



### **Part III: Refuge, Reinvention and Revolution**

*In the mid-20th century, political pioneers like Bill Meyer, a Congressman who challenged the Cold War, and Governor Phil Hoff, whose 1962 victory set the stage for historic change, rose to take the lead in state politics. Innovation was everywhere: in the work of “talented tinkerers” like Snowflake Bentley and Thaddeus Fairbanks, in the rise of IBM, and in the creation of the Interstate highways. We see the pros and cons of the highways--the high price of “eminent domain.” Revolution was in the air—rare archival footage provides a vivid look at the “hippies,” the realities of communal life and the paths of members of the counter-culture who established roots in Vermont. Who changed whom?*

#### **Still Living in Vermont**

By Reeve Lindbergh

I have been living and working in Vermont for forty-five years now, a period that accounts for about two-thirds of my life. I was born in New York City and grew up in Connecticut with my brothers and my sister, in a rambling house near a little cove of Long Island Sound.

Americans are restless people, seeking refuge but also reinvention. I learned this early in life. In the 1950's there was a general feeling that the United States was a nation on the move. People began to think of themselves as "upwardly mobile," with families thriving and prospering in the years following the Second World War. There was an implication that upward movement required literal movement, geographical dislocation from community to community, from state to state and even across the country. Many of my friends left our elementary school classrooms and neighborhoods when their fathers—almost always the fathers, in those days, because few of the mothers worked outside the home—were promoted or transferred within the companies they worked for. New families moved into the neighborhood and new children entered our classrooms.

I remember seeing the advertisements in Life and Look magazine, as many for moving companies as there were for laundry soap (Tide, Ivory Flakes) or cigarettes (Marlboros, Winstons, Camels and Kools). The moving company ads were fascinating because of the pictures of enormous vans that could fit everything in your whole house inside them, and then drive it all away. (Even the piano, I wondered? Even the refrigerator? What about the dog?) To me the whole thing was tremendously exciting. People just picked up their whole lives and moved.

Except me, that is. My family stayed in the same house the whole time I was growing up, until the year I went to college when my parents built a new, smaller house in a wooded area on the same piece of property, and moved into that. They sold the first house to another family with growing children, but we could still see the old house from the living room window of the new one. I'm

not even sure my parents used a moving van in the transition, because I was away at school on the actual day. Maybe they hired some movers just to pick up the beds and tables and carry them across the lawn.

After I graduated from college, finally, I moved. Not west across the country, because that was too far for somebody who didn't yet have the hang of the dislocating process. Not south, because I grew up in New England and didn't think I would like being in a warm climate for four seasons of the year. Not east, because there wasn't much to the east of me except the Atlantic Ocean. No, the only way for me to move was north, and north of Massachusetts is Vermont. So that's where I went, twenty-two years old and newly married, just starting out as a teacher in a tiny elementary school in southern Vermont.

I've been living in this state ever since. It never occurred to me that in moving from one place to another I might eventually find a home I'd never want to leave, but that's exactly what happened. I lived for several years in southern Vermont, then moved north to Caledonia County, and although I've lived in two different towns in the Northeast Kingdom, I can't imagine living anywhere else.

The place where you grow up leaves you with memories and dreams...the cries of seagulls, the bend of pine trees shaped by the wind, the tall, tawny brushes of cat-tails in the marshes, the tang of oak leaves in the fall. But the place where you choose to live, and to raise your family, offers deep roots and the strength of all the generations before you. Here, where I go to bed and wake up in the morning, lives have been lived in one place since the days of the early settlers. Some of the trees I see are their trees, and the land where we cut hay and pasture our sheep is their land, too. Here lives are not transient. Here they go deep.

Over the four and a half decades I've lived in Vermont, my life has gone deep, too, and this is a very different kind of movement from the geographical wandering I observed in childhood. This is sustained living with other people over many years, not just the eighteen years of childhood, though these seem so long and so intense at the time. But the later years bring the thick, complex interweaving of individual personalities in families and communities, and inevitably there are crises and sorrows as well as joys and triumphs as so many overlapping lives are woven into the fabric of the whole.

Vermont is a small state, with a population of just over 625,000, and it is made up of small communities in which neighbors have known and relied upon one another as a matter of survival for more than two centuries. Even now, when someone in a family is ill or injured, people come forward to offer meals, transportation, comfort and support. If there is a new baby, everybody knows and rejoices; when there is a death, the whole community mourns.

My family, like other families, has celebrated and grieved. All of my children were born here, and one very young child was buried in these green hills as were so many vulnerable children of Vermont families since the days of the earliest settlers. My mother and sister both spent the last years of their lives here; this is where my two daughters were married, and where my first grandchild was born. Our roots are growing deep in this earth.

Vermont, in fact, offers its citizens the opportunity for what I like to think of as deep living, a slow and profoundly strengthening expansion of the mind and the heart. It happens almost without our knowing it, through the challenges of season upon changing season, with the support of family and community. Eventually, there is that sense of firm ground under our feet, mixed with the old Vermont tradition of independence, the ineradicable scent of freedom in the air. To live with this combination gives the inhabitants of this state a kind of soul-stretching, earth to sky, and frankly, from now on that's all the movement I need.

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