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Sally, Part 14

California Trip Planning—1965

Fiction by Angela Bauer

Thursday afternoon Mommy told me that she had spoken to Daddy's new secretary, Megan Calvert. I remembered she had been so comforting with me at the office, so I was glad Megan had been promoted.

Mommy said that Daddy was having difficulty finding a nanny for the trip. She had given Miss Calvert the names of some agencies. At least Mommy was not deliberately spoiling our trip to California.

Friday evening Daddy phoned. After Mommy talked to him for several minutes, she handed me the phone. Then Mommy went to find Bobby. Daddy told me he was sure he had found a really great nanny for the trip. Bobby and I would have a chance to meet this mystery nanny the next weekend. After talking to Daddy, Bobby was overjoyed.

Although previously Mommy had taken me to buy new school clothes, that was before my sudden enrollment at Country Day. Saturday morning Mommy drove Bobby and me up to a uniform store in Rye.

My uniform started with black Mary Janes, white knee socks and underpants. My skirt was pleated plaid wool, hemmed two inches above my knees. There was a white blouse, with a collar that buttoned when I had to wear a tie. There was both a navy blue blazer and cardigan with the school logo. There also was an ankle-length matching

overcoat and hat with a wide brim. All things considered, the uniform could have been a whole lot worse.

Classes at Country Day would start the Monday (September 13) after Labor Day. A private bus would pick up Bobby and me each morning and bring us back in the afternoon. It turned out there were a few other students living in Larchmont. Once we moved to Rye another bus would pick us up.

Right on schedule Saturday morning, Daddy drove up in his blue Cadillac. On the drive to Manhattan Daddy said we would be meeting the nanny for lunch, and then all of us would spend the afternoon getting to know one another. The nanny had planned some activities for us. We would also have dinner together. After that the nanny would get us ready for bed, tuck us in, and then go home.

In Manhattan parking is always difficult. Daddy's cunning plan is to leave his car in his spot in the basement garage at the Time-Life building. He would always take cabs or walk around Manhattan. This time, after Daddy parked, instead of directly finding a cab, we took the elevator up to his office. I was delighted to see Megan Calvert sitting at her desk outside Daddy's private office.

Miss Calvert got up when she saw us in the hallway. She was wearing slacks, walking shoes and a blouse, hardly formal office clothing. We ran toward each other and hugged. After she gave me a kiss on my cheek, Megan whispered, "See, neither of us fell down!"

Usually Bobby dislikes being hugged by strangers, but he relaxed seeing Megan hug me. Probably her beauty charmed him. He did not try to pull away when Megan embraced him, nor did he turn away from her kiss. I was relieved the way Bobby accepted Megan. Daddy just watched, smiling broadly.

My delight continued as we all rode the elevator down to the lobby. Outside the building lobby there were cabs waiting. It was a very pleasant surprise when Megan got in the cab with us.

Bobby and I love riding backward on the jump seats. Daddy and Megan were sitting on opposite corners of the backseat. Her exceptionally large purse was separating her from Daddy. By comparison my own purse was tiny.

The cab stopped in front of the American Museum of Natural History. Megan walked with us to the restaurant there. I expected to see a woman dressed as a nanny waiting for us. Actually there were no women sitting alone in the restaurant.

Megan walked up to the hostess, saying "We have reservations for Donald Draper and party." Megan was polite with the hostess, yet had the same kind of authority I remembered about Granny Ruth in Cape May and recently about Granny Pauline in Rye. Of course Megan was much younger, even younger than Mommy. Yet when she needed to be authoritative she reminded me of Audrey Hepburn as "Princess Ann" in *"Roman Holiday"* who could also be goofy.

Once we were seated, Bobby could no longer contain his curiosity. He came right out and asked when we would be meeting the nanny.

Daddy answered "We need to think about that. Miss Calvert is going to spend the day with us. If we all get along, and your mother agrees, then Miss Calvert will be your nanny during our California trip." Bobby smiled and I was so happy I reached over and gave her right hand a squeeze.

Walking through the Natural History Museum, Megan knew her way around. Without sounding like a teacher or docent, she told us stories about things we were seeing. Some of those exhibits I had looked at many times without seeing all the details Megan mentioned.

From the museum we walked across Central Park to the zoo. Bobby always loves any zoo. When he would rush to see something, instead of scolding him or demanding he walk with us slowly, Megan simply followed him. Because she is tall, she could keep pace with Bobby without seeming to hurry. It was as if she anticipated where he would go next.

Daddy held my hand in a very natural way, as if we were together all the time. Away from Megan and Bobby I apologized again to Daddy for causing all the trouble by taking the train to see him.

"Sally, Precious, that was not the end of the world. Sure your mother was furious with me, but that is hardly new. I wish we could spend more time together, but what we need to do is make the most of the time we have.

"Miss Calvert did her very best, as she always does, to find a professional nanny. Mrs. Harris also checked with nanny agencies. Do you notice how easily Bobby accepted Miss Calvert? She had told me how the two of you got along at the office."

Just then Bobby, closely followed by Megan, rushed up to Daddy. "I really need to go to the bathroom. Can you take me, Daddy?" They walked toward a men's room.

Megan took my hand, not like I was a little child, but more like we were friends. We walked a few feet toward the sea lions, but were just far enough away their barking did not make talking difficult.

"Sally, your father has told me that you are so responsible helping to take care of Gene. Probably that is easier than taking care of Bobby because he is not so much younger than you. Look, I understand. I do not have any sisters or brothers, but I have a million aunts and uncles, all with kids ranging from infants to teenagers. Back home I did a lot of babysitting.

"My father is Dr. Gaston Calvert, a professor of business administration in Montreal. He was born there. My folks fell in love in Paris while he was over there doing graduate research.

"My mother, Tante Lachaille, grew up in a village near Paris. She was an under graduate at the same university. Now she is a professor of political science and refuses to speak English.

"They sent me to America for college. While I was at Hunter I worked summers and vacations as a nanny, mostly on the Upper East Side. After I graduated from Hunter I enrolled at Columbia University. After I received my MA in advertising I met Mrs. Harris. Several months later, shortly after your father started his ad agency, Mrs. Harris hired me as the receptionist."

Perhaps Megan was telling me more background than I needed to know, but she was doing so in such a natural and friendly way I was fascinated.

"Sally, I know that your little brother has not started toilet training. Your father told me that Bobby sometimes wets his pants, so I brought him a change of shorts and undies. I wanted to see how your father would deal with taking Bobby to the

toilet." I noticed that Megan had said nothing about my own wetting.

When Daddy walked back to us, Bobby was hanging his head. He looked like he had been crying. "Miss Calvert, Bobby did not quite make it to the toilet. Can you give me some dry clothes for him?"

As Daddy walked away with Bobby, who was carrying his own dry pants, Megan and I smiled. I remembered times when Daddy would be frustrated if Bobby wet. That had also frustrated Mommy. Probably that was why Mommy hardly ever took Bobby places. Until recently it was always Carla who took Bobby shopping or to the doctors.

From the zoo we all slowly walked south on Fifth Avenue until we came to the FAO Schwarz toy store on the southeast corner of 58th Street. Daddy said we could go inside but that he was not going to buy us presents. By the time we got to the store I really needed to pee.

Megan took me to a ladies room. She did not react when I pulled down my trainers and plastic panties. After I wiped myself with toilet paper and pulled my trainers back into place, I washed my hands. I held onto Megan's hand as we walked to find Daddy and Bobby.

In fact Daddy bought Gene a stuffed dinosaur. Back on the street we caught a cab to Daddy's apartment on Waverly Place, near Sixth Avenue and Washington Square.

When we got out of the cab it was still very early to eat dinner. Daddy went up to his apartment. Megan took Bobby and me to play in Washington Park. We had a lovely time. Bobby managed to enjoy himself without straying very far.

Megan and I sat on the grass, mostly enjoying the warm afternoon. We continued talking. I wanted to know more about Megan's childhood and also her experiences as a nanny in Manhattan.

When she was very young, Megan's mother Tante Lachaille was still a graduate student in Montreal. Her father's teenage girl cousin Gigi Calvert was her nanny.

Megan admitted she was older than average when she finally was toilet trained. Her mother was embarrassed about that, but it did not bother Gigi at all. When Megan wet, Gigi changed her. Way back

then trainers were not yet common, so part of her toilet training issue was that Megan had to tell her mother or Gigi when she was about to pee. Usually by the time her diaper was released Megan had wet it.

Megan said she completely understood outgrowing her bladder. Blushing slightly she said that she still needed diapers at night often when she was in high school. I told her that I really wanted to avoid that.

Megan went on to say that her mother finished graduate school and became a university lecturer when Megan was five. A distant cousin named Ariane Chavasse took over as her nanny. Nanny Chavasse was angry about wetting. She was also into strict discipline. Megan's mother was in complete agreement.

Megan did not seem embarrassed to tell me that Nanny Chavasse spanked her several times a week, generally on her bare bottom. Although then her mother only spanked using her hand, Nanny Chavasse used a short stick or a heavy wooden spoon.

The next year still another cousin, Miss Lise Bouvier, took over as Megan's nanny. Lise had not gone to college—instead right out of high school Lise worked as a nursery maid. Megan's wet pants and diapers did not make Lise mad.

Lise Bouvier also was as relaxed as possible about discipline. Sometimes Megan could hear her mother yelling at Lise to be more severe.

Megan told me she loves her mother, but can see why she is such a difficult woman.

First of all, not only does Megan's mother refuse to speak any English, she continues to only use Parisian French. Often her mother even insulted people who speak Canadian French or worse, a combination of English and Canadian French. Megan admitted her own Parisian French still does not satisfy her mother.

When Megan's mother caught her being naughty after age six, the punishment was no longer just a spanking with the hand. Oh, no, it was much worse.

It turned out that when Tante Lachaille Calvert came to Canada as a bride, she brought with her a typical French martinet. That was similar to one

used on Tante, apparently even until a few days before her wedding!

Of course I had never even read about a martinet. Somewhere I remember in a story a mean spirited boss was called a "martinet."

Megan explained that was because Admiral Joannes Martinet had a new kind of whip made to punish young cadets at the French Navy Academy in the early 1700s. Although at the time Admiral Martinet was considered a kindly man and far less harsh than most, because of the whip his name became synonymous with cruel tyrants.

The martinet used on Megan had a wooden handle about an inch in diameter and ten inches long, with ten thongs about 5/16 inches wide and 10 inches long. The thongs were made of old leather which was not very thick but was stiff in places. She told me usually her mother only hit the backs of her calves and lower legs. Only when really angry did Megan have to bend over a chair so the martinet could be applied to her bare bottom.

That kind of spanking sounded painful, but the same is true of a hairbrush spanking on the bare. I told Megan I would be a good girl to avoid feeling a martinet.

As we started to talk about Megan's experience as a nanny to the really rich on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, Bobby ran to us saying her needed to go to pee.

Almost running the three of us headed to Daddy's apartment.