

I LIED ABOUT MY AGE

I was born in a large midwestern city, the oldest of four girls. Until I was twelve years old, I had lived the average life of any girl in any large midwestern city like the one in which I was born. Then all at once everything seemed to change. Dad lost his job and couldn't seem to find another. Mom finally got a job in a dress shop in order for us to have money for groceries. This was a blow to Dad's pride as he felt that womens' place was in the home and he couldn't stand the idea of Mom's furnishing the bread and butter. After Mom had worked a few weeks and he still couldn't get a job he started drinking. Always before he was a jovial, good~natured man but drinking made him mean. His moods were unpredictable and we girls started living in fear, of the sudden rages he would fly into at the slightest provocation. He would yank off his belt and beat us unmercifully, whichever one was unlucky enough to provoke his ire, usually it was me. I think I looked so much like my mother that he was taking out some of his resentment of her on me. When Mom would get home from work at night and find Dad drunk she would quarrel and fuss with him all evening. It never helped but it sure helped to make being home unpleasant for we girls. Dad had been out of work for six months than finally landed a job selling advertising for a newspaper. He was not used to this kind of work at all as he had always worked in a factory but he tried. Somehow, it seemed like the only place he could sell advertising was in the taverns. There he was a good time fellow. Everybody loved him and called him "Mac" the little Irishman. Mom used to say any of the hangers-on in the tavern could always buy Dad a beer but he could be starving and not get a loaf of bread out of them.

Financially, his job helped out very little as he spent as much as he made. But it did help make it easier at home for us girls at least through the daytime. At first Mom felt like we were still too young to be alone so when school let out for the summer she got a woman to stay with us while she worked. None of us girls liked her from the start. It seemed like we would just get started playing some game and she would holler out the back door for one of us to do something like go to the store or dry dishes. Not that we minded doing the housework, we were (this page was unfinished)

Note to reader:

Contained herein are the few typewritten pages that were the beginning of an autobiography that was being written by Margie Allen. The pages were scanned and the text digitized.

Transcribing notes:

- Some handwritten sections are included in parenthesis
- She uses pseudonyms. For herself are "Bonnie" and "Anne" (not Dorothy's middle name "Ann")
- The first page (above) is an opening page but there is no sequential page for it
- Some of the formatting was carried over from the original (so some lines are shortened)
- The dashed full lines in the text mark some of the original page breaks

Margie Rita b.1920

Phyllis Marie b.1922

Dorothy Ann b.1924

Janet Teresa b.1928

I was born in a large midwestern city, the eldest of four girls. Until I was twelve years old, I had lived the average life of any girl in any large midwestern city like the one in which I was born. Then all at once everything seemed to change. Dad lost his job and couldn't seem to find another. Mom finally got a job in a dress shop in order for us to have money to eat on. This was a terrible blow to Dad's pride as Mom had never worked before in all the thirteen years of their marriage. She had just stayed home raising we girls. There were four of us- I-Bonnie the eldest followed by Pauline ten Diane, 8 and the youngest ----- who was only 4.

When Mom went to work and Dad still couldn't get a job he started drinking. It was not long until he was often drunk more than sober. The worst of it was he got so mean when he drank. Until he started drinking he had never whipped one of us kids and was always kidding and joking. Now his moods were unpredictable-- one minute laughing and joking and all at once he would fly into a rage over some little minor thing and would beat one of us girls half to death, usually it was me. I looked the most like my mother and somehow he always acted like he was taking some revenge on Mom when he could strike out at me. It was ironic, really, because actually it was Diane who was the apple of Mom's eye but he never caught on to that. Mom would try to stop him from hitting any of us when she was home but he would be there all day while she worked.

He had been out of work about six months when he got a job selling advertising on a newspaper, how-I don't know. But this did not lessen his drinking any it increased it. The only places he sold advertising was in a tavern and he spent more than he made. However this did mean Mom had to get someone in to keep an eye on us kids. Dad found her-Hannah Stine. None of us girls liked her from the start. We had always had to stay in our own backyard. It was a big yard all fenced in and Mom would not permit us to leave it to "run the streets" as she put it. We never minded too much as it was the custom for all the neighborhood kids to congregate in our yard to play all the games kids play--follow the Leader, Run Sheep Run or Volley Ball. Both boys and girls had always played together and we all got along well and had lots of fun. As for us thinking of boys in any romantic way it had never occurred to any of us. But Hopping Hannah, as we had all started calling her stopped that.

We were playing volley ball one day when the ball went into the opened garage door. Both I and Jack Porter ran in after it. Precisely at that minute Hannah came to the backdoor to call me to go to the store. Jack and I came out of the garage at the same time. When I went in the house she gave me a sly, menacing look and asked just what we two were doing in the garage alone together. "Just getting the ball", I answered her puzzled - what else would we be doing? "I just wonder what your father is going to say about it" she said. I never bothered answering her thinking she must be nuts. I realized how mean she really was when I heard her talking to Dad that night when he got home. She always carried all her tales she had to tell on us kids to Dad never to Mom. "Mac", she said, "Do you really think it is wise to let

so many boys play in the yard with the girls? Today I caught Bonnie in the garage with one of them and I have no idea how long they had been in there alone together. SHE said they went in after a ball; but now it doesn't take two of them to carry a ball." Well those meaning little words of hers really got Dad thinking. From that day on no boys were allowed in our yard and what is more if her even caught us speaking to a boy we got a sound thrashing. It wasn't too long before Mom and Hannah got into it and Mom got rid of her, but the damage she had done stayed. After that we would have boys in the backyard at night when they couldn't see whether it was just all girls or not and we started to play kissing games because they were quiet and wouldn't give us away. Of course, Diane and I had to wait until Pauline and-- were in bed or they would have blurted out what was going on. That was the beginning of the lies and deceit I practiced for the next two years. When the weather got cold and we could not play outdoors anymore, we would have a gang in while Mom and Dad went to a show and us kids were alone. They got to doing that more and more in the next year, leaving us alone while went out. They felt like I was old enough to look out for the young

By the time I was fourteen Mom and Dad were going out every night to a nightclub somewhere and leaving me with the kids. In a way I didn't blame Mom she could either go with Dad or he'd go alone. But it was awful hard on me. With her working all day and gone all evening it put a lot of responsibility of running the house and kids on me. I seldom got to go anywhere and had practically no friends--what few I had were the boys in the neighborhood. Even the girls had dropped me for their Mothers would not let them come to my house where there was actually so little parental supervision. What time Dad was home he was usually drunk and used such filthy language that ---- (unfinished paragraph)

It was a cold night in February when a car stopped out in front and blew the horn. I looked out to see Bill Fletcher and two other fellows. "Coast clear" Bill yelled. "O.K." I ans. He came in, Big Breezy guy--the boyish type that everyone loves to --. "Bonnie how about fixing my pants?" he queried. "I got a big date and I've gone and ripped the seat out of them and nobody's home at my house." He just lived across the street and I had known him for years; in fact sort of had a secret crush on him but he always regarded me in a sisterly sort of fashion. "O.K." I said "go in the bathroom and put on Dad 's robe and I'll open up the sewing machine." He went to the door first and yelled "Come back after me in about fifteen min, fellows."

After a few minutes later Bill came out of the bathroom a ludicrous sight indeed, in Dad's robe as he is at least six inches taller than Dad. The robe barely came to his knobby knees. He danced around acting silly as I tried to sew up the rip in his trouser; not doing a very neat job as I was laughing so hard. Just as I finished the horn blew out front again and Bill went running out in the robe. The boys laughing roar could be heard a block away. He came back in with the other two boys behind him. There was so much joshing and teasing going on nobody thought to introduce me. Of course I had met the one boy before, Alvin Collins but the other one was a stranger. He was handsome though with real dark brown eyes and blond hair. He acted like more of a serious type of fellow than Bill or Al. The ping pong set was set up on the dining table where we girls had been playing earlier and Al and the newcomer started playing. I gave Bill a shove toward the bathroom with his trousers "get in there and get dressed

before you ruin my reputation." I said. While I was watching the game Al asked me if I had ever heard of a guy called Calvin Lewis. "Of course I have but never anything good about him" I answered. "No", said Al "what have you heard?" "Well it was plenty for to know I wouldn't be caught dead with him" I said. "Not caring to go into details but the talk of the girls at school was he was really wild and many a girl had had to walk home from a date with him and a few never even got the chance to walk. Just came back with black eye and various bruises etc. No--not me I never wanted no part of him."

After they left I thought--dates

I wouldn't be caught dead with him myself, I ans. --a date with anybody was out of the question as strict as my parents were. I didn't even have any girl friends except Betty. She was the only girl in our end of town allowed by her parents to come down to our house. What little time my folks were home Dad was always drunk and used such filthy language, that the other girls' mothers kept them away from our house. And little time did I have for visiting. Going to school, keeping the house clean and taking care of the kids. Mom thought I should be allowed to have boys at the house when they were home, but as they were never home that was out. I cleaned up the mess the kids had made with the popcorn, got them started for bed fighting as usual. There was Diane, two years younger than I, Pauline my pet the baby, Wanda. She had pretty blonde hair and big brown eyes and was an angel minding me all the time.

When they finally quieted down, I sat down with my school books. I loved school. There I could escape the quarreling and nagging of my parents. I studied hard and was on the honor roll. This was my first year in High School.

The next afternoon when I came out of school, someone said "Hi beautiful, Can I carry your books?" -nobody ever called me beautiful. Mousy brown hair and grey eyes—never allowed to wear make-up. Of course it was the stranger from the night before. He took my books while I was still trying to get my voice back. As we sauntered up the street he kept up a constant patter while I wondered how to ask him what the world his name was. He so obviously expected me to know. Somehow, I just couldn't get a word in edgewise. At our corner, I persuaded him to give me my books and let me walk the half-block unaccompanied. I hated to admit to this sophisticated character that I was such a baby my folks didn't allow boys in my life. The rest of the way home I kept wondering-me beautiful-I wish Betty went to the same school I did so I could ask her about him. We had no phone and I'd just have to wait to she came to see me before I'd know what she knew about him.

For a week, every night he met me and walked to our corner,

He was interesting to talk to and I managed to find out his family was moderately wealthy, that he had had a car and recently sold it. That he worked part time in a super market and hoped to be manager of one someday. I kept [him] talking about himself, and evaded any discussion of my own home life.

On Friday evening, he met as usual, As I started to leave him at the corner he stopped me "Just a minute, Anne, How about going to the

movies with me tomorrow night?" I had been expecting something like this so I was ready with my answer "I'm sorry I couldn't but I've got a date." He smiled ruefully and said "You really meant it when you said you would never go out with me, didn't you?" I looked at him blankly-He studied my expression and said "Don't you remember saying that when I was at your house the other night with Alan and Bob? I'd hope by now you'd realize I am not quite the cad gossip would have me. I promise if you would just go with me I'll behave like a perfect gentlemen and bring you home whenever you say." Alvin Lewis! It couldn't be, This blonde headed dreamboat with such nice manners. Standing there speechless all I could do was look at him. Finally I nodded my consent; after all what could he do in a movie? "Wonderful!" he shouted. "Pick you up at 7:30 o.k.?" "Better make it eight", I ans. distractedly; how would I ever manage it. That my parents would ever permit a date was out of the question.

All evening I went around in a daze. Should I go with him or not. Maybe I ought to go to the drug store and phone and tell I had changed my mind. Yet he had treated me so nice. Not at all like a boy with his kind of reputation would be expected to act. But how to manage my parents. They were going to play cards on Sun. and would probably be gone before Alvin came after me. But I would not dare to leave my sisters alone- maybe if I could think up somewhere to tell them I could go they'd take the kids with them. But where could I say I was going?

Not Betty's -They never let me go to her house. Too many of Bob's friends were always around. An idea- Alma Parker's! She was real nice girl. Shy and quiet-Mom had always wanted me to spend more time with her. But what time she never said. She lived far enough away that they weren't likely to find out I wasn't there. Too the Parkers had no use for my parents at all so there would not be much chance of a friendly meeting somewhere that would catch me up. I thought it over carefully. If I acted like I wanted to go down there out of the clear blue sky, Mom would be suspicious. Dad would be no matter what I did. Finally I figured it out. I faked an invitation to a party to be held at Alma's, and just left it lay on the desk where Mom would be sure and see it. Sure enough when Mom came in from work Sat. evening and looked at the mail, she saw the "invitation". "Oh, how nice" she said, "So you want to go?" "Oh, I don't know" I said off-handedly "probably be a dull party". "That's it", she ranted, "You're always hollering you don't get to go anywhere and when you get the chance, no you don't-want to. Well, you'll go young lady, or you won't get to go anyplace ever again. Diane's old enough to stay with the kids Sun. night for awhile and we won't be gone late." It was hard for me to hide my elation at the way my plan worked.

Sunday morning, as I came out of church, there was Bob Atkins waiting for me. "What's this about going out with Alvin Lewis tonight?", he said, "Surely you're not." "And why not?" I asked defensively. "In the first place, he's much too old for you to be chasing around with", stated Bob. "He's almost nineteen and he's been around plenty. You know his reputation. He wouldn't believe me last night when I told him you were only fourteen, he thinks you're older or he wouldn't even be fooling with a kid like you." "What did you have to tell him my age for?" I stormed. "It's none of your business. I don't believe all those stories that have been told about

him. He's treated me real nice, A lot more mannerly than that rough neck crowd of yours ever acts." "What about your folks? They would never let you go out with any boys-what are you telling them?" "I've got it all figured out Nosy, so don't worry about it." "Anne, if I didn't know your Dad would whale the tar out of you I'd go tell him what you are up to. That is something else, Alvin doesn't know your parents don't allow you out with boys." I just stalked off leaving him standing there. Nevertheless, I was uneasy, though I hated to admit it. Sun. eve everything worked out swell. The folks left about six p.m. and I got Pauline and Wanda to get to bed by seven. I brushed my hair until it shone, and experimented with a little of Mom's lipstick. Promptly at eight Alvin knocked. I was ready with my coat on and cautioned Diane to lock the doors after me and full of excitement left on my first date.

All through the show I couldn't concentrate on the picture.

He didn't even put his arm around me. As we slowly walked home I wondered was he really this nice all the time or maybe he just found me uninteresting. We got to my house and I could see Mom and Dad reading in the front room. They were home early. Alvin said "Let's don't go in yet. How about a sundae at the drug store on the corner." I didn't see any harm in it, Nobody had said be in at a certain time. So we had a sundae and walked around the block. When we got back the folks had gone out to the kitchen for a snack. So, I told Alvin I wouldn't ask him in for the folks were probably getting ready for bed and I had to get up and go to school next morning. "May I kiss You Goodnite, Anne?" he asked softly. I nodded and he kissed me lightly. I went inside my heart singing he's wonderful! Dad and Mom were in the midst of an argument so they just looked up and yapped in unison "Get to bed". And to bed I got.

For three weeks I got away with seeing Alvin everyday except Sat when he worked.

Sunday nights he'd come after Mom and Dad would be gone first. Only they knew I gone. Diane threatened to tell on me and I was bribing her with my clothes and everything to keep still. After that first Sun. I got in before they got home.

Then on a beautiful, balmy night, the first Sun. in April when Alvin called for me. Alan Reed and a girl were with him. "I thought we'd make it a double date tonight, honey" Alvin said as I came out the door. Instead of going to the neighborhood movie they hailed a cab and we went downtown to a movie. After the show we went to a nice restaurant and had fried chicken and I had never had so much fun in my life. By this time I was hopelessly in love with Alvin. And he treated me like a queen. Alan's girl's name was Gladys Foster and I discovered she only lived about six blocks from my house. While we were in the lounge at the movie I confessed to her my folks didn't allow me to have dates and I was worried if we took a cab home they might catch me. Yet, I still hated to admit my dilemma to Alvin. So she helped me out by telling the boys she had to go home first. But after the cab left, we all persuaded her to walk home with me. Alan and Gladys were walking in front of us but when they turned the corner towards my house they suddenly stopped and came running back to us. Alan said "down that alley quick!" We obeyed instinctively. "Anne", he said "your Dad is walking up and down in front of your

house with his belt in his hand. I started muttering "Oh my God, my God what'll I do?" Alvin was puzzled "What's this all about, for heaven's sake?" Alan told him "If Anne's Dad sees her with a fellow he'll beat the daylight out of her and us too." "Quickly", he explained to Alvin, "Look you kids go on and leave me here and I'll think up something but don't let him catch me with you. I'll see you after school tomorrow Alvin." Alvin protested vehemently, but Alan and I managed to convince him that was the best thing to do on the spur of the moment.

When I got home, There was Dad sure enough belt and all. He never bothered asking me where I'd been. Just started beating me with the belt and roaring he'd teach me to go out whorin'. He whipped me all the way in the house and up to my bedroom. Mom finally got him to quit and I undressed quickly and fell sobbing and exhausted to sleep. The next morning my legs and arms had such big black and blue welts all over them that Mom said I'd better stay home from school. I was glad to for I didn't want the curious glances of the other students gazing at me. But Alvin-would he be waiting for me? Probably not after last night. He wouldn't liked me for being so deceitful. It was all over between us and all morning I cried and cried. I cleaned up the house haphazardly; I was sore I didn't feel like doing much. The kids came home from school and I got Diane's story of events before I'd got home the night before. She said when the folks got home she was in bed. They looked in saw I wasn't there and woke her. They really were up in the air when she claimed she didn't know where I was but when they threatened to call the police to hunt me she told them I had a date with a boy.

She looked so sorry for me I smiled and patted her, telling her not to worry about it. I was used to whippings and this was one that I wasn't sorry for. I'd the pleasure and happiness I had before I got it made it worthwhile. Someone knocked at the door and when I opened there stood Alvin. "Is your Mother or Father here, Anne?" he asked. "No, and please go away Alvin." "Anne, Alan told me all about the way your parents feel. But I don't like sneaking around to see you. Maybe if they met me and I could talk to them they'd feel differently." "No! Alvin, please go away you'll only make matters worse." At that moment Diane turned on the hall light and he saw all the welts and bruises and he put his arms around me and muttered over and over "a oh, honey, honey, what have I caused you?" "It's five oclock, Anne", interrupted Diane. I knew she meant Dad was due any minute. Alvin finally left. He promised I'd see him after school the next day.

When Dad got home that night, still raving but sober he demanded to know who the boy was I'd been with the night before. While I didn't deny I'd been with anyone I refused to tell him who it was. "I'll find out who that s.o.b. is and I'll have him thrown in jail for molesting a minor. I'll see his parents tell them to keep him away from you." he ranted. When I steadfastly refused to answer him he started slapping me. Luckily Mom came in and made him stop.

The next day after school, Alvin met and we went to the corner drugstore and got a booth, where we could talk. Alvin still wanted to meet my folks and talk to them. I knew if he ever did, Dad would carry out his threat of seeing Alan's parents. What would they think of

a girl that came from a home like that? "Please Alvin let's just go on like we have been", I pleaded, "you just don't realize the things Dad would do to you. I don't like sneaking around to see you but for a while at least until Dad cools off a little it would be best."

"I just don't like it", he said "it's so underhanded, and after all this isn't 1800 they can't expect to keep a girl of 16 away from boys altogether." He still thought I was 16-I'd never come right out and lied about my age, but I'd tried to act like I was older than 14 and everyone thought I looked 16. Somehow I just felt if he knew I was only 14 he would think I was too young for him and I'd never see him.

Another reason to keep him away from my folks. He finally agreed to wait a week or two until Dad simmered down.

So for awhile I had reprieve-. Dad stayed out on a drunk for two days and Mom was so mad and worried over him she forgot about me. He was chastened and quiet when he did get home and honeyed us all to get out of the doghouse. So I was left alone. Sat. Alvin bought a car- just an old jalopy but it had wheels and he was proud of it. Gladys came down Sat afternoon and told me about it. It was the first time Mom had met Gladys and she found out she knew Gladys's Mom. Mrs. Foster was a widow and worked as a cook in the local tavern, according to mom there wasn't a nicer woman anywhere. When she found out Gladys stayed by herself nights while her mom was working Mom suggested she spend Sat. night with me. I know Mom thought if she was there I wouldn't be apt to sneak out again. Little did she know. Gladys mother worked from nine to 4am on Sat nights so Gladys went where and with whom she pleased with nobody to say anything about what time she got in.

When Alvin got off work at 10pm that night he rode up in the jalopy. Of course we went for a ride. We picked up several more kids and rode all over town. That lizzy was the beginning of the change in the relationship of Alvin and I. All his friends were about his own age 18 and 19. Instead of just going to a movie we would go to a drive-in for a hot dog and go for a ride always ending up parking on a country road somewhere and petting. At first Alvin kept his kisses light and we didn't do much necking. One Sun afternoon we went to the country for a wiener roast. One couple strolled off to get wood and stayed for two hours. The rest of us had finished eating and were clearing off the table when they got back. I was shocked to see she had her blouse on wrong side out and I was sure I'd noticed it if it had been like that before. Gladys teased her about it and she just shrugged and took it off and changed it right in front of the three boys. Alvin must have sensed my disapproval because later after we'd taken everyone else home he mentioned it. "It was wrong of them Anne", he said, "that kind of stuff should wait until you're married, don't you think so?" "Absolutely", I said vehemently. "That's what we'll do, honey, wait til we're married. You do know We are going to be married don't you as soon as you get out of school. Next Mon. I start as Manager of the produce dept. at the store so I'm getting in a position to afford a wife." Marriage!_That was the last thing I'd ever thought of. I was sure I loved Alvin but that e really loved me--and enough to marry me. Common ordinary Anne who had never been even whistled at ---married to Alvin. Alvin who had never went with any girl longer than a month or two, and only for what he could get, according to rumor. Of course, I had decided long ago that society had misjudged my Alvin. If he were guilty of all those wild tales, it must have been the girls he was with fault. He had certainly always been a gentleman with me. Maybe he had just never cared enough about a girl to respect her before; maybe he really did love me.

"Hey, kitten, answer me, will you be Mrs. Alvin Lewis or do I jump in the river?"

"Oh, yes Alvin" I said breathlessly, "of course."

"Well, then give your future old man a kiss, then, and not one of those baby kisses, either but a real woman kiss." I thought he was just fooling--after all a kiss is a kiss.

But when my lips met his he kissed me hard and long trying to force my lips apart.

He seemed so strange and demanding.

Afterwards, I felt like I wanted nothing so much as to scrub my face with soap and water.

He turned me loose to go in, whispering good nite my little wife. As I went to bed my mind was in turmoil. What was I getting myself into? It would be four years before I could get married, legally without my parents consent. Never with their consent, I thought ironically. Would Alvin wait four years--and what would he say when I told him it would be that long? I'd have to tell him soon.

With his new job now he never met me after school anymore, so he tried to see me evenings. Increasingly it became more difficult. The folks were more suspicious and were popping home at all hours. I never knew in advance anymore where or when they were going out. Gladys was a godsend. Strangely, they never questioned me if I wanted to go to her house. I spent every Sat. night at her house. Mom felt Diane was old enough to keep the ----- and I know she was trying to let me have a little pleasure. (I was out to wee hours ...) Alvin's lovemaking was more demanding everyday. Now that we were "promised" to each other he kept urging me to "loosen up" a little. And instead of feeling the rush of warm affection when he kissed me I just felt dirty. Now I knew what Mom meant when she was always complaining about Dad wanting to lollygag and paw around. But that was the price women paid for marriage, I thought, and I would either have to marry Alvin eventually or give him up. To give him up was unthinkable.

Memorial Day we planned a picnic. Alvin and I, Gladys and her latest beau and another couple. I asked Mom if I could go to a picnic with Gladys and some girls whose mother was to take us. Getting her consent I was all enthused. Gladys and I got together to discuss clothes and what to wear. The weather had been extra warm for that time of year and we thought about wearing shorts. I didn't have any. Dad would never allow me to wear them. Gladys talked her mother into buying a new pink --- . It turned out to be a beautiful day almost hot. The boys knew a swell spot for a picnic. It was on a river bank, with a nice woods complete with an old swimming hole and diving board. The boys kept hollering to go swimming but so early in the season nobody had thought to bring suits. We finally decided to go in anyway, the boys in their shorts and us girls in our panties and bras. We undressed in the car and got in the water first, while the boys went back in the woods. But the water was really cold. I shivered so and got so blue with cold that Alvin got blankets from the car and wrapped me up in them. We found a sunny spot to lay out in it to dry and warm. I felt like I was in heaven lying there with my head on Alvin's shoulder and his arms around me. (--- the others had come out of the water too and drifted off.)