

## Sue 1

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Sue Kusserow is one of the venerable, wonderful women who has lived in Underhill for a long time.

She was born May 16th, 1932 in New Haven, Connecticut. She grew up there and we're gonna jump really fast up to Under Hill. She got her BS from the University of Connecticut and a graduate degree from Yale in nursing and public health and she married Bert Kusserow.

Back to her parents, I just wanted to put your parents in there. Your father was Raymond Kienholz. Did I say that right?

Very keen is actually German, a certain type of tree, which of course now I can't remember. Okay. Holtz is wood. Okay, and I think it was ash wood or ashwood is where it came from.

And your mother also had K in her name. She was keying. Pearl. Yeah. Pearl Keating, put herself through college out of a family out of five or six.

And I don't know if you had siblings or if you grew up an only child.

Well I have my brother was eight years older.

Okay so you didn't have a brother. What was his name?

And his name, unfortunately, was Joaquin. Both of my parents were given fellowships to go to the Philippines and spend two years with trying to remember all these things, which I'm now forgetting. But anyway, they loved the name Joaquin, which means most beautiful or something like that.

That is a nice name.

But that has a K in it, too. Yeah, it does.

Joaquín Keenholz was his name, yeah.

But unfortunately, this happened during the Second World War, and he was ostracized in school. Because of the German name? Well, not—the more penetrating connection is that Genghis Khan came over, invaded Switzerland, and left a lot of babies lying around Switzerland that had slanted eyes.

And my brother very definitely had slanted eyes, which then here he was in Spring Lane, Connecticut.

So he was teased?

Yeah. He was teased. Oh. And that's a sad thing. That's too bad. I really kind of felt obligated to get all these degrees.

But getting a nursing degree in public health meant sort of a commitment to helping people. I've always sensed that about you, that that's one of the things that you wanted to do is call on seniors and call in people and help people out with especially with any kind of medical problem they had.

And the the other thing that I know you're known for and that has meant a lot to you is your writing. Oh yes and we have with us her book Under the Mountain with essays it was published in 2017 and you

You know, really, Karl, who is a visiting professor at, well, I've been visiting, he's been in there for years, at Princeton, and... He's a professor of art, isn't he? Yeah, right, American art.

Before we talk about your book, your three children are Paul, for eldest,

and, you know, I can't remember their, do you have difficulty with trying to remember their birth dates?

Oh, yeah, I do. Yeah, I don't think that's something a mother automatically, I have to stop and get it out of my head. Yeah. I wouldn't worry about it. But I know Paul is the same age as my daughter, Kate, same So anyway, Paul, and then Karl, and the Adrie, and all three of those wonderful children grew up, and good kids, and they're all adults and have families, and pay attention,

and there are the ones who put this book together for you. They took your essay. Karl did it mostly?

Karl didn't mainly because he has had about five art books that are about this thick, and he's written or edited or edited part of it. Okay. So he knew just what to do with all these things I was sending, And he went to Mountain Gazette.

Yep. Or Mountain Villager.

He was the your first and then because that yeah and that's where they were published and every couple of weeks.

That was that was fun I like doing that I don't know but

well but in recent years you have blessed us with some articles some essays and so yeah so I think maybe this would be a good moment to choose something out of the book to read yeah do you have anything in mind well you know there are so many of them we can look at the table contents there are two four six there's over 20 about 30 essays in here yeah how about going to the last one summer at the back end because it's short and I will help you with the reading it is way at back - end Sue.

I've read this one before and I like it it has children in it and it sort of appropriate because we're just coming to the end of our summer one more page right there you go whoops starts there would you like to read that one yeah okay and if you get if your voice gets tired just tell me and I'll help you and read some of it too well anyway

there are a lot ones that I could read I don't remember summer is being exceptional but it's okay. Summer is really here on the edge of the river road is the sign of its arrival, strawberries. The day is slightly overcast with tiny shafts of Sun sliding through so that when they hit one realizes how truly hot it might be without the huge cumulus clouds piling up in the West.

From the road one can see people in the strawberry field. The bigger silhouettes are bent over moving along slowly and what they feel after a brief research are the best spots. Occasionally they wander a bit from row to row, foraging farther up to see if there are some undiscovered patches of bright red or even deep dark red turning over bright green leaves to find the beauties.

Then comes the ethical decision. Should I just pop this juicy one into my mouth right now or take it home to be crushed gently with some sugar and dropped by spoonfuls on fresh -made shortcake biscuits.

The problem is solved quote I have worked hard picked almost my quota and ergo I deserve this reward. In it goes to my mouth and as the juice slides out the corners of the mouth it is obvious the right decision was made.

Do you want to take a little bit of a break?

there and move over to the last one thing that I remember people like Judy Boardman and who heard them so many times in terms of Christmas is a Christmas. Remember the title? The Revisited. It's either 53 Remembrance.

No. Christmas Revisit is page 57.

And this is 53 I'm looking for. Go to 57?

Yeah. It's quite long, but we could pick apart a part of it.

It was, did you find it? It is the very, the last part that we're driving home from. It has stuffy and hot, and the coffee smells burnt and someone, a small one, is crying from the aftermath of excitement.

A little bit louder, Sue. The evening is ending. The piano gathers us with sleep and heavenly peace, and we all stand and bring our children in close. The room lights dash out and the tree rejuvenates in the darkness, glowing watermelon reds and greens and electric blues.

Together we sing firmly on the first verse, reaching and petering out on a high piece, tentatively in the second verse. Thinking out the words, relaxing on course, I am singing softly in German. As I sang many years ago with my June, speaking husband.

And my kids look up at me with that perplexed, censoring look deserved when a parent does not conform. But they come in close to, as if to protect me from my own oddities. The last note, gentles in the heat, preserving itself for a moment and a forever, until the lights snap on and break into our eyes, and the exodus begins our own personal journeys of the Magi.

The cold cuts into layers of down, inexorably and swiftly dissipating the radiator toastiness of mittens and caps. Plumes of exhaust blow into the night as each car costs its way on its snowy road home.

Our lane is pure, we are the first car to track it and the drive below zero snow flies away in wings beside the car windows. our kids all three are huddled in front on the old -fashioned bench seat. No one speaks.

One large star hangs over the nose of Mount Mansfield and bids the others to cluster on the mountaintop. As we drive up our lane of giant maples, they catch in the frozen branches like a thousand birds of light.

We tuck our children into bed and the silence surrounds me. The moon jewels a cloud and throws heron blue shadows in pools under the trees. Intellectually I know that the moon is very cold and very far away.

Rationally I know that it does not give warmth, yet in my heart that night in Underhill, I was sure that it did. And then that was dedicated to the teachers that were... It's beautiful, really beautiful.

That last paragraph I can remember.

You remember it, wow. dedicated to Gladys Kingsbury, Rose Lindner, Alan Basil, Janet Steckler, Karl Driscoll, Mary Balch, and the many other teachers and staff who took care of our kids. Yeah, very nice.

That was our kind of good life, of course. It was a good staff, good stuff, yeah. Very nice! So, can you tell me any kind of a story, do you have any story from Underhill? Something that may have happened on Beartown Road, something funny, we're kind of not going into, you know, history as such, but just something that might have it talk in your memory about being at the store with your kids or being...

Well, what I started to do with the little kids in nursery school was start to sing with them. And I used to sing with Brahms and chorales and this sort of thing, so... Solo by yourself. Oh, yeah. uh and um and you would go into the so i go into each classroom yeah i'd go in to each i think for the kindergarten i went in twice a week and then you know so on but they just love to sing and anything that involved marching all around the classroom which was so typical of Mary Balch.

She marched right along with them. Did you teach them the songs or just sing it? They learned them? Yeah, you know, I said, what will we do when we all go out, when all we go, out when, we, all, go. What should we do when we all go out to play.

And then there would be hands raised and kids wanted to pretend they were shoveling snow or that they could spot a star up in this part of the sky. That's what

they would do, when they went up. Yeah, yeah. So did you make up that song or did you know it from somewhere else? I guess I made it up. It sounds like you made it. I probably did. Did you go every week regularly or just

occasionally? Yeah, except for the older grades. They were already kind of on their way to growing up, so they only needed one.

They change. Around sixth, seventh grade they change? Yeah. Yeah, the kids. Yeah?

When I would walk to the school. From your house? Yeah which could be done if the weather wasn't too horrible. But they, oh we made up songs, they learned how you make up a song. I remember one day a young man came up to me in the fruit and vegetable section of Hannaford's and said, you know, I wonder if I could ask a favor, could you teach me the words, too?

I'm being followed by a bow constrictor. Swallowed. Swallowed by bow constructors. Yes,

I remember that one. So in the store?

In the stores, we're standing there, two or three of us, and then a couple other people, you know, just joined in. And—

Can you sing it now?

What, what did I start? What shall we do when we all go of? No, not that one. I'm being swallowed by a boa constrictor. I'm being swallowed by a boa constrictor and I don't like it very much oh no oh

no. Oh no and then you just stopped loved because you've been swallowed.

There was little girl in the first grade who I found got very worried that this snake was coming from the library and it was too real for her yeah so I revised it and made it a little softer yeah and of course it was a very nice boa constrictor wouldn't hurt any of the kids.

Yeah that was in

In the early days when you lived in Underhill, you had to drive to Essex Junction for groceries, or did you pick up groceries? It was before Mike and Patty. Who ran the store before that, I don't remember.

Well, way back it was landfill. No, bolio. Bolio, yeah. Right. So you could go there and pick up just something quick like milk or something if you needed it for the house. Did you grow a garden at your home?

No. Up in Beartown?

Well a little bit. Enough so the kids knew where food came from. I was never the gardener that my son -in -law, Robert, is now a superb gardner.

He's a tulip expert, isn't he? Yeah, I've seen his garden, it's beautiful.

He is Dutch, so he had to plant a lot of tulips.

Tulips. But... Did you like to cook during the years of raising... No, I've never really liked... Did You get that thing from your children around four or five o 'clock? What's for dinner mom? Yeah. And I always said, well I don't know yet.

Well you know I usually gave them a choice. Like every Wednesday you can pick. So invariably it was Chef Boyardee.

Fish sticks, hot dogs. We all went through that. I mean nowadays you're supposed to be gourmet cooking for your family but I raised five kids so I know it's just like, there's food in the together and eat something.

Let's sing about something, yeah.

Did you take them to the Underhill Ski Bowl?

Actually, the boys, when they were a little bit older, just skied down from our old house, which is where Tom Feters lives now.

Right. Big house. Big trees. Yeah. Going in the driveway. And 400 acres of- but not Adriean so much, but the boys would ski from your house to the ski bowl. Yeah.

Oh, yeah, fairly steep. I always waited until M called and said, they just left and I'd look at the clock and make sure.

So coming back they had to kind of climb the hill. No, I pick them up. Oh you'd pick him up coming down, it was all downhill to get there. Yeah, yeah, crossing a brook that was— Did they eat hamburgers and hot dogs in the little shed with Emmy Durbro cooking?

That's what Emmy Durbro was cooking.

And she took care of all these kids. Mobs of kids, yes. And, she knew enough about all of them so she could predict when he'd be going home or whatever. and she'd call and say, I don't know, I think about four o 'clock you better start looking up the hill.

Did she, did any of your kids ever like have an accident or hurt themselves and have to have Emmy taken care of them? No. That's something about the way that hill was set up with the rope tow and then later the T -bar.

It was safe. I mean, it was really—

Why the town didn't buy that, and—

It would have been wonderful if we were still there. The only thing I think that happened is that children's mittens or gloves would get totally ruined because to hang onto that ropeto and...

And it got heavier. I'd go up on the ropedo and it'd got heavy. Heavier and heavier, you get to the top. looked at them in back of me there must have been 10 kids that were all dragging

it down I know I didn't have to do a thing that I'm yeah I love doing no I lived in Jericho during those years and I used to drive up with my kids and I think people from Cambridge and Jeff would come down to I mean it was just a it wasn't Underhill blessing it really was yeah yeah and we had to had to quit because of insurance insurance it just got to be too much yeah yeah and then the Adams ran it for a little while remember Jerry and Susan Adams yeah ran it but they just did it as a sort of a a little wild to keep it going and it was too bad it's too bad.

Let's see what else about Underhill could we talk about? Well one thing,

it's not my best writing. Oh, Apple Pie Camp, that's when I, Adrie had her friends over and they each had a a wooden bowl and a spoon. I'm trying to think. Anyway, there were about six or eight of Anna's, Yeah.

I remember the three A's.

Yeah, Adrie, Anna,

and Anne. Adriee, Anne, Amy. Amy, absolutely. And then there were others, too. They were friends. And what would they be doing with the wooden bowl?

Oh, well, this was our apple tree, our Apple Pie Camp. And so we had it—

You would gather apples from your tree and make pies? Uh, yeah.

The night before, it tells all about— You want to read that part? Yeah. I'll skip part of it because it's a long one, but boys guffaw, girls giggle. I can hear them climbing out of cars, giggling, coming up the walk, giggling, and finally bursting forth into full voice as the porch door is opened.

They are of varying sizes and heights, blondes and brunettes, long and short hair, some with gloriously painted fingernails, courtesy of an overnight together. Anna had sent out invitations. That's interesting.

It was Anna then.

This was not Adriean. This is Anna. This is Anna. Yeah, okay. Anna, for those listening, is Sue's granddaughter, Adrie's daughter. Go ahead.

She had sent out invitations with a logo of a steaming apple, I presume, pie, and a request to bring an apron. Not all did. it's almost an old -fashioned idea now. So some were fitted with dish towels around their waist.

And I was in charge and moms were not invited. Neither were fathers or boys. I cherished the moms, volunteers, chauffeurs, caterers, horse trainers, teachers, pick up your kid when you are a sick mom.

I admired them so much with their tough tenderness and caring arms. The girls warmed the room, filled it with chatter and more giggles. the first apple pie camp had begun.

So it sounds like you did it more than she did at more than one time.

Now if I ever get this republished, which I kind of like to, some of them are a bit long, but the famous line in here is when Adrie, what a halt to everything and said now this is the toughest part of the whole thing this whole pie making thing and it's the hardest thing to do but I'll show you so she got her things out and rolled out of a top piece everything else was done and And she had learned how to do this from you.

Yes. And, she says, I'm going to count up to three, and then what you do is you take your piece of wax paper with the pie dough on it and you flip it, um, and hope that it lands on top of it. Anyway, they all did very well, and then they flute the

edges.

And at that point, when the pies were cooked, they could either take them home, or they could invite these leering boys who were outside peering in. To come have a piece. Yeah, they could finally join the group, but that was um—

And you were there observing all this,

I think. And each of the kids had a chance to use a coffee grinder and grind up, oh, what would be, uh, trying to think of,

um, all of them. They would grind the apples for the pie. Were these apples from trees and they they were local trees not not bought apples. No, no

Local and if you didn't have enough you just had to run outside and get some more

Yeah, yeah, is that that's the time of year we're in right now. There's apples everywhere It's a good apple year. Yeah and there all just falling everywhere in my woods and and nobody really can use them.

Well, I have made applesauce at times, but it doesn't taste too good. I don't think I just find the right recipe. The deer like them though. Yeah,

so you can get to see. Actually, there's a beautiful deer last night.

Really? You could see from your home? Were you out the window?

I was at Avery's.

Oh, uh -huh. you see them out the window yeah yeah but is there an apple orchard there at

the house well you know these came from Bear Town okay, Bear Town was taken taken over by the range, the Army or U.S., something or other, and turned into a shooting place. Shooting range.

And that was kind of— Kelly- So where does that name come from? Why is it a Bear Town?

because there used to be a lot of houses up there on the range but then when it was built the army came in and took down all the houses left cellar holes and bowls. Apples,

I mean. Uh -huh. Okay. Apple trees around each home that was there, but I've never understood where the term bear town comes from.

Well, I think that there were—

Was the town or those houses, maybe? Yeah, and the bears—

And the Bears liked it, and they came in for the apples, so they called it Beartown. No, that's why they call it Beartown.

It's a good name. Yeah, it was. It was something you don't forget. No. No? Yeah.