

Author's Invitation

The generating capacity of a single memory has not been measured. ~ Robert Kilborn

My grandmother's hands shaped mine within her own. Together, we put our cupped hands under the tap and brought cool water to my mouth. I hung with my belly against the lip of the sink and her ample body wedged behind me for support. My feet dangled in midair. The comfort of that simple act soothed me and stayed with me—forever.

Memory confounds. Even as critical recall remains frustratingly elusive for important issues, this moment of my time replays without effort. Poring over family albums, my small memory tucks itself between the pages. Agnes Gregg Davis Annis, who died when I was five years old, becomes a composite of stories from family, photos I see, and snapshot moments in my mind. A proper, private woman and busy as the day is long, she birthed and raised children in China, midst riots and beheadings. In the Canadian countryside, meetings added to the mix of a growing family in a minister's highly visible home. Never was there a word about the orphanage where she lived for ten years, or her father's second family. Such private matters were not discussed. Yet, curious, I search for her story, attempting to understand her challenges compared to my own; to reach part of my own past through the legacy she left behind. I want to know the woman who tilted her head when she smiled, just as I do.

Please come into the story of my grandmother's life. Open the pages of the family album and look into her eyes. Like her, every woman lives an ordinary life, often under extraordinary circumstances. Choices and events out of our control determine so much of the journey we take. Ultimately, we attempt to live well and leave a legacy, a memory in one person's collection that will stay with him or with her forever.

Lynn Wyvill, September 2011

