

25th August, 1987.

Dear Keith.

Your letter was a welcome surprise. You want to know more about Granny Lock. I will tell you what remains most vivid in my mind.

First a little background material.

As you know, I was adopted by your father's sister. My birth mother was Irish - her name Mona. My father's name was Stanley Chin - a playboy gambler - Cantonese. He never lived with us.

Mona somehow knew Granny Lock. I first met Granny when I was about four years old. She was living in that little house near the Mon Shiang. I don't know why but my half sister 100% Irish, and I were sent to live with Granny Lock. After much thought over the years I have come to believe it was probably arranged by our church. Aunt Violet may know something about this. It was a very tiny house but very neat and clean with lace curtains and lots of plants in the windows. There was no bathtub. The toilet was a cupboard like affair in the kitchen. It was painted white with a black boarder around the bottom. There wasn't space for my sister and me at the table so we sat on tiny footstools and used chairs for our tables. It was fun! Granny used to take in washing and ironing to support the family. Her kitchen always had the sweet smell of laundry starch.

One day Granny took me to visit her daughter, a very regal looking lady who lived in a beautiful apartment with nice furniture and pretty crystal bowls ~~pepper~~ filled with candy bowls filled with hard sweets - peppermints.. To this day I love peppermint hard candies. It was like visiting a palace.

I didn't see Granny Lock again until I was about six years old and the adoption formalities completed. I remember being Irish with the surname of Vance in Kindergarten, Elsie Lorraine Vance. In Grade one I was a very happy little Chinese girl called Virginia Carol Lum. Mommy worked so every Friday after school I took the Bay street car to St. Claire and Landsdowne and spent the weekend with Granny at the laundry. When I was about eight I started spending most of my summer vacations with Granny at the laundry. Your dad went off to war when I was about 9 or ten. That's when, on Saturday nights Granny and I would listen to or tolerate the noise of the hockey game to impress upon customers there was a man in the house because we were alone and the laundry didn't close shop til ten o'clock. We would talk and talk me always filled with questions. Granny with the wonderful answers.

When I was very good Granny would, after we locked up, take me upstairs to the "sunroom" and she would open her funny looking trunk (I think it was made of wood) and let me see the treasures. Those beautiful shoes, the embroidered tunics and silk pleated skirt!.