



**"A  
Daughter's  
Legacy"**

**Lovern Root King  
LRWG Final Assignment  
(1996 Article Condensed - 2004)**

## "A Daughter's Legacy"

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(Original 1996 Final Assignment Condensed 2004)

"I feel sorry for most women of my generation who never learned to whistle or spit," Park co-founder Lovern Root King says firmly as one who did. Professor Emeritus of The Evergreen State College Olympia, Washington, she was the one daughter in a family with three sons.

Stylish silver hair graced by distinctive earrings, she speaks in a voice made patient by life's adversities. "I was the only girl in our neighborhood and learned my physical limitations at a young age." Hazel eyes piercing six decades, she scrutinizes a tomboy challenged by boyish play.

She was left daily to her own devices by a mother with other priorities. She sees now her legacy of independence nurtured by periods of being alone. What impact would that legacy have for her and for others? *Every mother's influence shadows a daughter to this day...*

Early photos capture a shy child at the frame's edge - a stranger in a divorced father's new family. She was shuffled between family members preoccupied with their own concerns. "I learned to rely on myself and not depend on anyone else, although I always wanted a big sister."

Settled comfortably on her patio, she shares her mother's memory. "She was a strong woman, prone to speak her mind. She discouraged friendly relations with neighbors and divorced in an era when other women did not." Lost in thought, eyes blinking at a distant vision, moments pass before she returns with a reluctant start.

Shifting slightly, she speaks in a quiet voice, "I lived a life that, by today's standards, would be considered deprived. But my strengths came from how I was raised." Those strengths were developed in a relationship outside the cultural norm. She laughs, with a quick catch in her throat, about the annual chore of choosing a Mother's Day card. The cultural ideal of a nurturing, caring - a daughter's inspiration - wasn't quite the sentiment required.

Truthfully, her independence was built on a foundation free of a traditional mother's expectations. Having few demands made upon her as a daughter, she reciprocated with no guilt feelings toward her mother. She also felt few qualms about leaving a Christmas note: "By the time you read this I will be married..." (1951).

Home today, is an upscale RV resort, founded with a Partner three years ago, for women who love to travel. Why would a woman, addicted to travel, plant roots in the Arizona desert? "Women we met on the road wanted a park of their own. My partner supported their need and I felt a commitment had been made. So I started looking."

But why trade a passion for travel for a commitment to home? Silence envelopes her, finally revealing a *deeper* truth. Quietly, she shares an unsettling trail of memories: the death and burial of a little known choir member; a news story of a deceased recluse no one knew well enough to mourn; the loss of a father with few in attendance at his funeral.

She sits very still, as if any movement risks further exposure. "I wanted my life to have some kind of impact, to touch other lives in the process and to help," she says softly, retreating to safer ground. Her tradeoff for travel was a connection with others. "...I felt a commitment had been made..."

Connections link us one to another. "She was a strong woman, prone to speak her mind..." describes fairly mother and daughter. Her mother's reticence and need to keep close counsel shadows Lovern to this day.

She produces a wonderful photograph of a mother and toddler striding down a Seattle street in 1937. The mother's progress is slowed by the toddler's distraction at something just beyond the camera's range. Her mother's ramrod straight posture signals an early beacon for the daughter at her side.

"My strengths came from how I was raised..." reinforces the photograph's cherished place on Lovern's bedroom wall.

Still, whose voice is it when she speaks and whose eyes scrutinize what she sees? Asked what she admired most about her mother, she replies it was her sense of humor. Recently informed of a neighbor's dog, Betty Grable, Lovern's quick inquiry: "Does she have great looking legs..." echoes a question her mother might have asked.

No one is free of a mother's influence. What role would that play? Legacies beg to be explored because they are who we are. "Women on the road wanted a park of their own" ultimately prompted each woman's unique journey to that park.

But it was Lovern's passion for travel that ultimately guided the others to this desert community.

Other daughters need to be heard. Other photographs need to be seen. Other legacies need to be shared. Every mother's influence shadows a daughter to this day. Nancy Barnhart's legacy to the park is Lovern Root King. And while Lovern gratefully acknowledges her mother's role, she resolutely cedes little ground in her own contributions.

Who among us can't feel that struggle? Who among us hasn't benefited from it?

I have *always* been fascinated by who people are and where they come from and why they live on one side of the street instead of the other. That fascination led me to Lovern Root King. The photograph led me to her mother, Nancy Barnhart. A passion for communicating has guided me through a writing program and is now propelling me into digital filmmaking.

**That passion comes from the *authentic* me. I want to meet other daughters, ponder other photographs and record other legacies.** Because legacies provide opportunities for learning and while I am an adequate whistler, Lovern is going to teach me how to spit.

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