spent summers there with his family.”

Colleen vividly recalls her parents – then in their late 40s or early 50s — participating in afternoon sessions “where they danced in all kinds of crazy situations – like setting up squares in the pool or the public restroom — to achieve badges of sorts. When I think back, I remember never wanting to join them on these camping excursions when I was 15 or 16, always trying to rebel, but they weren’t about to let me stay home with my older siblings and get into whatever they were doing at the time so I always got dragged along. Ironically, as I’m thinking back on it, those square dancing camping trips were some of the best times of my life. Go figure!”



Bob and Irene Havens often took to the road to enjoy camping and square dancing. Photograph of the ORIGINAL “brake dancer” at top right was snapped at an automobile museum by daughter Linda in her father’s later years. Inset image shows him and Linda in the Nifty Fifties.

Among her fondest recollections: “Many regular dancers began camping there with their families and we all became part of a tight-knit community: swimming pool during the day, dance workshops and bon fires at night, often ending with *Good Night, Irene* as we were heading back to our camper.”

Because Colleen’s cousin Mary was closest to her in age, she often accompanied the Havens entourage on these camping adventures.

“Although Uncle Bob’s brake dancing days had come to a halt by the time I accompanied him and Aunt Irene and Colleen on vacations, he played lead singer in our little car choir,” smiles Mary, who also recalls many a chorus of *Good Night, Irene* as she was drifting off to sleep on camping grounds.

Mostly, Mary fondly recalls Uncle Bob as reminding her of Ralph Cramden’s neighbor Norton on *The Honeymooners* – except that Robert Havens was head and shoulders above Norton in the intelligence department. “Uncle Bob could hold his own in any adult discussion or debate, but he also loved playing the part of a goofball like Norton to keep us kids from utter boredom and was always making us laugh,” says Mary.

Colleen was tickled to hear Mary shares such light-hearted memories, adding: “My Dad was a blast. As Mary put it, although very intelligent, my father never hesitated to throw on his old fishing cap and dive into the pool just to be rushed by all the kids who wanted nothing more than to steal his hat and play Keep-Away with it. He joined in the fun, splashing and tossing kids in the pool in an attempt to get his hat back – though in hindsight, I wonder just how hard he was REALLY trying to retrieve that famous hat!”