

Author shares stories of growing up in Northern N.H.

By Barbara Tetreault, *The Berlin Daily Sun*
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Sister of Executive Councilor Raymond Burton will hold book signing in Gorham

GORHAM— Being a writer is not something Joan Day ever considered. “This was the furthest thing from my mind,” the Concord woman said. But one day in the spring of 2004, Day was thinking about a favorite cat that had died five years earlier.

“I just sat down and started writing,” she recalled.

As she was writing, she signed up for a workshop entitled, “*How to hold in your hands the book in your heart.*” With some encouragement from the instructor, Day proceeded to turn her writing project into what became her first book, “*Sylvan, The Gift of Unconditional Love.*”

Day has since completed a second book, “*Thinking of Yesterday Today,*” about her memories growing up on a farm in Bath. The farmhouse is now owned by her older brother, Executive Councilor Raymond Burton. Day will be in Gorham Saturday, Aug. 11 to discuss and sign copies of her two books at Wonderland Bookstore at 11 a.m.

After writing the first book, Day said she didn’t set out to write a second. The impetus for which came from talking to her youngest brother Steve about his weekly visits with their mother. Steve reported the two would talk about their memories of growing up on the farm.

Day decided it was a good time to collect those memories. Her mother had just been diagnosed in the early stages of dementia, but her memories were still strong. Day had retired in 2001 after 38 years working as a human services administrator for the state.

Once again, Day found a workshop provided valuable assistance. This time it was a six-week course on “How to write the story of your life.”

For Day, that life was growing up on a dairy farm in Bath with her three siblings, Raymond, Steve and Mary. Her parents, Stephen and Natalie Burton had purchased the 490-acre farm in 1938.

Day said the book takes readers back to a slower time.

“It just takes them back to a time we’ll never see again,” she said.

In the book, Day describes the family gathered around the radio to listen to the *Lone Ranger* and *The Shadow*. The Burton family purchased its first television in September 1954.

Day said the family did not have a lot of money, but never considered themselves poor. “We always had fun. We made our own fun,” she said.

The kids would dress up in their parents’ old clothes and put on performances for their parents and neighbors. They would slide on homemade sleds in the winter.

And there were games of Monopoly dominated by big brother Ray.

“He always had all the money,” Day recalled.

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The family made maple syrup from trees on the property and Day said her mother canned her own vegetables. The book includes nine traditional family recipes, including salad dressing, cake, homemade bread, potato candy, hot milk sponge cake and baked beans.

The hardcover book also includes numerous black and white pictures from family albums as well as illustrations of the neighborhood.

Day left the farm after high school to attend Concord Commercial College, where she earned a certificate in secretarial studies. She remained in Concord—the only one of the four Burton children to leave the North Country.

Like her first book, Day self-published *“Thinking of Yesterday Today”* in December 2005.

Day said she is pleased that she completed the book in time for her mother to enjoy it.

“I just consider this a very special gift to her,” she said.

The book is now in its second edition and Day said she has hired the literary-focused public relations firm, Bisson Barcelona, to help her promote it. She said she is trying to learn about the publishing world and is eager to share knowledge with other aspiring writers.

At this point, Day said she has no plans to write a third book, but at the same time, she won't rule another one out.

“I really don't know if I'll write a new book. But something may hit me again,” she said.