

Shades of the Past

Lifescapes Writing Group 2009
Brantford Public Library





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This book was written by members of the Lifescapes group, a seniors' memoir writing program sponsored by the Brantford Public Library.

Editorial team: Joan Faehrmann, Lorie Lee Steiner

Photo editing: Joan Faehrmann

Cover by Joan Faehrmann

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Introduction

Lifescapes is a program of the Brantford Public Library created to help seniors begin to write their memoirs. This is the second year we have run the program and the second book of life stories that we have published. The two *Lifescapes* anthologies are available to be checked out of the library or to view on our Website at:

<http://brantford.library.on.ca/adults/lifescapes.php>

Two local authors visited to speak to the Lifescapes group this year. We would like to offer our sincere thanks to Selkirk author, Cheryl MacDonald, for her talk on “Truth in Non-fiction,” and to Brantford author, Lorie Lee Steiner, for her talk on Christmas memories and for her invaluable assistance with editing the stories.

Thirteen women and six men, ranging in age from their mid-fifties to ninety, completed the program this year. Some were returning members from last year’s inaugural *Lifescapes* program, while others had already started writing their memoirs and wanted tips on polishing them up, but most were new to memoir writing. Each brought something special to the group. Their stories of family history, of loss, of travel, of special people and special times exemplify our motto: “Everyone’s story is worth telling.”

We hope you will enjoy the second edition of the *Lifescapes* anthology, *Shades of the Past*.

Joan Faehrmann
Adult Services/Readers’ Advisory Librarian
Brantford Public Library
Brantford, Ontario



A Child and a Welsh Town in the Second World War

Fiona Clarke

When I was a child of 5 or 6, my younger brother and I had a very special window. It was on the upstairs landing at the back of our house and about three feet off the floor and set far enough back in the thick wall for us to climb up onto the deep sill. The window was taller than we were, so we could stand there and look out on a totally absorbing world of activity. Down below, there was a stone-flagged yard enclosed behind high walls. Directly beneath us was the back door. From our vantage point, we could watch the comings and goings of everyone who clicked open the latch on the tall green wooden gate in the passage between the house and the garage.

Every day, we heard the sound of shiny brown leather boots clip-clopping across the yard, announcing the immaculate-looking milkman, smartly dressed in his grey tweed cloth cap, well pressed overall coat, and polished brown leather knee-high gaiters. There were loud clinking noises as he put down the day's supply of milk bottles, with the inches of cream on top, and took away the rinsed out empties from the day before. The milk came from his herd of cows that lived in a field behind his house. He milked the cows and then bottled the milk himself.

One cause of big excitement for us was the delivery of coal before winter set in. Several men, full of loud, joking remarks and almost black from head to toe with coal dust, would clump their way across the yard with sack after heavy sack loaded on their backs, and we would listen to the loud roars, as lumps of coal poured from the sacks in through the open door of the coal house. The men wore special leather hats, with wide



My younger brother and I

flaps that hung down over their broad shoulders, protecting them from the sharp, knobbly edges of the lumps of coal.

Beside the coal house was an open area with a glass roof where, winter or summer, rain or shine, the washing was done every Monday—no washing machine, just a large metal boiler filled with cold water and heated by gas flames below. Stains were removed by using a big bar of washing soap and a ridged wash board that stood in a tub of water. The used soapy water bubbled and gurgled down an open channel in the stone until it slurped and swirled into the drain by the back door. Afterwards, lines of bright white washing and familiar little articles of our clothing, held on with wooden pegs, flapped back and forth in the breeze. What was going on in our own yard, however, was nothing compared to the fascinating and ever changing events over the back wall.

We lived on a main road out of a small South Wales market town called Bridgend, with the cities of Cardiff and Swansea about twenty miles to the east and west. These cities both suffered severe bomb damage during the war but our little town, where cattle and sheep were herded down past the end of our drive to the weekly market every Tuesday, saw no bomb damage at all. At the bottom of our road, a very old bridge crossed over the River Ogmore, its waters black with coal dust from the mining valleys to the north. To all appearances it was a quiet little town, where nothing much happened except on market day. Then it sprang to life with the farmers in town, and the women from the mining valleys arrived, baskets over their arms, to do their shopping.

Even as young children, we knew that there was a war because the wireless news bulletins told us about it, and at any time of day or night, the ominous wail of the siren would warn there were enemy planes flying overhead; we could feel the relief and the tension dissipate when the All Clear siren went off. A suitcase, never to be touched, was kept ready packed on a table in our bedroom in case we suddenly had to run. I had a green wool dress with a pleated skirt in this case; in those days little girls never ever wore trousers. I so wanted to wear this dress because it was the only one I had with pleats but it was never allowed out of the case and I never did wear it.

The Second World War started when I was four and soon after the house next door was requisitioned by the army. A sentry box, with a soldier on guard, appeared at the bottom of the drive, which was right next door to our drive. The large house stood in about five acres of landscaped garden, surrounded with shrubberies. The house was used for offices and some officers lived there as well. There was a wide gravel area in front of the house where the soldiers paraded and, significantly for us, stable buildings and a cobbled stable yard directly behind the wall at the back of our yard.

Over the war years, our window sill gave us a bird's eye view of the constant activity in the stable yard. We woke each morning at dawn to the sound of a bugle calling the soldiers for their breakfast. The notes beat out, "Come to the cookhouse door boys, Come to the cookhouse door." Totally absorbed we watched the soldiers line up with their mess tins in front of the covered area where all the cooking was done. Later in the day, we watched, fascinated, as soldiers sat around peeling mounds of potatoes into slowly filling great drums of water.

Directly opposite was the old stable. On the peak of the roof, a large rooster weather vane, slowly or giddily, according to the vagaries of the wind, showed us and the soldiers below which way the wind was blowing. During the day, the top of the stable door was always open. There was a wide counter attached to the bottom half of the door

and a soldier stood there handing out the stores; it might be a uniform, blankets, or any other supplies required by the soldiers living in Nissan huts, behind the high, brick-walled kitchen garden.

In the town we began to notice young men, dressed in ill-fitting royal blue wool suits with white shirts and red ties, sometimes hobbling on crutches or sitting in a wheel chair. These were men who had been wounded in battle and were recovering at the nearby convalescent home. They were issued with these colourful uniforms so that the population would know they had been serving their country and were not malingerers.

Surprisingly, the local ballet school survived the cutbacks of the war and I and other little girls annually took the examinations of the Royal Academy of Dancing. One evening in the Town Hall, we put on a concert for the convalescents, and I danced a solo, dressed as a Puritan, in a plain pale grey dress with a white collar and cuffs and a white mob cap on my head. The point of the dance was that I had found a red silk scarf and was having some guilty pleasure playing with it. The sea of blue in front of me, with a mass of heads on it, did not bother me. It was the stage that sloped downhill towards the audience that was the scary part. What, I wonder, did these fighting men who had been risking their lives on the battlefield think of the evening's entertainment?

Further up our road, past the house of the milkman, there were green fields where one spring a friend and I picked armloads of beautiful yellow cowslips that smelled like apples. The next spring the cowslips were gone; the fields were covered with gravel roads and prefabricated houses. We noticed more people walking up our road, and some had orange faces, hands and hair.

On the other side of this sleepy little market town one of the biggest munitions factories in Great Britain had been constructed. It employed thousands of women from the town and the mining valleys to the north. They worked in shifts, twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, making detonators and filling bombs, shells, rockets and grenades. It was dangerous work and some of the buildings had high earthworks around them in case there was an explosion. The orange stain on the people who walked past our house was from the chemicals used to fill the ammunition; it was difficult to wash off. Amazingly, this factory was never bombed. It was assumed that because it was in a valley and often misty that the Germans did not know of its existence. However, after the war, examination of Luftwaffe aerial photographs showed that they knew exactly where it was. The suggestion has been made that it was left alone so that it could be used when the Germans finally crossed the English Channel.

On Island Farm, on the outskirts of Bridgend, another area of hastily constructed buildings had appeared; they were originally built to house the women who were going to work in the munitions factory. They were never used for this, as the women preferred to live at home, in their valleys to the north, and endure a long journey to work by bus or train. Later the buildings were used by some of the American army on their way to D-day. I can remember being very unimpressed by American soldiers. In a morale boosting parade through the centre of the town, with the crowds cheering and excitedly waving flags, the leather soled boots of the British soldiers made a satisfying loud clumping sound, in time to the rousing music of the band. But the rubber soled, and no doubt more practical, American boots only made a soft shuffling sound of "pad pad, pad pad," which made no impact at all.

Towards the end of the war, this same group of buildings became a prisoner of war camp for German officers. Eventually, it served as a special camp for senior German officers, with no one under the rank of General, Admiral or Field Marshal. Some were eventually to go before the Nuremberg Trials. To give them an occupation, among other things, they went out to help clear overgrown and neglected properties. I remember several times coming home from school at the end of the day and seeing, even to my nine year old eyes, a distinguished-looking gentleman in old clothes, working in the shrubbery next door.

On VE Day there were two special events for me. It must have been late in the evening, when I was taken down to the centre of the town in the ink black darkness. On our walk there was no light anywhere, no street lights and no lights from the houses. During the war, all windows were totally covered with blackout material after dark. We walked down the hill and over the old bridge and, as we turned the corner, there ahead was an amazing sight. The square in front of the Town Hall was floodlit and ablaze with light, packed with a cheering mob of people. It was absolutely fascinating for a rather sheltered child, in the days before television, to watch men and women, arm in arm, kicking up their legs, dancing and singing, "Knees Up Mother Brown." The other, and at the time more significant, event of that night was arriving back home and hearing, as we entered the house, the big grandfather clock in the hall slowly chiming midnight. I had never ever been up so late.

Not long after, I remember asking if there would be anything on the wireless news bulletins now that the war was over...



***Fiona Clarke** was born in South Wales and lived there until the age of ten, when she went to boarding school in England. On leaving school, she took a domestic science course and a secretarial course, then worked in London for several years. She met her husband when he was serving in the Canadian army in Germany. They have lived near St. George for over forty years and have two daughters and two grandchildren. Fiona worked in the St. George Public Library for sixteen years.*



The Folly of Old St. Nicholas: Sinterklaas Memories

Mary C. Huurman

It was early in the evening of December 5th, 1947, St. Nicholas night. In Abcoude, about ten miles southeast of Amsterdam, the streets of the medieval Dutch village where we lived were deserted, except for a few cyclists and pedestrians returning home late from work. The darkness was broken only by bicycle lanterns and diffused light escaping through the living room draperies of brick row houses in the Heinkuiten Straat, hinting of family life that thrived indoors on this special night. Just three houses down and across from ours, three young couples gathered with their children and their parents to await the long-anticipated return of Sinterklaas. Excitement buzzed in the room as we listened for sounds signalling his arrival at my aunt's front door. The annual visit of Sinterklaas and Zwarte Piet, known in other parts of the world as St. Nicholas and Black Peter, was celebrated both publicly and in homes, but this particular family celebration left me with a life-long, not-so-happy memory.

Newspapers reported that St. Nicholas and his helpers had arrived in Holland a week ago from Spain by steamboat. Everyone knew they had been eavesdropping at chimneys on slate-tiled rooftops all over the country to decide who deserved a gift and who did not. At family parties like ours, the naughty and nice would be exposed. Black Peter usually carried a switch of sticks and an empty burlap bag over his shoulder. Those who had stepped out of line by disobeying a parent or habitually arriving home late for dinner (and all these misdeeds were recorded in St. Nicholas's black ledger), could expect a warning to do better. For flagrant sins such as ridiculing St. Nicholas or boasting of being unafraid of Black Peter, there could



St. Nicholas arrives by boat in Abcoude

be serious consequences such as a spanking with Black Peter's switch of sticks. He was reputed to stuff chronic offenders of all ages into the bag and carry them off to a boat, anchored in the nearby harbour, to sail home with St. Nicholas to Spain. There, they would have to work until next December. Unless the good Saint showed mercy and forgave them, naughty children (and very bad adults too) could expect to leave the party in Black Peter's custody. Needless to say, most children had a fearful respect for both The Saint and his black helper.

For family parties like ours, Black Peter would bring treats of candy and chewy ginger cookies, and a gift for deserving boys and girls. St. Nicholas would read from his thick ledger book, where he had a record on everyone. His dark-skinned servant, who seldom spoke, would reward good children with a gift from the bag at his feet. During the reading of offences, he would wave the switch or his empty burlap bag menacingly at the guilty person. The empty sack also posed a threat for anyone who had not lived up to the promises made last December.

Crowded into the small living room for the St. Nicholas Party, were the Dekker, Lancker and Albers families — three related couples with children. Most of the children were under eight except for our youngest aunts, my mother's little sisters. They had come to the celebration with their mother, our maternal grandma, Oma Kats. My father's austere parents, Willem and Gezina Albers, now in their seventies, were also present. At age five, I loved being with cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents, but my big brother, little sister and I especially adored Mom's kind, loving parents. We all lived within blocks of each other in our little village.

Our middle-aged Grandfather Kats worked as a watchman at a busy railway crossing on the highway to Amsterdam. Unfortunately, he could not be with us because he had to work the afternoon shift again this year. His five grandchildren secretly hoped that, one year, he could be there too to reap his just rewards for his incessant teasing and tomfoolery.

My most favourite person back then was my dark, handsome father, Bertus Albers. A quiet, soft-spoken man, he worked hard to support his little family in those post-war years, yet he always had time and energy for his three children. Since mother was the disciplinarian in our home, Papa was seen as the kinder, safer parent to be around. For our living, he drove a flatbed truck to pick up cans of fresh milk from farms in the surrounding countryside, then delivered them to the commercial dairy in Amsterdam — twice a day in summer, mornings only in winter. Saturdays and holidays, he would sometimes take us along for the ride in his green Ford V8 truck. He was lean, strong and muscled from heaving those heavy steel milk cans onto the truck but he loved playfully romping with his children on the floor. He read us bedtime stories. Seldom missing an opportunity to tease us, with a wink and a nod in the opposite direction, he could distract you and make your favourite food disappear from your plate, and then



My father and I

return it when you weren't looking. He was popular with children and grown-ups alike. Most days I couldn't wait to be with Papa. Late in the afternoon, I would wait for him at the drawbridge just down the street from our house until he rounded the corner, and then hop on his bicycle to ride home with him. He was the one I wanted to marry when I grew up.

While we waited for Sinterklaas, adults chatted and laughed as children hovered near their parents, trying to control both their excitement and their anxiety. A sharp rap on the door and the sound of a chain rattling at the window silenced the room. Knowing, nervous glances darted toward the front door. Aunt Willemien, a pretty young mother of three, quickly got up, dashed through the hall and opened the front door. Children scurried closer to their parents, anxious, but longing for a special gift out of Black Peter's sack. Finding their voices, they sang a chorus inviting St. Nicholas in, and then another song of welcome.

Shuffling through the hall, St. Nicholas halted in the living room doorway to scan the gathering. "Good evening, good evening," he nodded into each corner, waving his white-gloved hand to acknowledge our adulation.

The elderly man in a long red velvet robe was the picture of dignity with his white hair and full beard. Leaning lightly on the tall golden staff in his right hand, he clutched the feared black book in his left. Under the brilliant red robe, he wore a white cassock. A pointed red bishop's mitre, with an embroidered gold cross on the front, balanced on his head. Both the robe and mitre were trimmed with gold braid.

Black Peter followed behind carrying the bag of gifts, which he placed at St. Nicholas's chair. He was dressed in the garb of a medieval page: brightly coloured purple satin jacket over a bright pink satin blouse, topped by a high accordion-pleated black collar. His hat was a matching floppy beret of purple satin. Black gloves, a pair of billowing black and gold satin shorts over long black stockings, and buckled black shoes completed his outfit. In his left hand, he carried the switch and sack. The whites of his eyes flashed in vivid contrast to his black skin.

St. Nicholas entered the living room and settled into the seat of honour reserved for him. Black Peter stayed behind St. Nicholas's chair, eyes darting suspiciously from one person to another, as if to put us on notice that he knew some secret information about everyone. Black Peter, we were sure, had done his rounds during the preceding week because, during supper one night, we heard loud rapping on our living room window. It scared my brother into gulping down his brussel sprouts. Judging by the thickness of the black book, Peter had reported in detail. *The Book* would chronicle particulars of our acts of disobedience, of wicked things we had said or done, but also some commendable deeds to balance the account. Peter's eyes glistened like his satin jacket. Yes, the lowly black servant was a feared enforcer.

From his chair, St. Nicholas acknowledged each child with a slow nod and a friendly smile. Our host, Uncle Leo, had us sing more of the St. Nicholas songs we had learned at preschool.

"Sing louder!" exhorted Uncle Leo. "St. Nick is a little hard of hearing." Undoubtedly, passersby on the street smiled knowingly at the volume of our voices.

"Welcome! Welcome!" Uncle Leo addressed our honoured guests. "We heard that you had a long journey by boat. We're very glad that you have time to visit us. We have a lot of good boys and girls here."

“Yes, yes,” the dignified Saint agreed. “We’ve been listening at the windows and chimneys and it’s all written down here, in my book.”

Little minds quickly scanned events of the past week, wondering what might be written about them. Tension eased when Black Peter reached into his bag and flung handfuls of ginger-spiced treats around the room, sending the children scrambling. When everyone was back in their seats, a pregnant hush settled over the gathering. The moment of truth was upon us.

The Book appeared from under the Saint’s beautiful red mantle. Removing his white gloves, he began leafing through the pages. One by one, the children were called forward to stand at his knee while he read from his notes. Three- and four-year olds were accompanied by an older sibling or their Mama. Mostly good things were said about them.

The more mischievous older children, and those with a stained conscience, approached reluctantly, mindful that the fearsome Black Peter could dole out something other than a gift. What if *The Book* told only the naughty things you’d done? How much did he know about you anyway?

To my eight-year old brother, he said, “Billy, I read here that you came home late from school twice this week. Is that right?”

“Yes, but I won’t be late again, I promise!”

“I see that you don’t like eating your vegetables, especially brussel sprouts.”

“But I ate them all last time!” pleaded Billy.

“That’s a good boy! And I like that you left out hay and water for my horse last night. You deserve a present.” He turned to his helper. “Peter, what have you got for Billy?”

Black Peter dug into the gift bag and brought out a shiny red metal car, the kind you wind up with a key to make it go. Billy left happy with his new toy.

Next, my sister and I were called forward. I was praised for doing well at school and for looking after my little sister. From the other side of his ledger, there came a warning not to fight so much with my next-door cousin, Gerrit. “And,” he admonished, “You should obey your mother the first time she says something. Is it true that you suck your thumb at bedtime? You really should stop that. Will you promise?”

He really was all knowing! “Yes, Sinterklaas, I will.” Relieved that he left it at that, I returned to my place, happy with my reward of a box of embroidery cards and yarn and a corking set.

My shy little sister had been very good - she always was. But St. Nicholas knew all about her recent carelessness.

“You must be more careful not to fall into the river. Promise me that you will stay away from the edge of the water, Gezina! You’ve been going to bed without fussing. That’s what I like to hear. But you must take your cod liver oil every night, okay? Will you do that?”

Eager to agree to his terms, she nodded three times, then turned to see what wonderful present Black Peter might have for her. It was a little doll.

Saint Nicholas next called my favourite cousin, Gerrit. The curly haired five-year-old trembled as St. Nicholas exhorted him, too, to stop sucking his thumb and to obey his mother in the coming year, and to fight less with his cousin Mary!

With few exceptions, children were admonished to change their ways: be more obedient, do your best at school, fight less with siblings, come home on time, don't argue, don't hit, don't lie, eat your veggies, go to sleep without talking to your sister for an hour, etc. Black Peter had definitely had his ear to the chimney! Every child returned to his seat happily clutching a cherished gift. There was no extravagance because St. Nicholas cared about many, many children and would be on his way to other homes once he left this family. There were no gifts for grown-ups.

Not surprisingly, the adults had also made it into *The Book*. One teased too much, another was frequently late for dinner, another forgot to bring home a grocery item. My mother pleaded guilty to reading too long and not having dinner ready. As the sins of adults were revealed, an uncle would call out a new accusation, disclosing some fault Black Peter overlooked. Black Peter wagged his switch threateningly at the offenders.

When *The Book* was opened on my father's life, it said that he had been overheard making disparaging remarks about St. Nick and his helper. Black Peter's eyes popped in disbelief! He shook the switch angrily at my father. Fear gripped me at what might happen next. I slowly got up off the floor to stand beside my father.

Papa, always a quiet, respectful man, denied the accusation. "Oh no, Sinterklaas. That's not true. It must have been somebody else." The sly smile on his face made me think he was maybe more amused than afraid. St. Nicholas must be mistaken, I thought. Papa stayed on his chair, relaxed, legs stretched out before him. Black Peter's fierce stare did not bode well to a child's way of thinking. It was the certain precursor of unpleasant things to come. Still, Papa seemed confident, fearless, in the face of punishment that was sure to follow.

St. Nicholas again consulted his book. "It says here that Bert Albers said that Sinterklaas is nothing but a story." He glared at my father. "How can you say such a thing when you know I visit here every year?"

Uncle Arie Dekker confirmed the charge. "Yes, Sinterklaas, I heard him say that he didn't believe in you. Bert thinks you don't really know anything, but now he'll find out!"

"Yes, yes," nodded St. Nicholas. "We have to do something about that."

I squirmed in fear, but the adults didn't seem afraid. St. Nicholas glanced up over his shoulder at Black Peter, who knew instantly what must be done. My father was going to have to be punished for his disrespect.

"Papa, Papa!" I cried in dismay, fearing what would become of our family. Dad still smiled mischievously. In utter terror, I jumped on his lap and threw my arms around his neck as Black Peter crossed the room toward us, empty sack in hand.

Dad sucked in his breath and gulped hard. "My, my, I had not expected that!" he chortled.

"No! No!" I screamed. Clinging tightly to his neck, I buried my face in his chest and threw my body across his. I was not going to let him be carried off if I could help it.

Black Peter began tugging the sack over Dad's feet. Papa was my hero, my playmate, my father, my rock, my protector, my whole world! I could not let this happen! Sobbing, I got down and pushed the sack away, looking around for someone to come to the rescue, someone to help me prevent this abduction, this shattering of our lives, but no one moved. All eyes were on Dad and me.

“No-o-o! No-o-o!” I resisted the enemy’s effort to take my Dad from me with all my strength. As hard as I pulled the sack down, Black Peter pulled it back up to Dad’s knees. My very strong father offered little resistance, certainly not enough to prevent his dire fate. Desperate, I threw myself across his legs so Black Peter could not pull the bag up any higher. Realizing I was losing the battle, I became hysterical. “Papa, Papa,” I screamed and cried and screamed.

At last, Grandmother Kats spoke as mediator. “Sinterklaas, allow him stay with us this year. He is a good man. I am sure he promises to never say that again.”

I looked around again for help. My brother and sister were crying too, but no adult was coming to the rescue. Finally, my mother spoke up. “I am sure that Bert will never say such things again. He should have another chance.”

Black Peter straightened his back and turned toward St. Nicholas for further instructions. St. Nicholas asked Dad, “Do you promise to never say such awful things again?”

“Yes, I promise,” my contrite father replied. His eyes still twinkled mischievously.

“Peter, you can let him stay this time.”

“Thank you, Sinterklaas,” Dad said in humble appreciation. Peter looked disappointed but I was glad. He slowly tugged the sack down over my father’s feet and returned to his boss’s side.

Back on Dad’s lap, I sobbed, clinging to the man I loved more than anything in the whole world. His big strong arm around me reassured me that we were both safe. Exhausted by emotion, I sobbed in relief at the stay of his deportation.

St. Nicholas and Black Peter soon gathered their belongings and rose to leave. More candy and sweets were scattered around the room. Everyone joined in the traditional farewell chorus as the Saint headed out into the dark December night — that is, everyone but me. My face, pocked red from crying, I cared little about anything happening around me, not candy, not singing, nor St. Nicholas. My father was safe. He and I were inseparable until we were home and he tucked me into bed.

I was hoarse for three days, and more of a Daddy’s girl than ever.

The few St. Nicholas celebrations that followed were more enjoyable. When *The Book* was read, there were only rewards or warnings, no more hostile actions such as those that marked the 1947 St. Nicholas “party.”

Years later, when the emotional scars were long gone, our mother told us that on December 5, 1947, Oma Kats had been very, very upset with St. Nicholas and Black Peter. She felt they had gone too far! In no uncertain terms, she ordered her husband, our Opa Kats, and her son, Black Peter, to never ever cross that line again! Adult fun at the expense of a child from then on was taboo.

In 1961 our grandparents spent a year with us in Canada. As teenagers, we three grandchildren teased Opa Kats about his red-robe duties every December 5th. True to form, he insisted that he always worked afternoon shift at the railroad crossing in past years.

Sixty years have passed, but I still remember the intense terror that possessed me as a five-year-old that December night. To this day, it remains the most frightful event of my life. In our new homeland, Canadian traditions were adopted. Christmas became the

time of gift-giving and there were no more St. Nicholas myths or parties for us. Thankfully, in more ways than one, we all grew up.

Postscript: A 2008 civil action was brought in Holland against St. Nicholas's helpers who had pulled a burlap bag over a father's head, bringing a little girl to tears. St. Nicholas had done nothing to console the child. Artistic freedom was cited in defense of the cast.

The judge agreed, ruling that actors portraying Black Peter or St. Nicholas may perform their roles as they see fit, as long as belief in St. Nicholas and Black Peter is not compromised. The actors' intentions in interpreting their roles in a reasonable, recognizable manner and what is agreed upon prior to the "performance," determines the boundaries. It was not inappropriate, therefore, for Black Peter to put the sack over a naughty father's head since there was no real danger to the individual and it did not contravene the terms of the contract.

De Nederlandse Courant, Dutch Canadian bi-weekly, December 6, 2008



Hurman Family in Holland, 2008



Mary Hurman-Albers came to Canada from The Netherlands at age nine with her parents and two siblings (a baby brother was born a year later.) Growing up in western Wentworth, she enjoyed a career in administration in Wentworth public schools for more than thirty years. Mary and her husband, Harry, have two married children, Elaine and Alan, and four granddaughters. In May, 2008, they fulfilled a lifelong dream of touring the land and towns of their birth with their family. The young Canadians were thrilled to meet distant relatives, to discover the magnetic charm of the tiny country on the North Sea, and to experience their Dutch heritage—minus St. Nicholas!



Anna

David Kipp

“In ordinary life we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich. It is very easy to overestimate the importance of our own achievements in comparison with what we owe others.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The years, at first, seem to pass with turtle like speed, but as we begin to approach the end and contemplate our mortality, they pile up with shocking quickness. And as I approach this end, I look back to ponder events which have had profound effects on what and who I am today. Some happenings have had a negative side in shaping my thoughts and feelings; some, thank goodness, have been positive in nature and have brought me to this point in my journey. One of the most significant happenings in my life was that, at some early time and I cannot give you an exact date, my life became intertwined with Anna: one Anna Sutherland Williamson by marriage and MacKenzie by birth.

Anna grew up with her six sisters and five brothers on a farm at Waterside, near Pictou in Pictou County, Nova Scotia. She was of Scottish stock. Her great-great grandfather was a sea captain. As a child, Anna grew up in a dense forested area, the closest neighbour being a half-mile away. In a newspaper article written on her life, Anna relates a few harrowing incidents concerning a little girl growing up in a somewhat hostile environment at the turn of the century. Anna's mother and father introduced her to the wonders of learning and the beauty of the world in which she lived. Anna graduated from high school with such good marks, especially in mathematics, physics and biology, that she was accepted into the second year program of studies at Dalhousie University in Halifax. It was from here that Anna experienced and survived the December 6, 1917 explosion and disaster in Halifax Harbour. At about 9:00 am at the boarding house where she resided, Anna had just pushed the window up in her room

when a terrific explosion caused the furniture in her room to be bounced around. She was some three miles from the harbour and she told me had she been standing in front of the closed window, she would surely have been killed, as windows were blown out for miles around. She also related how the doctors, nurses, and volunteers went about treating and comforting the injured and that it was phenomenal.

After graduating from Dalhousie in 1920, Anna went to normal school in Truro for three months. Teachers were plentiful in the area so, when Anna got wind of a teaching position in Manitoba, her father said, “Go for it,” and so she did. She soon realized that her teaching credentials were limiting her options and decided to enrol in Toronto’s College of Education. After successfully completing her studies she taught at Exeter High School for the next three years. She had a physical education option in her teaching portfolio and, wanting some practical experience in August of 1926, Anna boarded a train for Georgetown, Ontario and the home of the Georgetown Boys: these boys were orphaned Armenian lads brought to Canada after being rescued from the Turks off the island of Corfu. Anna had read the stories of these young boys—some ninety of them—and her heart had gone out to them. It was at the Georgetown farm where she met a young agricultural graduate from the Ontario Agricultural College (University of Guelph) whose name was Wilfrid Williamson. She travelled on to teach for a time in Timmins, but accepted Wilfrid’s proposal of marriage in the spring of 1929. They were married in 1931 and settled on a parcel of land that Wilfrid had purchased some time before to raise and experiment with genetics in chickens, ducks, and geese. They founded the Edzell Poultry Farm and it was here that I came into their lives as a young boy of about ten or so.

My mother and father met while working at the farm. I was born in 1943 and I recall playing at the farm, running all over the place and getting into Wilfrid’s hair doing some of the things little boys would do around animals, barns, and an assortment of machinery. Wilfrid, though kind and never gruff, did not have the patience that Anna possessed and displayed all of the time. She worked hand in hand with Wilfrid, building a successful business and raising two sons. At the same time she was guiding me, a young and mischievous lad, with a gentle hand, an always quick chuckle, and a vast general knowledge. She imparted that knowledge to me sometimes in the evenings while gazing at the stars in the heavens and pointing out constellations (which I, to this day, cannot find out there), and sometimes while watching earthworms leave their castings by a hole in the earth, but always with an abiding faith in God and the goodness of people.

This farm was a site to behold, especially in the wet spring. Everywhere you looked or walked was a virtual sea of mud. The footwear of the day was rubber boots and I never had them. You can imagine the mess I managed to get myself into as I flitted here and there about the farm totally unsupervised, slowing the work of the hired hands and being dragged into trouble, of sorts, by Anna’s sons, Dyce and Cecil. They were older than I and I vividly recall egg fights throughout the farm lands and buildings. They were bigger and stronger, so you can imagine who came out on the short end during these once in a while jousts. And there was always Anna, in rubber boots, trousers and a smock with a duster on her head working in all manner of less than ladylike conditions to help build a solid financial institution in the Princeton area.

I never remember being driven to the farm. I had to have walked across farm fields and climbed over fences to make my way from the village to the farm, but I was

there often and I was always made welcome. Sometimes I would ride to the fields to help feed the hundreds and hundreds of turkeys in the outer fields. Sometimes I watched them grade eggs in the semi darkness of the cellars. I did not enjoy it as they took live poultry to make them ready for the dinner tables, especially during the festive seasons of Christmas and Thanksgiving. But Anna was always there, working with the men and with her husband. She was not above getting into the “muck of the day” in a manner of speaking. The evening meal was prepared by a hired cook. I sat with the Williamson family, the hired help, and any guest who happened along at evening meal time to share in the fare of the day. It never failed, but that we did not begin until grace was recited by Wilfrid. It was a very good time.

My wonderful relationship with Anna began somewhere about the age of sixteen or seventeen, when I discovered that she was a remarkably educated woman and teacher, and that her knowledge in the maths and sciences, blended with an overabundance of patience and love, would all come into play in my life. Without Anna, I am absolutely and totally convinced that I would not have achieved what my life has brought to me, nor been able to enjoy the lifestyle that my family and I share today. You see, by about grade eleven, I came to the sudden realization that math and I did not blend at all well together. I did not have an analytical, logical, mathematical mind. Along with this, though I am sure they meant well, my teachers did not have the extra time which I sorely needed to gain the skills required to succeed in their disciplines.

The old cliché “small but mighty” aptly describes Anna. She wasn’t much over five feet tall and was quite slight. Her hair was snow white and most often carelessly



Anna

tossed about her head. She always had a smile on her face and a pleasant word for each and everyone she would meet. I especially remember her hands. They were deeply creased from work and the lines were a brownish red colour. Those hands would cut the throat of a chicken, which I witnessed more than once, or they would work magic at her dining room table moving symbols and figures about in an effort to help me understand the mysteries of algebra, physics, chemistry, and trigonometry. She would even have helped me with botany and zoology, but sheer memory work got me through those subjects.

Night after night, week after week, Anna would patiently help me to muddle through this content material, never once raising her voice or throwing down the pencil in exasperation at my inability to comprehend that which flowed from her mind to paper like water bubbling from a spring. And I was not the only young person from our village whom Anna took under her

wing in matters of education. She tutored hundreds of students over the years, helping them to master the intricacies of the maths and sciences. The cost of these thousands and

thousands of hours of dedicated instruction evening after evening you would not believe; we were charged not a penny—not one cent, though our parents insisted on payment. Yes, that was Anna. If you had known Anna, it would have been so easy to understand such monumental acts of kindness. What God had blessed Anna with, she was only too willing to pass along to others. It was her gift to so very many of us and we, in turn, were able to give of our talents to countless others.

Because of my academic challenges as a teenager, my high school principal encouraged me to drop out of school should I be successful in attaining a grade twelve certificate. I was devastated and went to Anna with the challenge. She was flabbergasted. How could an educator, let alone a school principal, say something like that to a student? She assured me that not only would she and I get me through grade twelve, but together we would achieve a grade thirteen standing, as well. In those days only by achieving such a standing could one go on to post secondary education. Grade thirteen opened many doors, doors I would not have had opened to me without the “paper”. And we did it. She would not give up on me, nor would she give up on any student in her charge.

Into her nineties, Anna continued to tutor the young people in the area. I was a grown man and had sung the praises of Anna so often that, when my children were old enough to appreciate such a wonderful lady, we took them to visit her in her small, tidy apartment in a senior’s complex in the village of Princeton. I observed some of the sentimental curios she still maintained in the same weather beaten cabinet she had kept them in while on the farm those many years ago. They mostly pertained to her beloved Nova Scotian roots that she had left behind long ago. On this Sunday she was preparing to instruct yet another student that afternoon, but she informed me that she was very excited, as this was Super Bowl Sunday and she would be watching the game with great interest as she was a fan of Joe Montana, the 49er quarterback, and he would be guiding his San Francisco team to, hopefully, a championship. Now remember, Anna was past ninety. But her mind was razor sharp, the twinkle in her eye was still very much in evidence, and the love and care she had displayed and so freely given all of her life, she continued to give to those about her. What a beautiful, but humble woman. What a gift from God.

Anna left us on January 17, 1993 in her ninety-third year. Wilfrid had gone many years before. The farm where I spent so many carefree days at play and so many, many countless hours toiling over equations and theorems has pretty well disappeared now. The original farmhouse remains, but has been refurbished. Anna’s granddaughter resides there with her family. I visit her father, Dyce from time to time. I have not seen Cecil for many years. Rarely a day passes without me thinking of Anna. I wish she were here so that I might feel her warmth and tender loveliness again. I thank God that in His plan for me he placed Anna directly in my path. She was and is the candle that to this day lights my way.

My journey is nearing its end. I only hope that along the way I have been able to impart some of those qualities I gained from Anna to those about me. As Anna always did, perhaps I might say something to lighten the burden of a fellow traveller or brighten their day with a friendly, unsolicited smile or nod of the head. If so, I will be giving back to Anna what she so unselfishly gave to me. What a wonderful world it would be if we had more Anna Williamsons in it. But there was only one Anna and I was so lucky to

have had her in my life. Through me, Anna continues to spread her love of life and faith in mankind and those that follow me will know that, yes, we have angels among us here on Earth. I knew one.



David G. Kipp: *I was born in Princeton and attended Paris District High School. I also attended Hamilton Teachers' College in 1963-1964. I taught in the elementary educational system with the Brant County Board of Education and the Grand Erie Board of Education. I was a teacher, vice principal, and principal with these boards for thirty-five years, retiring in 1998. I received a B.A. from Wilfred Laurier University and a M. Sc. Ed. from Niagara University in New York State.*



Colonel and the Democrat

Betty Jean Clark

While growing up in the early 1930s, I was very lucky to have both sets of grandparents living near us on the Old Onondaga Road. The CN railway tracks separated our farm, in Onondaga Township, from my grandparents' farms, across the tracks in Brantford Township. Often, on weekends, I stayed with Grandma Clark, but, occasionally, I would go to Grandpa and Grandma MacDonald's. My time with Grandma Clark was spent, mainly, learning to knit and crochet and hearing about family lore, while it was more about the great outdoors with Grandpa and Grandma MacDonald.



Thomas and Mary MacDonald (left)

Grandpa was a short, stocky man of Scottish descent, having a neat moustache and always wearing a vest and woollen tweed trousers, no matter what the weather. In his vest pocket he carried a tooth pick fashioned from a goose quill. Much to Grandma's dislike he would occasionally speak Indian. I do not know which tribe he spoke, all I know is that his older brother, Will, and wife, Mary, and family, lived on the reserve, as did Grandpa for a while.

Grandpa had the opinion that being a girl should not keep one from learning useful (as he thought) information, which would come in handy in later years on a farm. I couldn't imagine when I would ever be expected to bag up grain to take to the mill for grinding into livestock feed. But Grandpa deemed it necessary that I learn the proper way to tie the bags, so that when arriving at the mill, one only had to pull the end of the twine and it came undone – no knot to untie!

Because the miller used his own ties, ours were brought back and neatly hung on nails, specially hammered into the wall of the granary, where they would be ready the next time grain was bagged. I always felt quite important when I was told to hang the twine. I knew there must be no tangles, that they must be hung evenly, one by one, so that when needed there would be no fussing — because to waste time was a sin.

Funny, but sitting on a home-made bench, placed under the large tree by the drive shed, was not wasting time. Grandpa said one must take time to appreciate the day. Sometimes we might not even talk — so much the better to hear the birds. It was extra nice when a mother hen would bring her brood out to scratch around near us, the little chicks running here and there, finding interesting bits to examine. But always back to their mother with wonderful tales, even though they had ventured only two or three feet from her. And so pleasant it was to hear the hen, all the while, making that particular soft chirping that all mother hens make when their young are around.

Grandpa taught me that to just sit, not speaking, but keeping the eyes and ears open, was a great way to learn many important things that would be helpful through life.

Another special time was when Grandpa thought the fences needed repairs. I knew what that meant — time for Colonel and the Democrat. Colonel was a lovely, slight built bay horse and, to me, he seemed the most intelligent horse that ever lived. Grandpa would bring him out from the pasture and Colonel would stand quietly, while being hitched to the Democrat. A Democrat was a type of wagon, having low sides and a seat in front on springs, which made for a comfortable ride for two people. Grandpa's needed just one horse but Uncle Will had one that required a team.

The fence repair equipment having already been loaded, off we went. Grandpa sat on the seat up front, while I sat in the back. He had a tool holder that was lovely to see. Wooden, with a large bottom section for hammers, pliers and such, while above that was a tray, half the width of the lower part, resting on cleats. The tray could be slid back and forth, without having to lift it out to get to the tools below. It had a nice round handle with a shiny spot in the centre from much use. Today, it might seem that this carrier was nothing special, but to me it most definitely was!

When we got to the field, usually one near the house, Grandpa would tell Colonel, 'whoa', and then we would get down. The fence was examined to see



Thomas MacDonald with Colonel



A Democrat

what was needed, and then Grandpa would say what he wanted. If staples were necessary, Grandpa asked me to get the number he thought required, and the hammer.

Sometimes he might need pieces of wire that he had already cut into appropriate lengths. If any were not used, then I was to put them back in the proper place. It was stressed on me not to drop any, because if some were left behind and an animal ate them, it could cause sickness or death. When finished with one post, Grandpa would click his tongue and Colonel would move on and stop at the next post. So brilliant, I thought.

One very, very special day with Grandpa, Colonel and the Democrat, was when we went to see Uncle Albert and Aunt Sophia. They had a farm on the next road, and Grandpa wanted to pay them a visit. Uncle Albert was Grandpa's youngest brother.

Grandma made up a basket for us to take to Aunt Sophia. It had some of Grandma's raspberry tarts, jam-jams (oatmeal cookies put together with date filling) and a jar or two of preserves. This time, because it was a fairly long way, I had a cushion to sit on – a feed bag stuffed with straw.



The MacDonald brothers: L to R Albert John, Thomas Cecil, William Ross

When we were leaving Spruce Lane (the name of Grandpa's farm), we turned left rather than right. This seemed strange because any other time I had gone to Uncle Albert's we had taken the long way round. But for some reason, this time we turned left, across the railway tracks, past our farm (Sunny Spring Farm), and on to Cousin Alex's place. We turned right into his lane and I thought we were going to visit with him first, but we just kept on our way, calling 'hello' as we passed the house.

On we went, past the barn and down the lane to the bush. This really had me puzzled as I had never been beyond the barn before. I soon learned that there was quite a good path through the bush and Colonel seemed to need no instructions. Eventually, we came out of the trees into a clearing and still the track continued. I could see buildings, this time it was the barn and outbuildings first, and then I saw the house. Colonel stopped near a shed and stood quietly waiting, while Grandpa unhitched him and put him in the shed with feed and water.

Uncle Albert came out to meet us and we all walked together to the house, Grandpa carrying the basket. Aunt Sophia met us at the door and received the gift with much 'oohs' and 'just what I needed' and 'you shouldn't have brought all this'.

Inside the house was a table, set nicely with a flowered cloth, places for four and a large pitcher of water. On top of the pitcher was a square of material with coloured beads tied on the corners. This was to keep out any flies or such. There was really nothing here or at Grandpa's, that was just for show. Even though things might look lovely, they always had a useful purpose.

Aunt Sophia had sandwiches ready on a pretty flowered plate, and she set out the tarts and cookies Grandma sent. After we had eaten, she brought in a large brown teapot and we all had tea. Even me! I was not usually allowed to drink it, but this time I was given my own saucer of milky tea. My, I felt so grown up.

When we had finished, Grandpa and Uncle Albert went outside and I stayed in with Auntie. I couldn't tell you what we did or talked about, but I remember it being a pleasant time. After awhile, the men came in and Grandpa said it was time for us to go. We picked up our basket, surprised to see it was now filled with jars of pickles and a pie to take back to Grandma.

Colonel, hitched to the Democrat, Grandpa seated up front, and me, settled on my cushion in the back, took us home. That was truly a wonderful day and became a cherished memory.



Betty Jean Clark was born at home on Sunny Spring Farm in Onondaga Township, Brant County on August 26, 1932. She attended Cainsville Public School, Brantford Collegiate Institute, and Georgian College in Owen Sound. Betty Jean worked at the Brantford Welfare Department in the early 1950s.



My Dad's Garden

Anne Kittridge

We were posh, or thought we were, 'cause we had a bathroom and an inside loo with a long heavy chain for flushing. Oh, the fascination, as we watched the water circle around and around on it's way to who knows where.

We lived in a Council house on a Council Estate in Aspley, Nottingham, in England. Council houses were built by the City of Nottingham council, who then rented them out to lucky tenants, all of whom had waited many years to eventually reach the top of the housing list and qualify for one of them.

In our Close there were twenty-five houses built almost in a circle. Everyone knew everyone else and also all their business, both good and bad. Talk about Coronation Street! If someone had taken a good look and listen in those days, I am sure a television series could have been made of the goings on in our Close. But then, around 1926 televisions hadn't even been invented for the likes of us.

My Dad loved gardening, so when they moved into their Council house it was his idea of heaven. He had a garden back and front of the house, and both belonged to only him, no matter how we children begged and pleaded to be allowed to help. Although my Dad was excited at seeing his new garden, it was at first just a heap of rough and rocky soil. He toiled long and hard, working the land as if he had acres and acres. Looking back, his gardens always seemed so big to us, yet, in reality, the patches of land were quite small. But they were his.

As time went by, he planted roses in the back garden—gorgeous colours and smelling so sweet. When we were children, my friend and I would collect the fragrant petals which had dropped to the ground, and we spent many a Sunday afternoon making rose scent. I must admit the end product did not smell anything like a rose, but we always tried again. It was fun.

At the top of the back garden, my Dad built a shed. This again was his domain. I felt lucky, and a bit over-awed, whenever I was allowed to step through the door. Inside

was everything you would ever need in life. If it wasn't there, then it could be made, often out of old wire coat hangers. My Dad could make anything.

One Old Man (Jess Taylor)

*Jolly old man he knew how to live
Easy to please and fun to be with
Sometimes sharp tongued, yet quietly patient
Shiny red face and arthritic old fingers

Telling jokes, forgetting the last line
Always hungry but forgetting the time
Years of toil show in his old hands
Lifting his mug of strong tea, reading the paper
Old songs whistled out of tune
Rusty old bike ridden beyond repair*



Dad with his miniature garden

the sides to make it look just like a small pond. Many years later my daughter would do exactly the same thing - make a miniature garden and enjoy looking after it, exactly the same way I had. She also kept it on my Dad's backyard window sill.



Dad mowing the front lawn

The back garden had a path, running from the back door to the back fence. On the right-hand side of the path my Dad planted rows of beautiful pink and purple and cream sweet peas. To this day whenever I see those flowers, I am quickly taken back in time. Every year, on the day of the school flower show, I gathered a big bunch of his sweet peas and arranged them with baby's breath. Most years I won a prize. I also used to make a miniature garden for the flower show, with small plants and moss from my Dad's garden. In the centre I would place a small mirror, then, put green moss around

the sides to make it look just like a small pond. Many years later my daughter would do exactly the same thing - make a miniature garden and enjoy looking after it, exactly the same way I had. She also kept it on my Dad's backyard window sill.

In our garden was a peach tree that my Mum had grown, right from a peach pit. After she had eaten the fruit, the seed was placed in a small container on the kitchen window sill, until in time it grew quite big and then my Dad planted it in the garden. It was like Jack and the Beanstalk, it grew and it grew, and nobody would believe they had grown a peach tree in a back garden in England. We had everything on the tree, leaves and even flowers, but sadly never any peaches.

It seems strange looking back, that, during the war, when absolutely everything was rationed and in short supply, only the back garden was used for vegetables. The thought never entered anyone's mind to plant anything but flowers and have neat

lawns in the front garden.

At the front of our house was a gate, with a path leading up to the front door. On either side of the path were green lawns with beautiful neat edges and more roses.

In 1956, the day I married, I walked down the path and through the roses, proudly holding my Dad's arm. The day my Mum died I placed a velvety red rose from the garden into her soft gentle hand.

My Dad's roses were beautiful, and considering he was a self taught gardener, he certainly found the right formula where they were concerned. He pruned them back so hard to the gnarly old grafts that they looked like tight little fists poking out of the red clay soil. Their ability to grow again, like magic, seemed to be an amazing act of faith. My son says his Grandad's philosophy of pruning was "Ah meck the boggers grow where ah want em to grow"!

The vegetable plot out back was Dad's pride and joy. In front of the row of sweet peas, he always grew kidney beans. We were allowed to pick them and then Mum would ask us to sit in the back porch and cut them into slivers. They had to be an identical size. That was very important. In front of the kidney beans, my Dad sometimes grew Brussel sprouts and cabbages, and much to my Mum's annoyance, he often traded the best of these with his mates on a Sunday morning at The Cocked Hat, our local pub. He always told my Mum he could never give his mates any which were not absolutely perfect in looks and size. My Mum could have the rest for our use at home.

One day, when he was pushing a wheelbarrow of cauliflowers destined for my Aunt's, he passed by the bus stop, and a man waiting for the next bus commented on the size of his cauliflowers. Quickly, my Dad responded, saying "These aren't cauliflowers, mate - these are my Brussel sprouts!"

Also, at the back of the house was a rhubarb patch, where my son, when he was quite small, spent many happy hours playing - using one of the huge rhubarb leaves as a steering wheel and pretending he was driving a car, while my Dad watched him and smiled.

Picturing the care my Dad took with the back garden, you can now imagine how pristine the front looked. The hedgerows surrounding the garden were cut with hand shears by my Dad until they were absolutely perfect. He used hand shears throughout his life, although one year he did decide to "get with it" and bought himself a set of electric shears. He was so proud of his buy, I think he must have found a bargain somewhere and couldn't resist the temptation. Everyone was shown his brand new shears with their long electric cord. The first time he plugged them in, we all had to stand and watch.

He turned on the switch and the shears came to life, as he proudly started to trim his hedge. First, he cut the top and then the sides of the hedge, excited as any child with a brand new toy. He was making his way down the hedgerow, smiling as he went, when suddenly there was no power. His



Front garden with roses

wonderful shears were completely dead. He shook them and stared at them, checked the cord — all looked perfectly fine. What a dilemma and what a disappointment. Then he looked down and realized, that, as he'd been working his way along the hedge, he'd accidentally cut the electric cord!!

When WW2 began, we were issued by the government what they called Anderson shelters. These were supposed to be guaranteed to protect all those who used them! The shelters were actually corrugated tin roofs. My Dad had to dig a huge hole in the ground as close to our back door as he could. Eventually, the hole was lined and steps were placed for us to go down into the shelter with our dog Jack. He was a noisy, yappy, and strong willed wirehaired terrier who we all loved.

The corrugated metal roof was supposed to be strong enough to protect us from the bombs, which were often dropped really close by. A small wall was built in front of our shelter for protection from the blasts, it made a wonderful place for us to sit and play all kinds of games! My Dad covered the top of our air raid shelter with soil and grass and flowers to disguise it. Hoping and praying that from above, especially in daylight, the German planes, as they flew overhead, were unable to detect it.

When there was an air raid during the dark hours of the night, we would wake listening to the sound of the warning sirens wailing outside. It was scary and eerie. We then had to quickly make our way through the house, gathering up our things as we hurried outside to the air raid shelter, sometimes having to wait for hours before the 'all clear siren' began it's wailing, in a different tone to the warning siren. When we heard the 'all clear' we would often return to our own beds for the remainder of the night.

Following an air raid, we children would race to school the next morning, always carrying our gas masks, and collect shrapnel left by the bombs which had exploded during the night. We felt lucky if we were out first in the morning to grab and save the shrapnel souvenirs, taking them home to add to our collection on the inside kitchen window sill.

Eggs were very hard to find back then. One day my Dad arrived home with a large cardboard box. Coming from the box we heard muffled sounds. We couldn't figure out what was inside; no matter how many guesses we tried, the answer was always wrong. "Please, please, please tell us," we begged, but the answer was, "Wait and see."

To add even more mystery, Dad also brought home a huge old-fashioned zinc bathtub. No one had any idea what this was to be used for. Where his Brussels sprouts used to grow, he dug a deep hole and sunk the bathtub into the ground, the rim being level with the soil. He then filled the bathtub with water and put large rocks around the edge, making it look like a little pond. He put lilies in the water too, and it looked quite beautiful by the time he had finished. Only then did we find out what was inside the box—tiny bright yellow baby ducklings.

We were all excited as we stood around waiting for the baby ducklings to be placed in their brand new home. Into the water they went, and circled round and round exploring their new surroundings. They did indeed look and seem very happy. My Dad said, "Now all we have to do is wait for them to grow and then we will have beautiful bright blue eggs to eat." This sounded too good to be true, we hadn't had any eggs to eat for a long time. What a treat was in store for us if we waited.

Later that day we all had to go out for various reasons, leaving behind our beautiful new ducklings, all alone. As soon as we got home, the first thing we all did was

dash through the house and out the back door to see our little yellow ducklings. We found them alright. The poor little things were floating on top of the water as dead as dodos. There was no sign of life at all in any of them and we all cried. “What’s happened, what’s happened?”

My Dad finally figured out that the poor things must have got tired of swimming round and round, and decided to get out of the water to explore, but they couldn’t get a foothold. So they had to keep on swimming until they were absolutely exhausted and drowned. We never did have any blue eggs from our beautiful ducklings; in fact my Dad didn’t ever bring ducklings home again. Not too many people can say they had ducks which drowned!!

We did have rabbits, though, and we gave them all names. The biggest one we called Robert Taylor because he was a movie star who my Mum thought was wonderful. We had two rabbits to begin with in one hutch, but in the blink of an eye, my Dad had to build another hutch, then another. I think Robert Taylor was living up to his name. As time went by, we found we needed more and more hutches, as more and more rabbits kept appearing, until my Dad said enough was enough and gave them all away. We all cried again, then, as we loved them, especially Robert. I still think Robert Taylor was the happiest rabbit around!

During the war we also kept hens. My Dad built a henhouse with a small chicken run out in the back garden. We did at times collect lovely fresh eggs from these hens, they were wonderful and a real treat.

Around the start of World War II, a neighbour who was a miner, gave my Dad four or five quite large lumps of coal. These were for an emergency. Not quite knowing what to do with them, as coal was as scarce as diamonds back then, we helped him bury the coal in a hole he had dug in the henhouse enclosure. I remember at times we were freezing cold, yet I can never recall those lumps of coal being dug up and burned in our old fashioned fireplace. I bet if you dug today where our old henhouse stood, you might perhaps find the lumps of coal still there.

During the summer months, as you went through the back gate, you would pass beneath a bower of tiny bright red roses which my Dad had trained through the years, until it was a most spectacular sight. I often wonder if it is still there. I remember my Dad pushing his rusty old bike through those roses. Every night, he would whistle to let us know he was back home — worn out from cycling to work and back, as well as putting in a tiring twelve hour shift. Odd times, on his way home, he was lucky enough to find a store that sold homemade candy. This was such a luxury, that we always dashed to meet him to see if today was the lucky day. Occasionally we were right.

One night he arrived home really happy. He had been told by his boss that “He was the salt of the earth.” To him that was the biggest compliment he had ever received. And a compliment he remembered for the rest of his life. Even at the age of 96 he would still retell the story to anyone who would listen.

I remember clearly in 1945, what a happy joyous occasion it was for the whole country, when the end of the war was declared. At first no one believed it. Rationing was finally coming to an end; we would soon be able to buy food without queuing. No lining up for ages inside and outside the shops clutching our ration books in our hands. Clothes would be back for sale in the shops, if only we could afford to buy them, and cream cakes would once again fill the windows of Ellis’s, our local bakery.

We thought all this would happen immediately, but it didn't. It took a long time before we saw any changes at all. Families in most of the twenty-five houses had young children, and a meeting was held to discuss how we could celebrate the end of the war. It was decided a party would be given for all the children. Someone came up with the idea that it would be great to have the celebration in our front garden. I'm not sure what my Dad thought about that idea, but I do know he, like everyone else in the whole country, was happy the war was finally at an end.

The day of the party arrived and the sun shone. I don't know where the food came from, with rationing food was always scarce, yet it seemed to appear like magic on the long tables erected down our front garden. Smiling, shiny faces of the children as they sat around the table are a sight I will never forget. My Mum surprisingly brought out of the house a lime green jelly, which she had saved from before the war. The children at the party had no idea what it was, and many of them wouldn't even try it. Many of those who did pulled a long, unhappy face and wouldn't even swallow it.

One day a friend of the family dropped by for a visit and, of course, he had to be taken outside to admire Dad's back garden. Looking round, he said to my Dad, "You know, Bill, your garden isn't very big."

To which my Dad replied, "No it isn't, but look how high it is!"

*Bill was his name if you knew him at work
Jack, if you lived on the Estate.
Jess, the familiar family name,
But JOSIAH, the real one is great!
It was a name he did not like
And to me that was quite sad,
But if not Bill or Jack or Jess
He loved to be just DAD!*

One day, towards the end of my Dad's life, we were talking and he said quite unexpectedly, "After I'm gone, if anyone asks you about me, just tell them I was a good Dad." And he was.



Anne Kittridge was born in Nottingham, England on 30 July 1935. The oldest of four children, she was educated at the Wm. Crane School, Aspley, Nottingham, England where she completed her education in 1950. She married in 1956 and has two children, John and Jayne, and twin grandsons, Jensen and Keegan. In 1970 she emigrated from England to Canada and has resided in Brantford, Ontario since then.



Tales of a Young Hobo: a Memoir

Bill Van Gaal

I was born in Holland on February 24, 1942, when World War II was in full swing. Our home was in an area of heavy conflict, close to the battle area that became known as Operation Market Garden. From early 1944 until the end of the war, we were constantly being forced from one safe shelter to another. My family's home and barn, along with all of the contents of both, were destroyed. By 1950, my parents felt that immigration to Canada was the only way to give them and four children a better future, so the following winter we crossed the Atlantic Ocean on the converted troop ship, S.S. Volendam—pulling into Halifax harbour, Feb 22, 1951, two days before my ninth birthday, with 1431 future Canadians on board.

Quebec was our first home, where I started school in grade one learning French. That summer we moved to Ontario and I was enrolled in grade one again, learning in English this time. By the time I reached Grade 8, and was expelled by the head nun (principal) for smoking in the boys' washroom (not guilty), I'd had enough of formal education and was sure that I could make my way through life with no more of it. I worked at odd jobs, mainly cottage renovations, until the next September when I returned to school again at a one room schoolhouse close to the family farm. It was an awkward situation for me, as the next oldest student to me was in grade 5 and the teacher was fresh from teachers college on her first assignment. I attended off and on, but in spite of my parents insisting I needed a



Bill (front row at left) and family leaving Holland

good education if I wanted to make some thing of myself, I said goodbye to my classmates on Feb. 23, 1958—the day before my sixteenth birthday.

That spring I worked for 90 cents per hour at the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests reforestation nursery, harvesting and tending seedling pine trees. By summer I was able to buy my first car with my own money. I paid \$100.00 for a 49 Ford and I could not have been happier. When the tree nursery job was finished, I drifted from one temporary job to another until the fall of 1958 when I found what I thought was going to be steady employment.

At that time, Canada was sliding deeper into a period of economic decline - times were tough and jobs were hard to find. The unemployment numbers kept going up, threatening to break old records. The Canadian Government scrapped the Avro Arrow jet fighter project causing the A.V. Rowe Corp. to put 14,000 Ontario workers to the street in one day. The new housing market, which had been booming, dried up due to lack of available financing, throwing many people out of work.

My friend Jack Briggs and I had been working in our home town of Barrie, Ontario, for Ross Bloxom who ran a plumbing and roofing business. He had promised to get us into a plumbing apprenticeship, in spite of our lack of high school education, and as gullible teenagers we didn't question why he kept putting off the actual sign-up. All of his business was generated in the construction of new subdivisions and since no new housing was being built in the Barrie area, the week before Victoria Day we were forced to join the ranks of the unemployed.

JB and I spent the next 4 days frantically looking for other work with no success. We pondered our future in the Barrie area, where we both lived with our parents, but our thoughts centered on going somewhere else to try our luck. The lure of adventure, with a final destination unknown, excited us. Gas was selling for 40 cents a gallon, and we didn't have enough money to keep my beat-up old '49 Ford filled and still eat, so we decided to hitchhike instead. Our plan was to leave after the long weekend, but we would not tell our parents in case they tried to stop us. We would go to the Highway 400 overpass and head in whatever direction traffic was heaviest.

On the Friday morning, I drove to JB's home intending to keep looking for work. Our prospects were not good and after a long discussion we decided to hit the road that very day. A short note was written to JB's parents telling them not to worry, as we had left town to look for work. He packed a bag with a few clothes, some toiletries and other things he would need to survive. My old car made it back to my house, where I packed some things into a duffel bag and put JB's in the same bag, so we would be able to travel with less gear. My parents were both at work, so I also wrote them a note about our trip.

I left with emotions running wild. Excitement at the prospect of travel to new places, meeting new people and adventure, but also apprehension about leaving my safe, comfortable, happy home for the first time, and the insecurity of it all. My other concern was leaving my parents to worry about my welfare, while I was out of touch with them. I promised myself I would either phone or send them a postcard whenever I could, to keep them updated. I sent postcards, but did not phone for the longest time because I had no money.

Previous arrangements had been made to have a couple of friends meet us at the Highway 400 overpass, where we were intending to start our trip. They would drive my car back to my home and leave it there for my eventual return. As luck would have it, the

old Ford ran out of gas close to Century Auto Wreckers, just before we reached Hwy. 400. We pushed the car into their yard, and in return for \$20, I signed the ownership over to them, and we ended up with a little more badly needed travel money. After a short walk to the highway we met our friends, who now didn't have to worry about my car. As we said our farewells to them, we noticed traffic was much heavier going north, and decided we would follow the pattern.

With so many vehicles heading north on Friday afternoon, at the start of a long weekend, it didn't take long for a car to stop and give us a ride. The driver was alone and told us he was going to Sudbury, which I told him was our destination also. During the ride we learned that the driver lived and worked in Toronto from Monday to Friday and returned north to his wife and children every weekend. He kindly offered to drop us off in an area of Sudbury where we could find cheap accommodations and eats. This part of town turned out to be close to the rail yards, and a sort of hobo jungle was close by. Today the characters that hung out there would be called homeless people, in those days they were referred to as hobos, vagrants, or bums.

After a greasy breakfast, in a dive of a restaurant that was close to the flop house where we had spent the night, we ended up at hobo central, talking with the locals. There we learned the best way to move across the country was to "ride the rails" on a freight train. All sorts of advice was offered to us by these unsavoury gentlemen who inhabited the jungle, and with whom we spent the next week or so. They said the freight makes regular stops every 4 or 5 hours to allow for crew changes and that would allow us to get off and spend some time in the towns along the way if we wanted to.

The most important lessons were centered on basic survival on the road, like eating and sleeping with little or no money. Hostels, churches, restaurants and other means, such as hand outs at private homes, were suggested as food sources. Bakeries, and behind grocery stores, were put forth as other ideas. If all else failed, the larger towns usually had labour centres where a job for a few days might be found. Not all the ideas they gave us were legal. We did work at some day jobs while in Sudbury, to replenish our depleting cash supply.

When the time came for us to move on to our next destination, J.B. and I had less than \$30 between us and a few staples for food. We decided to travel alone because we didn't trust most of the men we had been in contact with in Sudbury. We climbed into a boxcar with an open door, after we had watched the train being assembled for its trip north and west, and after the railroad police had tried unsuccessfully to close the door on their final inspection. The one thing all our fellow travelers had imprinted on our minds was to stay away from the rail police, or as they referred to them, "the railroad bulls," and don't let them catch us if we wanted to continue on our journey instead of going to a jail cell.

On that first day of rail travel we enjoyed the scenery out of the open door during the daylight hours. When night came we were in darkness that seemed so thick you could cut it with a knife. We of course had not thought to bring a flashlight with us. Sleeping on the bare floor of a bouncing, moving boxcar with a duffel bag for a pillow proved almost impossible. The train was noisy, too, screeching and clanking as it went up and down hills and around sharp bends.

Both of us did manage a little sleep, after a long time. Then we were suddenly awakened as the train braked hard and eventually came to a stop, only to start up again



The inside of a boxcar

and slowly proceed forward. Darkness engulfed us, but we sensed we must be pulling into a siding when we felt a sharp turning sensation. Originally, we had thought we would spend a little time in some of the towns along the track, if and when the train made a stop. There were no signs of civilization or lights to be seen out of our door, so we sat and waited. A distant train whistle broke the stillness of the night, followed quickly by the sound of a train approaching from the opposite direction, roaring past us and on toward the east. On impulse we decided that this was an opportunity for us to get off and spend a little time in the town we knew would be close by, maybe even just on the blind side of our boxcar. As soon as we hit the ground the freight started to pull out of the siding. We waited for it to leave and give us a clear view of the other side of the track. When finally we had an

unobstructed view up, down, and across the tracks, we saw nothing but darkness.

As sunrise finally replaced night, and birds started to sing as they greeted the new day, we realized that this was the middle of nowhere. No town or any sign of civilization could be seen or heard. How long would we have to stay in this God forsaken place until we were finally able to continue our trip? The only living things we saw during the two and a half days we were there were beavers, a few moose, squirrels, and billions of flying insects that were determined to eat us alive day and night. Our lack of forward thinking, of course, meant we had no bug repellent with us. But food was the main concern, as all we had with us was a loaf of bread, 6 cans of sardines, 2 cans of pork and beans, a package of tobacco between us, and matches and cigarette papers. Our water supply was the lake we found, where the town we were looking for ought to have been. Before the next train pulled into the siding we had run out of food and, to make matters worse, we had run out of tobacco.

Our time of isolation from the world finally came to an end, when a freight train pulled into the siding to let another train pass in the opposite direction. We left our open air camping and started on our rail ride into Fort William-Port Arthur, which is now called Thunder Bay. We sent our folks post cards from there, to let them know where we were and that all was well. The fact we were in a large city sure made it easier for us to stock up, and, after four or five days, we prepared to leave again.

As my buddy JB and I continued west on the freight trains, our final stop before Winnipeg was in Kenora, Ontario. It was a sleepy little town that did not seem to hold much promise for replenishing our exhausted travel funds. We arrived there during a sweltering mid-June heat wave - two young, ragged, dirty, and hungry travelers, a thousand miles from home. Since our last layover we had been joined in the boxcar by a like-minded, more experienced traveler, probably 25 years of age. Like us, Mike was traveling west to find work and new adventure, as there had been little of either where we came from.

The three of us created much attention, curiosity, and suspicion from the local citizens as we made our way into the business area of Kenora. We were soon stopped by two of the local police, who, after much questioning, realized we were determined to

leave town as soon as possible. They assisted us in finding a shelter for a few days and nourishment for our empty bellies. As seventeen year olds, JB and I had hearty appetites that had not been satisfied lately. Our usual means of survival, since leaving our homes in Barrie four weeks earlier, had been working casual jobs (which paid cash at the end of each day), and staying in a shelter, hostel, or cheap rooming house till we were ready to move on. At times we resorted to asking for handouts at various denomination churches and elsewhere, and most often we were looked after, as we were not the only people riding the rails during that period of time. The generosity of others saw us through a few lean and hungry periods before arriving in Winnipeg, which as it turned out, was to be the final destination of our westward trip.

Mike, our new-found traveling companion, who originally came from the east coast, rejoined us as we left Kenora. He insisted we had to travel on a flat car, or gondola, that has sides on it but no top, and is used to haul sand, gravel, coal, or other loose commodities. That mode of travel, he said, would allow us to jump from the moving train before it crossed the Red River and entered the Winnipeg rail yards. He assured us that going into the yards would result in us being detained by the railroad police, who had a zero tolerance policy for trespassing into their yard. We would surely be turned over to the Winnipeg police force, which would arrest us as trespassing vagrants and put us into their jail to await a trial.

The gondola car we climbed into was empty, and we departed from Kenora without further incident. However, as the train picked up speed on its way west, we were engulfed in a vicious dust storm. The gondola floor was covered with three or four inches of dirt, and we were deluged with dust and sand that swirled around like a dry tornado. It got into the eyes, noses, and mouths as though we were eating it. After what seemed like days, but was actually only a distance of about one hundred and fifty miles, Mike told us we were approaching the Winnipeg rail yard and it was time to prepare to depart our dirty conveyance.

Mike traveled with all his worldly possessions in what appeared to be an army surplus overnight bag, which he held as he gave us instructions on getting off a moving train.

“When the time is right,” he said, “you have to start down the ladder with your bag on your shoulder. You then throw the bag down and, with your back foot, step down and run in the same direction as the train is moving.”

“Why do we have to start off with the back foot when it seems easier to start with the other one,” I asked.

“Because it forces you to move away from the train instead of under it,” he replied.

When the time was right, Mike and I climbed over the side, he on the front ladder and me on the rear. I carried all of JB’s and my belongings in a canvas duffle bag, with a handle on top that also served as the closure for the bag. We watched the expert throw his bag from his shoulder, followed by a leap forward. He had no problem getting off. The train had slowed considerably by this time because of the crossing and the upcoming rail yard.



I promptly followed his example and tossed my bag, then jumped after it. When I looked up I saw JB starting down the ladder. Everything seemed to be going as it should, until the train blew its whistle with a frightening noise that froze JB halfway down the ladder. The highway was approaching and the jump had to be made right away, before it was too late. I shouted at him to act quickly, as his window of opportunity was disappearing fast. He did not move and the train crossed the highway. Realizing he would be in serious trouble if he went into the rail yard, finally, JB made his jump. But because he was still scared, he held his body stiff when he landed, causing many cuts to his back and buttocks area and tearing his shirt and pants.

The three of us re-grouped and found a gas station, where we cleaned ourselves up as best we could. We discussed our next course of action. We had arrived at our chosen destination after nearly a month underway. The heat wave we had experienced in Kenora was still with us and you could literally fry eggs on the sidewalk. We three drifters decided to head for the Salvation Army men's hostel on Lombard Street in downtown Winnipeg, where our immediate needs might be filled: namely a shower, food, and a bed.

We must have been quite a sight as we walked from the outskirts into the city—sweating from the heat and with dust and dirt from the train ride streaking our bodies. JB looked as if he had suffered a beating, with his torn clothing and bleeding arms, back, and legs. We were relieved to finally arrive at the Salvation Army hostel, and be taken in by them. While I cleaned up, JB had his wounds looked after, and a change of clothing was provided for him. We rested until supper time, and we sure enjoyed the lovely meal, served in a sort of army style mess hall. Our belongings were secured in a locker and we were shown to a big dormitory, where twenty-five to thirty men ended up sleeping for the night.

Next morning, after an early breakfast, we went to the hiring hall at the hostel where we had been told employers came to look for workers. Mostly it was day labour, with pay at the end of each day. JB and I worked a few days for a gentleman who was moving his warehouse to a new location and needed people like us with strong backs and weak minds, willing to put in ten hour days.

The morning of our third day in Winnipeg, JB went to work at a steel recycling mill, in Selkirk, on the outskirts of Winnipeg. The man who hired him said he needed a person for steady work, but he also needed to be experienced working in high heat. JB had previously worked tending the asphalt heater for a roofing contractor, so he was hired and driven to his new job, where he would be offered help to find a place to stay close to work. The kind folks at the Salvation Army also gave him some money to cover food for a few days. That morning, we made plans to keep in touch, through the Salvation Army, when we were both a little more established. Little did I know, that, when I said goodbye to him, it would be forever.

Two days passed, during which time I was employed by a house painter who had a rush job and needed someone to do the rough work. I was well qualified for the job. Other odd jobs came and went for a few weeks, with nothing permanent being found. I was preparing to move to a local boarding house because the hostel needed my bed for newcomers.

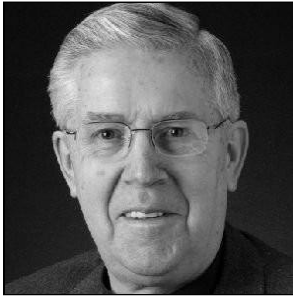
Then came the fateful day, when the owner of a carnival named STRANGAR SHOWS, was looking for someone with a chauffeur's license. He said they offered full

time employment, with lots of travel, and needed someone who could drive big trucks, put up and take down the carnival rides, and operate them when the rides were open. I became a “carnie” but still living like a hobo, traveling around Eastern Manitoba and North-western Ontario, doing the town fair circuit.

Upon my return to Winnipeg about 3 months later, I attempted to contact J.B. through the Salvation Army hostel, as we had agreed we would before parting company. The 2 postcards I had sent him were still waiting to be picked up, and they had no messages from him. I went to Selkirk a number of times and watched the plant gates at shift change time but did not see him. The plant office refused to discuss his employment, or lack thereof, with me. After my return to Barrie in mid-December that year, I got in touch with his family. They had not heard from him since he left home and to date he is still missing. Over the past 50 years I have had occasion to travel to Winnipeg a number of times and I tried to find him without success. This has been one of the mysteries of my life. What ever happened to my friend JACK BRIGGS?

In looking back and reflecting on my travels on the “iron road” I now consider it part of my education, taking advantage of, and learning from, real life experiences that would eventually serve me well.

To quote the immortal words of Mark Twain, “*I have never let my schooling interfere with my education.*”



Bill Van Gaal was born in the Netherlands in Feb. 1942 and immigrated to Canada with his family in Feb. 1951, settling first in Quebec. That July they moved to the Barrie Ont. area where he was raised. Bill dropped out of school in grade 8 the day before his 16th birthday.

After a period of travel and adventure and many jobs he started working at the Ford Motor Co. in Oakville where he was employed for 40 years. For 7 years he worked on the assembly line taking an interest in the workings of the union, Local 707 UAW. He ran for the position of Union Steward and was elected to that position for 12 years. Always looking for new challenges he ran for and was elected Vice President for 6 years and the next 12 as Local Union President. About this time retirement was looming and he decided not to run in the next election. After a short period of time as a driver in the shipping department he was appointed as a Union Program Co-ordinator for the next 3 years, retiring in Oct.2002.

Bill is married to Sandra (45 years) and has 2 children and 4 grandchildren. Bill and Sandra enjoy spending time with their family and grandchildren as well as boating, fishing and some travel. Bill stays active as a Twin Oak Credit Union board member having served over 25 years, with the past 11 as President of the board. Genealogy and memoir writing are also on the agenda for the future.



No Clocks Ran At Homestead Farms and The Creek

Frances Gray Currie

No Clocks Ran at Homestead Farms

Deep in the fertile farm country of Southern Ontario, sprawled along the Seventh Line (now known as Oakville Trafalgar Road) just north of Highway 24, lay the little village of Hillsburgh. Almost at its mid-section, was a long tree-lined lane leading to Homestead Farms. The property had been in the same family for generations. Right at the road was a solid brick house, where the retired patriarch and his wife resided. The son, now working the land, lived in the main house. It was clustered with the farm buildings further down the lane, closer to the main fields of the farm. Both homes were constructed in an era when the builders were craftsmen.

In my youth, in the 1940's, Mungo and Lilian Nodwell, and their family of four girls, lived in the main farm house. Mung had a laid back nature. He loved to have people around. Lilian was an exotic plant for a small farming community. She was an artist and an intellectual, and the women of the village didn't know quite what to make of her. Lilian had been born in China, to missionary parents. She arrived in Hillsburgh from Toronto, as a friend of Mung's brother, and stayed to marry Mung. The couple became like the pied pipers of Hillsburgh that all the children loved to follow. Their second oldest girl, called Patsy, or Pat, became my best friend. I spent every moment I could at Homestead Farms. It was a magical place.

Lilian was usually the first person I'd see, as I cut across the field to the laneway. Sometimes, she would be coming from the garden, or out the milk house door, or the back door of the house, or on her way out the back lane. She was a gentle person with an enormous enthusiasm for life, who always made you feel she was really glad to see you.

Maple syrup time was one of my favourite memories. The maple sugar bush was located in the far right corner of the farm. There was a bit of a shack, in the middle of the bush, that housed the evaporating pans and the storage tank. That was Mung's home, most nights, once they started to boil down the sap. On the weekends, Lilian would bring eggs and bread to the bush and the village kids were always welcome. The eggs were dropped into the boiling sap and when they were hard-boiled, hauled out with a ladle and set in a snow bank to cool. Presto, breakfast of eggs, bread and syrup — yum! Lilian did the final boil down of the sap on the stove in the house. As a special treat, sometimes she had a taffy pull. Other times she drizzled the hot syrup over Newport fluffs and rolled them into balls.

One year, the field in front of the bush had been plowed up the previous fall, after the harvest of potatoes had been picked. My girlfriend Pat had strict instructions to go around that field, not through it. I went home with Pat after school one day, to see how the sap was running. Going around the field looked like such a long way, so we decided we would just cut through. It was a gorgeous sunny spring day and the footing was a little muddy, but on we went. Half-way across the field we got in trouble. Our boots started sinking deeper and deeper into the mud, until we were completely stuck. Now we knew why we weren't to cross there. Pat's Dad saw our plight from the bush and had to come and carry us out of the field.

At the far left corner of the farm was a pine grove. Mushrooms and puffballs, which grew in profusion in the pine needles, were one of Lilian's passions. She had a vast knowledge of plants and fungi. We had lessons on which ones were edible and she would cook them up for us to taste. We were also taught conservation. If it couldn't be used up, it wasn't taken.

Just outside the pine grove was a lovely meeting place, with rocks and a bit of a swale hole. We spent many Sunday afternoons there. Lilian always had a campfire going; boiling water in an old tin honey pail from Gray's Apriaries, and adding coffee grounds. The coffee was served with evaporated milk right out of the can and all ages drank it. Lilian would wander back and forth, sketching here and there, or looking closely at some plant. Mung would be lying back on the grass having a bit of a snooze. Kids would just be roaming. Time stood still.

Wintry Sundays found us in the great room at Homestead Farms. It had a massive harvest plank table across one end, which would seat 10 to 12 people. There was a huge stone fireplace, with burning logs, along another wall and tall, almost floor-to-ceiling windows. The room was the heart and soul of the farm.

Lilian marched to a different drum than other housewives in the small farming community. For her, life held many fascinating things to explore and time was short. She saw no reason to set up housekeeping standards. When something needed to be done, it got done. When it wasn't necessary, it could wait. I don't ever remember seeing a clock in the house. But I do recall getting into trouble so many times as a child, because I was late coming home from Homestead Farms.

Lilian was always quietly on the move. She would wander into the room and hesitantly suggest that maybe a card game would be a good idea, and soon a table would be set up. Mung would sit in the corner just watching it all. Later she would slip back in and wonder if people were getting hungry — mentioning that she was making a soup and it was almost ready. She was an amazing cook. Dishes were going to be needed for the

soup, so some of us would volunteer to wash and dry dishes. A brigade would be set up and soon the steaming soup was dished up.

Homestead Farms was a mixed farming operation and Mung never minded village kids tagging along when his children were helping with the chores. Back then, horses were still used for drawing most of the machinery. Cows were milked by hand and the liquid stored in milk cans to be picked up daily by the local dairy. Food for the cows was grown on the farm as much as possible. Extra money could be made with a couple of fields of potatoes. We took a week off from public school in the fall, to earn money picking potatoes — a cheap but not very efficient way to get the potatoes picked. Pat's older sister had to keep us organized in the field and also scout out Lilian to get food going when lunch time was coming up. Hens were kept in the hen houses and the eggs sold locally. The hen houses made wonderful play houses when they weren't occupied by laying hens.

We threw stones on the horse-drawn stone boat when the family were removing rocks from a ploughed field. Many an hour, we played on the huge boulders that their ancestors had heaved from the ground and lined up as fences on the farm laneways. We watched them bring the hay into the barn with horse drawn wagons. That was an exciting time, getting the horses to back up a load of hay on the ramp to the top floor of the barn. Then at the end of the day we were allowed to jump from the beams in the barn into the fresh cut hay. I had my first ride on a horse at Homestead Farms — if you could call it a ride. The horse headed for a fence at a gallop and I jumped off, just before it sailed over the fence. I've always regretted that I didn't have the courage to stay on. It would have been a wonderful sensation, flying over that fence.

Parties at Homestead Farms were given on a grand scale. The whole community was invited and Mung was in his glory. It was an awe-inspiring sight. There were four huge bedrooms, plus the master suite, a room called the library and a front parlour, all filled with card tables. One bedroom would have people playing bridge, another one was devoted to euchre and on it went. The house was packed and kids were everywhere. Lilian organized the food, which usually came up from the basement because the kitchen was too small. One of the desserts would be Lilian's famous elderberry pie. All her pies were made in huge rectangular roasting pans. They had no bottom crusts, just humongous amounts of fruit and a delicious flaky crust on top. They were cut into square pieces and served with an egg flipper.

The hospitality and magic carried on throughout the years. They had a party for my husband and me when we got married. Our children played at Homestead Farms when they visited my parents. The final big party was a special one for children. Mung had died of cancer. Lilian was in her eighties. She decided that the flocked wallpaper on the staircase walls going up to the landing and bedrooms, should be removed. When the plain white plaster was exposed, she invited all the children of Hillsburgh to come and do drawings. She provided coloured chalks and let them draw whatever they wanted. When they were finished, they signed their artwork and Lilian invited the whole town to come and see the art exhibition.

In 2005, there was a reunion of kids that went to the little two-room Hillsburgh School, in the 1940's. Not surprisingly, the common thread throughout that day was memories of Homestead Farms and Mung and Lilian Nodwell. What a legacy!

The Creek

The rush of water roaring down the creek from the melting snow runoff was always our first sign of spring. I was brought up alongside the creek, as it was always called. There was a United Church between our house and the road, but they didn't have any land, except for the building, so our property went down to the creek edge behind the church. It was a fast flowing, cold water, speckled trout stream. I never found a spot that was over my knees in depth and the width was just a bit wider than a kid could jump.

Hillsburgh was a very small village. It was peopled by retired farmers, the business community, and a few day labourers. My childhood was in some ways a very solitary one. There were only 50 children in the whole two room school and my grade one class had seven of us—four girls and three boys.

I spent a lot of time very happily on my own. The creek was one of my favourite places and it was at its best in spring time. The first flowers of spring were the marsh marigolds. I'd pick bouquets for my Mom. They grew in the little eddies, along with what I called pipe sticks. These were tall stocks all made up of segmented bits that pulled apart. It was fun to make necklaces joining the segments together.

Of course usually I was right in the stream, trying to catch some tadpoles or minnows, as I continued on in my meanderings—jumping from rock to rock in the shallow parts and sliding off slimy rocks with sharp edges in the deeper sections, and scrambling up the banks in the murky areas. Later on in the season, I had a friend who helped me catch a few frogs. He would kill them and we would take the legs to one of the ladies in town who would pan fry them for us—delicious. But most of the time I was just by myself, following the creek up through the fields. On one of my early explores I discovered a wild strawberry patch along the creek in a sunny open area. I had a wonderful feast on plump tiny berries. Every year I had to check out the patch.

There came a point when the creek traveled into very wild and overgrown vegetation and that was the signal for me to turn around and head back for home. I left that wild section for my grandfather, who was an avid fisherman. At one time, a family member owned the farm on the next concession and when they sold the farm, Grandpa Gray was given the rights to keep fishing the creek through that property. On a Saturday he would be out at day break fishing down the creek, landing back at my place. He would stop in to tell me there was going to be speckled trout for breakfast.

Our family had other strong ties to that creek. It was the only source of water when there was a fire. Hillsburgh had a volunteer fire department. Its fire fighting equipment was a water tank on two big steel-rimmed wheels with a wooden shaft. I presume if the fire was a distance away they would hitch it onto a horse, but in my memories, men just ran dragging the water tank. It was like using a watering can. Of course, it had to be refilled and it was filled from the creek at the bridge outside our house. The creek was never deep enough to fill it quickly, so out would come the shovels and Mom's rinsing washtub. Men would dig down in the creek bed and sink the tub. No building was ever saved but they at least were able to keep the fire from spreading.

The creek brought us sadness too. My tiny three-year-old cousin, Joanie

Gray, strayed from home one wintry day and somehow got down on the ice by the bridge, and then slipped and slid into the open water under the bridge. I can still see the scene in the office of our home when they brought her up out of the creek—the ebb and flow of life.



***Fran Currie** was born in 1935 in the village of Hillsburgh in Ontario. She is the proud Mom of three children and grandmother to four fine grandsons. Since retiring from the accounting field, her passion is her flower beds, friends, and reading.*



Building a New Life

Christine Morton

When I walked through the door of the small terrace house, I gasped in amazement—electric light! We actually had electric light! Upstairs there was another surprise—a bathroom! No more going outside to a toilet shared with other families. Best of all, there was a real bathtub. I imagined myself soaking in warm bubbles like the film stars in the movies. This was our new home. When Dad came home at the end of the war, early in 1946, he vowed we would move out of Glasgow and now here we were, six months later, at number 7 Mansionhouse Drive, in the village of Carmyle in Lanarkshire. I knew I would miss the friends I had shared good times and bad times with, during the war years, but I looked forward to making new friends and, most of all, living in a house with lots of room. No more sleeping four in a bed.

My joy was short-lived, however. Within months of moving in, we were asked to take in a young family who had been bombed out and were on a waiting list for one of the new “pre-fab” houses. Mum and Dad agreed, of course. After all, we had been lucky during the bombing; not one building in our street was bombed.

So, Jean and Peter Laurie and their baby son moved in. Soon after that, my mother’s youngest brother, John, came to stay too. He must have been about 20 years old, as he had just completed 2 years in the army. The house was filling up fast and we were not finished yet. Alec, the new village police constable, moved in. He must have been about 22 years old and had just returned from serving in Cyprus. Now the house was bursting at the seams. The Lauries had the back bedroom. Mum, Dad, my baby sister (who had arrived in January, 1947) and I were in the front bedroom. Uncle John had the tiny box room and Alec slept on the sofa bed, downstairs in the sitting room. It certainly did not feel like a roomy house now, but at least I did have my own bed. It was only an army cot and, since there were not enough blankets to go round, I kept warm under Dad’s big overcoat. I still remember feeling the weight of it and how cosy and safe I felt in that little bed.

We all lived quite happily together, and as the years rolled by, many changes took place: the Lauries finally got their little house, Uncle John found a job in Glasgow and moved out, Alec met the love of his life and got married, and Mum's little sister, Cissie, moved in and stayed for a couple of years.

At 13, I was in Grammar School and loved it. I had always enjoyed school and now, to my surprise, I found I was good at sports, winning the Junior Championship twice. Our school had very strict rules. The tall iron gates were locked when the bell rang for morning classes and stayed locked 'til classes were over for the day. It was forbidden to leave the school grounds during the school day. In our first year, we obeyed these rules to the letter. However, in our second year, we were brave enough to plan escapes in our lunch hour. Many times we scaled the 8-foot iron railings, tearing the hems of our gym tunics, and making our way to the nearest café to drink lemonade and talk to boys from a neighbouring school. It was all very exciting, and, amazingly, we were never caught.

I seemed to have a way with small children too and when my little cousins came to visit, I was put in charge and we would go on picnics and gather wildflowers. I have memories of long walks with 3 little girls skipping along beside me.

My Dad loved his garden. He grew enormous dahlias and I remember the scent of sweet peas at our back door. We all enjoyed that little patch of land: Mum in a pretty



**Cousins Isabel and Frances,
my little sister Jaqueline,
and me**



Mum and Dad



Me, Jaqueline and Mum

summer dress, Dad in his shorts, and my little sister in a big straw hat—happy days!

In 1953, my friend Grace and I graduated from Uddingston Grammar School. Grace and I had been best friends since we were 8 years old. We had the same sense of fun, the same interests, and supported each other in times of trouble. Growing up together, we had been blissfully unaware of the obvious differences between us. However, now in our early teens, I could no longer ignore them.

Grace's hair was jet black and curly and she had a flawless complexion. She was petite and had curves in all the right places, had a bubbly personality and was full of self-confidence.

My hair was mousy brown and would not hold a curl. My complexion was clear but pale. I was taller than Grace and, so far, no curves had appeared on my slim frame. I was also inclined to be shy.

In short, Grace was a beauty. Sadly, I was not. However, these differences did not spoil our friendship in any way. We did everything together. We listened to records for hours on end, swooning over Frankie Laine and Guy Mitchell. We gave each other “home perms” and practiced putting on our mothers’ make-up. At 15 years old, the highlight of the week was the Saturday night dance at the village Welfare Hall. This was a family affair attended by parents, grandparents, and siblings. This was a good place to learn how to dance and for me to get over some of my shyness.

In 1954, at the age of 16, Grace and I felt we were ready for the “big time,” which was the Saturday night dance at the “Palais de Dance” in Glasgow. This was a big step, as we would have to take the village bus to the next town, then a city bus into Glasgow. Our parents agreed on one condition: we must find 2 more friends to travel with and we must stay together at all times. After some searching, we found 2 girls whose parents agreed under the same rules. We knew Moira and Betty from school days. They were not exactly our type, as they were from upper class families, while Grace and I were definitely working class. They were also inclined to be snobbish, but we would just have to get along with them if we wanted to get to the “Palais.”

Finally, it was the big night. We spent all day doing our hair, choosing what to wear, though we didn’t have much to choose from and, of course, we knew Moira and Betty would have lovely dresses on. When we walked into the dancehall, it took our breath away. It was huge, with a circular dance floor surrounded by tables and chairs, and, at the far end, a raised stage with a Swing Band and even a singer who crooned like Bing Crosby. There must have been about 200 girls and young men, all eager for some excitement and, perhaps, a little romance. The atmosphere was electric and we were quite nervous. What if no one asked us to dance? Of course, I was sure Grace would catch someone’s eye, and Moira and Betty in their gorgeous outfits would surely be asked to dance. As for myself, this could be a disaster, but I was ready to take a chance. I had done the best I could with my appearance. I had a new blouse and had borrowed my mother’s best skirt and her shoes.

As I predicted, Grace was popular. I was asked to dance more times than I expected and I was enjoying myself. Part way through the evening, a tall, handsome boy came walking towards us. Betty had danced with him earlier and gushed about him constantly, so we assumed he was coming to ask her to dance. Suddenly, I felt a hand on my arm. I turned to see “Mr. Wonderful” standing there. I glanced over at Betty and saw her jaw drop. I heard him say, “Would you like to dance?” I couldn’t answer, my mouth had gone dry. I couldn’t get any words out. He smiled, flashing perfect white teeth. “Come on, let’s dance,” he said.

As we danced, thoughts were whirling round in my brain. Why had he picked me? Why not gorgeous Grace or fashionable Moira or Betty? I was convinced that, when the music stopped, he would realize his mistake and that would be the end of the glorious dream I was in. To my amazement, he asked me for the next dance too and, as we glided round the room, I glanced over at my friends. The look of shock on Moira’s and Betty’s faces was priceless. Grace, bless her, winked at me and gave me the “thumbs-up.” What a pal!

Grace met a nice boy that same evening and we all agreed to meet there the next Saturday. We didn't know it then, but that evening was a turning point in our lives. In a few years, the two boys would become our husbands. However, during the years between meeting them and getting married, the four of us would have many adventures together. But that's another story.



Christine Morton was born in 1938 in Glasgow, Scotland. She has 4 children, 9 grandchildren, and 3 great-grandchildren. She was a private secretary for 35 years, and then opened an antique shop when she retired.



The Summer of '81

Theresa Haq

It was late June, 1981. Our kids (Inaam, 10 years and Moiz, 6 years) were out of school, my husband was overworked and needed a break from Massey Ferguson, and I had my accumulated vacation days from work. Our plan was simple: five days in Paris, a week in India, and ten days in Karachi. I had always dreamed of seeing the fabulous scenery for myself, but that is not what I remember most about the trip. There is a different memory, one that will remain with me all my life.

Paris was a breeze. Our hotel was near a subway line and we could get anywhere, without knowing a bit of *lingua franca*, by following maps and information available for tourists. One bit of info we learned by ourselves was that food/drinks cost more if consumed at a table by the courtyard or the sidewalk. We did the usual touristy things—took a lot of pictures of statues, visited famous museums (the Mona Lisa seemed much smaller than I had imagined.) The boys were more impressed with the fact that the guy ahead of us in line to enter the Louvre was wearing jeans with the same "Wranglers" brand tag as they were wearing. Time in Paris went by in the blink of an eye.

Our first stop in India was New Delhi. This was to be our station, while we took side trips to areas with centuries old palaces and forts. Our guide was a courtly gentleman who prefaced his spiel to our party of four with,



**(L-R) Marita, Inaam, Moiz, Muzaffar
Taj Mahal in the background**

“Lady and gentlemen, your attention is solicited....”



Dancing monkeys can do the Samba

We saw yards where elephants were once housed (imagine a stall the size of a one-car garage, with foot-wide stone walls, one for each of 20 elephants for the Rajah's army.) We rode elephants up ancient roadways, watched monkeys and dancing bears, and snakes in baskets swaying to flute music played by their owners.

One morning I looked out the hotel window to see the front gardens awash with men waving flags tied to long bamboo poles.

The “flags,” on closer look, were pieces of cloth not of any particular design or colour but actually plain faded white fabric, about three or four yards long. I watched for awhile, wondering why they were waving the banners to no one in particular, and then it dawned on me. They were drying their “dhoti” — a long piece of cloth tied loosely around the waist and between their legs. Their “pants,” probably washed the night before, were getting dried out enough to wear again.

During one of our walks, at the end of the day, we noticed young and old people sleeping on the street medians and pedestrian lanes—some lying on cardboard, others curled up in small hand carts. I told the kids that some of the babies and young children would have been sold, enslaved and bound to adults who dragged them around, asking

for handouts from tourists who would pity them for their poverty. We also reminded our boys, more than once, to remember the name of our hotel and the room number in case of an emergency, and to beware of strangers.



Shopping for unusual souvenirs

One night we decided to have dinner at our hotel and enjoyed the food so much, we complimented the chef. Moiz especially waxed on his favourite dish, called lamb gosht, made of tender lamb bits with lots of onions, thick sauce of tomatoes, coriander, cloves and other spices. The next time we dined in the same restaurant, Moiz's order was on the house.

On our last day in India, we decided we would shop seriously for handicrafts for souvenirs and presents. Since the third portion of our trip to Pakistan was by air, we had to consider the weight and volume of additional baggage when making purchases. Shop we did,

starting at the end of the main street, where so many stalls were set up they extended onto the sidewalks. One minute we were walking through tinkling wind chimes and, the next, stepping under a row of hanging brassieres in all sizes, or under silken saris in glorious colours swaying in the breeze.

Intricate wood carvings and marble chess sets and ornaments, sold side by side with incense sticks, enticed our curiosity for what was in the next stall. We wandered and wondered, showing each other items we thought would surely be treasured, until we noticed one of us was missing. I thought Moiz was with his father, while he thought Moiz was with me and Inaam.

Have you ever felt your heart was being squeezed and you could not breathe? That is what it was like for me. Hurriedly, we went back to all the stores we had passed through, describing a young boy, so high, so dear and, oh, so lost. At one point I thought of how we had reiterated the danger of being abducted and kept as a beggar. Imagine not finding him and having to board the plane for Pakistan; not seeing him until perhaps ten years later, when we had saved enough to come back, and then meeting a beggar I do not recognize as my own son?

Right at that moment a woman carrying a baby came by, reaching out a begging hand and showing me her baby. "Madam, my baby, please give." I cried all the more and said, "I lost my baby," and slumped against Inaam, my strip of a ten-year-old, who later said my dead weight was very heavy.

Finally, we decided to go back to the hotel and call the police. We could not even discuss what we'd do when our hour of departure came nearer. We would not be able to leave until we found him.

I recalled asking a friend before we left Toronto, "How do you think my in-laws will react to me?"

Whereupon she replied, "Don't worry, Marita. When you get off the plane, just let the kids go down ahead of you. Everything will be fine."

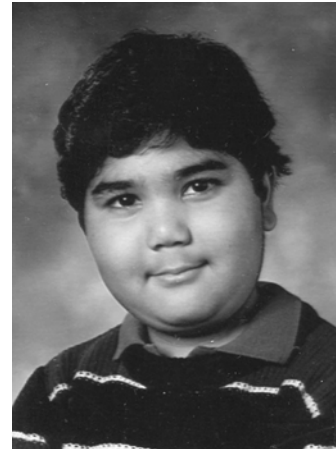
As we walked up the steps to the hotel, we were numb and silent, thinking of what we would say to the police, providing a picture of the missing child, what he was wearing when last seen, how tall and ...

"Guess what? I had my first motorcycle ride." The voice came from about waist-high. It was Moiz!

You can imagine the commotion, the emotional outbursts, and the questions that ensued. It was a long while before we calmed down and Moiz could talk about what had happened. It seemed that after he realized he was separated from us, he saw an official looking gentleman in a uniform, who looked like a policeman.

Not everyone speaks English in India. But being a multi-national family, we had made it a point to speak only English at home, so as not to confuse the children with different mother tongues. Moiz spoke to the policeman, who understood that Moiz was lost.

From the description of the forgotten-named hotel—a lobby that was large, bright, green marble with lots of plants—the officer then said, "Come. I'll give you a ride."



Moiz Haq, the gourmand

And what a ride of emotions it was. I never did get the name of the officer, but somehow I always think my guardian angel had gotten in touch with his guardian angel.

As our bags were gathered in the taxi to take us to the airport, I saw the same woman with the baby across the street. I waved at her, held up Moiz's arm and shouted, "We found him!"

And so we left India for our journey to Pakistan. A reception was held there for us, during which I did not see my husband the whole evening because the ladies were in one part of the hall, while the men were in a different area. But that's another story.



Born in the Philippines, Maria Theresa Mercado immigrated to Canada in 1967 and married Muzaffar Ul Haq, from Pakistan, in 1969. Her husband survived a heart attack in 1982, and Marita is grateful for the ten additional years her family enjoyed with Muzaffar, before he died in 1992. They have two sons, Inaam and Moiz.



A Pioneer's Journey

Peter Hardwicke

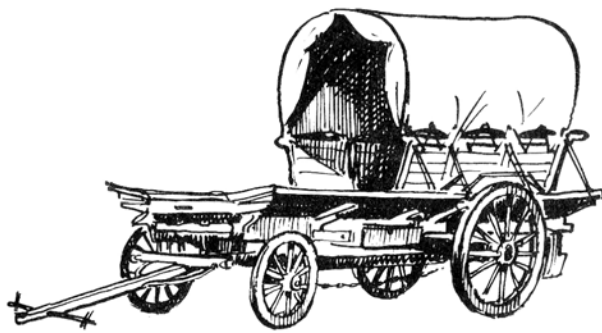
Around the circled ox-wagons, life is beginning to stir. It is an early morning on the African high-veld in the year 1890 and a phenomenon unique to Africa is about to unfold. It is known as the “false dawn” and heralds the arrival of a new day. As the sky lightens the people of the wagon train set about their chores. The women set the fires and start the coffee while the children pack up their belongings. The men move among the oxen and begin the long process of “in-spanning”—collecting the oxen and hitching them to the wagons. Each wagon will use 8 pairs of oxen, known as a full span. Soon all the wagons are ready and the families settle down to enjoy a cup of coffee before starting the day's trek. Around them the birds are welcoming the new day. The oxen stand contentedly chewing and waiting to begin their work. Then the light begins to fade signaling the end of the False Dawn.

Now all is silent. The birds stop their singing and all the animals stand quietly. Even the wind seems to still. The surrounding veld seems to dissolve as the darkness becomes more intense. This is a time of the day when the world seems to hold its breath, as it waits for the new day. The only sound is the low murmuring of the pioneers as they discuss plans for this day.

At last a lark is heard high above them announcing that the real dawn is about to break. Coffee cups are emptied and stowed on the wagons, fires are put out, and everyone prepares for a long day of walking, for there was only room on the wagons for possessions and supplies. As the pioneers take up their positions the silence is shattered by the sharp crack of the drivers' whips and shouts of encouragement as the oxen strain to start the four-ton wagons moving. Slowly the circle is broken as the oxen follow the “voorloepers” (usually young boys who walk in front of the oxen) and the day's trek begins.

Thus starts a day in the life of a pioneer who, in 1890, left Cape Town in South Africa and journeyed to Rhodesia. The journey covered nearly 2000 miles and took four years. My grandmother, Philipina Scheffer, as a little girl of 10, was a member of that

pioneer column. I always loved to hear her talk about the journey, and admired her for the endurance required to *walk* the entire way, but such was the spirit of the pioneer. I say she walked, but when her father wasn't looking she would ride the horses. Because they were going to a new and unsettled country, the pioneers had to take everything they needed with them. This meant extra cattle for pulling and breeding, as well as some chickens, sheep, and horses. The task of herding these animals fell to the children with the column. The pioneer column needed to stop every few days to rest the animals and give them a chance to graze, making progress so slow that they did not reach Fort Salisbury until 1894. In some places it was necessary to clear trees from the roadway so the wagons could continue. The one thing a pioneer could not afford was impatience. It was best to put their watches and calendars away and just take what the country and the weather gave them, for to do otherwise was to court disaster.



Trek wagon of Southern Africa.



American pioneer wagon.

In the early stages, the process of in-spanning was very stressful and time consuming. After a while the oxen learnt their names and their positions within the span. As far as was possible, the drivers always tried to put an ox in the same place. Certain beasts were suitable to lead and others excelled at encouraging their fellow oxen from the rear position. Thus, as the journey progressed, it became necessary only to call the oxen by their names and they would amble up to their positions and wait for the yoke to be lifted, at which time they would walk under it and allow themselves to be in-spanned. The wagon train would then be on the move from sun-up until about noon, at which time, during the heat of the day, it would stop to rest the oxen and to have lunch.

The time that the column stopped varied, as they usually tried to make sure that there was water and grass available for the oxen, which would be out-spanned and allowed to drink and graze. Around 3pm the oxen would be in-spanned again and the trek resumed until nightfall. The wagons would then be circled for the night. By circling the wagons the pioneers reduced the chance of predators carrying off any livestock or even children.

Supper would be cooked, and there would be some entertainment until everyone retired for the night. Some forms of entertainment would be dancing, singing, or playing "jukskei". This was the South African equivalent of horseshoes. The name is derived from the Afrikaans name for the wooden piece (the skei) that was passed through the yoke that rested on the ox's shoulders. There were two of these on each half of the yoke, one on each side of the ox's neck, and a piece of rawhide was attached to them, passing

under the neck. The skeis would be removed from the yoke and pitched like horseshoes towards a target. The closest to the target would win.

Often at this time, some of the men would go hunting to supplement their larders. Some of the meat, usually venison, would be cooked and some made into biltong, which is the Afrikaans equivalent of jerky. Thus preserved, the meat could be given to toddlers who were teething or carried in the pocket and snacked on to ease hunger pains without having to stop. Hunting was not an arduous task, as at that time game was plentiful and not as skittish as it is today.

Often, during the migration season, the wagon train would be held up for 2 or 3 days while herds of animals passed in front of it. There are reports of a single herd of migrating springbok and ostriches taking 3 days to pass a given point.

If the terrain was friendly and the weather fair, the wagon train would travel about six miles in a day. There were, however, many days when these ideal conditions were not there. Incredible hardships had to be endured when rivers had to be crossed or hills climbed. On these days only a mile or two would be made.

The technique for crossing a river, if a shallow ford could not be found, would be to cut down some trees to make a raft and then float the wagons across the river one at a time. Care had to be taken, when swimming the livestock across, that there were no crocodiles in the area. It would often take all day to accomplish this, so that night camp would be set up on the opposite bank from the previous night. During these crossings was just about the only time that the women, with their long dresses, and children were able to ride on the wagons, as the currents usually proved too dangerous for them.

Where steep inclines were encountered, the wagons, which were capable of carrying up to four and a half tons, often proved too heavy for the normal team of oxen to manage. In these circumstances one or two teams would be detached from other wagons and each wagon would be double or triple teamed in order to get to the top of the rise. This meant that each team of oxen would make two or three trips and needed to be rested when all the wagons were finally up. Once again, only a couple of miles would be covered in a day.

A really bad day would follow an overnight rain, when the wagons would be faced with a steep climb up the hill which, the next morning, was like grease. On these days there was nothing to do but wait for the hill to dry. Each wagon was equipped with large wood blocks on the rear wheels. These were the brakes and were operated by a handle attached to a large turn screw. On many downhill slopes, men had to walk behind the wagon ready to apply the brakes at a moment's notice to prevent the wagon from rolling over the oxen pulling it. Sometimes six of the oxen were moved to the back of the wagon, leaving two to steer the wagon while the remaining six held it back, helping the brakes. This also, in the event of a runaway, reduced the number of casualties among the ever precious oxen.



Things did not always go as planned

These pioneers needed to be resourceful, but above all they had to be very patient. Life moved at a set pace and could not be hurried. Animals needed to be well cared for as there were very limited replacements if an ox was injured or killed. One constant danger was from the wild animals that were all around. Many predators saw the oxen, and very often the pioneers themselves, as easy prey and any animal or person who wandered too far from the wagons was in danger of being attacked. Rabies was also prevalent and rabid animals had been known to fearlessly attack the column, even in daylight. A bite by a rabid animal was an automatic death sentence, as there was no cure. Another scourge was the rapid infection of any minor scrape or cut. The pioneer women were usually well versed in herbal cures and adept at doctoring any who got hurt or became ill. Many of their recipes were handed down. Listed below is an example. It is an ointment for clearing infected sores and I always knew it as “Grandmother’s Salve”.

GRANDMOTHER’S SALVE

- 2 Large Tablespoons Resin, fine and sifted
- 1 Large Tablespoon Raw Linseed Oil
- 1 Large Tablespoon Castor Oil
- 1 Large Tablespoon Turpentine
- 1 Small Bottle “Haarlemensis”
- 1 Small Bottle Balsam Copiva
- 1 Small bottle Balsam Sulphurus
- 3 Large Tablespoons Yellow Wax
- 1 Tablespoon Olive Oil

Put resin, linseed oil, castor oil, wax, olive oil and turpentine in an enamel bowl and melt, stirring all the time. Add the bottled ingredients and then bottle quickly.

My mother used to make this, using it on me on many occasions. It was most effective and cleared things up in a couple of days.

Over the four years of the trek some wagons were lost through accidents, or simply fell apart due to the stress of the journey. There were births, deaths, and even a couple of marriages. However, enough pioneers and supplies completed the journey to enable them to establish a thriving settler community. My grandmother was 14 when she arrived in what was then Fort Salisbury and is today Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe.

Grandmother seldom talked about the trek from South Africa, but often told stories from her life on the farm. I always remember her telling me how she cheated death twice. “The first time,” she used to say, “was the day that the wild dogs chased a large buck into the farm yard. I tried to chase it off by shouting at it, but it charged me. As I stepped back, I tripped on the hem of my dress and fell backwards. Fortunately the buck jumped over me and ran off.” She also told of how, when she was 8 months



Philipina at age 89

pregnant with twins, she had to ride 60 miles in a cart during the rainy season when the roads were just water and mud, and all the rivers full. This was a week before the twins were born, and then, when they were 10 days old, she made the return journey.

The second time Grandmother cheated death was in 1940 when she was in the accident that killed her husband. He was crushed, while she escaped with her arm broken in five places. In spite of this injury, she was able to do prize winning fine needlework well into her old age. It was her eyesight, and not her arm, that finally forced her to give this up.

My grandfather, Daniel Ayliff Tarr, was born near Grahamstown, South Africa, in 1862. He became a Transport Driver and owned 2 ox-wagons with which he used to transport goods from the railhead to the early settlements. In 1890, he crossed the Limpopo River from South Africa into Rhodesia for the first time, and fell in love with the country. He determined to settle there and take up farming. In order to accumulate a nest egg he continued to transport goods between Kimberly and the newly established Fort Salisbury.

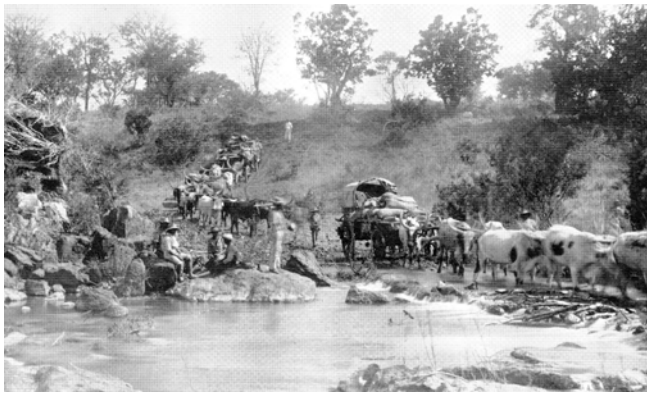
On one of these journeys, in 1894, he fell in with a column of settlers going to Rhodesia. Among the settlers in the column was an attractive 14 year old, to whom my grandfather took a particular liking. By the time the column reached Fort Salisbury a year later, they had become firm friends. Soon after this, grandfather lost all his oxen to rinderpest (this is a type of fever which spread to Southern Africa from Europe and North Africa in the late 19th century and wiped out about eighty-five percent of the cattle. It was spread from food sources and, as the settlers discovered, buried animals remained a source of infection for many months.) When Cecil Rhodes, who was the driving force in the settlement of Rhodesia and after whom the country was named, heard of this he immediately wrote a cheque, and instructed my grandfather to buy more oxen and continue to transport goods to the new settlement. At this time the wagons were the only transport capable of moving supplies from the railhead to the settlements and mines of the newly founded colony. While I was never able to talk to my grandfather about his adventures while transport driving, I was able to find some stories that will illustrate the tribulations that these intrepid pioneers faced.

During the rainy season many areas became waterlogged bogs of greasy black mud. Wagons easily became stuck in these, often sinking up to their axels in the mud. On one occasion a wagon, loaded with about three tons of general supplies for a settlement, became stuck, sinking to its axels, with the oxen up to their bellies in the mud. There was no hope of moving the wagon as the team could find no traction. There was a mine close by—less than a day's ride. The driver set off and borrowed some corrugated iron sheeting from the mine. Returning to his wagon he unloaded it and, using the sheets as skids, moved the merchandise to higher ground. With the wagon empty, he attached a long chain to it, enabling the oxen to stand on the firmer ground and pull the wagon out of the mud. After this was accomplished the wagon was reloaded and the oxen rested for a day, while he returned the corrugated iron sheets to the mine. The result of this exercise is that only half a mile of progress was made in five days but the precious cargo was saved!

Another story also involved a wagon stuck in the mud. On this occasion the cargo was a four-ton boiler destined for a local mine. Unloading the wagon was out of the question, so additional oxen were borrowed from other wagons in the convoy and added to the span. Eventually there were five complete spans, totaling 80 oxen, attached and

they were finally able to pull the wagon out. Unfortunately it slid from under the boiler, leaving it sinking into the mud. The boiler was abandoned and probably still lies there.

I should like to include, here, a brief description of the whips carried by the transport drivers. They were usually about thirty feet in length and were attached to a



A typical scene during the days of ox wagon transportation

fifteen foot pole. With this whip, the driver was able to reach the lead oxen. Good drivers seldom, if ever, struck their oxen. The whip was used to crack above the oxen to encourage them, or beside them to turn the lead pair. I used to practice with these whips when I was a young lad on the farm and admired the skill of the drivers in being able to “flick a fly off the ear of the leading ox without touching him.”

In 1896, Daniel Ayliffe Tarr was 34 and engaged to 16 year old

Philipina Sheffer. He was bringing 2 wagons loaded with much need supplies to Salisbury, on what was to be his last trip, when he was involved in an accident that, while it cost him his wagons, oxen, and goods, almost certainly saved his life.

It had been raining and the ground was very slippery. On quite a few occasions he needed to double span his wagons in order to negotiate a hill. On one occasion he was going downhill and walking behind the wagon in order to slow it with the brakes when one of the wooden blocks broke and the wagon careened forward, killing many of the oxen and scattering its load as it broke up. The other people accompanying him helped to gather the scattered goods and put them on the broken wagon. My grandfather covered them with a tarp and, instructed his driver and voorloeper to guard them, intending to deliver his remaining wagon load to Salisbury and then return for them.

During an overnight stop with his remaining wagon, about 40 miles from Salisbury, he became very restless. Finally, surrendering to this restlessness, at about three o'clock in the morning, he in-spanned and gave instructions to his driver to bring the wagon through and then set out to walk the remaining distance alone. Waiting for him in Salisbury was his young fiancée, Philipina Scheffer. They were to be married when he arrived there and he was to give up his transport business and start farming. The goods in his wagon were the nest egg. He arrived in Salisbury the next day, having walked through the night, only to find the city under siege and all the women and children in the jail—this being the safest place for them. He was told that the local Mashona tribe had risen in rebellion. Later he discovered that his decision to leave the wagon had saved his life, as the wagon had been looted and all those with it had been killed.

After he and my grandmother were married, Cecil Rhodes, who had heard of my grandfather's misfortunes, gave them a farm as a wedding present. My grandfather promptly named this farm “Philipsdale” in honour of his new bride. My mother and all of her 12 siblings were born here. My grandparents were married for 46 years and had 13 children. Seven of the children died before reaching adulthood, the oldest being Eileen, who died at age 17. The remaining 6 children all married, producing 17 grandchildren

and 24 great-grandchildren. My grandfather was crushed to death in a car accident in 1940 at age 77, and my grandmother, who was born in 1880 and lived to see her world go from ox-wagons to jumbo jets, died in May 1969, 2 months before Neil Armstrong landed on the moon.



My grandparents at their wedding



**The last picture taken before
grandfather's death**



Born in Southern Rhodesia in 1937. The early part of my life was spent on a farm. I started boarding school in 1947 and continued until I left high school in 1955. After 3 years in the Royal Rhodesian Air Force I left Rhodesia in 1959 and traveled extensively for 15 years, living in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States. In 1974 I married Margaret, who is Canadian and in 1977 we immigrated to Canada. I worked as an Undergraduate Computer Lab Supervisor until my retirement in 2000. I live in Brantford with my wife Margaret. We have a daughter, Karen, who is married and lives with her husband, Dave. We have 2 lovely grandchildren, Gavin and Cate.



Remember When...

Ally Bryant

I grew up in England in the nineteen-fifties, one of a family of five children. Today, that might be considered a large family but in those days, not long after the Second World War, it was quite an average size.

My childhood held many happy memories of family outings in the summer months—varying from sausage sizzles at Hampton Rocks with the grandparents, to blackberry picking followed by a picnic and a game of cricket for all our hard work. Mom used the blackberries to make mouth-watering pies and lots of jams for the winter months ahead. Sometimes we would go to the coast by coach for a day trip or by train to the zoo.



**Grandad and Granny Chapman,
Ally and Mom, Graham, Steve &
Elizabeth at Hampton Rocks**

Every year in the summer, after much scrimping and scraping in the household, Mom and Dad made it possible for an annual week at a boarding house at Swanage, in Dorset. When I say scraping, Dad had three allotments which he planted to keep us in produce all summer long and enough for the winter, too. Mom would can fruit and produce to help reduce the grocery bill.

Most people in those days didn't own a car unless they were quite well off or had a job that required you to travel. Our family didn't fit either category. But unbeknownst to us, Dad had taken driving lessons and bought a Dormobile van that could carry all seven of our family; it even had room for the grandparents. We had always gone on holiday to a boarding house, so when Dad bought

a tent and equipment from the Army and Navy surplus store, there was an adventure awaiting us.

Our first camping trip was to beautiful Cornwall and I can still see the rugged cliffs and the white froth on the surf as the huge waves came crashing onto the beaches. It was quite enthralling to watch as people caught the huge waves and rode their surf boards right up to the beach. On that first trip we also visited some old neighbors that had moved from the city to try their hand at farm life. They had a small holding in Cornwall and it was our first experience with farm animals and rural living. How we used to argue whose turn it was to collect the eggs from the chicken coop. I remember my brothers enticing the old fat pig to come to them and then it would get a shock from the electric fence surrounding its pen!

We camped on our friends' land for a few days, allowing us to visit and get caught up on all their news, as well as go to a small beach in St. Agnes which was not far away. We really had lovely times during that summer, travelling to various places with our yellow Dormobile, but as the summer came to an end so did our trips in the van. It was put away for the winter, as Dad said it would save us money for the following year and since the buses were so handy and regular there was no need of a vehicle. So during the winter months the maps were poured over to see where we would go for our next summer holiday.

One of Dad's dreams was to return to the Scottish highlands, north of Inverness, to find the little butt 'n' ben (small one room house) where he was born. My paternal grandfather had always kept in touch with my grandmother's family in Scotland, even after my Gran had passed away. Correspondence went back and forth saying that our young family was hoping to make it north to see the area where my father had lived until the age of five, and also to meet up with his long lost cousins.

The countdown was on and great preparations were taking place in our small terraced house. We children counted the days until school was out at the end of July. My sister who had started her first job would not be coming with us; she would be staying at Granny's while the rest of our family was away. Finally, the day arrived. We started out early that Saturday morning, having loaded the van the night before. I can always remember our ascent up the winding Lansdown lane. As we turned our heads and viewed the City of Bath, swirls of mist obscured the landscape behind, promising a hot July day ahead. My brothers and I looked at each other wondering if the fully loaded van was going to make it up the steep incline. But the Dormobile was a work horse and kept a steady pace as the miles sped by.

Around us, the scenery slowly changed from farm land to the industrial Midlands. At school, we often talked about the industrial north in geography class, so our eyes were glued to the ever changing landscape; the coal pits, coal slag heaps, chimneys bellowing out acrid, black smoke and the contrasting pottery kilns, covered in white dust from the china clay. For several days we travelled by day and camped at night until, eventually, we reached Northumberland.

It was so good to see the rocky crags and the moorland covered in heather, the rugged outcrops bathed in purple and golden hues. As we got out and stretched our legs, Dad took a picture of us feeding the sheep that wandered the moorland; they certainly weren't timid and came around looking to be fed. As city children we were a little nervous in case they bit us, but the animals behaved and Dad was able to get his photo.

Being fairly high up above sea level, the wind blew in great gusts and the air was intoxicating. After a day in the hills, we descended to the Scottish lowlands and camped near a town called Galashiels.



Graham, Ally, Mom, Steve & Dave feeding the sheep on the Scottish border

The next day's journey took us into Scotland's heartland. The route took us through Glencoe where we parked and had a picnic lunch. Mom and I set out the picnic things and a rug for us all to sit on. We had bought a few groceries on the way, and mom started cutting the bread rolls while I buttered and filled them. While we were busy doing this, Dad and the boys

got out some small fishing rods. My brother came running to us to get a piece of cheese which Dad proceeded to put on the hook. This done, he launched the line into the wee burn and it didn't seem like a minute had gone by before they were shouting, hooting, as Dad reeled in a wriggly trout. The fish was only small so they had to release it. Before long they were all pulling them out, but the moment Mom called "lunch is ready," that was the end of their fun.

One place we camped at overnight was called Spean Bridge—with its Great War memorial to the Commandoes, looking North, South, East, and West. It commemorates the lives of soldiers who trained there, before being shipped overseas in the Second World War. I remember Dad was getting a bit antsy that day, as we hadn't found anywhere to camp. When we came over a humped back bridge, with a sign in the hedge that read 'Overnight Camping,' Dad said to Mom, "It doesn't look like much but what option do we have? It is getting late".



Dad, Steve, Graham, Ally & Dave

"We don't want to put the tent up in the dark," replied Mom. "We'll wait in the van while you enquire."

Dad came back and gave Mom the details - running water and a flush toilet were part of the facilities! And we could even buy eggs. We pitched the tent and then Dad and the boys went off to find water. To Dad's surprise it was the burn (stream), but it was crystal clear. Then my brothers investigated the toilet, which happened to be across the road. It was a flush toilet all right, an outhouse hung over the burn! The boys killed themselves laughing. They explained, we get drinking water from one side of the road, then

the water flows under the bridge to the other side of the road where the outhouse is situated, and it flushes everything away. It was talked about for quite awhile how inventive the farmer had been.

As we headed north, we stopped at various places for a picnic or to camp, passing Loch Ness, but we didn't see the Loch Ness Monster. Then at one point Dad said we were nearly at Inverness, which wasn't far from our destination. We stopped off to visit a cousin in Dingwall for coffee and by mid-afternoon we arrived at our little place called Saltburn, just further on from Invergordon. This was the place where my grandmother's cousin lived. We loved it there; Davey had a huge garden overlooking the Firth and Black Isle.

While Mom, Dad, my youngest brother and I visited with the folks, my other brothers were allowed across the road to the beach to skip rocks. We had planned to go a few more miles north to a camp site that Dad had on his A.A. Campsite Packet, but Davey and Lena weren't eager to give up their long lost relatives. So Davey said we could put the tent up in his big back garden and invited us in to cook our meals. Lena was an invalid and though she was a much larger woman than my grandmother, her facial features made you almost think they were sisters. Dad remembered meeting Lena when he had visited as a small boy.

Davey was quite glad to hand over the cooking to Mom. The next morning Dad's other cousins arrived with their children Helen, John and Jessie and it wasn't long before the boys went over to the beach, while Helen and I went for a long walk along the road. That evening I was invited to stay with Helen, at the farm where her father was head herdsman of a very large herd of Friesian cows. The next morning I was taken for a tour around the farm, it was so much bigger than the one in Cornwall. We went into the byre while they were finishing the milking. John, Helen's younger brother would call the cats and kittens, then go up to the cows and squirt milk from the udders into a tin dish, which he set down for the cats to lap up. After the men had finished milking, they headed to their houses for a late breakfast, while we children headed for the hay loft, having great fun swinging from a rope and landing in the hay. When my parents and brothers arrived at the farm, the boys joined us until we were all called for lunch. Dad came to fetch us, only to find us scrabbling around like a load of monkeys. We'd never had so much fun and freedom. It was quite different from living in the city.

We went on several different jaunts around the area, ending up, as you may guess, at Hill of Fern and the wee butt 'n' ben where Dad had been born and lived for the formative years of his life. It was quite a trip for Dad, meeting lots of people he only vaguely remembered. The boys enjoyed the beach, and when the tide went out they



Our family with the Scottish cousins at Davey House at Saltburn, Ross-shire.

B/Row: Helen, Graham, Steve, Jessie, John, Dave, John, Ally

F/Row: Mom, Jack, Chrissie, Davey

hunted for crabs, and small transparent jelly fish with pink tentacles that died when out of the water for too long. However, I think the thing they enjoyed most was chasing the drunken seagulls, which had got intoxicated from the distillery outlet pipe that flowed into the Firth. The birds floated about in the water quite easily, but once the tide was out, staggered around on the beach as if they had two left feet and couldn't take flight if they tried! That made them fair game for the boys to have a bit of fun.

As usual, when you're enjoying yourself, time slips away and it was soon time to start our long trek home. As the journey took two or three days, Dad and Mom made sure we had plenty of breaks and stopped to see many things of interest. At Pitlochry we watched the salmon swimming and jumping at the fish ladder. Further on we crossed the mighty Forth Bridge, then into the city of Edinburgh where we visited its famous castle, perched high above the city.

Though we were all weary when we arrived back home, we had lots to tell our grandparents and our sister about the places we visited and things we saw. Even now we still mention these things to each other when Scotland comes up in conversation.

Do you remember when?



Alison Bryant (Ally) was born in Bath, England. She married Paul Bryant in 1968 and has a son, a daughter, and three grandsons. She immigrated to Canada in 1977 and settled in Thornbury on Southern Georgian Bay where she had a hair salon business for twenty-two years. She now resides in Brantford near her daughter's family, gearing towards retirement. Her passion is quilting and she has been teaching classes to pass on her interest and knowledge to others.



My Dear Old Friend

Martin Porter

This is a true story of two Second World War veterans, who were friends before the war ever started. One is my dear old friend, Johnnie Langille, and the other is me. There are very few of us left.

Johnnie and I had several things in common. We were both from the same rural area of Nova Scotia and grew up about 3 miles from each other. We were both from basically Irish Nova Scotia families—I, being the oldest of four boys and five girls, and he, the third oldest of five boys and three girls.

Johnnie was very fond of my third sister, Sally, so he was at our place quite a lot. I liked his sister, Margaret, but I never got around to telling her. Out of all the siblings mentioned above, Johnnie and I were the only two who were interested in playing instrumental music and we played several instruments each.

We were also the only ones of the group to join the armed forces during World War II, except my sister Sally, who was, as I was, in the RCAF. She was posted to the Vancouver area after the war and never returned to Nova Scotia, except for visits.

Johnny married a girl by the name of Jeannie McKinnon, and they were together for 58 years. When the war broke out, Johnnie was working as a cabinet maker in the shipyards, in Pictou N.S. He joined the merchant Navy and served in places around the world, including the Middle East.



Johnnie & Sally ca. 1944

I was employed as a surveyor on the Sunrise Trail (which is the highway into Pictou) and working an 88 acre farm, when hostilities broke out. Aeroplanes, twin engine Ansons and single engine Harvards started flying over our farm. They were from the

Commonwealth Air Training navigation school at the Charlottetown Prince Edward Island RCAF station.

There I was, earthbound: plowing, harrowing, seeding, digging potatoes, cutting firewood, logging in the woods, and looking up at those airplanes. I began to wonder, yes, even worry. What would happen if some day those airplanes were sporting swastikas or the like? I wondered, also, why couldn't I fly one of those things? I happened to know a couple of fellows in their late teens and early twenties who were actually flying them. I knew that I was just as smart as they were and probably smarter than some.



Martin in 1945

So one day I decided to leave the farm. I said goodbye to the horses, the dog and, finally, the family, and hitchhiked to Moncton, New Brunswick to join the Air Force. I was accepted immediately. So, now, Johnnie and my sister and I were all in the uniform of the armed forces, the RCAF to be exact. Johnny and I had to postpone our music careers. Whereas we used to play for nursing homes, family gatherings and just for fun, now that had to be laid aside.

Fast forward to the year 2002, some 60 years later. I was vacationing in Nova Scotia and Johnnie happened to be there at the same time. He and his cousin, Geordie Baird, calling themselves the Ancient Mariners, were going to be playing at the Veterans Hospital in Pictou. Would I like to come and listen?

"I'll do better than that," I said. "I'll come and play along with you."

So that's what we did. While playing there, I noticed an old veteran in the audience, seated by a small table upon which sat about six harmonicas.

I went down into the audience and asked him, "Do you actually play those?"

He replied, "Yes I do."

"Do you have two in the same key?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "I have two in the key of C."

"Fine," I said. "Bring them up here to the front, one for you and one for me. Now you can play along with us."

We decided which tunes we would play—Red River Valley, Darling Nellie Gray, and Red Wing, which were songs that everybody knew. He was excited to be playing with an impressive orchestra like the Ancient Mariners, composed of two harmonicas, a violin, two guitars and two vocalists. The audience was very appreciative and loved it all.

All good things must come to an end, however, and we had to go back to Ontario. We had a final big party at my brother's summer cottage, near the Prince Edward Island ferry dock, and Johnnie and I supplied the music. Sad to say, that was the last time we ever played together.



Martin Porter in 2009

One Monday evening, in 2003, Johnny telephoned me in Brantford. When he told me who was calling, I had to ask, "Johnny, have you got a cold or something?" I could hardly understand his speech!

"No," he said. "I have cancer in my throat and I have trouble talking now, and worse trouble singing. But it's okay. I can still play the old guitar, so when you do come down again, I can still play but I will not be able to sing anymore."

That almost broke my heart. I was devastated. I found it impossible to believe. He called me again a few months later, near the end of 2003, saying that he had deteriorated so badly, "I can't even play the old guitar anymore—I have lost all interest in it. When are you coming down to Nova Scotia again?"

"We are coming down in September," I said, "for the whole month." That would be 2004.

"Well," he said, "I hope I am still here, but I don't think I will be."

"Well, hang in there, Johnny. We will have to get together one more time, music or not."

"I hope I can," he said. "I want to get it over with, but my body will not let me. I'm not in any great discomfort or anything like that, but I feel so hopeless lying here, unable to do anything or even talk to anybody. Marion is the only one who can understand what I'm saying. She comes in often to see me and so keeps my hopes up."

I called my sister Marion to get the lowdown on this situation. She told me Johnnie was okay mentally, good eyesight and hearing, unable to talk clearly but hanging in there.

When September arrived, I left Ontario for Nova Scotia knowing what to expect. My wife and I love going to Nova Scotia and this time was no different, except for the sad part, Johnny's condition. Would we make it in time to see him alive one more time?

Every day on the way down we worried that Johnny would decide to pack it in and we would never see him again. I called my sister Marion who kept close tabs on him and he still continually asked when Martin would arrive. After a few days, we finally made it there and went to visit Johnny. He was in the Pictou Veterans Hospital, bed-ridden, but really glad to see us.

Because of his condition, he was very shy of visitors, but with us he was okay. From the chin up he was the same old Johnny, sparkling eyes and friendly smile but from the chin down his neck was like the bole of a large tree, which I suppose made him shun other visitors because he was a pretty proud sort of guy. We could not stay very long because of his weakened condition.

Eventually, we had to leave Nova Scotia to return to Ontario, but the night before we left, we went to see him for the last time. When we got back to our van, Lois discovered she had left her sweater in Johnny's room. Would I go back and get it please?

Johnny was surprised to see me back, but he waved me over to the far side of his bed, closest to the window. He motioned to me to lower the side of the hospital bed, which I did, then, I sat down on the edge of the mattress. I laid my head on his chest and felt it rise and fall and heard the rasping noise of his labored breathing. He was quietly talking about my sister, Sally, of whom he had been so fond in days gone by, and of all the good times we had shared.

The tears began to flow. Johnny reached over to get a Kleenex out of the box, so I could dry my eyes, and I used the same Kleenex to wipe the tears in his eyes. Just then,

almost like a blind man, he ran his hands over my face and through my hair (what little I had left of it) while softly talking about my sister and the good times we had spent together.

When the nurse came in to look after Johnnie's needs, I just got up and left the room without looking back. I didn't want to remember him as he was at that moment. I wanted to remember him standing beside Geordie Baird, strumming his guitar and singing:

*Farewell to Nova Scotia that tree lined coast
Let her mountains fair and dreary be
For when I'm far away on the briny ocean wave
Will you ever give a sigh and hope for me?*



Martin Henry Porter: I was born at midnight on July 1st 1918 at Millville, Pictou County, Nova Scotia. I lived there for 8 years. In 1926, I moved to Three Brooks, Pictou County, where I started school at age 8. In 1932, I moved to Bay View, Pictou County, and started school in grade 8. I farmed there until age 22. I joined the RCAF in 1942, serving in Canada and overseas until the end of the war in 1945. I came to Brantford Ontario and married Lois Buskard in 1947. I attended the University of Toronto, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute and Teachers College. I spent ten years in the automotive trade prior to teaching secondary school and Fanshawe College until 1984. I celebrated my 90th birthday on July 1st 2008. Presently I am writing my memoirs. I have 5 sisters and 3 brothers, all alive and well. Lois and I have 3 children, Beth, Gerald and Tim in Nova Scotia and on the west coast.



Scrambled Eggs

Karan Stemmler

I can't recall the day I first met Donna, but I bet I was wearing the ochre-coloured, wool bell-bottoms that were my good slacks back then, in 1969. Donna was my sister-in-law, or used to be. I had married her youngest brother; we have since divorced.

She now calls me her sister, which must cause people to wonder, since we don't look anything alike. Donna has dusty-blue eyes and ash-blond hair, while I have hazel eyes and greying, brown hair. I tan very easily; Donna's complexion is as fair as could be, without being albino. Once she lifted her pant leg to show me her ghostly-white leg. This gal never wore shorts and her skirts were always long enough to keep those Casper-like legs hidden. I must admit, I sometimes wondered about our relationship though, when I compared photographs of my Dad's Aunt Emma, as a young woman, to Donna. They looked very similar. Many people have commented on this and I have no explanation for it.

Donna could be counted on to help out in any situation and she was always more than willing to watch my young son, Aarron, whom she called AA because of the spelling of his name. She had two children of her own but they were older than he was, so I believe she enjoyed tending to a baby. When Aarron was about two years old, Donna took him with her when she went visiting a friend. He was in another room with the woman's kids when they came running out yelling that Aarron was choking. Donna tried to dislodge whatever was in his throat, but it wouldn't come back up. She grabbed him in her arms and went running down the street to our doctor's office. The motion made him spit up a hard candy. Apparently there had been a dish of these candies on the coffee table. Once the treat was out of his mouth, Aarron said, "candy." I guess he wanted more!



**Donna with her children
Kimberley & Michael**

I'll always believe Donna's quick thinking saved us from a tragedy that day, and I can never fully express my gratitude to her. When my Dad died, Donna stayed the night with me and held me as I cried. She assured me that eventually I would find peace, as she had after her mother's death a few years before. She was right. As I said, Donna could always be counted on.

The years flew by and even after her brother and I separated, Donna and I remained friends. Aaron attended grade school around the corner from her house and she gave him lunch a few times each week, ruining him for eating anyone else's cooking, because her culinary skills were excellent. Sometimes he told me his Aunt Donna's cooking was much better than mine. And more than once I told him to go back to Aunt Donna's to eat then. Once he even took me up on it. Donna would not take any remuneration for all she did. Every now and again, Aaron would come home with toys or clothes that his aunt purchased for him and I'd tell her she was spending money she didn't have to spare.

"But he wanted it," she'd reply.



Donna with (cw) Brooklyn, Hayden, Bailey & Caroline (1998)

Once Aaron began high school, our contact with Donna began to wane—not for any particular reason, just a stage of life. We still talked on the telephone now and again, and I would drop by her daughter's house the odd time, when Donna was watching her grandkids. It was during one of these visits, that I noticed something peculiar—her conversation kept reverting to the subject of her Uncle Bert.

In April 2003, Donna's daughter invited me to join them at a restaurant to celebrate her mom's 65th birthday. As we sat around the table reminiscing, Donna, the birthday girl, was strangely quiet. She had always been talkative and animated. I noticed her meekness, but stacked it up to the trauma of becoming a senior. Looking back on photographs taken that day, I could actually see the change in her demeanor. She looked shrunken in her seat at the booth. She looked befuddled. She looked concerned and lost.

A few days after the party, Donna went to live with her daughter, Kim, and her family. They were concerned about her curious behaviour and very high blood pressure. What was to be a temporary stay, lasted five years.

One day I called Kim to see if her Mom would like to go for a walk with me.

"Just a minute, I'll ask," said Kim. A minute later she replied, "She said sure."

"OK, then I'll be there in half an hour."

By the time I reached the bend in the road where their street becomes mine, I met Donna. She had grown impatient and had left her house instead of waiting for me. We strolled off together, with her chatting like a magpie. I knew she was upset about having to move in with a houseful of people. We all enjoy our peace and quiet. She was now living with her daughter, son-in-law and four grandchildren; who of course had friends coming by.

She started talking about something we had been over many times before and it was the topic for the entire walk. I tried to change the subject but she was determined to

have this conversation again and she kept speaking louder and louder with every step she took. I even tried to shush her by holding my finger in front of my lips, indicating 'QUIET,' since I couldn't get a word into her tirade. After a couple of hours we returned to her daughter's house and agreed to meet again soon.

Donna and I had signed on as volunteers, at St. Joseph's Lifecare Centre, and on Fridays we went together to help out with the 'Mocktail' party. Often there would be a mix-up. I'd phone her and say I was on my way, and then I'd arrive at her house to find she wasn't there. Since her son-in-law and daughter were at work and the grandchildren were at school, there was no one to confirm where she had gone. I would retrace my steps and find her already inside St. Joe's. I couldn't figure out how this was happening. There was only one public entrance into the facility, and I lived closer to the site than she did and I wasn't seeing her along the way. I would joke and say she must have run there.

It wasn't until I discovered Donna was taking the long route to the unused front door that I really understood. She had entered the building through that door many times over the years, when she visited the old hospital. Now that it had been remodeled, those doors were no longer in use. Realizing this, she'd make her way down a small slope to the old 'EMERGENCY' doors, which was the proper way into the building now. It was an entirely different route than mine and I was correct in saying she must have run there. She did! Donna thought she was going to be late, so she ran all the way. I rectified the problem by showing up at her house ahead of time, without telling her.

One day Donna said she had been to her doctor and he told her she probably had Alzheimer's. I could see she was upset about this diagnosis, but I felt relief, thinking she was going to tell me she had cancer. I thought Alzheimer's was not nearly as devastating a disease as cancer. I was wrong.

As the months turned into years, Donna changed noticeably. One day we ran into my son, Aaron, and his daughter and after leaving them, she asked, "Karan, how do you know Brooklyn?"

"She's my granddaughter," I replied.

"She is my granddaughter, Brooklyn is my granddaughter." Donna stated very matter of fact.

Wow, what was going on now, I wondered. I supposed that because Donna used to watch Aaron quite a lot, in her mind he was her son and therefore his daughter was her granddaughter. Her reasoning was working, but inaccurate. We continued on our walk – something we both enjoyed because it gave us plenty of time to talk in private and lots of exercise, which is always a bonus. When you walk you see so many things you never notice when you're in a vehicle. We pointed out creatures running about, and landscaping or decorating ideas that caught our attention. Then Donna repeated the question we'd just been through. "How do you know Brooklyn, Karan?"

I'd noticed the repeating was becoming more frequent and was nearly identical each time. About this same period, she started doing another odd thing; saying every



**Karan, Aaron holding Hayden,
Brooklyn, Donna (2003)**

word you had said, practically as soon as the words left your mouth. This was terribly distracting when you were trying to carry on a conversation. At the same time it was fascinating because it was so immediate, almost as though she was reading your mind. I've since learned this is called 'echoing.'

"When I was taking care of Hayden, he wanted to go to the dollar store. Bailey and Hayden like to go to the Eaton's Square," Donna told me. She had made the association between Brooklyn and her brother Hayden and this became her focus for a time. We rehashed this tale for maybe ten minutes before she tired of it. For some reason this story always reminds her of her own grandmother. (I think it's the mentioning of the 'Market / Eaton's Square). "My uncle Bert sells Christmas trees on the market square, and Gramma gives me a thermos of hot soup to take to him because it is very cold out. I want to go to Simcoe to see Uncle Bert soon. I haven't seen him in a long time." (Her uncle has been dead for some years). "Karan have you ever seen all of the Christmas trees for sale on the market square?"



**Donna with her
Gramma/Auntie, Caroline**

One afternoon we stopped at Dairy Queen to get an ice cream, then wandered into a nearby park and sat on a bench facing a grove of trees. I chose that bench because the other one was near the ball diamond and it wasn't as private. I knew the story Donna would recite and she could get very agitated telling it. "I love ice cream," she said.

When Donna was a child, she had wanted an ice cream, and ran into the path of a car when she was on her way to buy one. This happened in front of the Hotel Kerby, a grand, old Brantford landmark that is no longer standing. Her grandmother was sent for and she arrived in her bloomers. What a scandal! Every mention of ice cream conjures up this memory and Donna recites it word for word.

Once, when I went to pick Donna up, she met me at the door and told me to come in, then immediately changed her mind and pulled me back out the door onto the verandah. "I can't find my Mom anywhere, I've asked the boys in there (pointing at the house) where my Mom is, and they don't know. (Her grandsons were probably as confused as I was.) "I can't find my Mom anywhere. I walked out there, on the highway." (She motioned toward Cainsville; she had been on a streak of talking about Cainsville lately), "and I looked down there." (She moved her arm in the opposite direction.) "Karan, I can't find my Mom anywhere!"

She was very agitated. I took a big breath and decided the truth was best, so I said, "Donna your mom died a long time ago."

"No, no," she wailed in distress.

"It's okay, you knew at the time Donna, you've forgotten it though. You arranged everything beautifully for her funeral. Everything is fine."

"Are you sure, Karan?"

"Yes, I'm sure." She was quiet for a few minutes, and I watched her closely. This was an unexpected turn of events and by then I was nearly as upset as Donna was. I waited for a little while, then, asked her if she wanted to go volunteering.

“Yes, let’s go.”

We wiped our tears, and blew our noses. As we made our way down the street, she told me another story about being at her Gramma’s house, and sitting on a tractor while some men lifted up the door so that she could see out while she pretended to drive the tractor. Donna told me that tale as if it were minutes before, but also as if she were a little girl.

“I miss my Mom and Gramma too. I wonder if my Gramma wants me to stay with her tonight.” I have difficulty following her train of thought.

We entered St. Joseph’s Lifecare, and signed in. Donna’s penmanship has changed dramatically. She writes ‘DONNA’ in the spot that I have pointed out to her. It is in large disjointed letters, and therefore there is no longer room for her last time.

“Did I do it right?” She had asked me this every time, for months.

“That’s fine Donna.” I answered. We hung up our coats and set off to collect the residents wanting to go to the auditorium to hear that day’s entertainment. Donna is very nurturing to many of the older people. She touches them under the chin and kisses their foreheads. She often dances with one lady who was always looking for a partner.

When our volunteer time was finished, we started off for home, taking Donna’s longer route back. She pointed across the street to a business complex and asked me if I got my hair done there.

“No.” I said.

“I do, my Mom takes me there.” Suddenly I became aware of the terrible blunder I had made. When she had told me she couldn’t find her mom earlier that afternoon, she had really meant her daughter, and I told her she had died. No wonder Donna cried in such a gut-wrenching manner. Since she was now living with her daughter and her family, she had reversed roles with her child. Her grandchildren called Kim ‘Mom’, and eventually Donna did as well.

We continued volunteering on Fridays and into our third year Donna began to be bored, or at least inattentive, while in group situations. It might have been too hard for her to participate in the conversation, or maybe she just had a lack of interest in anything. She had been an avid reader, a wonderful quilter, a beautiful knitter and an imaginative cook. She now did none of these things. I tried to get her to at least speak about her hobbies, but she would answer in the most minimal way. A pair of mittens she had made for me, years before, was a continual subject of interest with her though.

“Those are really nice mitts you have.” Donna would say.

“Yes I know they are. You made them for me.”

A short time later she’d repeat the statement. I’d try to change the subject, but as sure as a new chisel’s edge is sharp we’d end up talking about the mitts again. “You should make me a new pair,” I’d tease.

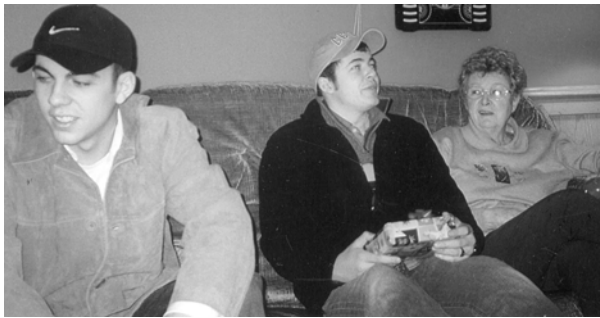
“Maybe I will. No I don’t remember how.” Not knowing how to knit anymore worried her, so I said some witty thing to make her laugh.



Donna & Karan volunteering at St. Joe’s Lifecare (2006)

“You know, we’re nuts.” Donna says.

“That we are, Donna. That we are.” We giggled together.



Donna with her grandsons, Jeff and Nick

“Gramma” for years when she is speaking to me) I stopped asking questions and simply let her talk on. Donna was back to being the chatty, animated person I first knew and she seemed to enjoy telling me stories, even if I didn’t know what the heck she was rambling on about. The last year or so, whenever she was asked how she was doing, she’d reply, “Oh I’m like eggs today. I’m all scrambled up!”



Donna with her grandchildren, Ben, Jake, Caroline & Bailey

The highs and lows were becoming more extreme. I wasn’t sure what to expect from visit to visit. I tried to get family history from her, for my son and grandkids, but I had waited too long. Events and people were getting all combined. A cousin suddenly became a grandparent halfway through the telling, leaving both of us confused. (Her Grandmother mentioned in this story is actually her aunt, but she has called her

Donna is very proud of her family. Her son Michael’s eldest child, Nick, is a police officer. He was her source of conversation for months with anyone who would listen. She’d show the photo of him in uniform and say, “See my handsome grandson, (or sometimes son) he’s a cop.” According to Donna, he shows up at St. Joseph’s, where she now resides, and solves a lot of mysteries that occur there. Some of these tales are hilarious. Three of Donna’s grandchildren are musicians. The two brothers, Ben and Jake, are in a rock band. Donna will tell you that they are good, but loud. Her youngest grandchild, a girl, Bailey, is the other musician. She places high in the Kiwanis Festival every year playing classical guitar. Another granddaughter, Caroline, just finished

college, and the final grandson, Jeff, is well on his way to becoming a police officer like his brother.

“My kids and grandchildren turned out pretty well didn’t they?” Donna has said many times.

“How could they not, you’d be on their case if they hadn’t.” I always reply.

“I tried to be a good Mom,” she said softly one day. “You were, you are, Donna. You’re a good sister too.”

We laughed and hugged each other. Sisters really don’t have to be related by blood. I wish that Donna could have been spared from this sickness but because she

wasn't, we're all trying to keep her happy. I had an old friend who lived to be nearly 102 years old and he always said being happy was the most important thing in life. I'm trying to stay there myself.



Karan M. Stemmler (Thomas), a 6th generation Brantfordian, has always enjoyed reading and writing, but not arithmetic, to the point that browsing the dictionary was actually fun. Books provided solace from her noisy, large family.



Feathers

Christopher Fowler

My life and chickens have long been seriously entwined. Is it just my name? There were no poultry in the recent family history, but maybe in the genes? Many Fowler ancestors earned their living by slaughtering birds. Most waded about in the swamps and fens of East Anglia, waving sling-shots, bows, arrows or, in a later time, blunderbusses. But apart from the name, I think I have little in common with them. Geese, ducks, chickens, and all my feathered friends, I like and respect too much to murder.

I started working on farms in 1947, straight out of school. Father had hoped I'd follow him and take a bank job in the city, but my wartime evacuation away from London gave me a taste for fresh air and the smell of the countryside. School had been at the little seaside town of Torquay, tucked among the green and dark red clay hills of South Devon. When the time came to choose, I went farming a few miles from there. My friends all regarded agriculture as a quaint career choice, poultry farming a joke. I did it anyway.

One employer, H.R.S. Humphries of Lustleigh, was a chicken breeder. His farm straddled the Newton Abbot-to-Moretonhampstead road, with small chicken houses separated by wire fences scattered among the fields (the old fashioned "free range" system.) In summer the tour buses clogged the little highway, especially at the end of the farm where the corner was too sharp for two to pass—great entertainment for us as we lugged our buckets of feed from pen to pen.

Mr. Humphries kept two main breeds: Welsummers, both gold and silver varieties, and Barred Rocks. This was 1947/1948, ten years before the advent of the "modern wonder chickens" and their universal plain white or brown colours. Our Welsummers were gorgeous in their gold, brown, and beetle-black plumage and the Silvers with their white, grey, and salmon. Despite these good looks, they also rated high among egg-layers, giving Mr. Humphries a respectable share of the local market. I tried to learn as much as possible there. The boss was encouraging, and when the time came, he gave me a good reference to apply for Agricultural College.

In 1950, helped by my father, a Devon County scholarship, and selling my motorbike, I enrolled at Harper-Adams. This fine old institution is now a university, mainly concerned with crops and cattle, but in those days it was the leading poultry school in Britain. This was fun. Perhaps my genes were acting up but, undeterred by scoffing friends and their “chickie” jokes, I dived right into learning the technical details of the chicken business.

Back in 1892, the main buildings, with some acreage, were bequeathed by Thomas Harper Adams, gentleman farmer, “for the purpose of teaching practical and theoretical agriculture.” From that time, besides being an up-to-date farm growing crops common to that part of Shropshire, the college developed expertise and leadership in livestock farming and, thanks to a succession of talented and dedicated professors, the Poultry Department thrived. By the close of WW II the place was overpopulated with students.

On June 9th, 1951 Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth opened the new “Jubilee” wing of the college. The needed extra space, modern but matching the old red brick exterior, allowed us “2nd Years” to dwell in comfort. Let the “1st Years” suffer the concrete hallways and 19th century plumbing (like my old boarding school.) Fewer students had to live off campus and I was happy to move into the modern wing.

A post-Princess ball was held in the main hall that night, to celebrate the royal ceremony. Even if the Princess Elizabeth had been asked to the dance, she couldn’t have accepted, so we compromised by inviting some female student teachers from a college near Stafford, “carte blanche”, so to speak. We didn’t know any of them. By the evening, I’d had enough for one day. After all the dashing from hallway to doorway providing more faces for the Princess to smile at, I decided, “I’ve done my duty. Dance too? I think not, well...maybe just peek in the door.”

That’s when my life changed. I looked across the hall and there was this girl in a red dress. “Forget H.R.H.,” I gaped, “My princess is right here.”

Corny? Perhaps, but what can I say? Happily, Olive seemed pleased to meet me too. We waited two years, even graduated, before we married.

After college Olive taught school. Chicken farming was still a “cottage industry,” and good jobs were rare. As my ex-college colleagues returned to their family farms I began to wonder: were those scoffers right after all? Finally, I got a post with a poultry processing plant in Boston, Lincolnshire and felt lucky to have it. There we rented an old gypsy caravan, wooden wheels and all, with an outhouse tacked on. It was nestled under the banks of the Wensum River (no misprint.) From our back window we could look up at the sea-going freighters chugging inland from the Wash to the dock in Boston. Well-dyked, well-named, this part of Lincolnshire is called “Holland.”

Olive had stopped teaching by then and our daughter Kelvin Anne was born in July 1955. She chose the wettest, stormiest night to arrive. While Olive did all the work, I



The caravan and Christopher with Kelvin Anne (10 days)

developed my first grey hairs struggling to start the car. The gas oven turned out to be a good place to dry spark plugs. We reached the hospital with two hours to spare.

Not long after that I lost my job. I never had enjoyed killing chickens, but we needed the money, now more than ever. We moved to Pershore in Worcestershire, a chicken farm job. In less than a year we moved again, on the recommendation of a college friend—chickens of course, but a little more money. A few months later I got myself fired again, for failing to obey! It was late 1956 and I realized the smartest thing I'd done in my 28 years was to marry Olive. She'd now had enough, but instead of telling me to take a hike she quietly suggested, "Let's immigrate to Canada. Things might go better."

With the help of my sister, Glenna, and her husband Joe, we packed up again and moved back to Bootle, Liverpool.



**Christopher, Kelvin Anne & Olive
1957**

Olive's parents patiently sheltered us for the few weeks it took to gather the paperwork. We were awaiting our second child and in the middle of all this he arrived: Andrew George, 18th May, 1957. There was no changing my travel dates. On 27th May, the whole family, including Andrew, waved me off. The journey from Liverpool's Speke Airport to Toronto (via Shannon, Gander and New York) was slow, but those were the days of propellers, not jets. At least it was still daylight when I arrived. Nearly two months later Olive, Kelvin Anne and Andrew George sailed from Liverpool on the Carinthia, to Montreal.

My first Canadian employer was Bray Hatcheries, John Street, Hamilton, Ontario. Fred Bray was an entrepreneur of the old school. In Ontario, and much of Canada between Winnipeg and Halifax, he was known as "Mr. Chicken". His staff sometimes called him Mr. Hypochondriac, for the drawer full of pills that were always spilling from his desk. He liked to be gruff but I never knew a kinder, more generous man. He sent me to a job in Quebec, mainly, I believe, so I would be on hand to welcome the family. Our first Canadian summer was in Glen Sutton, Quebec, trying to unlearn what we thought we knew of French and understand the patois. It was a lovely place, a broad, green valley with peaceful meadows sloping down to the Missisquoi, the little stream dividing the province from Vermont—peace before the storm.

Just before winter my boss called us back to Ontario and a new bungalow beside an old four-story barn in West Flamborough. My job was to care for ten thousand broiler chickens in the barn. Olive's, besides joining me to struggle up four flights of barn stairs with buckets of water when the pump failed or, worse still, boxes of snow when it froze, was to make a home. Our furniture was some cardboard boxes and two old doors.

As the snow got deeper we wondered whether leaving England and its food rationing had been the right move but, bridges and boats burned, we made the best of it. On Fred Bray's advice I bought a Ford Anglia for fifty dollars. It carried the four of us and groceries to and from Dundas, on our weekly outings. Before the brave little vehicle expired, it served us well. I remember Kelvin Anne's, "Go Daddy, Go," when we pulled out of a line of cars stuck in deep snow on the Dundas hill. The Anglia sailed serenely past everyone, round the tight bend at the top and all the way home in the snowstorm.

That was our first Canadian winter. It turned out to be one of the worst on record, but we didn't know that. It was a shocking change from old, mild Britain. Olive must have often wondered at the chain of events that brought her from cozy classrooms to a chilly chicken farm. She worked as if she had farmed all her life, suffered the pains and sprains as well as frost-bite, fed us and nursed us and never complained. This was no princess, far from it. She had wings!



Olive, the barn, and snow

That winter the price of broiler meat fell. The more problems I had with the leaky barn and sporadic water supply, the more my chickens got sick. "Why am I doing this?" I wondered. Bray Hatcheries was feeling the pressure from a big USA broiler integrator. The American had better breeds (modern, all white in colour of course) that grew faster. He had more money to spend and an up-to-date business concept. That summer, for me, the crisis arrived. I resigned from the broiler farm and took a job as poultryman with Shaver Poultry Breeding Farms in Galt.

One of the old Anglia's last journeys was along highway 8, from Christies Corners to Sheffield, loaded with our children, ourselves and our few household possessions. Frying pan to fire? Whatever, I'd still be working with chickens. Bray Hatcheries went out of business soon after. I lost touch, but had a surprise some years later. While overseas for Shaver's, I had to welcome a visitor from the Galt office. It was Fred Bray.



The Anglia with Kelvin Anne, Christopher, and Andrew George

"Glad to see we're both working for the same Company again," I said. No reply. He was being gruff. It's good that some things don't change.

Donald McQueen Shaver had bred chickens as a boy, before the war. Post-war, now an ex-colonel, he went right back at it, and hit the jack-pot. The strain of layers he had bred, laid more and bigger eggs than all others. He was well into marketing this wonder bird (also white!) by the time I joined his firm. Was the chicken business becoming respectable, even for me?

I worked at the Company's Whitecraigs farm in Galt. We rented an apartment, Kelvin Anne entered kindergarten, baby Andrew began to explore his environment and Olive set about getting the family oriented to the Galt way of life. After our turbulent first few years, peace seemed to have descended on us. We could look to the future, maybe even save a little money. "Canada," we agreed, "seems to have been a good idea after all."

Four years passed. The children were doing well in school. Olive had a job she loved, working with people. We moved into a house of our own, with mortgage to

match. Why was I still restless? From my point of view, “down on the farm,” the poultry industry hadn’t changed much. Cynical friends remarked, “Still up to your armpits in it? Why not get a job that pays real money?” I began to think they might be right after all.

Olive, always supportive, tried to help. “Why not try something else? You’re smart enough, young enough....”

So I did. I began a home correspondence course in journalism. Soon after, Mr. Shaver mentioned I should take evening classes in Spanish. “There may be a need...” he said. Hint enough to get me excited. I forgot the journalism. Perhaps, the great chicken revival may include me after all.



The children at our new house in Galt, 1962

Olive saw the gleam in my eye. She knew my hopes. Two weeks later I forgot the Spanish too. In his office Mr. Shaver announced, “Alfred (the farm manager) has turned down the offer to manage our new operation in India. I would like you to do it, if you will.”

The job was to build and stock a breeding farm, fully equip a hatchery and feed mill from scratch (excuse pun), train all staff and run the complete complex for three years. This would be the first modern poultry breeding operation in the Indian sub-continent. This would be pioneering...Columbus, 1962!

I had the option to refuse but it never occurred to me. I rushed home to Olive. “We are to go to India!” The fat fly in that pot of ointment was that I’d have to go ahead, 10-12 months ahead, before Olive and the children could join me.

She seemed to take my news stoically, pleased that I was about to achieve an ambition, but not at all happy for us. It would mean a long separation. Looking back I wonder at the mania that drove me to leave my lovely wife and wonderful children. There wasn’t even a war on. Perhaps it was the curse of my feathered genes but, thanks to Olive’s patience, we made it through, wiser perhaps, older too, but above all, intact.



I was born in the suburbs of London, England in 1928. In spite of my “city” background, my interest was always in farming. I became a poultry specialist. Olive and I married in 1953. In 1957, with our two children, we immigrated to Canada. In 1959 I started working and travelling for an international poultry breeding company based in Galt, Ont. Home, for us was Galt but of my next 34 working years, only 18 were spent in Canada. For the other 16 the family came with me. Our second son was born in India, our third in Germany. We lived for 3 years in New Zealand and for 4 back in England. Having traveled to 60 or 70 different countries in my working life I welcomed retirement in 1993, hoping to stay still for a while. We’ve lived in peaceful Brantford since 2005.



Mirror Images

Olive Fowler

Wispy white hair frames the elongated face. A straight aquiline nose above the medium-thick lips; the mouth wrinkled, corners upturned. Eyes are expressive, blue-green-grey, not very large, nor too small but with an upslant, all hidden behind thick lenses. This is what I see looking in the mirror.

Slide down through the murky layers of time hiding behind the reflecting surface. What can I see now? I have an early photo of a chubby, smiling ten-month-old, taken at a baby show. I was the winner. Mum said that was just how I was. Happy, quiet and very placid and I can't dispute or agree (who would want to anyway?)

We were living in a three bedroom row house in Wavertree, a district of Liverpool, England, which my Mother, Ada, cleaned inside and out. Having the shiniest windows and the whitest doorstep in the street, and cleaning until she eradicated all the cockroaches living indoors with us, was a very important issue to Mum. Eileen, my sister, was almost 9 years old at this time. We lived in this home with an outside toilet at the end of a concrete yard. No garden or even grass to cut, a boon as far as my father was concerned. He worked hard and long hours, coming home to eat a hot dinner and read the Liverpool Echo, without hearing children crying or shouting. Mother had us in bed by the time he came home, not to be disturbed at any price.

My father was the youngest of 5 children and was rather sickly, having to be carried on a cushion to the Liverpool hospital from time to time. Nobody ever told children about sickness in those days but I learned later that he had "a weakness in his bowels." He warned us many times about going to the bathroom when it was necessary, and not to wait.



Olive at 10 months of age

We lived in this house for four years and I learned later that either the wife or the husband, next door, was murdered by the other one. Mother was called as a witness. After that she felt we should move. Another momentous event was when Mother was gone for a wee while. I don't remember much about it, except I was taken to see Nanny Doyle, my Mother's mother in Kirkdale. Mother came home with a bundle which made awful noises, and I hid behind the big oak side board that Uncle Eddie, Mother's brother, made for her wedding present. I can remember screaming, "Take it away. I don't like it." This was my sister Marjorie.

Grandma Waring, my paternal grandmother, hadn't liked the fact that Mother was married, widowed and had a daughter (Eileen), before marrying Father, but eventually she relented and forgave her. Poor Eileen, though. I don't believe she ever came with us to Grandma Waring's. She stayed with Nanny Doyle. I'm sure Eileen liked being with Nanny, as she was such a



Olive and Marjorie, 1937



**Eileen (18 years) & boyfriend
Billy Doughty with
the neighbour's baby**

gentle, kind person. Grandma Waring was a bit of a tough egg and I can remember, in later years, hearing her say in her Lancashire accent, "Keep thee feet off th' spindles, childer" (the spindles being the wooden rails bracing the chair legs, which were just the right height to hold small feet dangling at the end of short legs.) If you didn't heed, you ended up with pins and needles and certainly the impression of the seat on your seat.

Can your memory conjure certain smells? Well Grandma Waring's house smelled of apples and linament. The apples, always wrinkled, rested on the cool grey & white marble slab in the pantry, accompanied by a skinny link of very pale

shiny-looking sausages. No refrigerators in those days, lucky people had a box with a wire mesh door that kept flies out and let in the cooling air. At the far end of the pantry, a small window was set in a heavy door leading to a very neatly kept garden; a grassy area ended with a stone wall, separating a church & grounds from the house. Years later, when I stayed at Grandma's for a week or two, she and I used to pick the elderberries that were hanging over the wall and make jam in the afternoon. She cleaned at the Blind school at the end of the street and always brought books home for me when I came to visit (keep the children busy and out of trouble.)

Grandma sometimes had an older cousin of mine over to keep me company. Sally, an only child, (her older sister had died as a baby by choking on a fluffy baby

chicken from the top of an Easter cake) was mean to me & I was frightened by her bullying ways. Grandma had a spare bedroom where we girls were allowed, only if we were quiet and good. At the end of a brass bed, with its white bedspread and mothball smell, was a large heavy Scottish kilt. Was this Grandpa's regimental kilt? Dark blues and green colours remain in my memory. Grandma promised the kilt to me when she died but Sally got it. When next we met, Sally yelled at me, "You should have had that kilt, it had moth holes."

One day I shall try and track down Grandpa's regiment and find out where and when he died. Nobody ever referred to him and one didn't ask, unless an adult volunteered the information. Somewhere, I have two Grandpas dead and buried, killed by enemies that they never knew—useless wars. I also had a third Grandpa that all the kids told me I couldn't have, but I did, I just didn't know how I got him. Nor did I ever meet him—a mystery to be solved later.

One of the neatest things about being at Grandma's, after I was allowed to cross the cobblestone street by myself, was going to Mrs. Seddon's shop. She had all sorts of curiosities in that little space, but the best was the live parrot that would yell, "Shop," whenever anyone came in. The first time was terrifying but then it became fun, especially when Joey talked back to you. On a trip back to England, my husband (Chris) and I went to see if the house and shop were still there, but a large shopping area had taken its place. I felt both sad and affronted. What had happened to Mrs. Seddon and the parrot? Grandma's house was also gone but at least the church was still there, along with the Town Hall and a magnificent library.

We spent a large part of one day in the library, researching the family name of George Waring. The surname went all the way back to the 1700s, on that very street. I felt sorry that I wasn't a son for my father, to perpetuate the name. However, a first cousin, George Waring, was living in the Manchester area when Chris & I were engaged. He was a member of the Horse Guards in London.

1935 saw us move to another house in Knotty Ash. This one was in a new area. It was still a row house but with a covered entry—just great for learning to ride my sister's two-wheel bicycle. She had been run over by a car and her leg was in a caliper for many months. This was a three bedroom house with a living room, a bathroom with hot running water, a kitchen, and, outside the kitchen door but still attached to the house, a flush toilet. One neighbour living on our right side was an old lady with her "elderly son" (at least 30 years old.) Her name was Mrs. Pace but everybody called her Nosy Parker, since she was forever peeking through the lace curtains. My mother always made extra scones and cakes and would take a few to her.

On the other side was a large family, the Gallaghers. Besides Mr. and Mrs., there were Peter, Florrie, Eric, Edna, Brenda, and John. At almost five, I loved Peter passionately, but I also hated him because he could play the piano much better than I did. Father (now



**Olive's first day of school
(5 yrs old)**

called Pop) would have me practice and practice but I never did play as well as Peter, or my sister Eileen.

Grandma Waring died in June 1939, not long before her 70th birthday and just before the war was declared. She had fallen down the cellar steps, carrying a bucket of coal, and hit her head. Sadly, after a short time in hospital, she passed away. But the memories I have of her, and my childhood, live on ... I see them behind the reflections in the mirror.



Olive Fowler was born in England and married Christopher Fowler in 1953. They came to Canada in 1957 and have 1 daughter and 3 sons, 5 granddaughters and 5 great-grandchildren. Her first career was in teaching, followed by chicken breeding in Canada and India. Moving back to Canada she became a real estate agent and for the last 15 years has been teaching china painting to seniors in Cambridge, Ontario.



It Was Time

Alan McClelland

On Sunday, October 16, 1988 I was on a plane headed to Buenos Aires, Argentina to begin a five year world tour. It was time to leave. By Saturday, November 12, 1988 I was on a plane flying back to Toronto, Canada. It was time to return.

My story actually begins a year before when the company I was working for in Cambridge announced they were going to move out of the ancient facilities they were housed in to a new factory that was to be built in Hespeler. I had been their cost accountant for twelve years. When I had applied for this job, I was an accounting supervisor for a company that had decided to move to Cornwall. It was a desperate move on my part because I had a family to support and a mortgage to pay.

The manager had made a big mistake when he offered me the job; I had made another when I accepted. Had he asked me, “Have you ever set up a cost system before?” or, “How do you plan to set up a cost system for us?” he would have realized I didn’t have a clue how to go about it. You see, one thing that I cannot grasp is abstract concepts, and that is what cost accounting mainly consists of. I did manage to cobble together a system for them but I was never confident it produced any reliable figures. I was well into job burnout by then and looking for any excuse to leave.

Since I always wanted to travel the world, this seemed like the ideal opportunity give it a try. The first decision I had to make was where I would start on my journey. As I also wanted to learn a second language, such as Spanish, I started looking for a city in South America. Buenos Aires was my first choice as the water was safe to drink and the city itself had a low crime rate.

I gave myself one year to get ready to leave. The first thing I did was contact Argentina’s consulate in Montreal to get the necessary paperwork to apply for a working visa. One of the forms they sent me was a medical form, printed in Spanish, to be filled out by my doctor. Now I had to find a Spanish translator. Looking in the yellow pages, I found a local French translator whom I phoned and asked if she did Spanish as well. She

didn't but gave me the phone number of Rene Crespo in Waterloo who did. Using the translation, the doctor was able to answer the Spanish questions in English.



Rene Crespo and wife Cecilia

Another requirement was to have the RCMP confirm my crime free citizenship. I eventually found their office in Kitchener and got the necessary paperwork filled out. It took me a while but I was able to send all the documentation they asked for to Montreal and was anxiously awaiting my working visa.

Instead of the visa, a copy of my original birth certificate was returned with the request for the signature of the Registrar General on the seal. I sent it back to Toronto asking for this to be done. It finally showed up again (after several phone calls trying to track it down) with an illegible signature in the required place. If I had to do it again, I would just scrawl something on it and send it back.

Rene also gave Spanish lessons, so I signed up. Since I no longer had a driver's license, due to my poor eyesight, I had to take a bus to Kitchener once a week and catch a local bus to get to Rene's house. This meant that every Thursday night I had to hurry home from work, have a quick supper, and head for the bus terminal. I had been divorced for eleven years at this point and was living in an apartment in downtown Cambridge;



Jen and Jeff, Christmas 1986

both my kids, Jen and Jeff, were in high school and had keys to my place. I would often come home from work and find one or both of them there playing games on a Commodore computer that I had bought. One time I came home on a Thursday night to find Jeff and a friend from school there. I got ready to go then went to the fridge to get the piece of left over chicken I planned on eating for supper; it was not there.

"Jeff did you eat the chicken that was in the fridge?"

"Yeah," he said, "I thought it was a snack."

Jen told me later that you had to write your name on anything in the fridge that you planned on eating yourself.

I found Sur travel in Toronto that specialized in trips to South America and booked my flight. I was leaving on October 16, 1988 and returning April 8, 1989. Argentina would not allow you to arrive with a one way ticket. Although I planned on working while I was there I had no idea what I would do. Then a fellow, I knew from Toastmasters, said a friend of his had married a girl who was born and raised in Buenos Aires, and they were coming from Ottawa to visit him. Her name was Cristina and she wanted to start a travel agency in Ottawa specializing in trips to Argentina, so she had business cards made up naming me as her representative. My job was to act as a liaison with the travel agencies in Buenos Aires - whatever that entailed; we only had the foggiest notion how this was going to work.

At the end of September, I had no job and no apartment, so for the next two weeks, I rented the spare bedroom at Pat's, my ex-wife's place. Although we didn't get along together, we had no problems apart. When the day came for my departure, my brother-in-law drove me to the airport where I boarded a Varig Airlines plane for a sixteen hour flight to Buenos Aires.

When I arrived at the airport in Buenos Aires, I got a taxi to take me to the hotel where I was supposed to have been registered by the travel agency. It was a long ride and as we approached the outskirts of the city, large numbers of galvanized huts began to appear. The closer we got, the better the housing got until all evidence of the extreme poverty had disappeared. The hotel had no record of my impending arrival but luckily there was a room available and I was able to phone home to tell everybody that I had arrived safely. The hotel manager told me that telephone service was extremely expensive and even if he could afford to have one, it would take several years for it to be installed.

The liaison job really appealed to me, so the next day I went to the Secretaria de Turismo and got a list of all the travel agents in the city. My first prospect was Transpampa Adventures. I hadn't developed a sales spiel so all I had to offer was this vague supposition of what I thought my role would be. The manager was very friendly and suggested that I get in touch with Canadian Airlines. Mr. Hughes, the manager at Canadian Airlines, advised me to talk to Lilo Steinberg at Emotion Travel. She was also very friendly and gave me couple of their catalogues and put together some pricing on some of their tours. In her opinion though, I would be far better off working from Canada than trying to make contacts in Argentina. In other words, the job Cristina and I had envisioned wasn't feasible.

Everyone moved at a much slower pace here than in Canada. For example, I saw a group of people walking down the street with a child of about three years old; he was stopping every few feet to examine something on the sidewalk and everyone just waited for him and moved on when he did. In Canada, the parent usually keeps a tight grip on the tot's hand and walks at a normal speed with the child's feet touching the ground every third step.

Another difference was that cars, not pedestrians, had the right of way. This made crossing streets, for me at least, a dangerous proposition. One time I was waiting with a group of people at a red light and when they started to cross, I simply followed them, suddenly everyone started running. I looked to my left and coming at us full speed were several cars and a bus; we were crossing on a red light. Some busy intersections had neither stop signs nor traffic lights. The drivers waited for a break in the traffic and started across, then, it was the other side's turn to wait for the same opportunity. Pedestrians crossed with the flow of traffic, hoping they would make to the other side before there was another opening. The Argentines were obviously used to it but I became paranoid about crossing streets.

Another downer was that I was still unilingual in spite of the Spanish lessons I had taken before leaving Canada. I have a strong mental resistance to learning vocabulary and had dropped French in high school because it became obvious that there was no way I was ever going to master the language. The same thing happened when Rene attempted to teach me Spanish. This became a real problem when I went to a restaurant and tried ordering something off the menu. I remember one time I was really hungry so I ordered

jambon y queso, thinking I was going to get lamb and a salad. What a disappointment when the waiter appeared with a ham and cheese sandwich. The trouble with eating out in that city was that they always brought what I ordered, not what I wanted.

In order to respond to people speaking to me on the street, I memorized a sentence in Spanish to explain that I could only speak English. Sometimes, while walking downtown, a person would ask me for directions - at least I assumed that is what they wanted - and I would give them my one liner. One day a fellow came alongside from behind; he was tall, slim and casually well dressed. He began speaking in Spanish and waving his arm so I offered my usual spiel and he immediately switched to English.

"That's the same problem I'm having," he said. I never did figure out what he meant by that. He went on to say how glad he was to have met me and asked where I was from. What a coincidence this turned out to be; although he was born in Venezuela, he was a pilot for Canadian Pacific and lived in Montreal. Today was his birthday and did I have time to have a coke with him? I was free and so we went around the corner to a small café. What were my plans for supper? I would be his guest tonight at the Hotel Sheraton (the most expensive hotel in Buenos Aires) where he was staying with the rest of the crew. He went on to say it was the first time he had been away from home on his birthday and he wanted to call his mother. Unfortunately his money was locked in a security box at the hotel and the captain had the key; could I lend him the money, forty-two dollars U.S. (he had borrowed my Cross pen to convert the Australes on a napkin) and he would pay me back at dinner.

During the telling of this story his easy going, confident façade disappeared and he became very nervous. I realized that there would be no dinner and no money, so I figured it was my turn to tell a whopper as well. I said that I didn't have that much on me but if I did, he would be welcome to it. I'm sure he was well aware that I was lying because just before he approached, I had exchanged some money at a Cambio shop. After I had turned him down, he got up to leave and asked me to pay for the cokes. It wasn't until he was out the door that I discovered that I not only got stuck for the bill but my Cross pen had left with him as well.

On Sunday mornings I would phone my kids. In order to this, I would have to go to a place called Entel from where you could make long distant telephone calls. It was always crowded when I got there so I had to join a line to get a number which someone would call out when it was your turn. I ran up every time a number was called because I couldn't understand Spanish and didn't want to miss out. On my third attempt the frustrated clerk told me he would speak English when my number came up. When I got paged, I gave them the name of the country I was calling and the phone number; then I joined the line up of people waiting their turn to use one of the six phone booths in an adjoining room. Once I had finished my phone call (you guessed it), I got in line to pay for it. This is a good example of that slow pace of life that I mentioned earlier.

Something I found disconcerting was that as we approached November the weather was like August and getting warmer. Apparently by the time January arrives, it is extremely hot with an unbearable humidity factor. It surprised me how much I missed the cool autumn air and the changing of the leaves.

Since my intention was to stay here for about six months, I had to look for an apartment. Someone showed me what to look for in the paper to determine whether it was furnished. I found one that looked interesting and made the call, with the hope that the

person who answered would be able to speak English. They did and that is how I met Rashid Bastion. He picked me up the next morning in a taxi at the hotel and took me to look at a bachelor apartment. It was on the twentieth floor and rented for \$230.00 US per month; I told him I would take it. The next day, Nelly, his girl Friday, picked me up in a cab at 11.00am to drop my luggage off at the apartment and continue to Rashid's office to sign the lease; business also moves at a slow pace and I didn't get away until 3.00pm. He told me he was a bachelor in his late twenties and was developing three different businesses and due to the



View of Buenos Aires from my apartment

long hours he worked, he wasn't planning on getting married before he was at least thirty-three. I would often drop into his office to get some advice or pass on some information I thought he could use. These visits could last up to a couple of hours as he was often called out to deal with something then he would return and take up where we left off. One time, he even took me on a walking tour of the area around his office.

Unfortunately, I realized that I had made a big mistake in coming here. The city was too big (at least two million people in the metro area); I was leery of crossing streets; I couldn't speak the language; I had no job and, although the people were extremely friendly, I wasn't comfortable with the change in culture. Once again, it was time to leave.

When I told Rashid I had decided to return to Canada, he told me to come to his office the night before I was leaving and he would take me out to dinner. I showed up around 8.00 pm and Rashid wasn't there but was expected back in about an hour; he arrived a half hour later with three other men from whom he was buying a travel business. We didn't get away until around 10.00 pm and took a cab to Florida Avenue. This was a pedestrian walkway, about two lanes wide and three blocks long, each side of which was lined with shops that sold everything from leather goods to electronics. There was always a moving mass of people, day and night. Some of the vendors would stand out front and try to cajole you into coming in to see what bargains they were offering for sale. There was even a McDonald's restaurant where I had once eaten a Big Mac.

By now, I was so hungry I was practically tripping over my tongue but Rashid was in no hurry to find a restaurant. We wandered down the street, stopping in some of the stores until he remembered that I had mentioned that I wanted to buy some Spanish cassettes. Our next stop was a music store, where he got the owner to play the tapes I had picked out to be sure they were the kind of music I was looking for. At this point, I was having doubts that Rashid had mentioned dinner but a few doors down we entered El Estancia, which turned out to be a huge room packed with people sitting at picnic tables.

Rashid ordered. We started with an Oktoberfest sausage which was followed by a cheese omelet and then a slab of roast beef washed down with a bottle of wine. At 3:00 a.m. we were one of the last to leave. On our way back to my hotel Rashid got into an argument with the cab driver as he was taking a long way around to get there. Rashid figured he thought he could take advantage of us because we were speaking English; we got out and hailed another taxi.

On November 12, 1988 I was on a flight headed back to Canada. It was time to return.

When I arrived in Toronto, I was so happy I practically kissed the ground. Canada is, without a doubt, the best place in the world to live. Buenos Aires was a great learning experience for me though. If I hadn't gone, I would always have had regrets about not following my dream of traveling around the world. I still travel but now I go on bus tours and thoroughly enjoy my stay in each country.



Alan McClelland was born and raised in Brantford. A high school drop out with dreams of world travel, he is no longer dreaming but doing.



A Small Hero

Sharon Bolger

On a sunny August afternoon, in 1966, I was lounging on the bed in my small bedroom, completely absorbed in a book. Suddenly, I heard my Mother cry out, “Tom....Tom!”

I ran to the back porch where my father had collapsed. My older brother was also within hearing distance and arrived seconds after I did. Together, we picked father up by his arms and legs. “Thank God he is not so big,” I thought. We carried him through the house to the front yard, where our Dodge was parked. My thoughts raced faster than I could have worded them. “This is not real, is he dying? I have never seen anyone die. My father, my father! We’ll put him in the car, get him to the hospital. He’s so limp. Does he know we are carrying him by his arms and legs? He is so white. I know this is death. I am scared, and I feel so...so sad!”

We placed him gently on the grass, inches from our vehicle. Instinctively, I knew he needed help—right now. By fifteen I had been taught simple resuscitation. I bent over and placed my mouth over his. In the distance, I heard my mother wailing and my brother’s urgent words, “You have to hold his nose.”

It was all surreal, like I was watching myself and my family in a movie. Unaware of time, I suddenly looked up to see an ambulance. Doctor Rabatorie was kneeling before me. For a period that lasted only seconds, but felt eternal, we locked eyes, as he shot an accusing glare that paralyzed me. When he spoke, his voice was devoid of emotion. “This man is dead!” he exclaimed.

I heard the muffled sobs of my brother, his head cradled in his arms over the hood of our car, and in the distance, my mother’s pitiful words, “No, no.”

Thomas Gilbert Barnes Jr., died on August 15th, a warm, sunny day, in 1966. He left behind his beloved wife of nineteen years, Rita, and five children: Delores eighteen, Gary sixteen, Sharon fifteen, Gregory ten and Darcy four.

My childhood, my life of normalcy and stability, had ended, and I was disquieted by a sense that his passing would bring inconsolable sorrow. Curiously, we three older



**Mom and Dad's wedding,
May 1946**

siblings immediately gave my father the status of a saint. Revering him, in this way, served us well through our grieving process, and we kept and protected the ideal as we grew into adults, until his sainthood became somewhat of a reality. As for myself, I have since come to accept that my father was just an ordinary man, and that is good enough.

Reflecting on the months prior to his death, I realize he had experienced a kind of enlightenment and a deeper appreciation for his family. He showed a lighter side of himself. He smiled more than I could remember. He tossed his shirt and cracked jokes about his physique since quitting smoking. "Take a look at this chest," he'd boast. "Sure, sure," we responded with playful sarcasm.

One afternoon, I teased him to give me a hug. He gave a queer grin and ran around the table to escape me. I knew Dad wanted to show affection, he just didn't know how. I also noticed moments when he became mysteriously pensive, and his gaze was miles away. I learned, as an adult, that he had visited a specialist a year or so before his death, and was told he would not live

much longer. In 1966 there was little that medicine could offer a person with advanced arterial disease.

Although my father was not affluent, famous or gifted, he enjoyed his obscure, simple life to the fullest. To say he was an untiring provider is simply inadequate. On the morning of his death my mother pleaded with him, "Tom, please, I beg you, stay home, you're not feeling well." "I am going to work," is all he would answer. He was a loyal husband. Forty-three years later, my mother still states with conviction. "I trusted Thomas one hundred percent."



**Dad, Mom & Gary
Christmas, 1958**

Dad worked for the Kalamazoo Vegetable Parchment Mill in Espanola, from a time I was too young to remember, until his death. As grateful as we all were that he had a steady job, that mill produced an odour so foul it was hard to ignore – the smell of rotten eggs and sewer. A tourist's first question to the locals always went something like this, "Oh my God---, what's that smell?" We who lived there adapted to it and didn't notice it at all, or so I thought. One warm sunny day, when I was nine or ten, I watched my father dozing peacefully on our lawn. Suddenly, he jumped to his feet. "That's not right," he said out loud. He dashed into the

house, with me at his heels, and quickly called the mill. I listened intently to the conversation. He had noticed a chemical in the air that was not supposed to be there.

Something had gone wrong, and he could tell. I couldn't believe what a keen sense of smell he had. I felt as though he was a hero that day.

He was a small hero, to my older sister, Delores, one fresh spring day in 1961. I was eleven at the time. My dad, my older brother, Gary, Delores and I were standing in my grandmother Cyr's old pioneer-style house. We were saying our final goodbyes before it was to be torn down. All of a sudden, Delores began hollering, "Aww... aww... heelp... heelp," and hysterically waving her arms over her head. A very unhappy bee had become tangled in her thick hair. She looked to me for help because I was the closest, but all I could do was gawk at her. Gary was beside me, but he did nothing either. My father, who was the farthest away, dashed toward her with lightning speed, grabbed her hair and the bee, and in seconds both were free. She was so mad at me for just standing there, that she swore, and Delores never swore. "You stupid, blah, blah, blah..." I can't help it, even today, I still laugh unrestrained at the memory. Thank God, though, that my father was there to rescue her from the bee.



Gary, Dad, Delores, Mom & me (1952)

In 1962, I was grateful for his calm demeanor during the Cuban Crisis. I was only eleven years old and became alarmed when our school distributed bomb shelter booklets. In the two week period from October 16 to October 28th, the world was closer to nuclear war than it had ever been. Fortunately, the crisis ended safely, due to the insightful wisdom of President J. F. Kennedy.

On Friday, November 22nd, 1963, dad listened with us to the distinguished voice of Walter Cronkite broadcast these words. "From Dallas Texas, the flash, apparently official. President Kennedy died at 1:00 PM central standard time...2:00 PM eastern standard time...some 38 minutes ago."

Despite sobering world events, my father seemed unaffected. He chose to focus on positive news, such as our upcoming Canadian Centennial Celebrations, in Montreal, the following year. I, too, was feeling the excitement when I realized he had been planning to go.

When I think of my Father today, I am reminded of these words by William Wordsworth:

*What through the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of Splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind...*

In many ways my father was our radiance and our rock. His brightness was his determination not to be discouraged and never to criticize his fellow man or woman.

Death took him from our sight, but not from our minds. He is gone forever, as well the life we knew. We did grieve, but we will always find strength in his memory.



Sharon Ann Jenifer Barnes /Bolger was born on March 20th 1951 in small town Espanola, in northwestern Ontario, a short drive from pristine Manitoulin Island. Four years after the premature death of her father, in 1966, she was married in New Liskeard Ontario. Mother of three cherished children, Barclay, Sarah, Loralie, and the grandmother of four beautiful grandsons. Employed by the Canadian Red Cross for 10 years, then in 1993 she graduated as a Registered Nurse. Divorced in 1998. In 2004, she applied her nursing background to start a retail/ educational, sun awareness business, The Sun Shoppe. Passionate about writing since she was a young girl, this has been her first opportunity to write and publish the memoirs of her childhood.



A Walk in the Park

Teresa Howes

Things can happen when we least expect it. I discovered just how true this saying is, one hot afternoon in July 1988. It was a beautiful summer day and I decided to go for a walk in the park behind my house. Little did I know that this walk would change my life.

It was the middle of the day and I was hoping there would be few people in the park. Due to cerebral palsy, a neurological condition I've had since birth, my walking is somewhat unsteady. My speech can be difficult to understand, too, and I am always aware of people staring at me. This bothers me a great deal. Luckily, there were not many park-goers on this particular day.

I did happen to meet my neighbour and her daughter, however; they had been out for a bike ride in the park. We chatted for a few minutes, and while we were talking I could see a guy on a 10 speed bike, doing figure eights in the crackly, yellow grass, not far from where we were standing. I found this annoying for two reasons. First, he was disrupting our conversation and second, I do not like to be watched.

I soon said goodbye to my neighbours and continued on my walk. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see this slimly-built guy still making figure eights on his bike. I was slightly annoyed, thinking his motive was to watch me walk, and I was afraid that he might make fun of me once I got closer to him. I walked slowly, hoping to avoid him. This didn't work – he just kept making circles in the grass, waiting for me. I became slightly nervous, wondering what this guy was up to. I did think he was cute, though, and a part of me wanted to meet him.

We finally met, a few minutes later. I still remember exactly what he was wearing – safari shorts, a very faded yellow tee shirt and a white bandana surrounding his head. We met near the park bench, where I had been passing the time of day with my neighbours. The first words he said to me were, "Nice day eh?"

And I replied, "Yes, but kind of hot."

This was the start of what was to be a very long relationship. We spoke for maybe five minutes or so. I learned his name was Steve Cogan and I told him mine, Teresa Howes. I naively told Steve where I lived and gave him my telephone number. He seemed like a really nice guy, so I saw no harm. Steve didn't have a paper on which he could jot down my number, so he memorized it. He said he would call me. After I gave him my phone number we both went on our way. I never thought I'd hear from this cool figure eight guy again.

Feeling very excited, I went home and announced "I met a man in the park and gave him my telephone number."

My younger sister immediately told me how wrong I was to give a stranger my telephone number and tell him the general area of where I lived. Considering what she said, I guess I realized it wasn't the best idea but I wanted to see him again. If I hadn't given him my phone number how would that ever happen?

Steve kept his promise and called me the next day. I was in shock and very nervous, but excited, speaking to him on the telephone. He told me he had forgotten my exact telephone number and tried many variations of it until he found the right one. He said it took quite awhile to actually reach me and he was glad when he finally succeeded. We made a date and agreed to meet in the park the next day — the same park where we'd met the day before. We walked for over an hour, exchanging information about each other.

Steve told me he was 32 years old, grew up in Thornhill and loved to work out. In fact, he'd been on his way home from the gym when we first met. I told Steve that I was 27 years old, recently graduated from university and was living with my parents in Etobicoke. I felt it necessary to explain about my cerebral palsy. I said it was a birth accident, affecting my motor control, but it would not get worse, nor would it improve. I was relieved that it didn't seem to faze him. The only comment Steve made was, "I thought you had M.S."



Sitting on Nana's porch

For about a month our dating arena consisted of various parks around the area, then we eventually took our dating ventures to other places. It seems odd to use the term "dating" to describe our relationship. We loved, or love, each other's company, so we spent lots of time together. Shortly after we met, Steve started a small business. His office was in my parents' basement. Often I would find him there working in the morning,

Steve joined us for dinner almost every night and then we spent the evenings together. We enjoyed taking my dachshund, Caelie, for walks in the park, throwing the tennis ball for her to fetch, until we became tired. Caelie never tired of fetching, though. It seemed like she was part of our relationship, as she and her tennis ball were always with us. We both felt extremely sad when our pup finally died at 14 years old.

We both knew, soon after we met, that we would get married one day and it was only due to financial circumstances that we did not marry sooner. We finally “tied the knot” in October 1994. The ceremony took place in Etobicoke, Ontario, very near the place where we first met. When deciding where to have the wedding photographs taken, we thought there was no better place than our special Bloordale Park. The picture of us, sitting on the park bench, was taken in the exact place we first spotted each other in July 1988. We agreed this was the ideal spot to have one of our wedding photos taken. That picture is now proudly displayed in our home. It serves to remind us that the simplest things, even a walk in the park, can change your life.



The park bench where we met



Teresa is 46 years old. She graduated from Trent University in 1987 and married Steve in 1994. She now lives in Brantford, Ontario, where she and her husband operate a research firm out of their home and enjoy spending time with their two adorable cats.



Oh Canada, My Adopted Land

Mary Huzul

In elementary school, in England, I learned about Canada—a beautiful country with great lakes, massive fir trees, lumberjacks, Mounties and polar bears. We even went to the London zoo, along with hundreds of other people to see a little polar bear called Brumas, the first born in captivity.

When I was eighteen I went into nursing training in London. During my second year, we were given a month's holiday in the summer. That was when my friend, Margaret, my brother, Pete, and I back-packed across France. We went as far as Cannes in the south of France. I was surprised my father let me go. I would not have let my children go. We had a few adventures, staying at youth hostels and living on bread and cheese. We also met many Canadians. They were very adventurous, especially the girls.

Margaret and I returned to Paris after graduation because she had been accepted as an air hostess for B.O.A.C. and needed to brush up on her French. I had decided to become a midwife, so I returned to England. It was while I was studying Part 1 midwifery that I met Anne, who was also from London. We stayed in Southampton for six months and returned to London to take Part 2. I also took a Theatre Operating Room course, as I was interested in this field of nursing. During this time we were living with two other girls from Kings College Hospital. Anne's sister Beryl also lived in London. Their brother, Richard, his wife Shay and their three sons lived in Hamilton, Canada.

Beryl, sadly, was diagnosed with cancer, and after surgery and radiation wanted to go to Canada to work and visit with her brother's family. Anne asked me to go along. The three of us went to Canada House to make arrangements for the trip and we were welcomed with open arms. The Canadian government would pay our passage but we had to have a job in Hamilton. This proved to be more difficult than expected, as many of the hospitals would not take a chance on Beryl. But we finally got a job at Chedoke, which was a hospital at that time and is still in operation today.

We had a stormy passage over the Atlantic, on the Cunard liner, Saxonica. Sometimes, Beryl and I were the only ones on deck. She was such a brave, inspirational

person. The day we arrived in Canada, the crew woke us at dawn. Coming up the St. Lawrence River was like a wonderland—everything was pink and pale green. We must have been close to shore as there were fronds from the trees in the water. We landed at Quebec City. I visited the spot last year; it was very picturesque and historical. After disembarking and going through customs, we went on to Montreal. It was August 1st and very hot. Anne's brother and family met us and I had a bad moment, as we weren't sure whether there would be room for me in the station wagon. But they were very welcoming and made room. We stayed in a beautiful inn, so like a place I had stayed in France. The next day we went to Upper Canada Village, Ottawa, and Niagara Falls. I didn't have time to be homesick.

Five days after arriving in Canada, I was at work. By September I was working with Beryl on a children's orthopedic ward; she was a wonderful nurse, very compassionate. I noticed she had developed a bad cough. After further tests we realized that her cancer had returned. Even though we had only been there a short time, the staff collected enough money to send Beryl and Anne home to England. When they got on the plane she looked more like a model than a sick person. Wearing her new grey suit with the mink collar, and her russet coloured hair and brown eyes, she was a lovely young woman. Sadly, she died shortly after arriving home.

I now was alone in Canada, but I decided to stay out the year. There were many nurses from many countries. It was during this time that I met my husband. We were married and remained in Canada. We now have four children and four grandchildren. The only lumberjack I have seen was at the Canadian National Exhibition. I also saw the R. C. M. P. musical ride in Brantford last year and some polar bears on T. V. I still think some of the scenery around the Great Lakes is awesome.

But I especially like the people. I have many native friends and I like the Polish culture of my husband's family. I still like French culture, too. There are parts of the Gatineau Hills where you would swear you were in France. I still don't like the winters here but the white Christmas season is nice. The kids love it. And I do like actually having a summer.



**Al & Mary Huzul,
25 May 1963**



Mary Elsa Huzul was born in London, England 30 Nov. 1937. She has been married to Al Huzul of Brantford for 46 years. They have four children: David, Alison, Paul and Christine, and five grandchildren: Derek, Daniel, Kristin, John David, and Julianne. Mary is a retired nurse with a social work certificate from Renison College, University of Waterloo. A cancer survivor, Mary is taking creative writing with George Whibbs at the Beckett Senior Centre. She is interested in the concept of "healing through writing." Her friends think she survived cancer to become an advocate against domestic violence.