

## 5. The Crowley Family

By

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The Crowleys were a large family with lots of relatives living around the Berea area of eastern Kentucky. You didn't have to look too closely at my stepfather, Everett Crowley, his brother, John, or his brother Fred to imagine that their prominent reddish hair and freckles connected them to the Picts or even the Vikings.



Fred and Everett Crowley in 1958

Their father, John C. Crowley, was born in Jackson County, KY, a mountainous eastern county adjacent to Madison County, where Berea, with its famous co-op college, is located. Everett spoke of "Crowley Mountain," a place he visited as a child. He indicated that some of his relatives there were quite wild. Crowley Mountain Road is near McKee, KY, not far from Berea.

Their last name is sometimes spelled "Croley" and, in fact, that is the spelling on Everett's birth certificate. An exchange on an Ancestry message board reveals that those with the Crowley spelling did not get along well with those who used the Croley variant. The message reads:

. . . there is a part of this line that uses the spelling CROWLEY and they live in either KY or TN on "CROWLEY MOUNTAIN". There was supposedly a feud and one Croley/Crowley killed another Croley/Crowley and they have had no connection since. As a matter of fact, my Aunt Paula and her husband Clarence Tackett went to "CROWLEY Mountain" to find out the lineage on that side of the family and they told them to "go on back down the mountain". I'm sorry that a feud can go on that long between family. (1)

Mom said that John C. Crowley was an itinerant preacher who came home just long enough to get his wife pregnant before leaving again. The trips must have been frequent because they had 9 children,

most of them born in Kentucky. Somehow, Everett's mother found herself in Hagerstown, Wayne County, Indiana, when he was born on October 2, 1916.

Hagerstown is only about 6 miles from the small town of Greens Fork, Wayne County, IN, to which in 1957 my stepfather moved us from Charlestown, IN at the start of my freshman year of high school. This move was quite a surprise to me since I was visiting Seabay and L E in Central City when it took place. I remember well the phone call from Mom that informed me of this. Some joker in Greens Fork (population 413 in 1957) evidently had a lot of fun with Mom when she asked about music opportunities in Greens Fork High School. He told her that they had a symphony orchestra. Mom relayed this to me, and though I was somewhat skeptical, I thought maybe it would be ok there. I had been playing trombone in high school band at Charlestown since midway through the sixth grade due to the lack of high school trombonists, and by the summer of 1957, I was pretty good. Why not give symphonic music a try? Imagine my shock at my first band class to find that it was a 12-piece rhythm band with triangles, a drum, and flutophones and one of the oddest-looking horns I have ever seen.

Fortunately, I soon met my best friend in Greens Fork, Cecil "Corky" Richmond, Jr., a talented cornet player. (2) Corky and I formed a strong friendship that was cemented through our love of playing music. Among the 60 or so students in Greens Fork High School, we were the only ones who played brass instruments with any facility. Needless to say, Corky was not a member of the "symphony orchestra" at Greens Fork High School, nor was I after day one of the class. He and I had lots of fun playing with various musical groups in the area before I moved back to Charlestown at the beginning of my junior year in 1959 to live with Aunt Marg and Uncle "Tip" (Clifton) Grace. At the same time, Corky transferred to Hagerstown High School for his senior year. Both of us were advised by the principal at Greens Fork to enroll in larger schools to give ourselves a better chance of getting scholarships for college. Everett and Mom came back to Charlestown before I started my senior year at Charlestown High School in 1960, and I moved back in with them.

Everett Crowley was raised by his sister, Dorothy, in New Castle, Henry County, IN. Dorothy married an electrician, John Bell. John may have been a nickname, since a New Castle City Directory from 1928 shows her as Mrs. Claude H. Bell, and at the same address is a separate listing for an electrician, John Bell. It was through Mr. Bell that Everett Crowley learned the electrical trade, as probably did his brother John.

Ironically, my stepfather also served in the Army Air Corps, but not nearly as long as the 21½ years put in by my real Dad. Everett's two enlistments together totaled 4 years, 3 months, and 47 days. He was married in 1939 to Marnie Elsie Sparks in New Castle, and they had a son, Michael Ray Crowley (1941-2011), whom I met when he visited us once in Charlestown. After their divorce, Elsie eventually settled in Auburn, IN, north of Fort Wayne (home of the famous Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Museum). Elsie sued for child support once she learned where we were living, and I recall making many trips to the Charlestown Post Office in the 1950s to purchase money orders to send to them. Everett presumably met his second wife, Reba Mae Hensley, while stationed at Rosenkrans Field, St. Joseph, Missouri. They had two children, Richard Dean (1946-1963) and Linda Susan (Crowley) Turner (1947-??). It seems that Reba Mae wanted no contact with Everett after their divorce. I never heard about their children and learned of them only through searches on Ancestry.

Everett's brother, John Crowley, was married to Etolia Ralph, Uncle Zibe Dennis's sister-in-law, in 1933, and they were living at the time in Yorktown, IN, near Muncie. In the 1940 Census and for many years

thereafter, Geneva (Ralph) Carson, Etolia's and Aunt Daph's sister, lived in Muncie with her husband, Cecil Lee Carson. Thus, the Ralphs and Crowleys had bonds in east-central Indiana that would eventually lead to a merger of the Dennis/Bolton family with the Crowleys through the marriage of my mother and my stepfather, Everett Crowley.

My younger son, Tom, was surprised to hear me say recently that I do not hate my deceased stepfather, Everett Crowley. No, I don't hate him (or anyone else, for that matter), but neither did I love him. I can accept him now, with all his faults. In retrospect, I learned quite a few things about life from him.

Everett was a drunkard and a wife beater. The drunken bouts were frequent, but it was the blows he inflicted on my mother during some of those periods of stupor that left the greatest impression on me. When he sobered up, he claimed to have no memory of them.

Everett never touched me very much. The first time was a very dark night shortly after we moved to the Pleasant Ridge housing project in Charlestown, Indiana in 1949 around my sixth birthday. All the project houses at that time looked alike, covered on the outside with cheap wood that was uniformly painted a dull brownish yellow color. It was a few years later that the government installed brick siding of various colors on the mostly duplex homes, some of which can still be seen in the project. On that night we were walking home, and we got lost. When Mom said, "We're lost!", I started to cry. Everett always had a short temper, and he gave me a couple of slaps on the rear end as soon as he heard it. Mom's reaction was very angry, and I think he realized quickly that he wasn't to touch me if this, his third marriage, was going to last longer than the previous two.

I remember only a few times when he laid a hand (or in one case, a foot) on me between then and adulthood. The local boys around Clark Street and Halcyon would usually go to the Saturday movies at the Venro Theater in downtown Charlestown. I was there one Saturday, when, in the middle of a movie, one of my friends came back from buying candy at the concession stand and said my daddy wanted me to come out to the lobby. Sure enough, it was Everett, and he was very drunk. He said I left a gallon of milk on the table instead of putting it back in the icebox, and that set him on the path to town to correct me. He spanked me, but as we were walking back home, some vague recollection of a threat must have come to him, because he began to say that I should not tell mother about this. When we got home, he set me down at a table where he was painting a checkerboard on our small oak kitchen table, and we began to work on it together. By the time Mom got home from her shift at the powder plant, things had calmed down. She never found out about this.

The final incident was quite a few years later. I was a teenager, and we were living in a house on the east edge of Greens Fork, Indiana. One of my chores was to mow the very large yard, which stretched out to the main road that led to Richmond. Across the road was a swampy area full of snakes. They would crawl into our yard, so it was important to keep the grass cut fairly low. Apparently, I let it go too long this time, and Everett literally kicked me out of the house to start up the mower and finish the job before the snakes got too close to the house. He was drunk then too.

I was afraid of Everett for many years, and rightly so. He would fight at the drop of a hat. Anyone who ever called him a "son-of-a-bitch" certainly regretted it. Size didn't matter. Before I arrived at the Greens Fork house in the summer of 1957, he and his older and much bigger brother, John, got into a fight at our house. Apparently, John was jealous of Everett at the time, and, according to Mom, he

started the fight to destroy as much of their furniture as he could. You could see evidence of this battle and many other fights Everett was in just by looking at his nose, broken many times over the years.

One evening after I had gone to bed in our project house, I heard him and Mom arguing in the living room. The walls of the project duplexes were paper thin, so our duplex neighbors, the Bettlers, could easily hear the shouting, and they summoned help from another neighbor. Everett had a shotgun and was loading it, as he and Mom fought. Just as I ran in, Mr. Herndon and his son, Henry, who lived across the street, rushed through the front door. Mr. Herndon was a short ex-Navy man, and he looked as if he had survived many brawls in his navy travels. Henry was quite a bit taller and was by then a grown man. Everett was going to take them on, but Mr. Herndon said, "Everett, you'd better think hard about that!" That ended the incident.

Things calmed down until the next serious confrontation. By that time, we had moved 6 miles east of Charlestown to the largely uninhabited area occupied by several square miles of what was to have been the rocket plant. A common trait of wife beaters is that they tend to find housing that is out of earshot of their neighbors.

Our 4-room modular rental home had been disassembled from a government facility somewhere and moved to one of the many concrete slabs in the area by Mr. and Mrs. James Staton, our landlords. They owned the lot our house stood on and a 40-acre adjoining plot of woodlands to the east of it. The Statons were in the process of building a large retirement home in the woods, a short distance down a gravel road from where we lived.

One evening I was awakened by Mom's shouts for help, "Oh, God, Gary, he's going to kill me!" He had her backed up against the kitchen sink with a knife to her throat. I darted out the door heading for the Statons' house, but heard Everett running behind me, followed by Mom screaming behind him. He caught me just as I reached their walkway. The ruckus had aroused them. Everett allowed Mom and me to slip into their house, and he went back down the road toward where we lived.

An Indiana state trooper, Mr. McDonald lived not far from us on highway 62, and fortunately for Everett, it was he who got the call to investigate. Mr. McDonald had been our neighbor on Halcyon Road, so we knew him well. We got in his car, and he drove to our house. When the trooper shined his large flashlight into the yard, we could see Everett coming around the side of the house with a shotgun leveled at Mr. McDonald. At that point, the trooper shined the light on his own face and began to say things like, "Everett, you know me. Let's just see what the trouble is here." That allowed Mr. McDonald to get within reach of Everett, which was apparently his aim all along.

Mr. McDonald was a judo instructor at the state police station in Charlestown. In an instant, he made a fast move that knocked the gun from Everett's hands, and he proceeded to beat him repeatedly in the face with the flashlight until he was subdued. This was eerily like the incident related in an earlier chapter when my great-grandfather, George Dennis, had tried to run Everett off the farm in Central City, Kentucky. I still remember sitting in the patrol car yelling, "Kill him! Kill him!" It wasn't Mr. McDonald's intent to kill Everett. The last memory I have of that night was Everett handcuffed in the back seat of the patrol car, lighting a cigarette that illuminated his battered face.

Everett and I were two very different people. He was very strong and athletic, and I was a little fat kid, who liked to read comic books, watch TV, and play with toys inside the house most of the time.



Gary Wiggins at Ten Years of Age

Once at the Halcyon project house, Everett decided he was going to teach me how to catch a baseball properly. We went to the back yard, and he proceeded to throw the ball at me as hard as he could. While I caught the first few of his pitches, the next one I misjudged and it hit me right on the tip of the middle finger on my right hand, causing it to bleed. That ended the lessons. Another instructional session was aimed at toughening me up when I was about ten years old. It involved Everett lying in the floor with me astride his chest. I was to show him that I could hit him hard in the face. After a couple of faint attempts, he got me angry, and I hit him several times in the mouth as hard as I could. His response was to praise me by showing that I had succeeded in breaking the upper plate of his false teeth.

Most of the incidents where I have negative thoughts about Everett Crowley involved him being drunk. After we moved to Greens Fork, he showed up intoxicated one day during a high school baseball game. Everyone knew everyone else in the small burg of Greens Fork, and I was ashamed at how he was acting. That infuriated Everett, and he made me get in the car with him to go home. On the way, he told me that if I ever again showed that I was ashamed of him, he would take my trombone and break it in two.

It was in Greens Fork sometime after this that I came home one day and found Mom with a battered face and Everett passed out in bed. I was furious and shouted that I would kill him. Mom got between me and the place where the guns were kept and succeeded in pushing me out the front door. Where she got such strength I'll never know. I ran out to the detached garage and continued to rave about killing Everett. As far as I know, that was the last time he hit my mother.

Everett Crowley was a man who was truly conflicted by his obvious drinking and other problems, and occasionally it became painfully obvious. Sometime around my sophomore year at Greens Fork, he came home drunk and was unhappy that Mom had fixed only hamburgers for supper. He threw his burger against the kitchen wall and began to cry. When he regained control somewhat, he cried out, "I want to pray!" After a few minutes of silence, another anguished cry was heard, "I can't!"

Everett was not a religious person. In part, he attributed that to an incident when he lived with his sister Dorothy. During one of the pushes to increase the membership in the Presbyterian Church where they

were living, someone apparently offered him money if he would be “saved”. He refused, and he didn’t have much use for religion after that. I think his attitude was also colored by his feelings toward his father, who was supposedly an itinerant preacher.

Once while a revival was being held at the First Baptist Church in Charlestown, some of us boys from our project neighborhood were moved to come down the aisle and accept Christ as our personal savior. A total immersion ceremony is required in the Baptist church, apparently to wash away any sins that might have been hiding between our toes or in other parts not so thoroughly cleansed in the baptismal rituals of other religions. Naturally we didn't want to wear our Sunday best during the baptism, so we were told to bring some old clothes and change into them before the ceremony. On the day we were to be baptized, Mom packed some clothes for me in a paper sack and hid them under the front porch so I could retrieve them without Everett seeing me. Needless to say, I did not have his permission to be baptized, and we never told him about this episode.

Billy Ireland was one of the boys to be baptized that day. Billy was a mischievous youth, and he decided to have some fun at the baptism. The baptismal pool at the First Baptist Church in Charlestown had dressing rooms on either side, one for men and the other for women. Billy told us that when he came up from the full immersion pool, he was going to fake drowning and make a mad dash for the girls' dressing room in hopes of catching a glimpse of some of the young girls in various stages of undressing. The minister at the time was Reverend I. T. Blick. We all waited with great anticipation to see if Billy would really carry out his plan. Sure enough, he came up flailing and spitting and made straight for the girls' dressing room. When he got within two steps of his goal, the long arm of Reverend Blick interceded on God's behalf and kept Billy's baptism pure and wholesome. Thus, an otherwise solemn ceremony had an element of humor injected into it that I have never forgotten.

Everett Crowley was raised by his sister, Dorothy, and he once told me about an incident that occurred at his elementary school. The old-style desks in many schools at the time were bolted to the floor, and the kids would entwine their legs around them. Something Everett did or said while he had his legs locked around the desk infuriated his teacher, and she grabbed him by the ear to pull him out of the seat. The fact that he couldn’t get up enraged her even further, and she didn’t stop pulling his ear until she had partially ripped the earlobe from his face. When Dorothy found out about this, she went straight to the teacher. After a visit from his pumped-up sister, he never had difficulty with the teacher again.

Everett himself championed me in this manner when I was in the sixth grade at Jonathan Jennings School on the square in Charlestown. By the time I had reached this level of elementary school, it was routine for me to bring home a report card with all A’s. The first six-week report card from Mr. Marshall, however, had at least one A- and maybe even a B+. Mom and Everett asked what happened, and I told them I didn’t know since I had been acing all the quizzes and exams. Everett went for a talk with Mr. Marshall and learned that it was his teaching philosophy not to give a perfect score to students at first because it gave them something to work toward. Everett had a message of his own for Mr. Marshall. He told him bluntly and forcefully, as only a construction electrician can, that he would beat the living shit out of him if he pulled that crap again. Needless to say, the A’s were much in evidence on the next six-week report card.

The next negative incident involving Everett’s drunkenness was his attempt to teach me to drive. He bought me a 1951 Ford convertible just before my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and paid quite a bit of money to a local

mechanic (also a drunk) to install a re-built Jasper engine in it. When the car was fixed, he made me drive it on a gravel road, following behind me in his souped-up 1957 Ford Fairlane 500 with a continental kit. The lesson was how to pass another car, and he flew around me at high speed, yelling at me to now pass him. That scenario went on for quite a few sequences before he allowed me to return home. Given the speed at which we were driving, I marvel that we both didn't end up in a ditch.

I had finally gotten up enough nerve to ask for a date with a popular girl in Greens Fork, and asked Everett if I could drive his car. He agreed, especially since mine had various parts removed for painting in the garage. When the day of the date arrived, he came home drunk and refused to let me have the car, saying, "It's my bread and butter, and I can't take a chance of you wrecking it!" I quickly put the old 1951 Ford back together and went on the date.

Indiana newspapers chronicle the many times that Everett was arrested for drunk driving, starting with a report in the Richmond *Palladium-Item* in 1939 when he was sentenced to 10 days in jail for driving while intoxicated. He was injured in an accident in 1956 when his nephew, John Charles Crowley, ran into a road grader that he failed to see. I remember once riding in a car that John Charles was driving. Everett and I were in the back seat, and Everett's brother John was in the front passenger seat. For long periods while driving at highway speeds, John Charles would turn his head completely around to talk to "Uncle Dusty" (Everett's nickname) in the back seat. It doesn't surprise me that he didn't see the road grader in the 1956 accident. Everett was lucky to escape with cuts and bruises.

A little over three years later in early 1960, the Richmond paper's headline was "Greensfork Man Denies Charge of Drunken Driving." Everett pleaded innocent to charges of a second offense for drunken driving, public intoxication, and reckless driving. The story mentioned another drunken driving offense that occurred in 1939 in Aurora, Indiana. Apparently, the trial was delayed, since a May 15, 1961 story in the *Palladium-Item* notes, "Second Offense Drunken Driver Is Fined \$66.75." His license was also suspended for one year. Three years later, Everett was back in the news again in Richmond, when the paper said "30-Day Term Is Given For Drunk Driving." His driver's license was again suspended, this time for only 90 days. I was in college at IU by this time (1964).

Drunkenness was not Everett's only fault. He was also unfaithful to my mother, apparently carrying on a longstanding love affair with a woman in Richmond (or New Castle? or both places?). By 1966, mother had finally had enough, and she abandoned him, bringing my cousin Pat Kelley to live with me and her in Bloomington. That began a very tough period for us financially. Aside from \$65 he sent in August 1966, Everett gave Mom no money during this time. I was working as much as I could and had taken out about \$3,000 in student loans. It was my first year of graduate school in Russian at IU, and I was trying as hard as I could to get good grades and apply for a National Defense Foreign Language Fellowship for the 1967/68 school year (which I eventually got: \$2750 for the academic year and \$450 for the summer).

Mom had various jobs during this time, starting at the Sarkes Tarzian TV component plant in Bloomington. That lasted 59 days. Tarzian routinely fired people at day 59 without cause since the union contract required that employees be covered by the contract if they reached day 60. Mom then went to work in a cafeteria at one of the IU dorms, and shortly thereafter found herself a boyfriend. He was involved in trying to unionize the large food staff at IU, and Mom got active in that cause. She was soon fired from that job because of her union activities and ended up as a cook at one of the IU fraternities, Sigma Phi Epsilon.

By the first of the year in 1967 Everett had seemingly come to his senses and approached Mom for a reconciliation. I wrote a letter to Aunt Seabay on February 22, 1967 saying that Mom had found out Everett went back to seeing the woman. She then filed for legal separation to try to get support money from him. By June, they were again reconciled, and Mom and Pat moved from Bloomington to start a new chapter in their lives with Everett at Oldenburg, Indiana, living first in downtown Oldenburg. Eventually, I went to Oldenburg to meet with Everett and try patch things up. I was going to Greens Fork later that evening. Everett never showed up, and I told Mom that I had to leave. One of the gut-wrenching moments in my life was when Mom began crying as I got into the car and told me she loved me. As I drove toward Greens Fork, I saw Everett pass me at a high rate of speed. It was a while before Everett and I resumed our relationship.

I had tried to teach Mom to drive when we lived in the rocket plant home the second time, but she never got the hang of it. After moving to Oldenburg, Mom once again tried to learn to drive during and was confident enough to drive from Charlestown to Marysville, as I learned in a letter from her. Unfortunately, she never got her driving license.

The second home they occupied in Oldenburg was a farmhouse on the outskirts of town far from other homes. Pat recently told me that the physical mistreatment of Mom resumed in Oldenburg. She recalled one incident when they were coming out of one of the Oldenburg bars, and Everett pushed Mom down the steps. After Pat was married in 1971, they continued to live in Oldenburg, but they eventually moved back to Charlestown's Pleasant Ridge project in a house on Marcy Street close to Aunt Marg and Uncle Tip Grace.

I'll relate a few more negative things about Everett before balancing out this presentation with some positive thoughts about him. He just didn't have good financial sense. Given the uncertain nature of the construction business, we were forced to deal with boom or bust times in our household. By and large, there was more boom than bust compared to our relatives and most of the families of my friends in the project who lived around us. Nevertheless, Everett didn't seem to be capable of planning for or anticipating when the next dry spell from work would come. Consequently, we were often forced to take loans from financial institutions. These were not banks, but so-called loan companies with names like Franklin Finance, Beneficial Finance, The Associates, etc. The interest rates they charged were outrageous, in the 20-25% range. When I graduated from high school in 1961, we couldn't even scrounge up the \$300 I needed to pay for my initial uniforms at the Coast Guard Academy in, so I borrowed the money from Grandad Wiggins.

When they moved from Charlestown to Greens Fork in 1957, Everett left behind a debt of over \$300 for groceries charged at Griesel's Market. Ceil and Red Griesel lived just down the road from my grandparents, and Heavenin Bolton and Red were very good friends. When I found out about the debt, I was embarrassed and vowed to pay it off. I did so over the course of the next two summers when I worked for the minimum wage of \$1.05/hour baling hay, de-tassling seed corn, and working in a mill that bought raw wool from farmers in the surrounding area of Wayne County.

In the post-war boom years of the 1950s, everyone wanted a car, a television, and lots of other things. Everett did too, but some of the trappings of the good life were short-lived in our household. One incident involved a maroon 1960 Pontiac Catalina convertible that he bought. Everett let me drive that car, and I almost killed myself in it when I floored it on Highway 403 heading toward Charlestown. As I approached the "T" intersection with State Road 3, I took my foot off the gas, but the car didn't slow down. When I looked at the gas pedal, it was stuck flat against the floor mat. I quickly bent over and



jerked on it, but the damned thing came off in my hand! It was attached to the floor only by a couple of plastic pins that fit through holes at its base. I was careening down the road at high speed toward a pizza parlor on the east side of Highway 3. I quickly realized that the accelerator was not attached to the gas pedal, but instead rode up and down on a plastic wheel when the underside of the pedal pressed against it. I bent over again and jerked the trapped accelerator out of the carpet to bring the car under control. Fortunately, the Bureau of Consumer Protection now exists to expose such design flaws, but back in those days, they were much more common.

The Repo men got the Pontiac Catalina shortly thereafter when they found it at the rocket plant house. (We lived in that house on two occasions—once from 1955 until 1957 and again from 1959 until shortly after I entered the Coast Guard Academy in 1961.) This time it was Everett who was using a flashlight as a threatening weapon. The Repo men were not intimidated, however, and the Pontiac went the way of my .22 rifle, a birthday gift from Everett that was also repossessed.

Wherever Everett lived in rental homes with my mom (they never owned a house), he made extraordinary efforts to improve the property. He and Mom had painted all the rooms in the first project house that we were going to move into in 1949 when he found a place more to his liking at the end of Halcyon. All the walls were refurbished in that house too. There was a lot more room in the back yard for kids to play, and it was near a wooded area just west of Clark Road that offered lots of opportunities for kids to enjoy. Everett also made elaborate improvements to the second place they rented for a long period in Oldenburg, Indiana. It was a large old farmhouse on the outskirts of town, and it had a big, somewhat rundown barn. Everett fixed up the barn, wired it, and proceeded to stock the farm with horses that were comfortably housed in stalls he built.

Even in the early years of their marriage, Everett was into raising beagle hounds and running them in field trials. This involved going to remote sportsmen clubs, pairing up the dogs, and getting them to hunt a rabbit. The dog that most successfully tracked the bunny moved on to the next brace and eventually won the field trial if all other beagles were bested. Everett bought some dogs with pretty good pedigrees, but only one, Rolling Hills Judy, managed to win a first-place trophy. Everett formed good friendships with some of his hunting buddies, including Zane Pigg and Dick Payne, and another man whom I knew only as “Jonesy”. They would frequently go out to run their dogs, sometimes taking along some strong liquid refreshment to fortify themselves against the cold weather. I had to go with them to the field trials but spent most of the time sitting in the clubhouses. I never was much of an outdoor person.

It was my job to feed the dogs and clean the poop out of the pens. Sometimes we had as many as 15 dogs at a time when one of the females gave birth. Once in the rocket plant house, a newborn pup was brought inside because it was having difficulty. At one point, it jumped out of the box and began yelping and dancing around haphazardly. I started laughing, but Everett quickly shut me up, saying that the pup was evidently infested with worms and having a seizure. We later took it up the road. Everett put the poor creature out of its misery by hitting it in the head with a hammer, and dug a hole in which he buried it.

Everett hunted both rabbits and squirrels. I remember he once made me help skin the rabbits inside our house on Halcyon. The sickly-sweet smell in the pantry where we were working was overwhelming, and I was glad he didn't ask me to help again. I never developed a taste either for rabbit or squirrel meat, and I bagged far more tin cans with my short-lived .22 rifle than I did game.

Everett took it upon himself to educate me in the “facts of life” (aka, “birds and bees” and sex education) when I was about 10 years old. It was a shock to hear about this at such a tender age, but I used my newfound knowledge and the treasure trove of dirty jokes that he shared to impress my playmates in the project. Everett brought home new jokes each week from his encounters with his construction electrician buddies. Since his home union was the I.B.E.W. local at Richmond, he frequently had to rent a room during the week close to construction sites that were far away from Charlestown.

During “the talk,” Everett explained to me that the reason one of the Swallow girls, Helen, who lived right across the street from us had pimples was that she wasn’t having sex. The next time I was alone with Mom, I asked her about this, and she said that she was very unhappy that Everett had told me about sex at my age. His attitudes about sex and its relationship to marriage can be judged by a couple of comments he made. Concerning marriage, he once remarked in mom’s presence that in his view, all women were essentially whores because they were trading sex for a secure home and food on the table. When I first started dating and was beginning to have conflicting emotions about my sexual yearnings, I asked Everett and mom about this. His sage advice to me shocked my mother. It was: “Fuck ‘em, Gary, fuck ‘em!”



The above cartoons that I inherited from Everett encapsulate his views about sex and fidelity.

Everett could always get a job as a construction electrician because he was a very good worker, so good and so productive, in fact, that on more than once occasion he told us that some of his co-workers would urge him to slow down because he was making them look bad. His approach to work was characterized by some as like fighting fire.

He could make things, many of which we used in and around the house. One of them was a wooden bird cage for Mom's pet parakeets that he made from dowel pins. It was very difficult to align all the pins at once on a given side so they would fit into the holes he bored in the base and top pieces. He would almost get them in when one would slip out. He was furious when that happened. At one point he grabbed a hammer and beat the whole contraption. But he did eventually get it done, and it made a fine home for our two pet parakeets.

My attitude toward Everett Crowley began to change as I grew older and realized that despite his faults, he had provided a relatively good life for us. We were never without food or a place to live, and we even had a few luxuries (color TV), etc. On the other hand, what I now think of as a normal part of my life (such things as vacations, for example) were foreign to Everett's concept of family activities. I never remember a true vacation away from home during all my life with him.

Other early memories were also pleasant. When he would return home on Fridays, Everett would stop at an ice cream shop and buy cones for me and mom. Since he arrived home late, we were usually in bed asleep, but we were willingly roused to get the treats he brought. Another fun memory was the electric train set I got for Christmas. I went to bed on Christmas Eve, and Everett and Buddy Kelley set up the train in the living room after I was asleep. Mom said they were like two kids playing with the Lionel train set, and she was afraid they would wake me up. They didn't, and it was a great surprise to find it when I woke up on Christmas Day.

The one thing that changed my attitude toward Everett occurred some weeks after I returned to Charlestown from the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut in September 1961. I was ashamed that I had let people down in Charlestown by not completing my studies at the academy and getting a commission as an officer. On top of that, I had arrived back home too late to begin college, and I had no luck finding a job around the area. I was very much down in the dumps one day, sitting on a bed and staring out the window. Everett entered the room and told me that regardless of how gloomy things looked to me at the time, I would always have a home with him and Mom, so I needn't worry about that.

My mother was terrified of cancer. In Bloomington Dr. William Howard discovered that she had endometrial cancer and operated on her for that. She was convinced that she had it for a long time afterwards. Around 1971 she came to visit me in Bloomington while I was working as a science cataloger in the Indiana University Library. I scheduled her for another appointment with Dr. Howard. She came to the Main Library after she saw him, and I met her in the staff lounge. When I asked how the doctor visit went, she started crying and said only one word: cancer. I was stunned. I called Dr. Howard and asked what kind of cancer she had. His response was that she doesn't have cancer, but she does have cancer PHOBIA.

There was a prolonged period during which Mom was convinced that she had cancer. She often complained of pain in her breasts. To his credit, Everett tried his best to find a doctor that would either diagnose the cancer or convince her that she was indeed cancer-free. In September 1972, her local doctor sent her to a Cincinnati nerve specialist. By November she told Aunt Marg that she had cancer of the stomach, breast, and head. In January 1973, she was still talking of visiting a cancer clinic in Louisville.

I never saw Everett or Mom very often after I got married in 1973. However, I attribute his influence on me and the adolescent feelings I had toward him to a long bout of anxiety and depression that took 2 ½

years of psychological counseling in Urbana, Illinois to overcome. For her devotion to our marriage and the patience that Mia had with me during that time, I owe the rest of what I consider to be a very successful life together.

Despite all the troubles that Everett and Mom had, they managed to stay together until his death on October 1, 1988, just one day shy of his 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday. His last years were not good ones. The hard life and bad habits (he was both a smoker and a drinker most of his life) caught up with him in his final years. A series of strokes eventually took him.

The last time I saw Everett alive, he was lying in a hospital bed at Clark County Hospital, unable to speak. It was quite late when I got there, and Mom had already gone home. They had tied both his arms to the bed rails to prevent him from pulling out the IVs. Incredibly, he woke up and fixed an eye on me as I entered the room. He was unable to speak. I told him not to worry about Mom and that I would always see that she was cared for the rest of her life. He died later that night.



Everett and Nell Crowley near the end of his life

Upon Everett's death in 1988, Mom had about \$20,000 in life insurance provided by the I.B.E.W. and a very good supplemental medical insurance policy through the union. She moved to the Bolton family property on Highway 3 after Bill Bolton's death in 1993, and I thought she was in good shape financially. However, on one visit to Charlestown, Donna Bolton, Dick's wife, called me aside and told me that Mom was practically destitute! When I checked, I found that some of our more unscrupulous relatives had drained her savings. To make matters worse, she had taken out loans with the Charlestown bank for \$10,000 and was using credit cards to make payments on the debt. It was at that point that I took control of her finances and struck the deal with Dick and her to purchase the old Bolton home place from them. Mom spent her remaining years in relative security and serenity, moving to the Brown County Health and Living facility in Nashville, Indiana in 2003, where she remained until her death on August 12, 2013.

1. <https://www.ancestry.com/boards/thread.aspx?mv=flat&m=62&p=surnames.croley>
2. Cecil "Corky" Richmond, Jr. Web Site <https://corkyrichmond.com/>
3. Newspaper citations: *Palladium-Item* (Richmond, Indiana): Aug 29, 1939, p. 1; Nov 20, 1956, p. 1; Jan 10, 1960, p. 1; May 15, 1961, p. 1; May 20, 1964, p. 1.

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<https://www.hoosierpewter.com/WBS/WBS-0005.pdf>