Beverly Connelly Diary

February 4, 1948

I had decided not to write this when I didn't get started the first of the year, but the things that have been happening should not be left unwritten.

Hum! Things happened so far, but we'll start here with Saturday afternoon, Jan. 31, '48. Billy was exceptionally cross, so my afternoon had to be spent downstairs trying to amuse him. When Bobby woke up, I left Bill to his own devices and went upstairs to dress Bobby. We had managed to get only one shoe on when I heard Bill begin to cry. It was only a whimper, and since he had been so cross all day, I thought nothing of it. Then only a second later, though, George, our downstairs neighbor, barged in the door carrying Bill, blood dripping by spoonfuls. It was his hand.

We washed it off and decided it was a pretty badly cut, so George drove Bill and me to the Mercy Hospital while his wife watched Bobby. At the hospital, Bill was wrapped tightly in a sheet and eight stitches taken in his hand. Luckily, the tendon had not been cut.

No one saw the accident, but it was assumed that he tripped and, when he fell, put his hand out and hit on a piece of broken beer bottle. It wasn't long before that that he picked up a lit cigarette from the ground and got quite a burn.

After this, we decided we just plain live wrong, since we neither smoke nor drink. Of course, the doctor's strict instructions were not to get the bandage wet. So he came home and thrust his hand in the toilet. Oh me.

Today has been another of those days. Bill had been upstairs all morning, so in the afternoon I put him down for a little while. In a short while, I thought I heard him crying. I wasn't dressed, so I slipped on a nightshirt and went down to the door to look for him. No Bill anywhere, and the crying was coming from a neighbor's apartment. I got some clothes on and went down to look for him. The crying was still there, but it sounded so much like Bill that

I knocked on the door. When there was no answer, I opened the door. There he was in the corner, an electric cord around his neck, and him pulling to get away was making it tighter. All that was visible was the white of his eyes, and his body was limp. I wasn't a minute too soon. The lady that lived there was asleep in her bedroom with her baby all the time. I had no sooner gotten him out of that situation and gone upstairs to bake my Christmas fruitcake when someone called me and told me Bill had gone in a girl's apartment and gotten a bottle of milk. But surprise -- had not yet spilled it.

I now have him upstairs with me. He has crawled up to my measured heap of flour and -- well, I'd better go before he makes a new story for me to write.

Feb. 15, 1948
Today is a beautiful Sunday, but as usual we've had a mishap. That is, Bill did. His hand was caught in the hinged part of a closing door. Hurt the little fella pretty bad, but it could be worse. Bobby has begun to accumulate quite a vocabulary. He has a girl friend named Kay, but he calls her "Cake."
Yesterday we had a Valentine's party for them, and oh, what fun.
Gert died Feb. 14, 1948.

August 1948?
There are so many times when I could have written but didn't take time to, but just one more incident along the same line. One day when Bill was fourteen months old, he and Bobby and I went to the grocery store with the wagon. Bobby was sitting way back in the wagon box -- Bill standing in front of him. We crossed the highway successfully and got to the store without mishap. On the way home we again crossed the highway, and when we reached the sidewalk, unbeknownst to me, Bill fell out. I went about five steps before I realized what had happened, but Bobby never said a word. Bill was lying on his back, spread eagle, in the middle of the walk. I wonder now why he was not killed. It was a miracle of God.

Nothing much else happened until this summer, when Bobby was three and Bill was two. We went to … for a few days after harvest, on the last of July.

On August the third, Mother and Dad went to town and left the boys with me.

Feb. 5, 1949

A great deal of time has elapsed since I last wrote in here, and a lot has happened. Finally I got so that there was so much happening that it seemed futile to try and write it all down. But the past week or so has been too interesting to pass up, so here goes.

I can't remember the date it started. I suppose it actually started with Bobby's accident — October 2, '48. He and Bill were out playing that Saturday morning as usual, and as usual were told to stay in the gate. I checked to see if they were there, then got some money for the washing machine and was at the door when somebody knocked. It was Marilyn to use the phone. She had just barely hung up the receiver when there was another knock at the door. A dark-haired girl stood there and said, "Don't be alarmed, but your son has fallen in the cesspool."

Of course it shocked me, but I had no idea what a cesspool really was, so I didn't guess the seriousness of it. About halfway back to it she said, "He's unconscious." Then I did get frightened.

When I reached him, he was lying on the dirt road near the cesspool with a girl washing his face. Blood was coming from his nose and mouth. His head was cut quite deeply in many places, and the blood pouring out of there.

When I saw him, I knew there was nothing I could do until the ambulance arrived. I walked over to look at the cesspool. It was a new one the workmen had just completed about a half hour before and gone on to another one about 20 feet away, leaving the first one completely open. It was a hole — 30 feet deep, brick lined, with a ledge about 8 feet down. When I'd seen the awful thing he had fallen in, I wanted to get Bob quick. He was working on the farm, so I ran towards where I thought he was. He was coming, so we went back together.

I'll never forget his face when he saw Bobby. While we were all waiting for the ambulance to arrive, we found out the little we could about the fall. No one actually saw him fall. The workmen saw a fast-moving object, but not clearly. They figured he had been playing on the edge of it in a big wooden box with Bill. The box tipped and threw him, then flipped back with Bill.

One of the workmen broke off a clothesline pole and went down and got him — in a bucket, I believe.

The ambulance pulled up about this time and he was put in. Little was said except, "Your son is hurt bad." We finally got to the emergency hospital. Once there they let him lie unattended for two and a half hours without even washing his wounds. After we'd been there a little while, a dead man was brought in and put near him. Those hours were a nightmare.

At last they began to take x-rays. First of his neck. They thought he had a broken neck. The X-rays showed he had eleven broken ribs, a broken collarbone, a broken wrist, about seven or more fractures of the skull, a chip knocked out of the skull, and a possible ruptured liver.

He was a sick boy. He was sure sick. His bones were set, then Bob gave him a transfusion. Of course he was in shock and had a concussion, so I stayed with him until the early hours of morning, then left with instructions to get a special nurse that morning.

Just when I arrived at the hospital, the nurses were sitting in the surgery room having coffee and putting on lipstick. Bobby was in a puddle of ice water. [BC: I recall Mom telling me that Bobby caught pneumonia from the cold water.]

February 1949

After Bobby's accident, it is easily understood how I felt when I went back to the same spot looking for him and met a girl saying, "Your son's receiving first aid." Then I saw him being treated by the same girl as where he fell.

This time some child had just thrown sand in his eyes, and she was removing it with a Q-tip. It made my heart fall to my heels, though. I quickly put them both inside the gate with a fair warning not to go outside again.

I swept upstairs, made Billy's bed, and went to see how they were doing. They were outside the gate again. I looked all over for them. Finally I got on the bike and went all over the neighborhood. Having no results, I started home, and just as I turned the corner to the project, I spotted Bobby coming out of an old abandoned chicken coop. Billy was still in it. They both had bumps on their heads and scratches. I guess they met some chicken wire.
When Daddy got home that night he said, "I'll watch them." Ha-ha.

He turned his back for two minutes — gone. Gone again. We finally found them -- in the car -- pushing the starter. It was in neutral.

Feb. 6, 1949
Today started out with a bang. I went downstairs to check on my little darlings. When I opened the screen door, an empty envelope greeted me. I saw several sheets of a letter scattered around the yard. On examination I found they belonged to an English girl that lives downstairs. I gathered the letters together and gave them to her, explaining that my boys must have done it since they were the only ones down there at the time. She looked at the letter and saw it was from England — and what's better still, there was one page missing. By the time I'd found it, my morning was gone.

I gathered the boys together and hustled them upstairs for lunch. They beat me up there and punched the tops off all the milk bottles.

I was downstairs when they awoke from their nap. When I got upstairs, I slid in the house on dried red beans. They had emptied a big package all over the house and were sliding on it for fun. The clean ironed shirts were all over the floor — wet and dirty. The beater to my electric mixer was missing and still is. I didn't have time to clean up the mess then because it looked like

rain and I had to get my clothes off the line. I didn't dare leave them alone again, so I took them down with me.

I had about half my clothes off the line when I noticed they were very quiet. They had my two-pound box of soap and had dumped it out under the clothesline. That night it rained, and we had suds. I had to go out that evening before they went to bed, so I'm not sure what happened. I know when I got home, though, the bathroom was white with tooth powder.

Feb. 7, 1949

This morning they wanted to look and smell good. Three times they came in with Bob's Lillac Vegetal all over them. Once with Wildroot, and the third time I caught Bobby in the act. He was smearing Mum on his face with one hand and had the razor in the other.

This afternoon Bob was watching them because I have a bad foot. He was supposed to have been flying a kite for them. I looked out the window and saw them both standing on the very edge of the roof across from us. I ran downstairs, out the gate, and over to them so fast I didn't dare call to them. I just went up and pulled them back and all. (Daddy was flying the kite for the boys??)

For a last act, Bobby just about emptied the cookie jar right under his father's nose before they finally gave up and went to bed.

Feb. 8, 1949

The morning has been comparatively quiet. That is until a little boy knocked on the door and said, "Your boys are climbing on the cars." I guess they were, but by the time I arrived on the scene, Bobby had fallen and hit his ear on the bumper of another car. The fun has officially begun.

Towards evening, Bobby came to me and with a big sign said, "Had a hard day Moma?"

Feb. 22, 1949

Bobby complains of his head hurting where the skull was removed.

March 14, 1949
The boys went to play school for the first time in over a year. They got along pretty well, but I can't see where it helps them, and it sure makes Bobby very nervous. He started his stuttering again when we came home and has been getting worse ever since. He painted three pictures and was very insistent that they be saved and shown to "his daddy."

Took boys on picnic in afternoon and all had a wonderful time.

June 5, 1950
The boys were eating dinner. Bob moved Billy's chair with his foot and then told Billy, "Stop moving your chair." Billy said, "Me didn't, Daddy." The same thing was done and said again. "Well Billy, chairs don't move by themselves," Bob said. Finally – "This one do" came Billy's answer.

Bobby was holding an apricot up to his Daddy, explaining to him, "Daddy, this is where the tree hangs."

Nov. 10, 1950
Bob was teaching the boys their numbers. He explained to them, "If I write numbers all day, all tomorrow, all the next day, etc., I'd never run out of numbers."

Bobby looked puzzled and said, "But Daddy, you'd run out of paper."