



A Walk Down Memory Lane

Lifescapes Writing Group 2010
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.

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Introduction

Lifescapes is a program of the Brantford Public Library created to help seniors and adults write their life stories. This is the third year we have run the program and the third book of memoirs that we have published. All three *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>

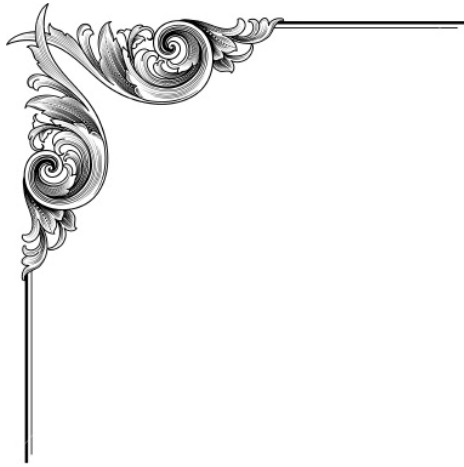
Four local authors, storytellers and teachers visited to speak to the Lifescapes group this year. We would like to offer our sincere thanks to Selkirk author, Cheryl MacDonald; Michael Rutledge of the Brant Taletellers Guild; retired English teacher and Chair of the BPL Library Board, Penny Mackenzie; and to Brantford author, Lorie Lee Steiner, for her talk on writing for the magazine market and for her expert advice and assistance with editing the stories.

Fifteen people completed the program this year. Their enthusiasm and dedication were inspiring and the resulting stories are a joy to read. We hope you will enjoy the third edition of the *Lifescapes* anthology, *A Walk Down Memory Lane*.

Joan Faehrmann
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The Idyllic Years

Alan McClelland

In 1942 my parents and I left my paternal grandparents' home in West Brant to take up residence in a house that Dad was building in a new survey in Brant Township. It is still there, atop Marlborough Street hill, about two blocks from St. Joseph's Lifecare Centre (formerly St. Joseph's Hospital.) I was three years old at the time and it seemed to me as though we had moved to a pastoral paradise. The open fields that surrounded the property and the foundations of an old brick factory that had burned down were just begging to be explored. The neighbourhood kids and I would head out the door in the morning, return for lunch, and be gone again until suppertime. The next eleven years offered a freedom I haven't experienced before or since; they were idyllic.

Dad, being an inexperienced builder, was working from the advice and guidance of two brothers who were building a house in the same area. It had no closets, there was no access to the second floor, and the basement floor was sand. You could say it was built on the open concept as the bedroom was next to the living room with only the studding in place. I can remember doing laps on a tricycle through the bedroom door going between the studs into the living room and back around again.



Alan and the open fields



Dad admiring his handiwork

The road in front ran at about a twenty degree angle for three blocks. In wintertime it would ice up solid and provide all of us neighbourhood kids with a natural sleigh run.

Dad always bought well used cars. Our first one was a 1935 Durant with four doors but only the two front ones had handles. It also required a considerable amount of restoration on Dad's part before it was road worthy. Sunday drives were often the norm as a form of entertainment for families during these years, since all businesses were required to close their doors on Saturday night and not open them again until Monday morning. One Sunday we were out on one of these aimless meanderings of country roads when Mom began pounding on the floor with her feet.

"Jimmy," she yelled, "the floor's on fire."

Dad stopped the car, grabbed the thermos of milk mom always carried for my younger brother Harry (he had showed up two years after we moved), and slid under the car in his suit to put out the flames. Dad had failed to take a hot muffler into account when he replaced the rusted out metal floor with a wooden one. In the ditch beside the car there was some garbage where he found a tin can which, when wrapped around the muffler, allowed us to get back home without further mishap.

On Sundays, a group of us kids often wandered for miles across the open fields. I found it had this great sense of freedom; there was only the horizon before you and hills to climb just to discover what was on the other side. Sometimes we would follow railway tracks to look for flares. One day we were walking along a railway track when we spotted a train coming. All of us got off the track except for Davey, who had wandered a long ways ahead of us. The train was coming directly at him but he couldn't make up his mind which way to jump; first he moved left then to the right. We were all yelling at him to get off the tracks but he waited to the last minute to take our advice and leap to safety.

One day the same group of us kids was waiting in our friend Doug's yard for him to finish his lunch when his younger sister, Darlene, came out with a brown sugar sandwich for each one of us. This was a real treat since we all ate what today would be considered strange if not disgusting snacks, such as mustard sandwiches, ketchup sandwiches and even raw hamburger (not one of us suffered any ill effects from this.) We were all happily munching away until we got to the centre and bit into the sweet pickle that Darlene had put there. I don't think Jack ever forgave her for that but I rather enjoyed it and began adding pickles to my brown sugar sandwiches.

Today, if you travel on Grey Street between Fourth Ave. and Stanley Street, you will see three four plexes and a strip mall but when I was a youngster, it was a child's idea of heaven. There were the foundations of a brick factory that had burned down long ago and a pond where the mall is now located. Trees had grown up around it which shielded it from view and gave it the feeling of having its own private world. The neighbourhood kids and I would spend hours playing there. Sometimes we would meet up with kids from the other side of Stanley Street (which was in the city) who we referred to as city slickers (they probably called us hicks); we would have an abusive verbal exchange but it never escalated to the physical level.

I think we all had the dream that there was a hidden treasure in there somewhere. A good example of this was the time I came across Phil, in amongst some trees, digging a hole.

"What are you doing that for?" I asked.

“See that,” he said, pointing at two sticks in the form of an ‘x’ at the bottom of the tree, “I figure someone buried something here.”

Of course, the only thing Phil got from all this digging was the benefit of the exercise but, as an adult, I realize the real buried treasure lies in the memories we have of the times we spent there.

We often helped ourselves to the local farmer’s fruit when it was ripe. One day Doug and I were sampling Mr. Bateman’s strawberries when we looked up to find him standing at the end of the row, arms crossed, watching us. Our appetites suddenly disappeared and so did we.

Doug used to spend a lot of time at a farm on Park Road which was not far from where he lived. They had an old horse named Maggie that was headed for the glue factory until he pleaded with them to let him have her. When his dad came home from work that night, he couldn’t park his car in the garage because it was occupied by a horse. So, instead of a bicycle, Doug had Maggie and he rode her to deliver the papers on his paper route. When the *Toronto Star* heard about it, his picture appeared on the front page.



Doug making a delivery

Another farmer, also located near Doug, had a large number of chickens and sold eggs to the public. He gave Doug about a dozen cracked eggs one day to take home for his mother to use. We had a better idea. In a field, at the corner of Park Road and Grey Street, a construction company had erected a huge sign which was an ideal target. That night Doug, Jack, Davy, and I stood at the edge of the road by the fence and pelted it with the cracked eggs. It was rather hard to see in the dark but we knew when we had hit it by the satisfactory loud splat.

The next day Doug and Jack were in the convenience store which was located nearby and Mr. Kelly, the proprietor said, “The police were here today asking about who had been buying eggs from me. They’re looking for the culprits who defaced Cromar’s sign.”

Mr. Kelly was well aware that he was already talking to two of the culprits.

What we had thought of as a lark had now turned serious and scared the living daylights out of us. All four of us returned that night, climbed the fence and used the ice scrapers we had borrowed from our parents’ cars to remove the mess those cracked eggs had made. Doug always claimed we removed more paint than egg yolk but the matter seemed to die there and we heard no more about it.

On Saturday afternoons we were often downtown standing in line at one of the theatres waiting for the matinee to begin. I always looked younger than my age so when it came time for me to pay the student fare, I still asked for the children’s ticket. This came to end one day when the ticket seller, who had been serving me for years said, “Next time you’re paying the student price.”

After the movie we would often wander over to the Lorne Bridge and watch teenage swimmers jump off the railing with arms wind milling to keep them upright until they disappeared into the Grand River. The dam that was there at that time kept the water deep enough to enable them to do this. They would bob to the surface, swim to the river bank and return for another go. Bill McClelland, one of my cousins, lived in West Brant and was one of the jumpers. I was talking to him recently about it, "Yeah, he said, "I would often stand there for half an hour before I had the nerve to take the plunge."

I laughed. "If it had been me," I said, "I would still be standing there today."

Whenever my family visited my uncle Bill, I would pair off with my cousin Gord because we were both the same age. One day we dropped in unexpectedly and when Gord saw me, he motioned to follow him out the back door. Outside he showed me a paper bag that was half filled with a black powder.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Gunpowder," he said.

He had made it himself using the formula he had gotten from his older brother's chemistry set. The sulphur and the saltpetre he bought at the drug store and the charcoal he got from burning some wood chips. When I showed up, he was about to head over to Agriculture Park (Cockshutt Park today) to set it off.

Gord brought some tin cans that we put the powder in and buried in the ground with a piece of paper sticking up for a fuse. We lit the first one, then ran and stood behind a fence to see what would happen. There was a loud explosion and a cloud of dust flew into the air. The same thing happened with the other two cans without any neighbours or police showing up to question what we were doing.

I got the formula from him and when I got home, I blew up my own tin cans. Eventually I lost interest in it but when I decided to try it again at a later date, I found the formula had disappeared.

One Saturday morning four of us were on a quest to find an abandoned house that someone had told Doug was located on Erie Ave. near the train station. There were a lot of maybes to be considered on this type of an adventure. For instance, maybe they kept money hidden somewhere and had forgotten it or maybe it had secret panels for us to discover and maybe, if we were really lucky, it would be haunted. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a one storey bungalow, not the three storey mansion with bats flying around the cupola that, I'm sure, we all imagined it would be. We stood out front wondering what to do next when Davey noticed that a side window was open and we could easily climb in. We wandered from room to room peering in closets and tapping on the walls but it was when we were all in the kitchen looking in the cupboards that a door shut with a loud bang. It seemed like only a few seconds had elapsed before we were all standing out front on the sidewalk again. Since no one had followed us out and everything was quiet inside, it became obvious that one of us left a door open and it had swung shut by itself. Even though our further exploring didn't turn up any hidden treasures or ghosts, we still considered it to be one of our most interesting outings.

Jack bought a used Harley-Davidson motorcycle and Doug, Phil, and I were standing in front of his house impatiently waiting for him to show up with it. Finally he roared up the street and pulled into the yard and climbed off. All of us were standing around admiring it when Jack asked, "Does anybody want to take it for a spin?"

Doug and Phil both eagerly volunteered and each took it for a short drive. Since I was the youngest of the group and the only one without a driver's license, Jack had to sit behind me to change the gears and work the brake; all I had to do was turn the throttle and steer. We were barreling down Park Road, which was gravel at that time and I could hardly see because my eyes were watering so bad from the wind in my face.

"Jack," I said, "How fast are we going?" I felt him stand up on the foot pedals to look over my shoulder.

"Sixty-five," he answered, and sat back down laughing like a hyena.

Neither one of us had the foggiest notion of how lucky we were to have survived that wild ride but just thinking about it today can send shivers up my spine.

Normally, I didn't tell my parents about these escapades but once in a while I slipped up. Such as the time I said to Mom, "You remember when Doug's brother was pulling us on a toboggan behind his car and the rope broke and we ended up in the ditch?"

Mom had a little smirk on her face as she said, "Oh yes, I sure do."

It wasn't until later that I realized that she couldn't possibly have remembered because I had never told her about it.

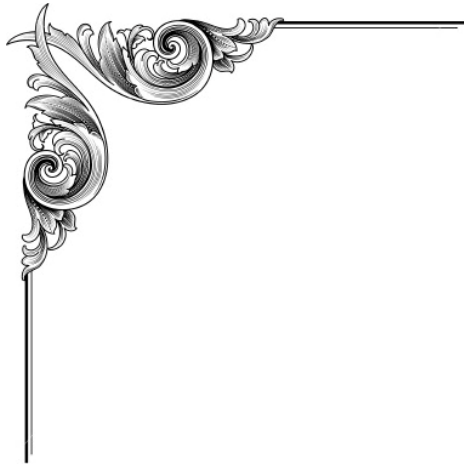


The finished product

The idyllic years were just too good to last and ended abruptly when I passed into high school. I hadn't developed any study habits, had no self discipline, nor did I have any idea what I wanted to for a living. This was the beginning of my drifting years but that is another story.



Alan McClelland was born and raised in Brantford where he attended both Brantford Collegiate Institute (BCI) and Pauline Johnson high schools. He returned to Brantford in May of 2000 after living in Cambridge and Kitchener for almost thirty years. He has two children and two grandchildren.



Fenced In

Sharon Bolger

It was 1964 and the Vietnam War was in full swing. It was also the summer Miriam and I met and became best friends.

At first I was not sure what drew my teenage friend and me together. The differences between us were many. She was extroverted and opinionated. I was shy and subdued. She had a well educated mother who had elaborate plans for her intelligent daughter. My parents were poorly educated French Canadians who showed little interest in my future.

I remember that first summer as a very carefree time. We spent almost every day together, basking in the newness of our relationship, but feeling as though we had known each other for ever. My fondest memory is of her on the seat of her brother's bike, and me peddling us around.

"You're going to have to pull your legs up," I said, laughing so hard I didn't have the strength to get us going.

Many times we went to her house for snacks or drinks. On one particular day, we entered the small screened-in back porch and the smell of sweet baking swirled into our nostrils

"Can we have a chocolate ball?" Miriam called to her Mother, as we eyed the little brown goodies.

"Each one is a pimple," she hollered back.

"If it's true she ought to know, she's a public health nurse," Miriam said with pride.

"I have yet to see a zit on your face," I responded enviously. I wasn't so lucky with my complexion. We grabbed our treat and scooted upstairs.

"Are you sure it's ok if I come in?" I asked, searching for a positive answer. "I always feel funny around your Mom. I don't think she likes me." Miriam just gave me a grin and said nothing. So I knew part of it was true.

Other than our backgrounds, the most obvious difference between us was our height. She was 5 feet 7 and I was only 5 feet tall. She also had a roaring laugh that shook your ear drums, then, ended in a series of snorts. And that's what everyone heard whenever we went to the show. If anyone asked, I'd have to say, she didn't have an insecure bone in her body. But, the following October I discovered I was wrong. And then I finally understood what we had in common. Now, forty years later, this particular memory still makes me laugh.

September had rolled around and we settled into our first year of high school. That's when I learned my friend was a dedicated student. I admired that about her, because I was no scholar. In October, our school had the first dance of the year. I was determined to convince Miriam to come with me. When I found her studying on that Friday night, I knew it was going to be a challenge. I began by showing interest in her well-being.

"You can't just study all the time, it's not good for you," I said, with tear-jerking concern in my voice. When that didn't work, I changed my strategy. "Don't you want to meet boys?" I questioned, hoping I'd make her feel less than normal if she said no.

"Not really, boys won't dance with me, I'm too tall," she responded, as she tossed her long thick black hair around.

"Well, then, do it as a favour for me," I pleaded. And after listing more good reasons to go, I could see her starting to cave-in. "If you don't like it we won't stay," I promised. Although she threw me a stinging look, I knew I had her.

"We are going to be late; doesn't that matter?" she shot back.

"I'll bet lots of kids arrive late," I assured her. "Just picture yourself dancing with a cute guy, a tall cute guy."

We arrived to hear the deafening sound of live band music playing "The Locomotion." I signaled her to two empty seats around the corner where we sat tight together against the wall. After what seemed like a really long time, Miriam leaned over to me between songs and whispered in my ear.

"Notice something, like . . . everyone's in couples? I feel like a dope and a wall-flower," she said sarcastically.

"Let's take a walk," I whispered back, and we slipped out of the gymnasium intending to get some fresh air. We quickly found a pair of doors leading out into the brisk October night.

"This is a drag and I'm going home," Miriam announced with conviction. "We haven't danced once and we aren't going to by the looks of it. You can do what you want, Sharon, but I'm going home."

"You're right," I admitted, and agreed to leave with her. "It's cold out here, let's get back inside," I said while my teeth chattered. Turning, I gave the doors a gentle push, and then, I pushed harder. "They won't open. Oh no, we're locked out," I whimpered.

"No!" Miriam shouted hysterically. "Don't you dare bang on the glass," she said in a threatening tone, her teeth clamped tight. "I won't look a like fool and be laughed at for the next 5 years. I knew I shouldn't have come to this stupid dance." For a few seconds, I became distracted from our predicament. She's come unglued, I thought. Suddenly I knew what it was that attracted me to her. It was her unshakable confidence. But now I realized she didn't have it either, not really.

“Don’t have a cow!” I shot back. “We’ll just walk around the school and come back in the front doors.” I tried to steady my voice hoping to calm us both. It was pitch dark while we headed toward the direction of the sidewalk.

“It’s fenced! We’re fenced in!” Miriam screeched. Suddenly we began to laugh hysterically and, without thinking, we both grabbed onto the 12 foot linked fence and began to climb it . . . in the dark . . . in dresses. I was clinging to it a couple feet off the ground when it became painfully clear that I couldn’t do it. I looked over to see that my friend had almost reached the top.

“Oh no, there’s barbed wire up here,” she said in defeat.

Just at that moment a couple from the dance opened the doors for several seconds, then went back inside. I jumped down, ran and grabbed the doors before they closed.



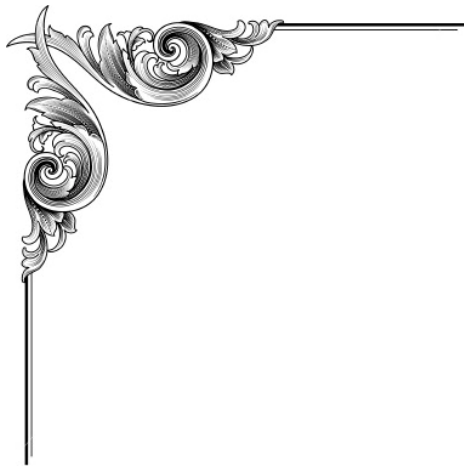
Miriam and Sharon

“Thank God,” I sighed with great relief. We headed toward the cloak room, grabbed our coats, and left. We didn’t say much to each other. We were rather embarrassed. I’m not sure if Miriam gained some insight into herself that night. I would never have believed she, of all people, could lose her cool—not my super confident best friend.

She never did go to another school dance with me. But it wasn’t the end of our friendship, nor was it the end of our adventures together.



Sharon Barnes/Bolger was born in northern Ontario a short drive from beautiful Manitoulin Island. Growing-up in a small town surrounded by trees, lakes, and small mountains provided an environment for a creative, wholesome imagination. Nature’s inspiration flowed into reading and writing and they became her joy and entertainment. That passion motivates her today to write stories about people who are close to her heart.



The Philippines and How to Quit Smoking

Christopher Fowler

The Philippines

In 1980, 22 years since joining ‘Shaver Poultry’ of Galt , Ontario, I was the Technical Service / Trouble Shooter for East Asia, teaching a little, learning a little, and discovering surprises at every turn.

It was a long flight from cool (August) Vancouver to far-from-cool Manila. This was the start of a month’s trip, the first week to be with the Robbins Company, Shaver distributor for the country, my first visit there

“Welcome to the Philippines.” The smiling Chinese gentleman spoke good, accented English. “I’m Jimmy Sio, farms manager for Robbins.”

Befuddled by jet-lag and overwhelmed by the sticky heat as well as the sudden appearance of a live Mandarin, I could only mutter, “Thank you.”

Surely no chicken farmer, I thought. My ‘Mandarin’ waved an imperious arm. The luggage and useless top-coat vanished and next minute I found myself beside him in a shiny Mercedes driven by a small, alert Filipino headed toward a forest of skyscrapers, Makati, the heart of Manila.

Chicken management is a scientific business, dealing with live creatures and all their needs. Quite often throughout parts of Asia and Africa I had found myself recommending housing and diets for the birds more generous than the local humans could expect. The job was starting to change my perceptions. Brought up in a Conservative household (Father was a banker), I could feel a little Socialism coming on.



Jimmy Sio



Makati/Manila

Air conditioned and fifteen stories above the cacophony of Makati, I slept soundly that night. Jimmy Sio collected me next morning. He looked a bit less Mandarin, a bit more chicken farmer.

“We go see the boss.” My guide announced. He pushed the UP button on the elevator.

“Up? Chickens on the top floor?” I blurted.

“Johnson office top of building. He owns hotel.” Nary a smile crinkled his Chinese eyes.

Some chicken farmers! I kept the thought to myself. I’d

better practice being inscrutable in this company.

Johnson Go was a modern Chinese, tall and slim—the sort who keeps a Badminton racket in the coat closet and trainers in the filing cabinet. I thought he was younger than me, but it’s hard to tell, especially with the modern ones. We shook hands, sat around his palatial desk and talked. Actually Jimmy and I just listened. We also drank coffee. After two hours Jimmy explained he had work to do and left. Johnson talked on. He and his elder brother owned a lot of real-estate in the city, besides businesses like breweries...and hotels, not to mention many acres of farm land throughout the country. In Philippine society they were the upper crust, supporting and supported by the Marcos dictatorship and all the goodies that appended thereto. I was impressed.

Eventually Johnson got hungry. The hotel’s restaurant, on the ground floor, kept a secluded table for the boss and his guests. The waiter, attentive as he was, offered no menu. Johnson turned to me. “Rare or medium?” he asked and it dawned on me that steak was all Johnson wanted to eat, probably all he ever ate, at least for lunch. I’m no expert but the steak on my plate was the tastiest and most tender I’d ever met.

“Philippines beef?” I asked politely.

“American, of course. We import a lot.” He swallowed a mouthful, called the waiter over, “Bring more Béarnaise!” It came at the double. With the next forkful poised he turned to me, “I’m addicted to the stuff.” It was indeed an excellent sauce, full of best quality butter. He didn’t have to explain. In his position I too could become addicted, and not only to the sauce. The wine was great and the whole lifestyle too.

Where does he hide it all? I wondered to myself. Not even a belly bulge....yet. I bet he jogs a lot.

“With so much going for you,” I asked, “How is it that you are in the chicken business?” I had hoped to get his attention away from food and onto the purpose of my visit. I hadn’t seen even a feather yet, and already nearly a day gone.

Johnson looked at me wondering at my ignorance.

“We are in the chicken business to make money. In this country poultry and eggs have long been in short supply. They provide high quality proteins with a low cost of production. We see it as a good business opportunity.” No altruism there! My

question must have broken his chain of thought. Shortly afterwards we set out for the farms.

We left the sophisticated, towering structures of Makati and headed across Manila, a confusing jumble of tin-roofed, tatty buildings, through streets thick with people, bicycles, trucks, carts, dust and, above all, Jeepneys. These relics of McArthur's war had been modified and decorated out of recognition. By their very numbers they dominated the Manila scene and, by their klaxons, ruled it. The drive was slow in spite of the adventurous efforts of our Filipino driver. He couldn't compete with the Jeepneys. A scratch on the Mercedes would be more than his job was worth. The afternoon was well along before we reached the first of the farms.



Manila/Jeepney

This was in Antipolo, a village perched on one of the hills that rim the landward side of Manila, 15 miles from the city, and shaded by great trees, it was a degree or two cooler there, and quieter.

"You think this a good place for chickens?" He asked.

"Yes Johnson. You chose well," I agreed.

Jimmy had the workers lined up, a parade for the dignitaries. They all smiled. I smiled back. Johnson frowned, "Let's get started with the tour." He was right, nightfall would be there soon, not dusk but sudden darkness in these parts. The farm was impressive with 25 widely spaced, open-sided buildings, each 200 feet long, 30 wide, and home for some 50,000 breeding birds in all. We walked between the houses, a very quick inspection. Electric lights extend the natural day length for the flocks to 14 hours, but on this farm, to suit the work schedule, they were used pre-dawn. As we walked, darkness arrived. The squawks and cackles subsided. Even the roosters fell silent.

"You'd better start in the morning." Johnson had somewhere else to go. Jimmy drove me back to Mikati. Manila under street lights was even more active and noisy than in daylight.

"Is there a motel in Antipolo?" I asked. "You and Johnson will be spending too much time driving me back and forth. I would rather stay close to the work"

"Well yes," replied Jimmy. "There is motel but not so comfortable." He looked at me strangely. "You rather stay Antipolo?" There was amazement in his voice.

"Jimmy, I'll risk it. Take me there tomorrow. I'll be all packed up and ready to move." I was looking forward to seeing trees outside my window instead of skyscrapers, and perhaps hearing something other than the howling Jeepneys or the roar of air-conditioners.

I checked in at the pride of Antipolo next morning. The room was bright and airy, clean and with all modern conveniences. What more could I ask?

On this farm, besides the fifty thousand breeding birds, and well spaced from them, was the hatchery. The building was huge.

“We also bring hatching eggs here from other Robbins farms in the area.” explained Jimmy. “The capacity is over three million eggs and we produce more than half a million day-old chicks in twice weekly hatches.”

I thanked Jimmy for his unusually long speech. On my ‘Tours of Inspection’ an important aspect was hygiene. One standard platitude in my lectures was, “Disease prevention, the key to successful poultry farming in the tropics.”

The hatching process yields much besides fluffy little day-olds. There are empty shells as well as little corpses that hatched but quickly died. There are eggs that didn’t



The hatchery

even start to develop and, worst of all, the embryos that tried but died part way. At this particular hatchery all the males are destroyed (even more debris.) In our trade we call them the ‘off-sides.’ The breeders here are strictly laying strains, very efficient egg producers but small and lean. Their brothers are just as small and lean, an overwhelming disadvantage in the poultry meat business. If

reared, they quickly eat more feed than their little bodies are worth. Hence the early, though painless, death sentence.

Eyes, ears and nose alert, I cast around for the garbage pit. None to be seen. Fearing the worst I turned to my polite host, “Jimmy, please where is the hatchery debris?”

Quiet Jimmy, self-contained as ever, added a small inscrutable smile to his usually immobile features. He knew what I was thinking. “Over there,” he said, pointing across the yard. Then I noticed a few shovels-full of dry, crinkly white egg shells.

“Is that all?” Disbelief.

“We bury the shells in our gardens. Good fertilizer.”

“But what about the rest of the stuff, the deads, the unhatched, the off-sides?” I was ready to panic, expecting to come across some lurking, fly-infested midden. I looked skyward for the crows or circling vultures but there were none. Jimmy’s smile broadened. He was ready with the punch line:

“We eat the rest.”

I had nothing to say. Even now, these many years later, the moment stays clear in my mind. This, I thought, is not Makati. This is the Third World.

The farms and hatchery crews at Antipolo were a cheerful bunch. They teased each other a lot. I understood none of their Tagalog and must have been a source of great amusement for them, but no one showed anything but respect for the naive foreigner. A few evenings later I was comfortably settled in my motel room, scribbling reports and thinking about going down for dinner. There was a tap on the door.

Jimmy said, “May we come in?”

‘We’ turned out to be at least half of the farms’ and hatchery’s crews. They filled the chairs, perched round the edges of the bed and squatted all over the floor, all grinning and chattering. “We’ve brought supper,” announced Jimmy.

I think the day had been a public holiday, for some. Perhaps my friends felt sorry for me in my lonely splendour but they certainly wanted to bring me into their cheerful circle. I was accepted. Flattered, I felt I should make a speech but Jimmy superseded me.

“Here’s food.” he announced, and by some sleight of hand(s) half a dozen 5 gallon plastic buckets appeared among the group and they were munching.

“Eat,” commanded Jimmy. From the first bucket they were pulling handfuls of crispy-brown, deep-fried whole baby chicks—the offsites! Colonel Sanders couldn’t have done them better.

“Oh, well, you see...I’m not really hungry,” I stuttered. “A tummy bug, I think. Looks delicious. Sorry, I couldn’t eat a thing.” They opened another bucket.

“Here, try this.” Jimmy pushed it toward me. “Good for the stomach!” I’m sure he was sincere, but it wasn’t good for mine. ‘Balute’ is what Jimmy called it, a delicacy. To me it was the missing ‘dead-in-shells,’ albeit thoroughly boiled. In that crowded, happy little room I suddenly realized there was a wide culture gap and I was sitting on the wrong side of it.

I’m sure they all got a kick out of my dilemma. Jimmy, educated, certainly understood my embarrassment, but the rest of the boys must have wondered at the dumb foreigner not knowing good food when he saw it. One thing I learned from the experience: there is more to recycling than I could ever have imagined.

On another visit to Antipolo, some years later, the waiter told me the cook was angry because a snake had been eating his ducks. The birds lived in the orchard at the back of the motel. The snake seems to have been quicker than the cook even though it apparently outweighed the little man by a good fifty pounds. A few mornings later the waiter was smiling. The usual neatly set breakfast buffet wasn’t there. In its place on the crisp, white tablecloth stretched a twelve foot Boa Constrictor, or rather the skin of one. “The cook shot him,” he grinned.

“But where’s the rest of the snake?” I asked, fearing it might soon be served as fritters.

“Oh, we ate it already.”

Twenty years before we had watched a hawk swoop to catch a pigeon which had bounced from our windscreen, and wondered at the desperate hunger of the predator. That was India. They’re hungry in the Philippines too, I reflected.

On this first, and many other visits to Antipolo I was interested to see how healthy the dogs looked. They were well fed, even sleek, such a contrast to the scrawny pie-dogs we’d seen scavenging the gutters of New Delhi. Then I thought a bit. Many Indians are vegetarians and in any case consider dogs ‘Untouchable.’ Filipinos, on the other hand, are rarely vegetarian. They treat their dogs well. They are food! From the dogs’ points of view they might actually prefer the short, happy Philippine life to the agony of being canine in a Hindu country.

“Come to a basket ball game.” Jimmy took pains to make me relax and not spend the weekends writing. In Manila the basket ball league is well organised, something they

inherited from the American occupation, and the game is played and watched with enthusiasm. They are just as keen about baseball, another import.

"I'd rather watch ice hockey," I replied, "But, O.K. I guess I do really need to get out." I'd say this for Jimmy, no matter how surly my acceptance of his attentive hospitality, he wouldn't accept a refusal. I got taken to several sports events and enjoyed them, all except one.

"You want to see cock-fight?" Jimmy's invitation came at a time when he seemed to have run out of other entertainment ideas.

"Not really." This was my standard reply to most invitations that took me away from my paper. It was always a struggle to get the notes and reports finished before the next stage in my journey. "Cock fighting? Isn't that illegal?" I hoped Jimmy was joking.

"Oh no, many people go to cock fights. Not like baseball or basketball, this a genuine Filipino sport."

Why not? I thought. Jimmy certainly wanted to go. "Thanks, I'll come with you, but forgive me if I keep my eyes shut."

Jimmy may have been a gambler, not that he ever placed bets while I was around, but of all the 'games,' it was at the cockfights where the biggest wads of pesos could be seen.

We stood on a high wooden terrace, as far as I could get from the battlefield. The cock owners were ordinary fellows, backyard chicken farmers by the look of them, hopefuls, not the slick gamblers I'd expected. I closed my eyes as feathers started flying. Shouts from the crowd drowned out the squawks. Then it was over, so quickly. I begged to retreat, not to have to look at the blood. "I'm sorry Jimmy. I'm too chicken for this."

"O.K., let's go." He followed me out to the sunshine. I apologized again.

"Forget it," said Jimmy. "Not your 'cup of tea.' I understand." As we walked back to the car a disappointed owner ahead of us was pulling the last feathers off the corpse of his losing battler, dangling the bloody remains by one leg.

"There's a family who will eat well tonight," remarked Jimmy. "A consolation prize for his kids." I remembered that hawk in India.

At the end of that first trip, Jimmy had driven me to the airport. This time we didn't go through the streets of Manila but took the long route over the ring of hills that skirted the city. "This makes a nice change," I remarked, "but why?"

"A little trouble in the city." He didn't explain further. It seemed strange to me but I'd neither heard nor read anything from the rest of the World for a week. It was, in any case, a delightful ride. The sun was shining on our hillside but away over there, in fact right above the towers of Mikati, there hung a huge black cloud, a freak of nature if ever I saw one.

We shook hands warmly at the airport, firm friends. For me that was an enriching and worthwhile experience. I hoped the Robbins Company felt some benefits too.

That night I flew to Seoul, South Korea. There was an English language newspaper at breakfast next morning. The headline, "Riots in Manila," caught my eye. It seems that President Marcos had been about to call out the troops as a mob set fires and smashed windows in the heart of Makati. A sudden freak rainstorm had broken up the demonstration. Lucky for Marcos! I thought. I wondered if Johnson had been out jogging. He wouldn't have enjoyed the rain.

Then I remembered the huge black cloud. The Americans' Clark Airbase was near there. Perhaps they'd been persuaded to try a little 'cloud seeding' to help their friend, Marcos keep his job. They might have saved Johnson Go and his brother a lot of grief too. One up for the capitalists.

How to Quit Smoking

It was late winter, 1972/1973. The price of a carton of cigarettes had gone up to 5 dollars, more than the cost of a week's food for the five of us. "That's it." I said, "I quit." A wild, meaningless statement, just another in a long series.

"Yes," said Olive, "and pigs will fly." We unpacked bags of groceries to fridge and cupboards. Finally the carton was left, upright in the center of the kitchen table, a monument to my sins. "Well?" she asked. "Does it go straight to the garbage?"

"Er, well no. I mean, it's already bought and paid for. But next time, I promise, I'll leave the cigarettes on the store shelf." I carried the carton upstairs and tucked it right at the back of my socks' drawer. Maybe I'll forget it's there, I thought. Or I'll ration myself to just one a day...no, perhaps just two...or maybe five..?

Steadily smoking, on an ascending scale, for thirty-two years is habit forming. Call it addiction if you like, but I could never bring myself to pronounce that word. "I could quit any time I wanted," was my standard defense when challenged, the same words most smokers use. Of course I had never yet come across a time I did want.

It was in the mornings when I heard most of Olive's criticisms. "Do you have to cough like that?" As if I could help it! "You'll wake the children with all your hawking and spitting." Or, with an expression of disgust on her face, "Be sure to rinse that down the drain!" I heard, but like the water, it all flowed off the duck's back. In fact I was well used to the criticism and advice, even before marriage.

"Such a dirty habit, dear, so smelly. Look at your father, nicotine stained fingers, and look at his teeth!" My mother had been at a loss to find some shining example of abstinence for me to follow. It seemed that all the world smoked in those days and, at 14 years old, who was I to buck the trend? Father said very little on the subject. With his old cherry-wood pipe clamped between his yellow stained and misshapen teeth, and his spare packet of 'Players' cigarettes in his pocket, in case he should run out of tobacco, not to mention the ever-handly box of Swan-vestas for reviving the smouldering plug in his pipe's bowl, he was in no position to start trying to guide his teenage son toward tobacco abstinence. Smoking was a status symbol. Respectable men, like Father (he was a banker,) all smoked. Didn't the poshest gentlemen's clubs have smoking rooms? There was little or no support for Mother's arguments or even her pleas. Health was not a factor.

"Look at your uncle Walter. You don't want to get like him, do you?" Walter was Father's brother-in-law, a kindly, soft spoken man, totally devoted to his wife, my auntie Hilda, (for some reason, nick-named 'Jim.') He had asthma, coughed a lot and smoked too but was clearly a sick man. His cigarettes were hand-made, a habit he'd

picked up in Calcutta in his years as a tea trader. The smoke smelled odd too, sort of herbal.

“No Mother, I won’t be like him.” Secretly, in my youthful arrogance, I thought Uncle Walter a bit of a softy and as for coughing? What had that to do with anything?

Mother didn’t know I’d tried my first cigarette at 12 years of age up among the branches of a big old oak tree behind the Williams’ house in Chelston, Torquay, where I was billeted. By the time she discovered my habit I was a two-year veteran, well hooked, the only constraint being money. Nothing changes. Thirty two years later I was still smoking to the limit of my wallet.

I had no idea how I could go about giving up tobacco but for a couple of days I fought the urge to dig in behind the socks. It might have been withdrawal symptoms but I started with a cold: watery eyes, sore throat and the promise of misery to come. Everything became tasteless. I forgot to want a cigarette. Then the phone rang.

“Get your bag packed.” It was the boss, Don Shaver. “You’ll be away at least six weeks.” Not everyone in the chicken business had to travel, but for me two or three weeks at a time was the usual, but six?

“Where to this time?” I asked, but he cut me off before I got to the ‘when’ and ‘why’.

“Something’s come up. See me, my office first thing tomorrow.” Click. The phone went dead.

“Not again!” said Olive, “And why so long this time?” She was despairing. “Six weeks? What will you be doing for all that time?” Then she thought for a moment and her expression turned to dismay. “Six weeks...in the hockey season!”

Andy was 15, Simon 10 and Paul 9: three avid hockey players, three different ice rink destinations every weekend, from one end of Ontario to the other, three key men in their teams, three who’d rather miss a meal than a game. All, or most, of the parents shared the driving, but often we were glad to have two cars and two drivers to handle our part of the complex itineraries. “You’ll leave me alone with all this?” Olive was in shock. “How could you!” Our daughter Kelvin Anne, 18, was already away at McMaster University, not in the least interested in sports, especially her little brother’s hockey games, but seriously dedicated to gaining her B.Sc. There was no help to come for the beleaguered hockey mum from that quarter.

“But, sweetheart, it’s my job.” Indeed, travelling was the main part of it. I knew well that my being away so often made Olive unhappy. It made me unhappy too. We were a tight-knit family and I should be there with them. “The boss pays me a salary for doing this...We need the money.”

“But six weeks!” It was her cry from the heart. Right then I privately made myself a promise. By hook or by crook, there’d be a stop to this travelling, just as soon as I could find the money. Here’s another incentive to quit smoking, think of the cash I’d save!

Somehow Olive made it through those crowded six (plus) weeks, often sharing the driving with fellow hockey mums. Bad enough that she had a full time job, weekdays, now she was spending any rest hours she might have found at weekends battling the endless lake-effect snows of south central Ontario. When I finally got home I told her she deserved a medal. She looked at me like I’d crawled out of a hole. “Huh. You need to do a lot better than that!”

The next day's briefing confirmed my worst fears. Six weeks? Probably more like eight. Sweden would be the first stop, in fact I'd be lucky to get away from there in less than a month, then New Zealand after leap-frogging across the Globe via Spain, Syria, Tehran, Ceylon (nearly Sri Lanka) and Singapore. Getting home from there would depend on everything going according to plan 'down under.' After being on hold for a couple of years, the project to ship pure-line breeding stock to New Zealand was suddenly an urgent, "GO". Some bureaucrats had had a change of heart.

"We must strike while the iron is hot." said the boss. "The license could be revoked if we don't act quickly, and you already have at least three weeks' work in Sweden to prepare the shipment." Through the virus-infested fog in my head I softly moaned to myself, "Why do I have to be the Jack-of-all trades? He'd never send a book keeper or a salesman on a jaunt like this."

The hasty assembly of equipment, pedigree records, note books, tickets, visas and all the other paraphernalia happened in a blur. Olive made sure a good collection of cold cures and paper handkerchiefs got squeezed into the suitcases. I was past thinking, past caring. My head was stuffed. The cold was settling in. Someone drove me to the airport. The skies were clear; it was only me in the fog.

"Hello, my name's Krister Jonson." The smiling, bespectacled young gentleman grabbed for the larger of the two suitcases. "Er, why don't I find you a porter?" Here was a wise man. He'd surely have damaged himself if he'd lifted the thing. Plenty of good living, I thought, envious. Years of farm chores had conditioned my stringy muscles, but done little for the brains, or the pocket book.

Between sneezes I thanked him. "I seem to have come down with a cold, or maybe it's chicken dust." He didn't laugh but kept a respectable distance between us, either side of the porter, as we walked to his car. I sat with a box of tissues on my lap. Though a cool morning, he opened his window a little, just a crack. "Cigarette?" he asked.

"No thanks, I'm trying to give it up."

He smiled sadly "Good luck! I've been trying that for years, but not this week. Mind if I light up?"

"Go ahead." I murmured, thinking, "Choke on it." At least he kept the window open and the heater at full blast. I really didn't care what he did. I had a hundred years of sleep to catch up on.

Krister Jonson had been Shaver's Swedish 'on-the-spot' man for several years. An advertising agent, his usual lair was high above the city streets of Stockholm. His suit was neat and tidy, his finger nails immaculate. Beside him I felt slightly grubby, but I had the impression he was looking forward to being a part of this earthier, hands-on aspect of the chicken business.

"This is Helsingborg." The sudden remark woke me.

"Where was Sweden?" I asked, beginning to feel better as my wits began to drift back between my ears.

"Sorry, you missed it." Krister grinned, "For now, that is. You'll be seeing plenty of my lovely country for the next few weeks. I hope you enjoy it."

The Esso Motor Hotel, all in English, could have been in Kitchener or Brantford. In spite of sleeping all the way from Gothenburg to Helsingborg, probably 5 hours, all I wanted at the "Esso" was more sleep, preferably between sheets.

“Try these.” Krister handed me a metal tube with an Orange label. “Vitamin C. The best cure for a cold.” He said. I must have looked skeptical.

“Will they help me give up smoking too?”

He cackled as he waved from the car. “Lief Rosengren will be along tomorrow to get you started. Sleep well!”

Agricultural Ministries of all nations take their responsibilities to exclude foreign diseases, real or imagined, very seriously indeed. Their regulations alter, often. Their lists of “Favoured” and “Unfavoured” nations change daily. This may have more to do with politics than veterinary concerns, but who can comment? In 1970 a bunch of one-day-old pedigree Shaver breeders had been placed in Sweden, a ‘Nucleus Flock,’ a disease-free source for when, or if, the New Zealanders decided an import could happen. Regulations changed, New Zealand closed the door. The bunch of one-day-olds grew up on their Swedish farms, maturing, lingering, then aging gracefully. At two years of age a chicken has passed its prime but it was then the bureaucrats decided the door might be opened. A ‘foreign’ flock could be placed in New Zealand after all. Fearful that the ‘Permit’ might be revoked at any moment, my boss wanted the shipment done, fast.

Leif Rosengren owned a chicken hatchery and, on some of his many breeding farms, reared and managed that 1970 ‘Nucleus Flock’. “You can use one of my egg-storage rooms at the hatchery. It’s empty now. Don said you’d be needing it for a month and I hope it won’t take longer than that.”

“A month? Less, I hope.” I was not going to stretch this trip a day longer than I had to. Leif’s concern was that his main hatching season would start soon and I’d be clogging up the works. We saw eye to eye.

Leif, like most Swedish people I met, spoke very good English and did it without condescension. It never seemed to occur to them that I should at least try to speak Swedish or apologize for making them talk my language. How unlike some places I’ve been, I thought. In Germany I’d had to speak German, or be ignored, the same with French..... “Count your blessings.”

I have come across poultry farmers in many lands. They have all been entrepreneurs, most of them natural salesmen, often blunt, likely to describe a spade as a bloody shovel, sometimes even crude. Leif was an exception. Always polite, he was considerate of others, gentle in his manner, congenial. At six foot six, he commanded respect anyway. He knew I was born in England. “You O.K. with driving on the right side of the road?” Not many years before, Sweden had switched from the left. My mind boggles at the thought of it, the whole country, suddenly! He knew all about the hazards. It was nice of Leif to show concern, or maybe it was because it was his van I’d be driving.

“It’s been years,” I smiled, “But please give me a good map. When I need to ask the way, I might not find an English speaker.”

The Boss had told me the job would be simple: gather, sort, pack and store the eggs then dispatch them to Auckland. There was nothing simple about it. The Dams had never met their designated mates. They weren’t even living together and at their age, not all that interested in sex. For most of the first week I was driving between farms, creeping through chicken pens, catching protesting birds, performing unspeakable acts upon them in the name of “Artificial Insemination” and inhaling litres of their desiccated winter dust. One of Leif’s farmers, Stig Johanssen and his son Anders, a keen hockey

man, provided help and encouragement. In return I tried to avoid sharing my now streaming cold, thriving in spite of the Vitamin C tablets. Smoke? Nothing further from my mind.

For two more weeks I carried out more A.I., gathered eggs, sorted, graded, packed and labeled them. Full cases accumulated while I hopped between hot hen houses, the windy Swedish outdoors and Leif's cold storage room. The head-cold developed smoothly into Bronchitis. Sweden, I'd heard, had a great health care system. I wondered whether they'd accept a foreigner with pneumonia and an OHIP card. Someone had told me that during winter the dead are usually incinerated but, in special circumstances, may be refrigerated 'til spring thaw. I hoped I'd last till the ground softened. Incineration reminds me of cigarettes, and, so far, my deadly habit was holding off.

Leif was very patient and polite. A long-time customer of Shaver's, he seemed unsurprised at my (and my Company's) antics. "Is it the New Zealanders who want you to go to all this trouble?" Krister Jonnson had been on the phone and told him the permit from Auckland hadn't arrived yet. "Any day now," had been his actual words.

"And if it doesn't come?" Leif had stopped to talk as I heaved another bundle of packing cases into the van.

"Maybe I'd go home to nurse my miserable cold!" Then I relented. "Don't worry, the New Zealand bureaucrats have some of their own poultrymen to deal with and they're probably as mean as all the others I know. They really do want our chickens." Leif still looked worried. I think, by then, everyone was worried, especially Don Shaver. I climbed back into the van. "I'll just keep on gathering eggs and hope for the best."

Some evenings Krister phoned me at the motel. "The permit is being held up." Then, next time. "The permit seems to be going forward"

We didn't discuss the weather, which was getting nicer every day, nor my cold which was nastier. I just said, "Thank you, Krister. If you have any influence, please hurry it up. I don't wish to die in Sweden!"

"Ha ha," he sniggered. "I'm sure it won't come to that."

The snow had vanished from the roadsides. Pale green buds, even leaves began to tinge the trees. I dared think I might actually survive and just when I became sure the whole deal had fallen through, Krister phoned again: "It's GO!"

Saying goodbye to my friends was not difficult. Always they made me feel welcome, but a germ-breathing foreigner in their midst must have given them concern. Whatever dues they might have owed to Shaver's, were surely paid. I packed the van with the cases of eggs, every square centimeter of it, and with my two suitcases jammed between the front seats, headed for Malmo and the ferry to Copenhagen. In those days there was no bridge. Looking back, I'm sort of glad at that.

Krister met me at the dock. He had all the papers. "The eggs fly out of Copenhagen this afternoon, for Auckland."

"Thanks for the pills," I coughed. "They didn't work."

"Ah," said Krister, "Now for the real cure. We have ways to deal with problems like this in Sweden, but there may be side effects!"

As we watched Malmo fading astern, we drank to the good health and happiness of the chicks who'd hatch (we hoped) from all those eggs. Then we drank to our own good health. The liquor tasted like fire. "Made from potatoes," said Krister. I felt it had been designed for mightier men than me. The boat chugged slowly to Copenhagen and I

noticed my breathing was getting easier with every glass. We helped each other ashore. Krister, with a Swedish license, drove the van. At Karlsrup airport we watched the cases of eggs roll up the loading ramp into a fat SAS Boeing 707. Next stop Auckland.

On my flight to Barcelona I slept soundly and then for another eight hours after reaching the hotel. The cold was gone and so too was that nagging need for cigarettes. From then on I told everyone that I met, "Smoke? No thanks, I don't."

If she had time to read my letters in between work, hockey and all the agonies of managing a house full of growing sons, Olive would surely have been gladdened to hear the cold had gone and cigarettes were still out of my life. With still another three and a half weeks (at least) to go, I don't think she was celebrating. I know I wasn't.



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.



The Harrow Train Crash Murder at the Convent And Adelaide Hunter Hoodless

Mary Huzul

The Harrow Train Crash and Murder at the Convent

When I failed the 11-plus exam, my family was very upset. In England, this exam decided whether you went to grammar school or secondary school. As I was always in the top three of the class, I was expected to go to grammar school like my cousins. Although we were not a family who sent their children to private school, my father decided to send me to St. Dominics convent school for girls. I was not that happy about this, but it was a good decision—even my father would agree it was money well spent.

The convent was situated in a beautiful area, Harrow-on-the-Hill, very close to the famous boys' school (Harrow.) It was not unusual to come across a film crew on our way home and I once met actor Richard Widmark. The sprawling grounds of the convent featured a watch tower that overlooked London; it was not hard to imagine the Anglo Saxons guarding the fort from a Roman invasion. There was also a stone chapel that was kept in good repair.

I made life long friends at St. Dominics with whom I still keep in touch.

Two significant events happened while I was attending the school: the first, a horrendous train crash; the second, a murder suicide.

When I was fourteen, my parents divorced and we moved to my grandparents'; it was a few miles away and we took a bus or underground train to get to school. That day, we took the bus—my brother Peter who attended another school, and my friend Pat who lived around the corner. My brother crossed the bridge one way to catch a bus to Salvatorium College. We crossed the other way over the underground. There was a tremendous explosion; the whole road shook. At first I thought it was World War Three. I found out later that two trains were in the station and a third train slammed into them.

One hundred and thirteen people died; over two hundred were injured. The bridge we had just crossed over was brought down.

We arrived at the school at the same time as some injured and traumatised



October 8, 1952. At least 85 people are killed in the UK's worst peacetime rail crash after three trains collide at Harrow and Wealdstone (BBC News)

students. Sister Conrad enrolled me to look after some younger students until their parents could be located. The girls were not seriously hurt—some cuts and bruises but the emotional trauma of what they had seen was mind boggling. All I could do was listen and give them a hug. Luckily the parents arrived quickly. My own father had trouble getting information and didn't know whether we had taken the train that day. The awful thing was that this accident was the result of human error.

The second incident, a murder suicide, happened a few months later. We would go down to the hockey fields for mid-morning break. Several girls were standing around what I first thought was a pile of old clothes. Then I thought it was a Guy Fawkes effigy (He was the fellow who tried to blow up parliament but he was caught and executed. Every year in November we would make a straw figure and burn it on the bonfire, roast chestnuts and marshmallows to celebrate.) I realized it was the wrong time of year and saw all the blood and a gun. The police arrived shortly afterward and we were ushered back to school. It was religion class. We were studying the Sixth Commandment (Thou Shalt not Kill.) Our religion teacher, who was not a nun, said, "I think we will leave that one for today."

The walk home was scary—a murderer behind every tree. I could not sleep that night. My mother said as she soothed my brow, "It's a nine day wonder dear. Every day it will become less scary."

We read in the paper that it was a love triangle. He may have been the boyfriend. She had thrown him out and he had returned and shot her, jumped over the fence, and killed himself. The sad part was she was found by her young child.

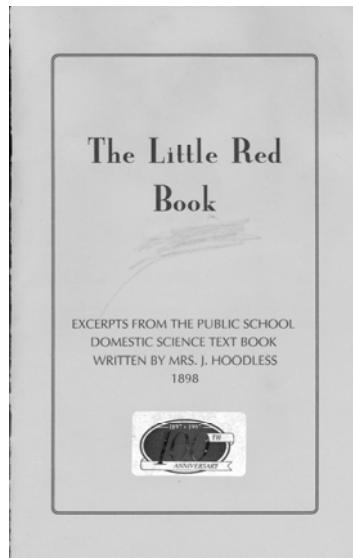
My mother was right. Each day it became less vivid and frightening.

Adelaide Hunter Hoodless

For my sister Cathy

The youngest of thirteen children, Adelaide Hunter was born in 1857 near St. George, Ontario, just outside Brantford. At age twenty-four, she married John Hoodless and moved to Hamilton where they raised a family of four. Her first child died at the age

of eighteen months after drinking unpasteurized milk. The tragedy inspired her to educate women in “domestic science” and she pushed for courses in Hamilton public schools. She was the author of *The Little Red Book*, a domestic science booklet for public schools.



Sterilized or Pasteurized Milk
Put the amount of milk required for a meal into pint or half pint bottles, allowing for the number of times the child is to be fed in 24 hours. Use cotton batting as a stopper. Place a wire frame, or invert a perforated tin pie plate in the bottom of a saucepan; stand the bottles on this, pour around them enough water to come well above the milk, cover the saucepan or kettle and when the water boils lift the saucepan from the fire and allow the bottles to remain in the hot water for 1 hour. Keep in the ice box or stand them in cold water until needed. If milk is to be used during a long journey, it will be necessary to repeat the above operation three times, latter in every case.



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Tea Biscuits
1 pt. flour ½ tsp. salt
1 c. water 1 tsp. lard or butter
2½ tsp. baking powder ½ tsp. sugar
Mix thoroughly in a sieve, the flour, sugar, salt and baking powder, and rub through the sieve. Rub the butter or lard into this mixture. Now add the milk, stirring quickly with a strong spoon. Sprinkle the board with flour, turn out the dough upon it. Roll to the thickness of about ½ in. cut with a small cutter. Bake in a quick oven. Do not crowd the biscuit in the pan. They should bake from 10 to 15 minutes. (All biscuit doughs should be mixed as soft as it is possible to handle. Sour milk may be used in this recipe by substituting soda for the baking powder.)

Whole Wheat or Graham Gems
2 cups whole wheat 2 eggs, beaten separately
½ tsp. salt 1 cup milk
1 tbsps. sugar 1 cup water
Mix flour, salt and sugar. Beat the eggs until light, add the milk and water. Stir this into the dry mixture. Bake in hot gem pans for 30 minutes.



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Excerpts from *The Little Red Book* by Adelaide Hunter Hoodless

A social activist and community organizer years ahead of her time, she was also instrumental in the founding of the Y.W.C.A. She gained a reputation as an entertaining speaker and Erland Lee invited her to speak at his local farmer’s institute. In February of 1897, one hundred and one women and one man (Erland Lee) crowded into Squires Hall in the village of Stoney Creek to organize the first branch of the Women’s Institute. They now have nine million members in seventy countries. Adelaide died in her early fifties while giving a lecture, doing what she loved best. If Adelaide was alive today, many people think she would have taken up the fight against child poverty and domestic violence.

When my sister Cathy visited me in 2000, she was more interested in visiting the birthplace of Adelaide than Niagara Falls where most of my English visitors want to go. Both my mother and sister were members of the Women’s Institute founded by Adelaide. Although I had lived in Brantford since 1963, I had not known of this wonderful woman. Imagine my surprise to find the homestead was only a five minute drive from my house, situated on Blue Lake Road. We had to make an appointment to visit and spent a pleasant afternoon there. Many Women’s Institutes from other cities make an annual bus trip and have a picnic and tea on the grounds. I have been back several times but I am long overdue. I



Birthplace of Adelaide Hunter Hoodless

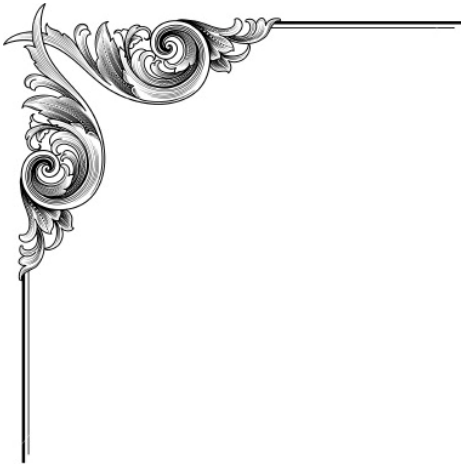
intend to visit this spring as I read in the *Expositor* that it is the hundredth anniversary of her death. I encourage others to do further research and rediscover Adelaide Hunter Hoodless, a Canadian treasure with a worldwide influence.



“A group of normal students with principal, 1900”
From *The Little Red Book* by Adelaide Hunter Hoodless



Mary Elsa Huzul was born in London, England 30 Nov. 1937. She has been married to Al Huzul of Brantford for 47 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 Lifescapes at the Brantford Public Library. She is interested in the concept of “healing through writing.” Her friends think she survived cancer to become an advocate against domestic violence.



A Murder Mystery

Olive Fowler

It is said that the sins and whims of the fathers are visited upon the children. I wonder if my father ever heard of his great uncle, James Clitheroe, and did it ever affect his way of thinking?

Brrng, brrng, brrng—the front door bell. The special ring of John, the postman, with a letter from my sister Eileen living in America. I dashed down the two flights of stairs, not stopping to slide down the big wooden stair-rail with its large knob lurking at the bottom to catch one a clunker in the backside if speeding. Not a letter this time but a large parcel.

"Thank you John." The immediacy to open the parcel robbed me of any good manners to stop and talk, even for a second. Dashing up the stairs again, I breathlessly burst into the kitchen. "Mum, Pop, look!"

"Oohs" and "ahhs," as well as slicing, opened up the box with alacrity—out of which fell candies, gum, soup packages, a tin of ham, a fruit cake in a tin, nylons for Mum, cigarettes for Pop and, best of all, two sun dresses, one blue and white for me and a green and white one for Marjorie. They were sleeveless, but with broad straps. The other goodies forgotten, we rushed to the dining room to change for the fashion show, shucked off our gymslips and long sleeved blouses, and "Tddah" back to the kitchen. Mother turned and smiled, with a smile that only a mother can do.

Pop's eyes widened as his lips sucked in, "What are you trying to do, make shows of yourselves? You will wear shawls when you go out in public in those frocks." The bottom fell out of our



My father

joy. I wish that I could have asked him, "Why don't you want us to look nice or be looked at?" Back to the dining room, to take off our finery and the smiles on our faces.

Many years later, while researching the family history, we find that there was a crime in my father's family. Could that have shaped his life and his reticence to show off?

Our daughter Kelvin Ann had caught the ancestry bug. She called me one evening and told me that a perfect stranger, named Jane, in England had seen Kelvin Ann's efforts on Ancestry.ca and had added her comments.

"Do you know we may be related through the Clitheroe side of the family?" More back and fro-ing and, yes, there is a definite link. Such excitement. Word passed through the family. Even my skeptical husband, Chris, was getting a glimmer of curiosity after pooh-poohing the idea of these far-fetched relations.

The next time Kelvin Ann & Jane (no longer the stranger) corresponded, further details were discovered: a definite link, albeit a gruesome one.

My great, great grandfather was the brother of James Clitheroe, who was the last man to be hanged in the Kirkdale jail, a district of Liverpool, England.



22 Barret St. where Grandma and my father lived

James was a happily married man with 5 children, and had worked at the Nook Glass works for 18 years. Near their home in St Helens, Lancashire, there was a young crippled lady, Mary Woods, who taught his children during the day and, as was the custom at the time, sold wines and ales from her home during the evenings. She was 32 years old on the 13th October, 1863. James and wife, Jane Hodesh (nee Twiss), became very friendly with her and frequented the premises often in the evenings. James became more than friendly; he became her lover.

The children came to school one morning, and finding the school closed, shouted to their parents, "Come and see if Miss Woods is in. The door is locked and she is not answering." The parents went round the back of the house and called but no answer. A local handyman was sent for to open the door.

Climbing the stairs to the bedroom and calling out, "Miss Woods?" they discovered a gruesome sight. Mary and James were lying

in the bed with their throats cut. Mary was quite cold and lifeless. The police came and Mary was removed. James was still alive but bleeding profusely. The police and a doctor stayed with James and covered his throat with large bandages, staying with him until he was able to be moved.

After two weeks, he was transferred to the infirmary at the jail, where he was looked after until fully recovered. James then became an inmate of the jail, guilty of murder or, at least assisting in a suicide. He was counseled by Minister John Jones of the

Claremont Independent Chapel, Kirkdale. The Reverend believed that James was innocent and listened to him.

"It was Mary Woods made me do it. She often threatened me. She said she would be dead if I left her. She told me she wanted us to run away together, to America." James didn't want that. Mary had a very strong hold on him, but he loved his wife and she had just delivered their fifth child, Jerusha.

James was very upset at first, morose. The Reverend and James studied the Bible, said many prayers together. They had many religious discussions and James became resigned to his fate. The Reverend felt sure that James was innocent, if not a little naive. Many of his family visited him, including his wife, Jane, ten year old daughter, Nahuster, mother and stepfather, his half-brother and his eldest son, William, an Aunt & Uncle, his brother-in-law and nephew, and many others. He was well thought of by the prison governor and officers attending him, but unfortunately he was pronounced guilty.



District in which James lived

The beautifully written newspaper report said that on the day of the hanging the jail was surrounded by the usual gruesome crowds, some in their best clothes as if going on holiday. It was stated that one old man was "all toggled up" as if going to a festival, while "an old lady disgraced her grey hair by her presence."

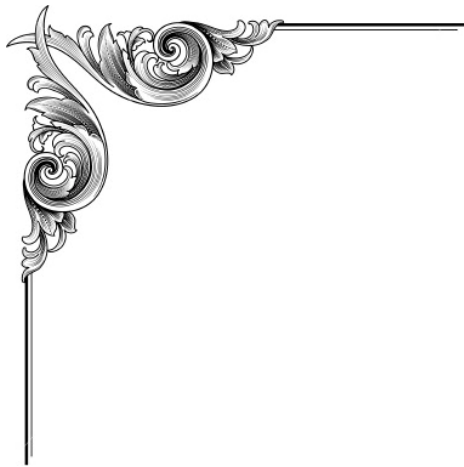
There were an estimated 3,000-4,000 people at the hanging. This was not unusual at hangings. Food-stuffs were there to be bought if people didn't have their own food with them. Young boys played football while waiting for the execution. Mothers walked around with babies on their hips: almost fairground behaviour.

April 26th, 1864, James said goodbye to his tearful family, all the relatives, the minister and jailors. Even the hangman shook his one free hand, before lowering a black cloth between the watchers and James, so his dignity would be preserved as he was dropped. He was buried in the grounds of the jail.

The family has discussed this event many times and we are all of a different opinion. I am now beginning to think, could this be one of the reasons why my father never wanted us to make 'spectacles' of ourselves? Or did he even know of this dreadful happening?



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.



Mother Sang a Song

Mary Huurman

All her life my mother sang. Not in concert halls as a professional, but on the stage of our lives. As a fastidious homemaker, as a perspiring field worker, as a doting grandmother, as a choir member, as a lonely widow, and lastly as a resident in a seniors' home afflicted with a dreaded disease, she always had a song.



1945 Gerry and her children

Around the house, she sang along with the radio but also *a capella*. Her sweet soprano voice, to my child's mind, revealed a suppressed inner sweetness that somewhat redeemed her quick temper and the strict discipline with which she shaped her children. Gerry Albers liked all types of music: classical, pop, instrumental, choral, religious and opera. Often she sang the psalms and spiritual songs she had learned at school or church or in her family as the eldest of nine children.

When I was not yet eight and she in her late twenties, I recall my mother read a Dutch novel entitled *Het Omweer Trekt Voorbij*, translated, *The Thunder Passes By*. I remember the book's ominous terracotta and black cover design, with dark brooding clouds streaked with yellow thunderbolts above a tree-lined road that disappeared into the landscape.

It proved to be portentous of things to come.

During the 1940's and early 50's, when only the well-to-do owned a record player or television set, music and song came into our home from a Christian radio station in Hilversum, the broadcast center of Holland. After immigrating to Canada in 1952, one of the first things our parents purchased was a green, plastic-cased kitchen radio. The

broadcasts of classical music and church services reassured Mother that all that was familiar had not been left behind across the ocean. Listening to the radio improved our English. We quickly learned songs such as, *How Much is that Doggie in the Window*, *The Tennessee Waltz*, *Oh My Papa*, etc. At church, English-language hymns also contributed to our English vocabulary. And country music, a brand new sound to our European ears, amplified our musical experience!

From 1953 to 1961, our immigrant family laboured together many, many hours in farm fields, hoeing, weeding, and harvesting crops such as potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers and turnips. From the time I was eleven, brother Bill and I, the elder two children worked with Mom through and past our summer vacation at friends' and neighbours' farms in order to help our parents make ends meet. After three years as a farm manager, with savings from better-paying work in the "steel plant," Dad bought his own farm equipment, rented land, and, with help from his wife and three growing children, grew his own crops of cucumbers and turnips "to get ahead."



Picking potatoes in 1953 with neighbor, Donny

The enduring Negro spirituals testify that labour is sweetened and time passes more quickly with song. Many a hot summer day, while we toiled with farm owners and their children, someone might begin a song and, before long, others joined in. The tune might be "The Happy Wanderer," "How Great Thou Art," or "Clementine," or "Wooden Heart." "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" and "The Old Rugged Cross" were favourites. "Cool Water" always seemed appropriate on those endless humid summer afternoons. In the fields, at home, and at church, music and song wafted through our daily lives.

When her three teenagers began to exert some control over the radio dial, Mother willingly yielded to them and shared their enjoyment of the hits of the '50s; however, out of consideration for Dad's need for peace and quiet, the radio had to be turned off once he arrived home from the noisy steel plant. My older brother purchased a portable record player, enabling us to play music of our choosing—provided we could afford the 99-cent price of a forty-five (a small black vinyl disc with two songs that spun at a speed of forty-five revolutions per minute) or \$4.99 for an LP (long-playing record, 33 rpm). When the records and record player moved out with the married children, Mom purchased a genuine "stereo" of her own, a French provincial floor model. Her record collection ranged from Bach to Boone to Mouskouri to Ernie Ford, to children's and choir recordings.



Albers Family - 1956

In her forties, Mother joined the church choir. As a youngish grandmother, she babysat her precious grandkids. One of the first songs the toddlers would learn from her would be the classic, "Jesus Loves Me."

The years flew by. Mother was widowed in 1982. Her spiritual repertoire consoled and encouraged her as she struggled with life alone. Choir nights and her music

brought comfort and inspiration to go on. Mother learned to write cheques and to drive at age sixty-two. For several years, twice each year, she flew to visit family in Holland. She joined bus trips in Europe and North America. She was the secretary of her church women's group and choir, and she loved being card secretary for the women's guild, sending greeting cards and inspirational poetry to bereaved or sick parishioners. Grandson David roomed with her until he graduated from McMaster. Then, missing his company, she took in a boarder.

She volunteered at a local seniors' home for weekly coffee service. Telling us about her experience of seeing folks with Alzheimer's, she would comment, "Those poor souls! They don't know what they're doing. What an awful disease!"

Mother loved nice things and good clothes, and took pride in a clean car and a spotless home. Never idle, she often entertained out-of-town guests overnight and family or friends to dinner on Sundays. She hosted family vacationers, some for several weeks, touring Ontario with them in her little blue Chevette. She visited shut-ins, attended plays and concerts with friends, and grew a vegetable garden. On a biweekly basis, she cleaned someone's home and a professional's office. It was hard to reach our "going concern" at home.

For eight years, she babysat two little grandsons. As they got older, she attended their hockey games. They rewarded her commitment to them on her seventieth birthday with a trophy inscribed, "Hockey's Greatest Oma."

In 1993 Mother and her two daughters flew to the happy island, Aruba, to surprise a relative on his fiftieth birthday. We spent an unforgettable week laughing, sightseeing, swimming, laughing, walking the beach, laughing, and visiting with her two sisters from Holland and our Aruba family during our girls-only vacation.

In 1994, a great-grandmother but not yet grey haired, Mother complained about becoming forgetful, easily rationalized as normal for a seventy-something lady. She found it difficult to record the minutes of committee meetings and sought my help. Following a medical appointment in Hamilton, she forgot where she had parked her car. We wondered what to make of these changes.

To her family and friends' amazement, after years of solemn declarations that she'd never marry again, would never leave her church or city, she married again in 1995. A year later they moved to another town. With the challenges of adjusting to married life, a new city, a new home, and a new church community, a serious decline became evident in her housekeeping; in her ability to calculate change; to play a card game; to follow a recipe she had baked for decades; to make coffee, etc. She became preoccupied with filling photo albums but could not arrange her pictures in sequential order and became angry with any attempt to help her organize them. Within months of the relocation, she could no longer manage the normal activities of daily living. Still, her love of music remained intact and that proved to be an anchor in the approaching blast.

After medical tests ruled out other explanations, a geriatrician confirmed the suspected diagnosis. The independent, busy woman began to disappear in the fog of Alzheimer's disease.

My husband Harry and I attended invaluable educational lectures and learned, among other things, that Alzheimer's creates plaques and tangles in brain cells, leading to memory and behavioural problems. This mentally and physically debilitating disease is named after Alois Alzheimer, a German psychiatrist, who first described it in 1906. It

truly creates dis-ease and misunderstanding when symptoms first manifest. Short-term memory disappears; words and names escape the victim. Higher functions such as computation, organization and judgment diminish. Personality may change. For years, such symptoms were attributed to hardening of the arteries, and sufferers were described as “going crazy.” The often misunderstood fear, frustration, and emotional pain that come with it can severely corrode relationships.

For nine months, my sister and I took Mother away to our homes for weekends and on day trips to relieve her husband. Our brothers spent Saturday afternoons with her doing errands and visiting at Horton’s. We helped with meals and laundry. Still, before long, the elderly man was unable to cope, and so she came to live with Harry and me. My always supportive sister, Gezina, and her caring husband provided blessed respite for us by taking Mother every other weekend. She was comfortable with both families.

Our mother/daughter roles reversed. I set bed and bath times, helped her dress, planned meals, outings, visits, and entertainment, etc. Mostly she was cooperative and pleasant, but the temper that kept us in line as children would flare up at bath time. Once dressed and ready for breakfast, all was soon forgiven but not forgotten. During the week, to avoid social isolation, I took her to see old friends who cared and understood. We shopped for clothes and for greeting cards which remained important to her, although she no longer remembered family birthdays. Simple games such as dominos and favourite programs helped pass time. She watched baseball and the news. Princess Diana’s fatal car accident saddened her. “That is terrible!”

Having been a beautiful knitter, she was happy to sit in a comfortable chair and knit away at a non-descript blue project while singing along with recorded music. Her favourite CDs and a video recorded by her choir engaged and settled her. Fifties and sixties music *a la* Mitch Miller, George Beverley Shea, Ray Price or Connie Francis had her tapping her foot, breaking her rhythm only for conversation or to enjoy a cup of tea. On the choir video, her favourite selection was, “Till the Storm Passes By.” The words of the song certainly fit her circumstances! Tears would well up and she’d clear her throat a few times as she sang along softly:

In the dark of the midnight have I oft hid my face
As the storm howls above me and there’s no hiding place.
Mid the crash of the thunder, precious Lord, hear my cry:
Keep me safe till the storm passes by.

Till the storm passes over, till the thunder sounds no more
Till the clouds roll forever from the sky,
Hold me fast, let me stand in the hollow of Thy hand
Keep me safe till the storm passes by.

Many times Satan whispered, “There is no need to try,
For there’s no end of sorrow, there’s no hope by and by.”
But I know Thou art with me, and tomorrow I’ll rise
Where the storms never darken the skies.

When the long night has ended and storms come no more
Let me stand in Thy presence on the bright peaceful shore;
In that land where the tempest never comes, Lord, may I
Dwell with Thee when the storm passes by.

(Mosie Lister, 1958)

Every now and then, Mother would say, “I would like to go to choir in Hamilton again,” referring to her former church where she had been active for more than forty years.

Wanting her to have opportunity to do the things she enjoyed before the disease robbed her and us further, I contacted the choir’s director and a date was set. He asked that we arrive thirty minutes into the practice. Two weeks later, my older brother, Bill, and I took Mom to choir on a dark fall night. In the social hall, a long-time family friend was preparing refreshments for intermission. She greeted Mom cheerfully.

“Hi Gerry! Do you know that the choir is going to sing a special song for you?”

“They are?” Mother exclaimed in surprise.

The hostess went on with her preparations and Mom and I sat down to wait for Bill to come in from the parking lot.

I asked her, “What song would you like them to sing for you, Mom?”

Avoiding my eyes, she whispered, “Till the Storm Passes By.” Speechless, I struggled to maintain my composure.

With Bill, we proceeded upstairs to the church sanctuary, settling into a back pew while the choir finished rehearsing a number at the front. The choir director, who, with his wife, had been frequent dinner guests at my mother’s table, turned and hurried down the aisle toward us.

“And what are you doing back there, young lady?” he quipped. “You should be up here with us!”

As one of his greatest admirers, she beamed with pleasure. She allowed him to put her arm through his and, together, they marched to the front. He seated her between two soprano friends and handed out sheet music. The piano played the introduction. Choir members raised their voices and began to sing, “In the dark of the midnight, have I oft hid my face...”



The unforgettable Choir night with
old friends

My brother and I fought back tears, moved by the significance of the song. In the front row, unnerved, Mother sang every word of that hymn so dear to her, never glancing at the sheet in her hand. The choir members were well aware of the storm raging in her life, tearing down the productive, capable, caring person they had known. When silence fell, there was nary a dry eye in the choir. Mother looked around, a little puzzled. In the back row, my brother and I let our tears roll.

It was an unforgettable night of love and ministry. Seeing how glad she was to be with her

long-time friends, we were very grateful for the folks who had been a cherished part of her life for so many years. Mother couldn't have been happier than she was there in her home church, singing one more time with her friends.

Mother's stay in our home ended after six months when she was hospitalized because of a fall. Just before Christmas, 1997, we had to release her to the care of strangers in a local nursing home. Placing my mother in a care facility was an expected but heart-wrenching experience, not unlike that of a mother on her child's first day in kindergarten.

To help her adjust, children and grandchildren came to the home to spend the evening hours with her, singing and chatting, laughing with her over things that had always made her laugh, then crying because we had to leave her behind. That first family Christmas without her was particularly difficult for my sister and me.

Family members visited often at various times of the day to ensure she was receiving the care she needed. I kept responsibility for her laundry and personal appearance, and monitored her health. Harry and I joined the home's Family Council and organized a Sunday singsong.

My prayer for Mother for her time in residential care was that she would be content where she lived, that she would always know us, and, thirdly, that she would never reach the ultimate "fetal" stage of the disease.

To establish her identity with staff, I wrote a synopsis of her personal history and of her likes and dislikes in terms of activities and foods. We hung lots of family pictures and brought her cherished hockey trophy. We brought a tape player and an assortment of her favourite music for her room and asked staff to play the familiar tunes to reassure and entertain her. The music helped all of us through some difficult hours.

Research has shown the right side of the brain interprets musical notes, and the "music centre" of the brain can be unharmed by Alzheimers or stroke or injury. During our many visits to the nursing home, we observed that residents who seldom spoke and slept in their wheelchairs most of the day would raise their heads and join in when an old familiar number such as "Jesus Loves Me" was sung. During our visits in the residents' lounge, it would not take much to get a few ladies to join Harry and me and Mother singing songs such as "Tipperary" or hymns like "Rock of Ages." (It makes one wonder what tunes our grandchildren will sing in their senior years in such a setting, since the common body of music has changed dramatically in church, and also because many do not attend worship services at all.)

The nursing home staff knew Gerry loved musical nights and church events. Whether it was a volunteer playing piano, a church service or singsong, she was always an enthusiastic participant. Scheduled singsongs led by wonderful community volunteers provided needed and important stimulation for all the residents. Her most frequent comment following such an event would be, "I like that. It was nice." Mother loved having her family members present to sing along, but she didn't want her son-in-law to share a songbook with anyone but her.

Early one evening, the nursing home called us to go to the hospital because Mother had had a fall in her room, badly tearing her cheek at a ninety-degree angle. My sister Gezina and I found her in Emergency at the nearby hospital, alone and bewildered. The wound did not seem to concern her but she was very anxious about the unfamiliar people in this unfamiliar place; having her girls at her side visibly eased her tension. We

accompanied her into the surgical area to await the doctor who would stitch her facial wound. The change of scene alarmed her anew.

“Shall we sing?” asked Gezina and she began, “Jesus loves me, this I know...” Immediately, Mother joined in. Glancing back and forth at her daughters for assurance, she sang unfalteringly through to the end, innocent as the toddlers who learned this chorus from her. By the third line, my voice broke. I turned away to hide my tears from Mom so that the power of song would not be broken. I admired my sister’s fortitude.

During Mother’s time in the nursing home, a cousin whose mother also suffered from A.D. in her last years sent me an article comparing the life of an Alzheimer’s victim to that of a songbird living with clipped wings, in a cage. As a place of security, the cage offers a safe environment where the disabled bird receives the care it needs because the time for free flight is over. Oblivious to the confinement of the cage, the little creature sings to its heart’s delight and blesses her listeners.

The analogy reminded me of the joy that brightened my mother’s now often expressionless countenance whenever she sang. As if it was part of her DNA, she had sung all her life. Her disability could not rob our caged bird of her song, and her enduring ability to sing blessed us and helped to maintain connection.

Up to the last two weeks of her life, Mother loved to sing the old familiar songs. Alzheimer’s was eroding her ability to speak at will but, interestingly, she never reverted to her first language. That music and song remained meaningful to her was crystal clear, because “Till the Storm Passes By” continued to visibly stir her emotions.



Gerry and her children – Christmas 1998

One night, a few weeks before the end, Harry and I found our eighty-year-old Mother alone in her room, slouched over in a wheelchair, her back to the door, apparently dozing. A tape of hymns was playing softly thanks to the caregivers who saw to it that Gerry had her music. Not knowing whether to let her sleep or to waken her for a visit, I turned the music off. Slowly, her head came up. She opened her eyes and began to sing aloud the song that had been playing, picking up precisely where the tape had left off: “It is well with my soul, it is well, it is well with my soul.”

Harry and I stared at each other, utterly amazed to see her perk up when the music stopped, but even more amazed to hear her sing aloud what she had been singing in her silence.

Her unexpected vocal response said there was more to our Mother’s cognition than met the eye and ear. Mother still sang a song, and not just in her heart!

Early in the afternoon of April 6, 2001, as the main family caregiver, I was called to the nursing home because, at lunch Mother had had “an episode” of sudden weakness and breathing problems. They had put her to bed but had difficulty getting pulse and blood pressure. Before leaving the house, I telephoned my three siblings to say that things did not look good.

I found her in bed, apparently asleep. At the sound of my voice, she briefly opened her eyes. Soon my husband came; Gezina arrived from work, then her husband, not much later my younger brother, Peter. As each of her loved ones came into the room, she roused, looked at the latest arrival, then closed her eyes again.

The doctor suspected she had suffered a stroke or heart attack. A choice would have to be made by the family to either move her to hospital, which he did not recommend, or to have her remain in her private room at the home. Mindful of her wish to avoid heroic measures and reluctant to see her lay in a corridor in Emergency hour after hour, we decided on the latter option. The doctor gave no cause for optimism, so we agreed that the morning would determine whether she ought to be hospitalized.

In the room that had been her home for two-and-a-half years, Mother lay quietly, asleep, waiting. By seven o'clock, the last of her children arrived with his wife. At the sound of Bill's voice, her eyes opened again. She focused on him, then closed her eyes. It was as if she was content to sleep, now that she had seen all four of her children. This indicated to us that, until the end, she knew and recognized her family, which is seldom the case in late-stage Alzheimer's. Her acknowledgement of each of us that night is a fond memory.

Late in the evening, my husband and brothers returned home. My sister Gezina, brother-in-law Gary, and I decided to stay at her side through the night "because no one should die alone." Mother was asleep, not responding to anything but the prick of the morphine needle. The nurse assured us that, though Mom was semi-comatose, she could hear us. My brother-in-law slept a few hours in the facility's guest room, went out for coffee for us, then dozed some more.

Through the wee hours, Gezina and I sat at our dying Mother's bedside, doing what little we could to make her comfortable. We wiped her forehead, moistened her lips, held the warm hands that had held ours. We talked softly with each other and to her. We sang to her again simple songs that meant so much, such as "Jesus Loves Me." We spoke words of love and affirmation. "You were a good Mother to us. You were a great Oma for the kids! They sure love you! You worked so hard all the time!" There was no response of any kind.

Throughout the night in her room, we played Mom's tapes of hymns and spiritual choruses hoping to bring her comfort and peace. By six that morning, I was becoming tired and asked Gezina to turn the music off. The last song that played on earth for our mother was a soothing rendition of "Sitting at the Feet of Jesus" by Alison Speer.

The nurse pointed out that her breathing was more and more labored. The time between morphine shots was shortened; it was going to be a matter of time. Still, at seven in the morning, the nurse urged us sisters to get some rest. "It is going to be a long day." We relayed her comments to my husband and he, to our brothers. Mom's lungs were audibly filling with fluid. The morphine kept her sedated. We hoped she would not suffer.

Around 7:30, brother-in-law Gary led in prayer asking God to take our mother home. We remained at her bedside and waited. About twenty minutes later, suddenly, Mother opened her eyes and peered straight ahead. Then she turned her head side to side and looked at each of the three of us in the room, as if she was concerned for us.

Sensing her angst, we reassured her. "It's okay, Mom. You go on. You go and be with Dad and your Mother and Dad. We will come later. It's okay to go now."

She then focused to a spot high on the wall at the end of her bed. A hint of a smile softened her face. Her eyes closed and she stopped breathing. She slipped the bonds of flesh and earth for her eternal home. A new spring day—her firstborn's birth day—was unfolding on earth.

My first reaction when her breathing stopped came from a gospel song: "Cares all past, home at last, ever to rejoice." On April 7, 2001, Mother reached the peaceful shore she had often sung about, to spend eternity with her loved ones and with the Lord of her life. The storm indeed had passed.

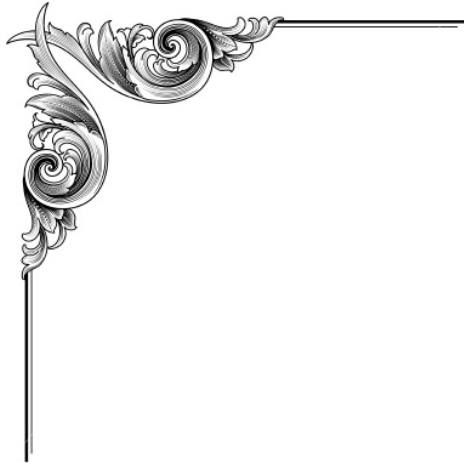
At the funeral service, we sang her song, affirming the truth that God had kept her soul safe until the storm had passed by. It was my sister who could just listen then, unable to sing the words which summarized the difficult voyage that had ended a few days before. As the last note faded, in the same church sanctuary where the choir had sung with her, family and friends dabbed watery eyes.

During the night after the burial, a severe thunderstorm raged through the area, as if underscoring the truth that storms come and storms go, that they do pass by. Great was God's faithfulness to Mother in her storm and, as I see it, to her entire family in answering all three of my prayer petitions.

The songs Mother sang when she was young and when she was old, even throughout her illness, will continue to anchor us until we, too, dock in our final port.



The second of four children of Bert and Gerry Albers, Mary lives in Brantford with her husband, Harry. Their family consists of two married children, their spouses and four granddaughters. Her three siblings, Bill, Gezina and Peter, were on board for the passage through the stormy years from 1996 to 2001. Their undying support and the faith that the Master Steersman was guiding the ship to safe harbor enabled Mary, as primary caregiver for their mother, to stay the course. The entire family witnessed the importance of music and song from cradle to grave.



Joy Under Canvas

Lois Porter

If you like camping then you love it and, likewise, if you don't then you just don't and no amount of talking can change your mind. People who don't like camping say, "I like my creature comforts," and I think to myself, "You don't know what you are missing."

When I was around three years old, my mother made a tent out of sugar bags that she got from some bakery. Sugar bags were used for all sorts of things in those days: aprons, dish towels, dolls clothes, tents, whatever. Well this time it was a tent, made by my mother who was a very creative seamstress and this was all done on an old Singer treadle sewing machine which had a grate-type pedal at the bottom that she worked with her feet.

It was quite a big tent, large enough to hold five people and the occasional family visitors like grandparents, aunts, and a cousin; just from time to time mind you, but the tent had to be big enough to take care of all visitors. There was a flap which was folded back during the day, just like an army tent but I don't believe there were any windows. The tent was water proofed with kerosene and paraffin wax! Yes, can you imagine how flammable that was? It would not be allowed today, nor would it be safe and it was not safe then as we had a Coleman stove and a lantern. However, nothing every happened with fire.

Our first camp ground was a farm orchard on River Road in Brantford. The farm is still there but the orchard, in which we camped, is long gone. We would go in the driveway, past the house, around the barn and the pig sty, and on to the orchard where there were always lots of bees and hornets. I don't remember ever getting stung but they were always present at our meals and caused lots of hysteria. Mother used to place a saucer of tea with lots of sugar right in the middle of the table for the bees; but they didn't always choose to partake of that, preferring instead the people food.

Mother would assemble all we would need for our holiday, call Mr. Willis, a community person who had a horse and cart, and get him to deliver everything to the camp site. The family would follow by street car part way and then walk the last mile or so. It was, and still is, a lovely walk by the Grand River. We would stay camping at this place for a month or six weeks, my father coming down each night from the Expositor where he worked. I can still remember holding my father's hand as we walked down the road, probably beginning to get dark, and the happy feeling of knowing we would be in the tent for six weeks.

We used to swim in the river every afternoon. I have looked for that beach but it seems to be long gone and the river does not seem as big or as wide now that I look at it through adult eyes. One day I got caught in the current, lost my balance, and was floating down the river until someone rescued me. My statement as I was pulled out was, "Dosh I's wet." Another caper I can remember is playing with the piglets in the pig sty. We were not supposed to do that because it was not the cleanest place for children but we loved those piglets. They must have been quite a size because one got a hold of me by the seat of my pants and was shaking me. I don't remember who rescued me that time.

We must have gone to this camp ground for a couple of years because the next thing I remember was camping down at Normandale on Lake Erie. We camped in a big



Three sisters—Lois, Doris, Gerry—and cousin Rosaleen at Lake Erie

ravine to the left of the present day pier. My parents had made arrangements with someone, probably a farmer, to camp there for the summer—Mum was always creative in arranging things and we just loved it. Our camp site was higher than the lake and there was a lovely sand beach all along the shore, right to Port Dover. The ravine was treed, which gave us

a great backdrop; there was a small stream down that ravine which became a raging torrent when it rained. One time during a particularly vicious storm, our icebox, which was a wooden box in the stream, was washed out to sea and Mother and Dad had to wade out and rescue the bottles of milk, butter, and pork chops. Our toilet for the summer was a one hole box over a hole in the ground in among the trees and if we forgot to take toilet paper we would yell, "Mum I forgot toilet paper," and she would answer, "Okay, just call Waggy" (our dog). She would then put the necessary toilet paper under the dog's collar, we would call him back and, voila, problem solved. The dog always had a grin a mile wide.

We children were allowed down on the beach on our own, but not in bathing suits and we used to walk along to the pier where there was another stream, much wider than the one in our camp site, where reeds used to grow. We would pull them up, separate all

the pieces of the stem and then put them together again. We also were allowed to go up to the main road and the general store usually to get something Mother needed for our dinner. Probably this is where I learned to like stones so much. I have always gathered stones and taken them home from my holidays, even in adulthood.

Family friends would come and camp with us, bringing their own tent and food of course. Camp fires did not seem to be a big thing at that time but there were some merry get-togethers. I do not remember what we did but my memories are all of fun and of being happy. Even now in the year two thousand and nine, when I am past my eightieth birthday, I still feel happy going south on Twenty-four Highway, making our way down to Normandale; smelling the sand and the vegetation around the creek as well as the blue waters of Lake Erie, evoke wonderful, happy childhood feelings. Things have changed down there of course; I cannot walk down the beach to the ravine as there has been erosion going on for more than seventy-five years and private cottages now line the shore. It is not exactly a private beach but they surely made it difficult for people to get down to the sand and the water.

About the time I was five years old, my parents bought a brown tourist tent with a flap that went up to shelter us from the rain and it also had a window at the back that opened and closed with a series of fine rope—quite a refinement from our homemade tent sewn in 1930 by my mother at the start of the dirty thirties. When the car was loaded up for the journey the back seat was eighteen inches high with blankets and pillows; the trunk was full as was the running board on our old Durant car. This was made possible by a little gate that went across the running board and secured the heavy items nicely. The car could only be entered from the passenger side and three little girls sat on top of everything on the back seat. It was a good place to travel as we could always see what was ahead. At one point we camped at a campground in eastern Ontario called “Loon Lake Campground.” It was probably at this lake that I heard my first loon call in the evening—its haunting cadence still brings feelings of contentment to me. I can remember being the only campers in this campground, and it was raining. The rain did not seem to faze us in any way; we just kept on with our itinerary. While in Quebec City three little girls sat proudly on the old cannons on the ramparts of the mighty Saint Lawrence River. I am sure this was the reason for our trip, so Mother could revisit the city where she and her family first stepped on Canadian soil. She always liked to follow her dreams. Probably that is why the Saint Lawrence is my favourite river, especially camping on its shores.

There was an incident where my sister Doris, who was just thirteen months older than me, ate some red berries which were growing around the Parliament Buildings in Ottawa. There was consternation but I don’t think too much was done about it. They couldn’t have been poisonous because she didn’t get sick. No wonder travelling and camping are so deeply embedded in my blood; I have always done them and enjoy every minute of it.

From camping at Normandale, our next six or seven years were spent in a cottage at Grimsby Beach on Lake Ontario. My Father’s family, “The Buskards” owned a couple of cottages, one across the road from the other and our family rented one or used it for the summer. I have no idea of the arrangements, but we loved it. Those cottages were pretty old then and were pretty basic. We had lots of rooms: a living room and kitchen on the ground floor with a pit toilet behind the kitchen. I think that kind of toilet



Years later—Lake Ontario
Bryce, Lois, Kay, Rosaleen, Gerry,
Doris

had to be pumped out each year. It smelled and we didn't like it. It was out the back door and to the right so it stood alone. Thank goodness. The stove was an antique and I don't remember how it was run—not with wood and I don't think gas; it was not like our range at home but Mother made very good use of it including an old square box of an oven that she sat on top of the burner and baked scones and big oatmeal cookies we used to call "stove lids." On the second floor we had three bedrooms with a screened in veranda over the front door on which my sister Doris and I used to sleep; any girl friends who were visiting slept there as well.

There was a large surround veranda on the ground floor, right along one side and across the front. This made a great place for the grocery boy to climb up the veranda post, rap on our screening and softly say, "Wakey, Wakey," when all we wanted to do was sleep. He was a very nice boy and his parents owned the only grocery store in the area. He became a teacher and was the principal of the large, stone high school in Galt, or Cambridge as it is now called. I always wanted to go and talk to him but I never did; ah, procrastination.

Grimsby Beach was beautiful. The lot just in front of our cottage was empty so my grandmother bought it and had it all landscaped with lovely flowers and trees. She could not garden herself as she had broken a hip and walked with a cane which she used to direct the gardener. There was also an empty lot next to Grandma's cottage and she had that all nicely landscaped and well taken care of all summer. The trees in the whole park were probably first growth and were lovely: large maple, oak, chestnut and many others. I used to love to gather the chestnuts in the fall when we were down there for Thanksgiving. I still like fresh chestnuts and used to oil one and keep it on my desk during my working life.

The large trees extended down in to the circle just below our cottage where we used to play and swing on the bars that circled the garden down there. Most cottagers came every year at the same time so we had friends down there as well as at home. The circle was to the left of our cottage, down a slight hill with two poles at the bottom to keep cars from using it. I used to stand on the seat of my bike and ride down this hill in a daredevil way. Also going down and between those poles no-handed was a favourite trick. I don't know if others did this or not. My sister Doris never did—she was more sedate than I ever was. The circle was just that, with cottages arranged all around the edge. Old vintage cottages that were there when I was a kid are being restored now to their original bright beauty.

There was also a playground a block or so away with programmes for kids. That's where I learned to play shuffle board, winning prizes for my scoring. In 1938 there was a boy named Hans who hailed from the Kitchener area and his whole family

went back to Germany that fall. I remember feeling so sorry for him, having to go back to such a disturbed country. There was a lot of propaganda about Germany and even children were aware of what was going on.

We had a small church just across the road from us, "The Tabernacle" which was interdenominational. We used to go for Sunday school when we were younger and Church as we grew older.

In Sunday school we sang all the old rousing hymns most of which I still enjoy when I get a chance to sing them. The whole back wall of the Church opened up so the hymns resonated all through the cottages. I have no idea who ran those services but they were well attended. My Aunt May used to sing a solo at least once a summer and I remember not enjoying



Just camping in 1930
Doris, Lois, Gerry, Mum (Rose)

her voice. It was rather flat but I guess it was an honour for her. She was a spinster who never married as her fiancé was killed in the First World War.

The swimming at Grimsby was wonderful as we swam off an old dock. In olden days the boats used to come across from Toronto on excursions. There were a lot of professional people who had cottages at Grimsby, but there were a lot of working men as well. The pier, as we called it, was great to dive from and to swim from pier to pier; the ones further out had rotted out and were not replaced but that didn't bother us. We used them anyway. Lake Ontario is very deep and sometimes cold so we were always testing ourselves to see how far out we could swim; the piers gave us confidence. My mother spent a lot of time teaching me to dive even though she couldn't dive herself. My father was the one who taught me to swim. He was a very good swimmer as I was when I grew older. I cannot remember any of the other children in the family being great swimmers or divers although they could swim, except for Gerry and I guess she was too nervous. My mother learned to swim at Grimsby Beach at forty-two years old. She always liked to keep learning.

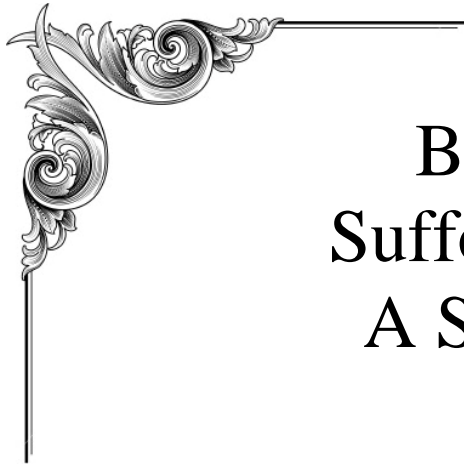
We used to go for walks at the end of each swimming day out around the orchards and the clay hills where we got clay to make into pots and bake in mother's old oven. We also had days when we picked wild berries to be made into jam. One day I got into a hornets nest and had multiple stings; I yelled and cried all the way home. I remember a man tried to stop me and find out what was the matter but I wouldn't listen to him and continued on home. There was always so much to do in Grimsby. There was a large dance hall on the bank of the lake and that is where I learned to dance. For a while there were a couple of boys who used to come down from Beamsville, to see Doris really, but

we all danced together. We always had to have a costume as it was usually a fancy dress ball.

After 1939, World War II had started and my sister Doris was sixteen and wanted to work; that ended our long holidays whether it was camping, travelling or at a cottage.



Lois Buskard Porter was born at Brantford General Hospital on November 11, 1925 and lived on Terrace Hill until 1947 when she married Martin Porter. They then moved to several different cities including Sudbury and North Bay before settling in London for twenty-four years. Then they returned to Brantford. She worked as a legal secretary for several years, worked in insurance estimation, and at London Psychiatric Hospital as Assistant Administrator to the Department Head, coordinating thirty social workers.



Born in the Cradle of Suffolk, I Remain Forever, A Suffolk Child at Heart

Audrey Mary Boggis Cichacky

Bealings Boot

The Great Depression was about to happen. The stock market crashed on October 27th, 1929. This day became known as Black Thursday. The mood of the British nation and the world was full of gloom and doom.

The farmers who owned acres of prime land were called gentlemen farmers and cracked their whips over the less educated and poor. These same gentlemen farmers later became the victims of circumstance. Finances were in a downward spiral. The crops they grew became an unwanted commodity with prices too low to be profitable. Many farmhands often received a loaf of bread for payment for their labour instead of money and all too often were let go.

But far away from these devastating headlines, a family celebrated an event of great joy. October 23, 1929 marked the day of my arrival. I am told that it was a glorious day when the postman delivered a wonderful bundle of joy. I would often ponder this dubious explanation of my birth and wonder if I were indeed a bundle of joy. Or, was I just another mouth to feed?

I never voiced those questions because I never needed an answer. My childhood years were a time of wonder spent in the rural countryside of the ancient village of Great Bealings, settled in pre-Roman times.

This small village situated in the east of England is cradled in a picturesque and gently rolling landscape. Two rivers, the River Fynn and the River Lark, run through it. The church of St. Mary's, built before the Norman invasion, sat in tranquility between



St. Mary's church

these two rivers.



Old barnyard and hay wagon

I spent my days running through those fields and meadows with my older siblings, Marjorie, Peggy, and my brother, Michael. We climbed styles that separated the fields and we chased each other down to the river. There my brother would scare us with the frogs and toads he had caught while we picked cowslips and watercress.

Times were good for us then for we were without a care in the world. Times were not as good for our parents or for the rest of Britain. Many adjustments had to be made. My older sisters had to make the most difficult adjustment when our parents could no longer afford to send them to a private school which was a costly, twenty mile train ride away. Neither of them was as happy to attend the local village school as my brother and I, who tagged along excitedly with our miserable older sisters. I eagerly looked forward to petting our

class pet, Tommy the tortoise.

While we were at school, my parents struggled through economic hardship. My father left early every day to look for work in Ipswich, a city about thirty miles from our little village. His father's gravel trucking business had been downsized and he, being the youngest, had been let go. During these desperate times, my parents welcomed the arrival of my younger sister, Brenda.

Our family needed a larger home yet could not afford a move anywhere else but to my grandparents' home which just happened to be at number four Boot Lane, otherwise known as Bealings' Boot, the local pub.

This new home inspired our vivid children's imaginations. Soon we became the characters in the great stories and poems we heard. We became the highway men and smugglers who moved throughout the night stopping to rest at the many pubs that dotted the back roads of Suffolk. We imagined tunnels under the pub with secret passageways and doorways. We imagined we were highwaymen riding in the moonlight. In our beds, before our eyes would close, we could hear the clitter, clatter of the horses' hooves outside the old pub door. We could hear the bellowing voice of Dick Turpin and all of his men and we clutched in our fists the precious Roman coins my father had dug up in the backyard and given to each of us soon after our arrival.

Sadly, our stay at Bealings' Boot did not last long enough. After only a few weeks, it was time to say goodbye to the many interesting characters who resided in the little Norman village nestled in the valley. Some of these characters we let slip away; others we never forgot. One character who left an indelible impression on us all was Mr.



"Bealing's Boot" local pub, now a private home

Harrison, the hardware man who had quite a stutter. Another rare group of characters was the Evangelists who later would visit us a Saturday afternoon.

Mr. Harrison

Mr. Harrison arrived every second Wednesday at Great Bealings to sell house wares such as jugs, bowls, kettles, soaps, and paraffin for the lamps. His beautiful horse drawn wagon was a wonder to behold for it was painted a magnificent bright red and gold.

Mr. Harrison was a formidable figure of a man smartly dressed in 'plus fours and buskins' with a tweed jacket and matching cap. He spoke deliberately so as to disguise his stutter.

"G..g..g..m..m..morning Mrs. B..B..Boggis."

Naughty as we knew it was to laugh when we heard him speak, we nevertheless could not resist asking him more questions to hear him stutter.

"How is your horse today, Mr. Harrison?"

"What kinds of soap do you have, Mr. Harrison?"

"Do you have any free samples for us please, Mr. Harrison?"

Sometimes, he would oblige us with a little sample of soap, then before he would get away and before his horses were settled into a steady trot, we would plant our feet firmly on the back axle and away we would go hanging on to the wagon with all our might. The wind would blow through our hair and around our tiny bodies and we would be giddy with excitement at our daring ways. I would be having the time of my life when suddenly Mr. Harrison's loud voice would stutter,

"G..g..g..get yourselves off! You will fall and crack your heads."

He would pull on his horse's reins to stop, jump off his cart, point his finger at us and say, "I..I..I'll tell your m..m..m..mother, I will."

The Blessing

I remember the afternoon when the Evangelists paid Great Bealings a visit. They brought with them glad tidings and promises of salvation as they pitched a large marquis tent on a farmer's field close to our home.

They invited all of us to Meeting and we accepted their invitation out of curiosity and for fear of not wanting to miss out on such an event. We arrived in our Sunday best and happily made our way into the tent to receive the blessing.

"Come along and never mind the weather. We will give you a blessing that will keep you singing. Come along. You're just in time. It's just the beginning."

We all accepted the blessing with our voices raised in song and our feet keeping the beat of the music. We lifted our hymn books just a little higher as our spirits were

raised by the excitement of the clanging of the cymbals and the beating of the tambourines.

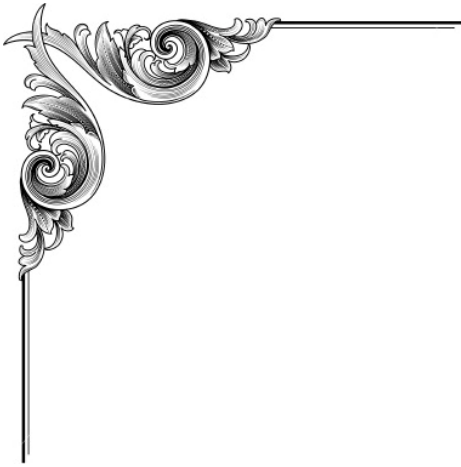
“Alleluia, we are safe in the arms of Jesus!”



My brother Michael at 2 years of age and myself, Audrey, 8 months old on our way to be “blessed” at the evangelical meeting.



Audrey Cichacky was born at home in Great Bealings, Great Britain on October 23, 1929. She began school in 1932 at the local village school in Great Bealings. The family moved to Ipswich in 1934 and then to Trafford House in Rushmere, Suffolk in 1935. By 1938 the education of preparing and coping with war had begun with nightly air raid shelter drills. Her little sister, Valerie, was born that year. WWII began in 1939 and father left with the military for France. Childhood changed. The war left an imprint on being children with air raids, restricted movement, drills and bombs. Charles was born 1940. At 18 Audrey began nurses training on April 1, 1945. She met Basil Cichacky at the Burrough General Hospital, Ipswich in 1947. They immigrated to Toronto in 1951 where she was employed as a nurse at Toronto Western Hospital for 6 weeks and then at Sick Children’s Hospital from 1951 to 1953. She continued nursing until retirement at age 55. She was married to Basil Cichacky and they had three children—Julie, Katrina and Danny



My Furry Little Friend

Vickie Iorio

I have a furry friend named Sunny, who always makes me laugh. He has four legs and a long tail that often gets caught in the door. When I am ready for bed he's ready to play. In the night when I am trying to sleep I can hear him running and playing throughout the house. At times I wonder if I have an intruder but it's only him.

Sunny has a great personality. He's full of love and always makes me smile. Sunny thinks he is the boss of the house and believes it is his way or no way. Some days he has so much energy, he's bouncing off the walls. You'd think he was a little kid.

Sunny seems not to understand what sleep time and play time means. When I am asleep he plays around with all his new toys but when I want to play with him he is always taking a cat nap. He loves to sleep under the comforter on my bed. I know when there is a lump on my bed he is hiding there. He always tries to jump on me when I am asleep, but I tell him it is my turn to sleep now.

When Sunny gets bored with his toys he looks out the window and tries to catch the birds flying by. When he sees a bird and gets excited, he runs back and forth in front of the window.

Sunny gets upset when I leave him alone at the house. He doesn't need to worry. I always come back home. Once when I was going out I opened the cupboard to get my coat. Somehow he got closed in and when I opened the closet when I came home, he jumped out meowing to let me know he was not happy!



Sunny's bed

Sunny loves treats but he can only have a few so that he stays healthy.

When Sunny is not playing with his toys or chasing birds he just sits and stares at me with his tongue out as if to say, "What are we going to do now, Mom?"

He loves attention and when he doesn't get enough he rubs against your leg like he is saying, "Look at me, look at me."

When Sunny is lazy he likes to find a high spot to lie upon, the higher the better. Often he chooses the top of the cupboard or the fridge.

As soon as my door opens and Sunny smells the fresh air, he goes for it. He usually doesn't make it far before someone is chasing him back home.

Sunny likes to get into mischief. This year he redecorated my Christmas tree by knocking it over.

The water bottle is great when he misbehaves. I give him a squirt and it doesn't always work, but when he sees that bottle, he knows his Mamma is mad. I often need to let him know that I pay the rent here.



Sunny at the window

I buy Sunny toys to play with but he prefers to play with a piece of paper or candy wrapper if one is left lying around.

Sunny had a birthday the other day. I remember when he was 10 months old and came to live with me. That was in April of 2008.

The previous owner, a friend of mine, thought he was a girl and called him Misty. I changed his name to Sunny because I thought it suited him.

When he first came he was afraid of everything because it was new to him. He was frightened of my wheel chair and the automatic door of my apartment. He would hide in the closet.

Now he is three years old. It is amazing how he has grown. He is happy and contented now.

I am so thankful for my furry little friend. He keeps me company when I am lonely. He makes me happy when I am sad. Sunny keeps me busy. I have to feed him daily, or he'll let me know I missed that.

I also clean his litter to keep him satisfied.

He's not afraid to say when things don't go his way. There are days when he just wants to be left alone so he hides and often I cannot find him. So I call his name or shake his treat bag and he comes running out.

I don't know what life would be like if I didn't have bright Sunny by my side. He



Sunny having a cat nap

gives me a reason to get up in the morning. When I hear that loud PURR coming from his chest, I know I have done my job that day.

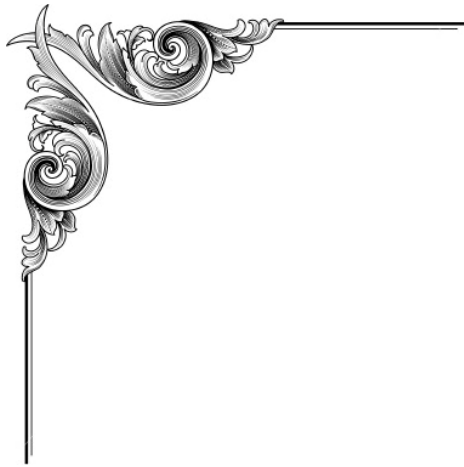
Sunny brightens up my days. He brings me lots of smiles and keeps my life interesting and complete.

Some days the way he runs around the house you would think it was his birthday every day. It must be nice to be that young.

I have decided that when I go, I am coming back as a cat because they have a good life.



My name is Vickie Iorio. I have lived in Brantford, Ontario since I was little. I am physically challenged and live in an independent living environment. I enjoy watercolour painting and going for walks. My favourite thing is spending time with my cat Sunny.



Journeys Along Life's Highways and Byways

Bill Van Gaal

*"Some people,
try to turn back their odometers.
Not me!
I want people to know 'why'
I look this way.
I've traveled a long way
And some of the roads weren't paved."*

Author unknown

It was late May of 1959 when my friend Jack Briggs (JB) and I decided that there were no jobs to be found in the Barrie, Ontario area where we each lived with our parents. Both of us were grade school drop-outs who did not complete grade eight. We had worked together for a contractor, building new housing until a credit crunch dried up mortgage financing, throwing us to the unemployment lines. At the wise age of 17, we agreed we needed to "hit the road" to seek our fortune and adventure. After hitch-hiking to Sudbury, we "rode the rails" all the way to Winnipeg, arriving there late in June. To say we had some interesting experiences en route would be a total understatement. It was a month long education.

Through the kindness of the downtown Winnipeg Salvation Army Men's Hostel, two young, hungry, and dirty travelers were welcomed. Food, a shower, and clean clothing were provided to us as well as a place to sleep with 20 to 25 other lost souls in a big dormitory. Thank goodness they also provided their "guests" with a locker to lock up personal belongings that we didn't want to lose. On site was a hiring hall where employers who wanted help for a day or longer came 6 mornings a week to look over the crop and pick out suitable people to do their work. Pay was usually received at the end of the day in cash. JB was soon hired to start full time work at a factory in Selkirk, leaving me alone at the hostel. Temporary jobs came and went for a while and I moved on to a cheap rooming house. It sure wasn't anything like the home I had left in Barrie but much better than some of the places we stayed in on the trip to Winnipeg.

The Salvation Army hiring hall had been working out well for me and I was finally offered fulltime work until at least October. The guy who hired me said, “I need someone who has a chauffeur’s license, who can drive truck, put up and take down carnival rides and booths, operate the rides, and do whatever other work we require of you.”

It sounded good to me and I left with him, looking forward to travels all over eastern Manitoba and north western Ontario. In hindsight, I should have asked a few questions before I left with him. He took me to their yard on the outskirts of the city where all the equipment was stored and we spent some days getting everything ready for the road trip. I stayed at the rooming house, eating in restaurants and buying some supplies for lunches and snacks. Finally, we hit the road. As I write this some 50 years later, I don’t recall the exact itinerary but some of the locations we set up in were Steinbach Manitoba, Rainy River, Emo, Sioux Lookout, Red Lake, Dryden and Kenora Ontario.

The memories of the work and general conditions are still sharp in my mind after all this time. Wages were low, considering we were expected to be available 24-7, ready to drive, set up, tear down, operate and repair equipment, and anything else that needed doing. We were responsible for our own meals and accommodations, be they in the cab of one of the trucks, or in the back amongst the equipment, or in one of the flop houses that the regular carnies knew where to find in every town. When travelling, we stopped at roadside picnic areas and, if there was a lake nearby, we cleaned ourselves up as best we could by going for a swim. Other times we made use of the water taps (cold only) on the fairgrounds if there were no public washrooms with running water. Stops for gas or food while on the road also provided good opportunities to clean up a little. In the late ‘50s there were few Laundromats in the small towns and the only places to get laundry done were dry cleaners or homes that took in washing. That would have cost money we did not have, so everyone avoided the inevitable as long as possible. How did the regulars, who were with STRANGAR SHOWS year after year, put up with these conditions, and why? Most of them, I discovered, were there to get away from something and the carnival circuit provided that opportunity. Some travelled to get away from obligations—either to family, whom they had deserted, or legal problems. A rolling stone gathers no moss and is hard to catch, especially having no address or telephone number.



Bill at 17

The independent operators who ran the games of chance from their tented booths are another story. They owned their own booths and everything needed to operate them, including transporting the equipment around the circuit. They paid a rental fee, plus a percentage of their daily take, to the carnival owner. Most played poker in all the towns on the circuit; these games were a regular part of their itinerary and were pre-planned. They claimed that they did well at these games, financially, and most of them did not

return to the fairgrounds until after the banks opened and they were able to wire their winnings and daily profit from their booths home. Them being away after the carnival closed for the night provided an opportunity for some of us carnies to make a little extra cash and have a dry place to sleep. We were hired to look after their booths, safeguard the prizes, and look after their pets until they returned, usually mid-morning. There was also a collapsible cot and a thin mattress for added comfort; at least it was dry and out of the wind.

Fast food became the main staple I survived on, eating from some of the food booths at the fair, usually after it had closed for the night, and we got to buy the leftovers for half-price or less. It's a good thing I wasn't having my cholesterol tested in those days. On the road our meals came from truck stops where there was enough room to accommodate our fleet of equipment and where we also parked in early evening to spend the nights. Sleeping arrangements were such that the drivers got to sleep in the cab of their truck, if they wanted to. At times 2 or 3 people would share a motel or hotel room, or stay at a rooming house, actually a crude, early version of the modern bed and breakfast.

The owner or "Mr. Strangar" as he liked to be called, traveled with us, but in the luxury of a big fancy car, a Cadillac I believe, pulling a small camping trailer. He and his associates usually followed the fleet, but most of the time didn't catch up 'til late in the afternoon. They stayed behind to do business, and prepare the contracts for the following year. All the rides belonged to them, and only they sold the tickets for the rides from a central booth. As operators, we were not allowed to take any cash from the patrons and were under strict orders to send anyone who did not have a ticket to the sales booth. By the time we arrived in the second town, after I was hired, the older hands confided in me that because we earned so little, they did accept cash on the rides from patrons who wanted another round and didn't have the ticket. We looked at the practice as a little extra pay that helped with expenses. We always kept an eye out for the boss or his wife, as getting caught meant being fired.

When we set up in Kenora, I was assigned to operate the merry go round for the duration. A little spare change was coming in to me. On



The midway

On Saturday, I encountered a lady who wanted to ride, standing beside a child who in my opinion was big enough to ride alone. She did end up giving me 2 tickets for the ride and all was well. When the ride had timed out and it stopped, the child got loud and demanded another ride from the mother. She ended up agreeing with the child but only had 1 ticket when I got around

collecting. She intended to ride for nothing and I insisted that she pay for it. We had some words but in the end she rode for nothing. Shortly thereafter a commotion caused me to look toward the ticket booth and to my horror saw this lady, along with the boss and his

wife heading in my direction. Following them was a man, and the child that had been on the ride with the lady. Without hesitating, they fired me on the spot when I admitted I had tried to get her to pay me in cash for the ride. When I picked up my final pay shortly after the incident, the boss told me that the lady was the wife of the chairman of the fair board with whom he had to sign a contract for next year on Sunday.

I collected my meagre belongings and pay and found myself unemployed again, and still almost broke. This time though I was alone, in a strange place, and over a thousand miles from home. What to do next? Where should I head now? Should I admit defeat and return home, or should I go back to Winnipeg and try to find J. B. again? I decided that the best option, under my present circumstances, would be to take up an offer I had received from what appeared to be a good family, when we were back in Emo. I found myself hitchhiking east on Hwy 17, but I wasn't going home yet. I went down Hwy 71 to Hwy 11 and west to the village of Sleeman a short distance east of Rainy River.

When we had been doing the Emo fair, I befriended a guy about my age who was really interested in my job and travels. He went off to find his parents and returned with them to see me during a break. Billy introduced us and we spent some time talking about my life and theirs. They operated a farm north of there, close to Lake Of The Woods, where Mr. S. did some guiding for fishing camps as time permitted. They lived a basic life, mainly from what they produced on their farm. Cutting pulpwood supplemented the meagre income from farming to provide the family with the needs they could not get from the farm. They wanted me to quit the carnival and spend some time helping them with the pulpwood cutting and the grain and hay crop harvest. I told them, "It sounds wonderful but I am not ready to give up the carnival life yet. Don't be surprised though if I show up on your doorstep sometime." I liked them, they were good, honest, farm folk living a simple life and raising what appeared to be a great family.

They welcomed me when I showed up at their door unannounced; they had no phone, so I could not forewarn them I was coming. Arriving there could not have come at a better time for me. No sooner had the front door opened, when I was overcome with a sense of missing my own home and family. I arrived on a Sunday afternoon and the kitchen was alive with the sweet aromas of roasting chicken and apple pie. I immediately knew I had made the right choice in deciding to spend a little time with them. Mr. S and eldest son Billy took me outside and showed me around the farm. Mixed farming is an appropriate description of their farming methods. They had chickens (two of them were in the roast pan, in the oven of their wood burning stove) cattle for milk and meat, along with two horses that were in the pasture. Pigs were in the barn, with some slated for sale and butchering for their own meat supply. Some ducks were in a pen and being fattened for butchering soon. Mr. S explained that the horses did some of the farm work but mainly were used to haul logs out of the bush. Their farm equipment, while old, was well maintained. They also had an old gray Ford - Ferguson tractor, similar to one my father used on the farm.

The supper that Sunday was tasty and wholesome. They used a word I had never heard before to describe things they had to buy in town, "*boughten*" described things like sugar and salt. They lived off the farm, preserving the produce from their garden and small orchard. Various meats were also preserved by canning because electricity had not reached that far into the back country at that time.

I shared a room with Billy and worked at whatever needed doing. During the few



Steam engine

weeks I spent there I helped with the grain harvest, not with today's combine, but the old-fashioned way with a binder. It cut the grain at the ground, and bound the stalks into sheaves and dropped them on the ground. We then stood the sheaves up, into piles of five or six, to dry. These were picked up a few days later and put into a hired threshing machine, powered by a big steam engine that

dragged the heavy piece of equipment from farm to farm to do the threshing in the area. The engine burned wood to heat the boiler and had to be fed constantly.

Back in those days, I used to enjoy hunting. Billy introduced me to a method I had not previously known. Before we did the threshing we hunted for prairie chickens, which were about the size of our eastern partridge, and were kind of stupid. Billy's hunting method was to hide behind the stocks of grain and wait for the birds to arrive in small flocks, to eat the grain that had fallen on the ground. You could then pick them off with a 22 calibre rifle, one by one, as long as we stayed out of their sight. Once cleaned and roasted they were like a Cornish hen in taste and size. The next major work was bringing logs from the bush for firewood, cutting them to length and splitting and piling for the upcoming winter, mostly by hand. The work was hard but I felt good doing it.

Mid-September rolled around, frost was in the air and I was again becoming restless and felt it was time to move on. It was heartbreaking saying goodbye to these kind and gentle folks who had made a stranger welcome as part of their family. Mr. S. drove me to the highway and I caught a bus to Winnipeg. Immediately, I went to the Salvation Army Hostel to see if JB had left any letters for me with information as to his whereabouts. There were no messages and I had no way to find him.

I stayed at the hostel and made use of their employment centre again. Finding work was crucial to my existence and I found steady employment after about a week in Winnipeg. I was hired as a labourer-driver by Gateway Packers working from 4:00 p.m. to midnight. This was a firm that produced feed for fox and mink farms, and other animal food. The boss had contracts with all the poultry slaughter houses in the city to pick up whatever they could not use from the chicken and turkeys they butchered. Heads and feet were kept separate from the innards and other unusable parts. The entire product was in big steel drums that were rolled by my partner and me onto the truck which I drove. The load was taken to the processing plant; the heads and feet were boxed in used beer cases for delivery to a freezer facility, and the rest was poured through a big hole in the floor and into a boiler below. Taking the beer boxes to the freezer plant was an interesting experience, at times. The police were always suspicious when they saw a dirty, stinking truck with a lot of beer cases driving through the city late at night. Many times we were

stopped, at times with flashing lights and sirens, a few times with their guns drawn. They were usually shocked when they found out what was actually in the boxes.

The empty drums were returned to the plants, and then using haying forks, we put the stinking, wet feathers into the back of the truck and hauled them to the Selkirk dump on the outskirts of the city.

I moved into a boarding house, found for me by the Salvation Army, at the home of a Polish family. Food was well prepared, and ample to feed my hearty appetite. The home was clean and close to my work. All went well until mid December. The weather had started to get colder and there was snow on the ground. Christmas was coming soon and I felt really homesick, longing for family and friends. I had not been able to find my friend JB again in spite of extensive attempts.

At that time, the International Nickel Corporation was developing the Thompson, Manitoba site for mining and smelting on the shores of Hudson Bay, 400 miles north of Winnipeg. They had a hiring hall in downtown Winnipeg where potential new hires were tested and interviewed for work. I went and applied, passed the test, was interviewed, had my medical exam, and offered employment. Those of us who passed were called to a meeting to be given details about the terms of employment. The hourly rate and benefits were fantastic. Housing was provided in dormitories and meals, in their mess hall, army style. We would be flown in and required to stay there for much too long to suit me before we could come back to the city for some R and R. I stayed at the meeting till the process was over, enjoyed the lunch they put on for us, and said, "Thanks but no thanks, I'm too young to be caged up like that."

The weather continued to get colder, and removing the wet frozen feathers from the back of the truck was becoming more and more difficult. When the thermometer hit 10 below, Fahrenheit (25 below, Celsius) we arrived at the dump with one big solid block of frozen feathers. Chopping the feathers from the back of the truck in extremely cold and windy weather was no fun. I came to know why some of its citizens called Winnipeg, "Winterpeg" and figured I should get out before it got much colder, or at least look for warmer work. I decided to go home.

Cash was still short as usual, so my travel options were limited. The bus was my choice for the return trip to Barrie, Ont. Eventually I arrived at the Barrie bus terminal. No one met me because nobody knew I was returning. I phoned my home and was stunned to hear an operator tell me that the number was no longer in service. There was also no Barrie listing for Van Gaal. I'd only been gone since the Victoria Day weekend, and came back around Dec 20th. What had happened to my family? Where had they gone? I phoned a friend who might know their whereabouts, and he informed me they had moved to Edenvale about 20 miles from town. He offered to pick me up and take me to my family's new home. I gladly accepted his offer and was soon on my way to my parents' new home.

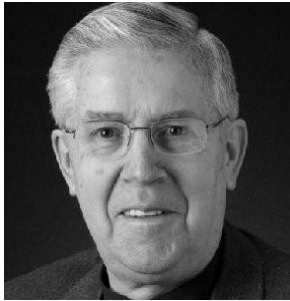
Mom and Dad along with my two brothers and sister could hardly believe their eyes when I walked into the kitchen as they were having their supper. Tears of joy were shed by all and it was a wonderful feeling to be back amongst the love of family after a long and lonely absence. It was the best Christmas that I recall from my youth.

My travel mate JB had not contacted his family when I spoke to them back in '59, and to date he is still missing. In reflecting on the experience of my "road trip" I feel that it taught me many life lessons that have helped me throughout my life and career. It

taught me the value of other people's feelings, and following your dreams to experience life to the fullest. In spite of my school difficulties—dropping out of the education system at the age of 16 and not completing grade 8—my secondary education has come from the “school of hard knocks.” In looking back on the adventure, I would do it all over again, knowing what I know today. But I would pay more attention to keeping family and friends in closer contact.

From Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*

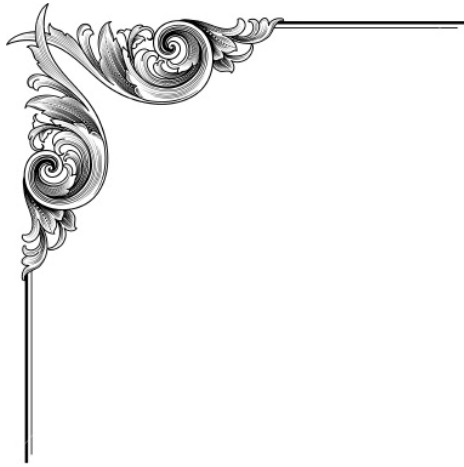
“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts, broad, wholesome, charitable views of men and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one's lifetime.”



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.



Footsteps to our Front Step

Anne Kittridge

I'm getting married in the morning, as the old song goes, and so I am. It is dusk and I am quite alone. I am sitting on the top step at the front of our house, with my feet firmly planted on the bottom one. I have a cup of steaming coffee on the step beside me. I can feel the cold cement beneath me. From where I sit, I can faintly see the long front path, green in places, with different kinds of mosses growing in the cracks where the cement has cracked with age. Through the grey, patchy fog I can see our old, creaking front gate. My mind begins to drift back in time and I begin to think of all the coming's and going's throughout the years on our front step.



Our front step

Daydreaming now, imagining myself as the step when it first arrived, I think "Phew, I am very slowly coming to life after getting dizzy going around and around in a cement mixer for hours and hours, and now I am being poured into a huge mould, wow, I am actually being made into a front step." Eventually I am lifted out of the mould and workmen moan and groan as they struggle to lift me onto their lorry. I am being taken to my final resting place. I am so lucky to have been made from the finest cement known to man. Now I know I will have a good long life.

We're here, we've arrived. I can see a large red brick house in front of me as I am carried through the gate and up the long front path to the brand new front door. The workmen once again grunt and groan as they lay me in place and, after much heavy shoving, pushing and banging, they are gone. All is now quiet and still. I gently settle into

my new home and wait, wondering what is in store for me.



Newlyweds, 1926

One evening I hear the creak of the gate opening and footsteps coming up the path. I am excited! I can't wait to see who will be the very first ones to set foot on me. It is the year 1926 and from the excited, whispered conversation I realize it is a young couple named Effie and Jess Taylor who have just gotten married. They have been given the key to their first home: the address is 20 Maltby Close, Nottingham, England. Both of them step on me very lightly as Jess fits the key into the new lock of the bright green front door. They turn the key and the door opens. Once inside the house I can hear their voices echo in the empty house. A few days later they return with what few possessions they have managed to collect to furnish their very first home. After this, I am in use every single day and I am overjoyed.



Anne's christening

One day the young couple walks slowly up the path and steps on me very carefully. They are carrying a very precious bundle in their arms. It is 1935 and the bundle is a precious baby named Anne Taylor. Anne was very tiny, in fact premature, born the first one of identical twins. Her twin sister only lived for a few days. I think nowadays they would have said her sad and sudden death in the hospital was due to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS.)

In 1939, at the start of WW2, another baby arrived named John Taylor. During the war, Brenda Taylor came into the world, followed right at the end of the war by the last baby in the family called Mary Taylor. Through the years, many prams were pulled and pushed up and down me with well dressed squeaky clean babies inside. Bump, bump up and down went the prams. How on earth those tiny babies slept as they were taken in and out of the house, I have no idea! I imagine they just got used to the bumping! I eventually discovered babies are a lot tougher than we generally think.

As the end of the war approached there were celebrations to welcome home soldiers, sailors and airmen who had survived their active duty abroad. These were happy occasions and enjoyed by all. Yet there were many wonderful young men who did not return; those who did always seemed to be scarred, often for the rest of their lives, and could never bring themselves to talk of the horrors of war they had witnessed.

I well remember many, many children tumbling up and down me as they rushed in and out of the house, often laughing, but every once in a while crying with a cut knee or bruise. Iodine was often used to make bruises better and was always bragged about and shown off just like a badge of honour, until the dark brown colour gradually faded.

As they got older, the children and their friends would often go out giggling to play a game called 'Spirit Tapping;' a child would quietly creep up onto me carrying a spool of dark thread and very quietly fasten it onto the front door knocker, then quickly run and hide behind the nearest hedge where others, who were watching, waiting and

giggling until they thought it was safe, would pull the thread making the door knocker bang loudly. Leaving whatever it was he was doing at the time, usually the man of the house would rush to the door expecting to find a visitor; instead there would not be a soul in sight. It always took a while before he found the piece of thread hanging from the door knocker. To say he was not amused is an absolute understatement. I always prayed no-one got caught!

Clean empty milk bottles were always returned to the milkman, they were placed on me the night before as the milkman came early in the morning. On special days a small piece of paper was placed in the top of one of the empty milk bottles, ordering a bottle of rich creamy Jersey milk as a very special treat for the children. Often a cheeky little Blue Tit, who was always an early riser, would softly land on the top of the bottle of Jersey milk, make a hole in the shiny foil on top of the bottle with its sharp beak, and then drink as much of the cream as it could reach, before flying away. The mother would try and get there first, but the little Blue Tit usually won. I used to wonder if the little Blue Tit could read, as he always managed to get to the right bottle first.

Often there would be the somber, heavy footsteps of the doctor approaching me, with his gaunt expression and dark soulful eyes. He always seemed to wear his long dark grey raincoat, swaying as he marched up the often rainy path towards me, carrying his large old musty black leather bag full of mysterious instruments and medicines, sometimes to help a baby or small child suffering from croup to scarlet fever. He delivered new babies, so I would hear the plaintive cry of a newborn baby drifting from the upstairs bedroom. Afterwards friends and relatives would begin to arrive, bustling on me as they brought gifts for the baby and flowers for the new Mom. The doctor's visit was always followed the next Friday at high noon, by his assistant, who would glide to a stop by the front gate, hop off her rusty old bike, rush up the front path towards me, and jump on me to reach the doorknocker. When the door was opened, a bill for the doctor's visit was presented. Each Friday she arrived until the final payment was made. Money was very scarce so adjustment's had to be made, often causing great hardship and yet it was always a matter of honour to pay these bills on time.

Throughout my life many people have stood on me, sometimes happy and sometimes sad. In my more mature life as I look back I remember young brides nervously holding onto their father's arm, dressed in the most beautiful wedding dress they could afford, smiling as they stepped down on me and walked to the waiting car to take them to be married. At other times, people dressed in black would come and go looking somber and sad as they came to say goodbye to a loved one. These times made me sad too as the footsteps were unsteady and unsure.

I got to know the rent collector very well as she dropped by every week. I recognized her footsteps long before she came into sight. First she would step on me and knock on the doorknocker, then if no-one answered, she would go to the window, push it



Anne, John and Brenda

open, and the rent with the rent book would be on the inside windowsill waiting for her! Would they dare do that nowadays? I think not!

The paperboy was my favourite visitor. He would be up with the lark and on his way delivering the day's newspapers before dawn broke, and yet he was always whistling as he quickly stepped onto me and delivered the newspaper through the letterbox. After this he would gradually make his way home for a quick breakfast of toast and jam, or toast and dripping and a hot *cuppa* before leaving for school.



A baby hedgehog

I had a secret friend. It was a mother hedgehog, who, if a saucer of milk was placed on me in the late evening by the children, would come during the night or early morning and gratefully drink the milk. One night I saw not only the mother hedgehog but, trailing behind her, were five teeny tiny babies. What a sight, to be sure, and how happy they made me as they scuttled up and on to me towards the saucer of milk. What a rare sight and one I shall always remember.

Often in the summertime, if the front door was left ajar, I would hear the sounds of popular music drifting down the stairs from the bedrooms. It was usually from the radio, and I would hear singers like Guy Mitchell or Lester Fergusen, or Ronnie Ronald and sometimes Vera Lynn and Anne Shelton. I love music and always felt like tapping my feet but, as you can imagine, that feat was totally impossible. Records played on the old wind up gramophone with the wooden handle on the side, were old large 78s. In later years I heard Buddy Holly and even Elvis Presley, perhaps The Rolling Stones or even The Beatles. I still recall listening to Tom Jones belting out "The Green, Green Grass of Home"—always one of my favourites and still is to this day.

During the war years I would watch young women go out on dates with Canadian or American soldiers stationed close by. Occasionally a bar of scarce chocolate was given to one of the children. Believe me, they almost broke their necks as they tumbled over me and into the house to show what they had been given. What a treat! They were nearly always made to share, if they had to!



Anne and Dad, 1939

The family had relatives who lived in Scotland and who sometimes, during the summertime, came to stay. When they visited, it was always a fun time for all. Off to the pub they would all go. I think the pub was called The Cocked Hat. They would step down me, all talking nineteen to the dozen, catching up on all the family news. After closing time, it was guaranteed that I would hear the sound of Scottish songs being sung before they even came into sight and staggered over me and back into the house for a good night's sleep. I knew I would be able to hear the sound of snoring before very long.

There were regular visitors who came by weekly and stood on me to knock on the door. There were the greengrocer and the baker and the fishmonger, each with their own cart, bringing the goods to the

house. After they left there was always the wonderful smell of cooking drifting out of the house towards me. Yummeee!

I was kept clean and shiny, scrubbed every week, often twice or more until I was squeaky clean. Then I was polished with a hard red stone until I looked gorgeous. As I got older I was painted with many coats of cream paint which made it much easier to keep me clean.

Effie and Jess Taylor and their family lived in their home all their married lives. As they grew older, their kindness to family, friends and neighbours came back to them twofold. Both caring and giving people, they had always helped their neighbours whenever they possibly could, and in return both received help when it was needed as they aged.

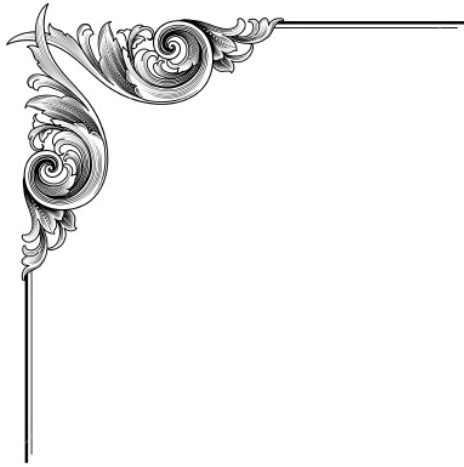
I am now much older and wiser and I have learned much as I have matured along with the path, the gate, the house and it's first occupants. We all look a bit shabbier these days, yet, looking back, I have had a basically good, carefree life. I have watched the family I loved arrive and depart. I now have a new family passing over me. They don't treat me with the same respect I was used to. I am ignored most of the time and left to my own devices. Still I guess old age is not what it was supposed to be.



The later years



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.



My First Love

Paul Benoit

I've had good times and bad times, as I'm sure we all have. I'd like to tell you about one of the good times in my life, as I can recall it. It started in grade 2, I believe. I was going somewhere on the elevator with a girl I'd just met, when she leaned toward me and we kissed on the lips (this happened in a school in Montreal in 1980.) After that kiss we were inseparable.

Three years later, we went to Camp Massawippi together—it's in Ayer's Cliff, Quebec, a very nice small town. We went just about everywhere together. In 1993 she came to my place in Granby Quebec. Granby is a city about an hour east of Montreal.

I've also been to her place several times through the years. I went there for supper a few times; one time I had lamb. One time, before supper, we watched Titanic—we had a good time together. I proposed to her in 1997 and she said yes but, sadly, a few years after that she told me she was moving to Greece.

In 2007, I went to visit the camp and she was there. That summer, while I was in Quebec, I went to her house with my parents for a visit. We asked her parents why they didn't move to Greece and they said it wasn't accessible for their daughter. I was very happy for myself but sad for them.

Christmas of that year we made plans to get engaged again. I bought a ring and a Cabbage Patch Kid doll (to represent our child) and went to visit her. I gave her the gifts I had brought and she gave me my gifts, then it came time for the ring. We didn't have to say anything because we knew each other so well we knew what we were thinking. Sometimes we even finished each other's sentences. But just 4 months later we had a big fight and split up. Now she wants nothing to do with me. But that's ok.

About June of 2007 I met a good friend where I live, who I like a lot. I hope this friend and I can get to know each other a bit better—only time will tell though. I don't want to name this friend for fear she may not feel the same way as I do. We do spend a lot of time together where we are. Last year we watched a movie together. The name of

the first girl is Penny; her last name is hard to pronounce. When we were growing up I was the only one, other than her parents, who was able to pronounce it.

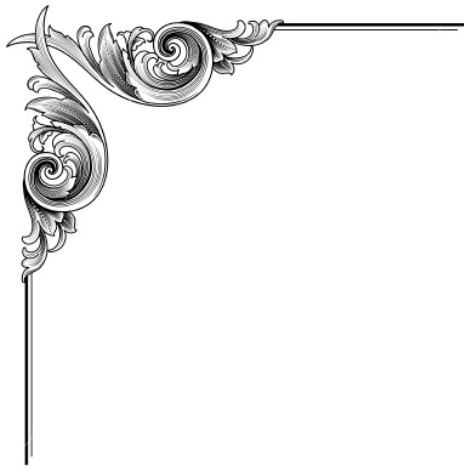
I don't know if the girl where I live feels the same way but I hope so. I like her a lot and really hope she feels the same way about me.



A picture of the girl I like now



My name is Paul Benoit and I have lived in Brantford, Ontario for about five years now. I enjoy playing video games, drawing, and going to the movies. I was born and raised in Quebec.



Vi's: Adventures of a Juvenile Consumer

Wayne King

Growing up in St. Thomas, Ontario in the fifties I would occasionally gain possession of a small amount of cash to spend on whatever I wanted. To me a nickel or a few pennies or maybe the incredibly good fortune of a dime or a mix of coins was the equivalent of the grizzled, half crazed, old prospector discovering the mother lode with a water hole conveniently located nearby. Adults called their small change chicken feed, but their dismissal of its value only made it easier for me to cajole a bit of it out of them. Of course, now that I am an experienced parent, I can understand that the adults were probably quite willing to give up some cash to get me out of the way for an hour or two.



Circa 1951, Wayne at 4 years of age. The Union Jack Hotel is 100 metres beyond the Wabash round house in the background.

Because I was limited as to what I was able to purchase this bit of chicken feed introduced me to the fascinating world of consumer choice and budgeting.

Saving was not an option when the little voice inside urged me to “spend it on candy, pop and comic books.”

With cash in hand the cry went out, “Let’s go to Vi’s,” or “Let’s go to the store.” The signal that an adventure was about to begin.

A visit to what was referred to as “the store” was an exciting event for me each and every time I went, no matter how much cash I had. However, all stores were not created equal. At the top of my list was the aforementioned Vi’s. Properly speaking Vi’s was not a variety store, but rather a coffee shop within the

Union Jack Hotel. Despite the small space allocated to my goodies of choice, Vi's had the best selection, at the best prices which made it the destination of choice for my sweet tooth and entertainment needs.

Although Vi's was only a few hundred meters from home, I had to cross the busy Wabash rail yards to get there. An adventure in itself, it was a treat for the senses that I never tired of. Long freight trains rattled through, yard engines hauled rolling stock back and forth, while the shops gave off a rhythmic banging and clanging. The pungent smell of oil and grease was everywhere, but somehow seemed pleasant rather than obnoxious.

The Union Jack primarily serviced the two railroads that crossed fifty meters north but was also an important adjunct to its immediate residential neighbourhood. A simple box like, wood framed structure, two stories in height, it was clad with the simple grey siding typical of the fifties. The first floor consisted of two beverage rooms or beer parlours, one for Men only, the other for Ladies and Escorts, and of course Vi's. Upstairs were a number of sleeping rooms rented by the day or week. Vi's occupied the left front quarter of the first floor of the Union Jack. Its only exterior door was accessed via a cement porch with three steps on either side. The front of the porch was closed off by an iron railing which we kids used to break our popsicles into two sections. A small sign secured to a wrought iron bracket above the door proudly proclaimed that I was indeed entering "Vi's Inn Coffee Shop." The wording seemed awkward to me, but it didn't really matter because the simple name Vi's was good enough to identify the premises. Reaching the steps my senses were aroused by the mixed odours of draught beer, deep fried french fries and grilled hamburgers mixed with fried onions blown outside by the whirling fan above the door.

Vi's was small, but had a very functional layout. Rectangular in shape, the self serve pop cooler, ice cream freezer and comic book shelves were to our left, while to the right sat the lunch counter with its lineup of a half dozen round chrome stools upholstered with red Naugahyde. Even a short kid could see the round, transparent candy containers and other confectionary displays situated on the counter top. The candy was strategically positioned to sit closest to the door so that we kids did not have to go too far into the store and thus disturb the mature lunch counter customers. The grill and deep fryer were situated behind the counter and against the wall, where cigarettes, chocolate bars, potato chips and other service items were also displayed. Above the grill was an opening where plates of food could be efficiently passed through to the hungry denizens of the beer parlour. The opening never failed to arouse my imagination as I wondered what mysterious rites were being performed on the other side.

During the fifties, the Union Jack was run as a family affair by the Derhollis family. Dad mostly worked the beverage rooms. He was bespectacled, and instantly recognizable in black dress pants, white dress shirt and black bow tie, the accepted garb for a beverage room server at that time. Mom was in charge of Vi's and dressed in a white kitchen ensemble. To my knowledge her name was not Vi, although I would never presume to call an adult by their first name. The kids attended different schools than I did so I didn't know them very well. The two youngest were boy/girl fraternal twins about my age. Donna had a well earned reputation as a tomboy. She looked and acted tough so I did my best to avoid crossing her path. Donna's twin brother, whose name I don't remember, was calmer. Their older brother Russell or Rusty was a big guy, probably because he was a teenager. Rusty also sported glasses. He was addressed by one name or

another depending on whether peers or parents were speaking to him. The kids all worked in Vi's, although the younger ones were not much in evidence since they were pre teens.

There was no place in our fair city that could compete with Vi's when it came to second hand comic books. Fancy new comics that cost a dime each were not stocked. Oh no, Vi's kept it simple by offering only used comic books that could be purchased via a nickel or a trade in.

My bartering experience with adults began the first day I nervously handed Mrs. D. the comics I had brought to trade in. Mrs. D. would slowly, or so it seemed to me, peruse my comics to determine their value. They had to be in good shape. No ripped pages or covers, no graffiti or pried open staples. The rule of thumb for trade-ins was two of yours for one of theirs. My goal was to maintain that standard. If not, then you had to decide whether to take it or leave it although I can't remember ever being disappointed.

Time stood still as Mrs. D. perused my comics. I watched her every expression to give me a heads up as to whether there was a problem or whether everything would be ok to proceed with the trade in.

A few "hmmms" and "ahhs" and a knowing glance or two in my direction would give me the clue that everything was going to be alright.

I would still be nervous until Mrs D. pronounced from on high "OK, for these six comics you can choose three of ours". Quickly I gave my formal assent that closed the negotiations and turned away to choose my comics.

The comics were highly visible and easily reached on a special set of shelves secured to the wall. I browsed through Vi's large inventory of perhaps one hundred used comics for the ones of interest. A warning not to linger was posted on a handwritten sign. Excitement at selecting a treasure or two from the shelf was tempered by the need to not handle the comics too long. I was always aware of the stern, watchful adult tending the counter. Mrs. D. was ready to intervene if something untoward occurred, while the sign was enough to warn me to expedite my buying decision. Generally, comic books published by companies such as Dell and Marvel, featured striking colour covers with the inside also colour, except for some of the advertising. *Little Lulu*, *Archie*, *Sergeant Rock*, *Blackhawk*, *Superman*, *Casper the Friendly Ghost*, *Green Lantern* and many, many more gave me exciting stories of action and comedy. Ignored by me were the Love comics, the predecessor of the Harlequin Romance, with their come on titles and plot descriptions that led to nothing. Comics featured advertising for products such as the Charles Atlas body building course that promised to transform a ninety-eight pound weakling, getting sand kicked in his face, into a calm, but effective fighter who flattened the bully with a single punch from a huge fist. They wasted their advertising dollar on me, however, because I was so young I did not even weigh ninety-eight pounds. Plus I could care less about positively influencing females.

Vi's incredible comic stock included used Classic Comics costing fifteen cents new, which made them an exception to all the buying and bartering rules. They were well worth the extra cost. I enjoyed particularly *The Talisman* by Sir Walter Scott and *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stephenson with their vivid graphics and intriguing plots.

I still remember the incredible opening of *The Talisman*. Sir Kenneth, riding alone in the Palestinian desert, spies a stranger in the distance and exclaims to himself and his

horse, "In the desert, no man meets a friend." Sir Kenneth's words of warning still resonate with me to this day in certain situations.

Drinking a pop was the perfect accompaniment to reading a comic in my young world. An ice cold pop, with its almost burning carbonation, was a heavenly treat which cleansed the pallet and cooled down my core body temperature even on the hottest of summer days. Pop was stored in a specially designed cooler, which was a massive steel box about three feet high by about four feet long and two feet deep. The exterior was painted red with the Coca Cola and Coke logos emblazoned in stark white on each of the four sides. The interior was galvanized iron. The lid was actually formed from two sections of stainless steel with a hinge running back to front. The lid arrangement meant that customers might have to look in both sections to find the pop of their choice. The cooler worked by immersing the pop in cold water, which was cooled by a condensing unit that vented into the aisle. The pop was submerged completely except for the top of the neck and the cap which proudly displayed the brand and flavour. A towel, provided by management to dry the pop was placed around a handle where it could be easily reached. A combination bottle opener with a gravity fed cap holder was contained in a slot built into the upper right top of the cooler. Opening a bottle could be accomplished either slowly to hear the fizzing sound, or quickly to hear the pop.

The choice of pops was incredible, but only six and ten ounce bottles, as well as some twenty six ounce Canada Dry were stocked. No cans, no plastic, no twist off caps, no cases of twenty four. Pop increased in price from seven cents to ten cents over the course of the fifties but the empties could be returned to the store for a deposit of two cents. Beware that Vi's would only accept brands carried by Vi's. Don't even try to cash in a bottle that they didn't carry. You were only wasting your time. The brand of pop I liked the most was the Wishing Well beverages. Wishing Well produced the best flavoured drinks such as black cherry, lemon lime and cream soda contained in a standard ten ounce bottle manufactured of clear, twisted glass. However, Orange Crush bottled my favourite orange drink and Hires my favourite root beer. Six ounce coke was too small to satisfy me, so I preferred ten ounce Pepsi when in the mood for cola. An added bonus was that Pepsi tasted sweeter than Coke.

For those of us kids with a sweet tooth, Vi's was Shangri La, I swear the best selection in town of penny candy. The cheapest object of our delight was black balls. You could keep them in play, in your mouth, for a long time, but beware of the black spittle. Cost was four for a penny. Caramels were one penny each. The chocolate caramels were more easily chewed than the straight caramel flavoured. Strawberries? Of course, but I chose the sugar coated, pink dyed variety. They cost two cents. Chewing gum was a popular choice in all of its many guises. Various types of bulk gums were stocked such as red hots, which had a fiery taste when you first chewed them. Large balls of hard gum were referred to as jaw breakers because they were very hard to break up and filled a small oral cavity to the maximum. Bazooka Joe featured a large, pink cylinder of gum wrapped in a corny colour comic with an outer wax paper. Double Bubble was a flat slab of pink, sugar coated, hard gum most often accompanied by four baseball, hockey or Davey Crockett cards. Wrigley's gums were mostly aimed at adults because they were more expensive and not as sweet. Nevertheless I always enjoyed a stick of the spearmint or juicy fruit when offered, usually by an adult. Then there were the miniature sugar cones filled with a syrup that was delightful to taste. Consuming penny candies made me

aware that I had to temper my excitement with the need to preserve my teeth. But I digress from more important matters than healthy teeth. Who can forget the jujubes with their choice of many colours and black babies, both of which were only two for a penny? Licorice was also available in singles and the choice was black, red or the more expensive and solid black pipes with pink and white hard candy to simulate a lighted pipe bowl. Red licorice flutes were a tasty favourite as well, but like the pipe they cost a nickel. Fifty years on, it's hard to believe that now politically incorrect licorice pipes and candy cigarettes were readily available to the eager and impressionable juvenile who wished to strut around pretending to be an adult. Also hard to believe was that penny candy was oftentimes not wrapped but was displayed in reusable plastic containers. Vi's did supply a small, brown paper bag to hold the massive quantity of candy that you would obtain for only a lowly nickel.

The local railroad guys who frequented Vi's were sometimes quite generous and occasionally treated us to candy and pop. They usually wore the traditional railroad garb of black pin striped hat and medium length coat with grease marks that betrayed the dirty jobs they sometimes had to do. Many of them sat in the beer parlour drinking beer, but Vi's was a quiet refuge for the guys who were content to eat their hamburger and fries, accompanied by a coke. I say guys because you would rarely see an adult female in Vi's and I do not even remember women working in the Wabash offices just across the way.

When leaving Vi's and spotting one of my peers it was the polite thing to call out, "No bites, no nibbles, no licks, no nothing," to discourage them from asking for a portion of my treats. But of course I always would share unless a particular individual had made me angry.

The challenge of consumer choice being solved I then walked back home, although not always the way I had come, imbibing the delights from Vi's.

Afterward

I started my high school career in 1961 and as a teenager my consumer tastes changed from comics to books and from penny candy to cigarettes. My taste for pop remained with me throughout my teenage years with Pepsi my beverage of choice and Pepsi was readily available almost anywhere, as were cigarettes. I was also getting around town a lot more with friends so that Vi's became much less important to me.

I did rent a room upstairs in the Union Jack for a few days in the late sixties when I needed a place to stay for a short time. I remember the room rate as being ten dollars a week. In the seventies the Union Jack was renamed the Wheat Sheaves and new cream coloured vinyl siding and brown roofing shingles updated the old hotel. The Wheat Sheaves remained as a beverage room that catered to the younger crowd and along the way Vi's finally closed down. Rooms were no longer rented upstairs. The railroads had dramatically decreased their presence, while fast food restaurants and trendy taverns were making their presence felt. I lost track of the Wheat Sheaves when I moved out of town in the mid seventies. It closed for good at the end of that decade and stood derelict for many years.

Postscript: God Bless the Union Jack

Fast forward to July of 1998.

It was a warm and sultry summer evening. I was visiting my Mum and decided to bike around St. Thomas to see what's what in town. I started by cycling over to the former L&PS right-of-way which, without tracks, had transformed into a beautiful, block long avenue of trees that stretched a hundred meters before intersecting the Wabash tracks. I could still smell the pungent oil that saturated the soil, exacerbated by the summer heat. The Wabash yards were much reduced with no station building, no water tower, no round house and few railroad workers.

Clearing the trees I was astonished to see a tow truck, positioned fifty feet from the front of the Union Jack. A thick steel cable was being deployed from its derrick until it was long enough to be secured to the huge, wooden, vertical pillar positioned at the front centre of the hotel. At that moment, the tow truck started up. The cable went taut. But despite the mighty roar of the truck's engine and a lot of blue smoke emitted, it made no headway with the beam. The tow truck quickly left the scene but within fifteen minutes a larger vehicle made its appearance to try its luck against the old building.

Secretly, I said to myself "I hope it stands" while all the time knowing that it couldn't. Standing vacant for many years it was being slowly demolished by neglect. But now the time had come to finally put the Union Jack out of its misery and move on.

Fortunately, I had my camera with me and was able to photograph the subsequent events.

The larger, more powerful tow truck simply attached its cable and pulled the front vertical beam down and out of the way without too much effort. Surprisingly the old hotel still stood, although it now looked decidedly shaky.

I repeated to myself "I hope it stands"



1998: the larger tow truck arrives and secures a cable to the centre, front vertical beam, just visible



The front beam is pulled out but the Union Jack stands

The next move of the demo crew was to attach the steel cable to the middle beam in the centre of the Union Jack. Pulling the middle beam out would surely bring the building down, but someone had to brave the interior, right to the centre and then properly attach the cable without causing a cave in. I was nervous just watching as our man entered. He secured the cable to the beam and emerged unscathed. After that the tow truck simply pulled and the old Union Jack came down emitting a big, choking cloud of dust. The dust of generations past now had to find another home.



The middle interior beam is pulled out and
the Union Jack collapses



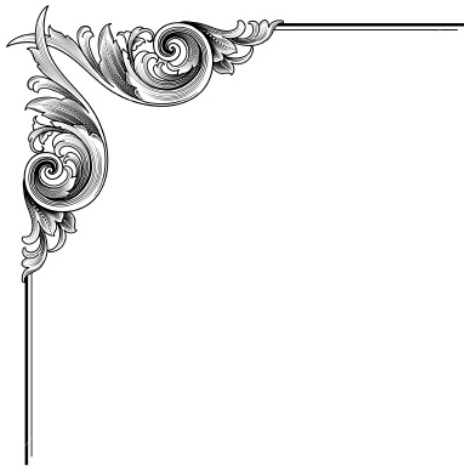
The dust of generations past must now find
another home

Cheers, rang out, “Hooray, hooray” from the neighbourhood girls, the demo crew and the new owner. Not from me though. I took my final photos and left.

Within a couple of months a new home stood on the very spot that the Union Jack had once graced. Gone, but not forgotten. God bless the Union Jack.



Wayne was born and raised in St. Thomas, but has lived in Brantford for almost thirty years. He is partner to Sharon and father to Amy, Aaron and Ian. His work career was in sales/marketing for a variety of businesses, both local and international. Interests include gardening, history, photography, brewing, cycling and hiking. Now that he is retired he is able to devote time to creative writing and reading.



The New York World's Fair

Mary Kress

Do you remember Jack Nicholson's sardonic line from the movie, *As Good As It Gets*? "... some people's youthful memories involve lakes, noodle salad and happy times ..." (I am paraphrasing Nicholson's ironic comments a bit.) That line resonated with me. I am going to share some recollections of an experience from my teenage years.

Out of the blue, one day in August, 1965, my mother announced that she had decided to take me and my 16-year old sister to the New York World's Fair. It appeared that my mother had visited the 1939 New York World's Fair and cherished fond memories of this trip. I guess that she felt that this would be an opportunity to re-live some of these youthful experiences.

To a 17 year-old girl in 1965, New York City represented glamour and sophistication. My sister's attitude was indifferent, but I was beside myself with excitement. We lived in a small, rural town of less than 4000 people. Aside from visiting grandparents in New England, we had never seen much of the "outside world." We'd certainly never had visited a large American city. New York City was almost beyond the realm of one's imagination.

Laden with enough baggage to embark upon an Atlantic voyage, we set out for the nearest train station on a steamy August evening. The train journey would take about twelve hours. On our previous train trips to visit our grandparents—just south of the Quebec/Vermont border—we had had berths to ourselves. We had been quite young—5 or 6 years old—but we remembered the novelty of those berths and little sinks very well.



Mary, typical "well-dressed" teenager of 1965

Alas, as the evening drew on, it became apparent to us that there were to be no such amenities on this trip. My mother was an extremely frugal woman. Moreover, she had seen no need to share an itinerary with us—that wasn't the way things were done in our family. "What is wrong with the two of you?" my mother would ask, "You are young". In any case, we sat up throughout the night on the train. Sleep eluded us completely. My mother looked as fresh as a daisy; my sister looked stoical and I looked (and felt) drugged with sleep deprivation.

When we finally reached Grand Central Station in New York, a cacophony of noise, activity and confusion assailed our eyes and ears. When we reached the taxi pick-up area, the scene that met our eyes was almost indescribable—hordes of people, tremendous skyscrapers and crazy, bumper-to-bumper traffic. Smells from exhaust fumes, hot asphalt and food vendors were overpowering. My sister and I looked around in wonderment...we may as well have landed on another planet. Our mother had reserved a room for us for a couple of nights at a mid-town hotel. Upon our arrival at the reception desk, unfortunately, it appeared that something was amiss. My sister and I weren't privy to the conversation, but after reaching our room, we received the distinct impression from our mother that this accommodation was not what she had been expecting.

Although I hadn't had much experience with evaluating hotel rooms, I felt that this one did not look promising. It was small, cramped, and furnished with what might be termed "cast-offs." We overlooked the back of a parking garage. The walls were thin and the locks on the room didn't look very substantial. There was a minute bathroom; a trickle of brackish, lukewarm water dripped out of the faucets of the tiny sink. There was a wall-mounted air-conditioning unit which appeared to be circulating hot air around the room.

After depositing our luggage in the room, my sister and I naively assumed that we would lie down for a bit of a rest, given that we had had no sleep the previous night. However, we should have known our indefatigable mother better!

We headed out onto the street—the heat was incredibly intense. The skyscrapers created a canyon-like effect. (Forty years later, while visiting the Republic of Panama, the heat of mid-day Panama City reminded me of New York City in August, 1965.) We then made our first descent into the bowels of the N.Y. subway system. N.Y. subways of the

sixties were dangerous places; evidently, not many tourists ventured into them. Having travelled a bit on Toronto subways, I found the noise, heat, dirt and graffiti to be almost unbelievable. My mother, however, was not deterred by any of these conditions. As the visit wore on, our sojourns on the N.Y. subway system took on a surreal quality. We never knew what sight might greet us as we emerged onto the "cityscape".



New York City skyline 1965

My mother's memories were of a more genteel, prewar, city. I think that she gradually became quite disillusioned by the changes which had taken place in the city since 1939. The Times Square that she remembered was certainly not the Times Square

that existed in 1965. Once we emerged in Harlem—the landscape there was as foreign to us as the surface of the moon might have been.

My sister and I began to ask plaintively, “When are we going to visit the Fair?” Mother replied, “We’re going to see the city first.” I have vague memories of our breezing through both Macy’s and Bloomingdales’ basements—not buying anything, mind you, but receiving somewhat vague impressions of these famous department stores. I remember seeing Central Park and later, the Statue of Liberty. For some reason, a performance at the Radio City Music Hall stands out in my mind—I guess, because I was quite impressed by the glamorous Rockettes. This dance company, founded around 1925, was famous for its precision choreography.

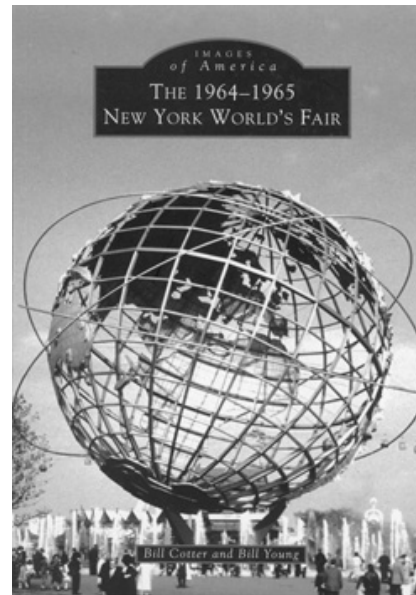
Unfortunately, our return each night to the hotel was not salubrious (I’ve always wanted to use that word!) Due to an unprecedented heat wave and the presence of several million visitors, New York City was experiencing rotating “brownouts” and water shortages. As a result, lighting, air conditioning and water pressure was sporadic at best, especially during peak demand times. Showers or baths for three guests during the same evening (or morning) were impossible. However, these conditions did not slow down our unflagging mother.

Eventually, we arrived at the World’s Fair grounds in the borough of Queens. The Fair took place during two six-month intervals between April, 1964 and October, 1965. Its landmark site was a giant dome called the Unisphere, which represented the planet Earth. There was no midway because the organizers of the Fair meant it to be an educational experience. However, my sister and I did not miss the midway because we felt that we were too old for such frivolous entertainment. Map in hand, my mother led us through the square-mile of fair grounds like General Wolfe leading his troops onto the Plains of Abraham. According to my reference notes, the theme of the 1964/1965 World’s Fair was “Peace Through Understanding” – an ironic theme because, as time wore on, any “peace and understanding” between my mother and I was fast evaporating. I suppose that my normally fearless mother envisioned would-be rapists and kidnappers armed with chloroform lurking behind every tree or pillar. She saw us as being as helpless as newborn babies. Naïve we were, but not helpless. I desperately wanted an opportunity to roam around a bit on my own. Alas, that was definitely not to be.

Because our time was very limited, as we soon discovered, we enjoyed only tantalizing glimpses of most of the exhibits. Much more time would have been needed to



Mother in New York City ca. 1940



explore all of the attractions. The Fair's most popular attraction, I recall, was a "show" called Futurama, which was sponsored by General Motors. In this exhibit visitors seated in moving chairs glided past detailed scenery showing what life might be like in the "near future," i.e. in twenty years or so. Other popular exhibits were hosted by such corporations as IBM, Bell, DuPont, Westinghouse and Disney. Unfortunately, like its predecessor in 1939/40, the 1964/65 World's Fair lost money. Although most of the pavilions constructed for the Fair were demolished following its close, some of the remaining pavilions were reused for other purposes. Apparently, there are people who buy and sell "collectables" from this Fair, but I am not among them.



Home at last

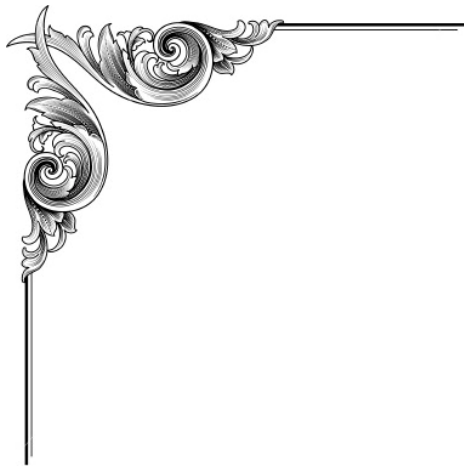
Our departure from New York was, I think, a relief for all of us. As the train, again an all-nighter, wound through eastern Ontario, a feeling of peace entered my soul. As the train pulled into our station, I was struck for the very first time by the lushness, tranquility and beauty of London, our "Forest City." When we arrived home, sadly, none of us shared any pictures or memories of the trip. Although I visited the great cities of Europe later in my life, I never returned to New York City. Neither did my sister, for that matter.

That trip gave me a much deeper appreciation for the prosperous, beautiful part of the world in which we were privileged to live. As for my mother, I think that perhaps she realized that you can't always go back to the places of one's youth and find them unsullied by the passage of time. She did return to New York City several times. Her younger brother accepted a position with an engineering firm based in Long Island and he married and raised a family there.

My husband speaks fondly of his visits to New York City. I know that he'd like to go back there one day. Perhaps, before we get much older, we'll go to New York and I'll have a chance to look at that city through different eyes.



I was born in 1947 in London, Ontario and grew up in Exeter, Ontario. I graduated from London Teachers' College and the University of Western Ontario. I have been married for 35 years; we have two grown children and have lived in Toronto, London, Brampton, Kitchener and Brantford. My employment as a teacher-librarian with the (then) Brant County Board of Education led us to move to Brantford from Kitchener in 1999. Since my retirement in 2005, I have enjoyed the opportunity to do a lot of reading and a bit of writing. This program at Brantford Public Library has been very encouraging. I think that insights into the past are valuable legacies to leave to one's children.



Evacuation Time

Sylvia Woodford

Many of us grew up during World War Two. When writing our stories, the themes may be alike but the tales will be as diverse as the people writing them. I was born on the 19th of January 1931, in a town called Cheshunt, in Hertfordshire, England. I have two siblings; a brother who was three years my junior and a sister who is a little over four years younger.

The house we lived in was a courtesy house that came with my father's job. He worked for a company called Chaplin Brothers, Rose Growers where my dad developed new strains of roses. For many years "Chaplins" would exhibit their roses at the Chelsea Flower Show where Dad would display his roses for the Royal Family.

At the beginning of the war many men had to enlist in the armed forces, but I think that men with young families were given a choice to either join up or go into agriculture. Dad chose agriculture and consequently we had to move house.

We moved to a town called Waltham Abbey (named for the Abbey that was built initially by the Romans and finished by the Normans) Dad got a job in a local nursery growing tomatoes. We rented a house in a place called the Romeland, circa 1700. A lot of



Me as a baby with Mum and Dad, 1931

the town dated back to 1359. The house we lived in had a chimney that the chimney sweeps boys used to have to climb into. It had a ledge halfway up for them to stand on.

The Romeland was around in William the Conqueror's time and he maintained a house there, so I understand. King Harold, who fought William and lost, is buried on the grounds of the Abbey.

There were animal pens surrounding the Romeland, which were used for housing calves, pigs, and goats on market days. Just outside our house and the house next door was a big machine for weighing cows. One day, some bright spark put pigs in there and one escaped and ran into our neighbour's house. She'd left her front door open. It was so funny and every one who witnessed it was in hysterics.

Behind the Romeland was a munitions factory that produced gunpowder and was considered a good target for German bombers, so when the war started in 1939 it was

decided that because of the close proximity to the factory, and due to the incessant bombing of London that the children should be evacuated. My brother and I had heard the other children talking about evacuation but we had no idea what the word meant. We soon found out, however, when the time came to be sent away.

The day we left was probably one of the worst days of our lives. I remember boarding a bus to take us to the railway station at Waltham Cross. Every kid was crying including my brother and me. There was a lot more crying when we got to the station. I remember boarding the train but the journey is forever wiped from my mind. We were sent to a town called Halstead in Essex which was

considered to be out of the range of the bombing. When we arrived we went to a school and assembled in the school hall where we waited for foster parents to come and claim us.

A couple by the name of Mr. and Mrs. Runtle took us home with them. Since not many people drove cars those days we had a long walk ahead of us and we were so tired from the journey.



Waltham Abbey



Me and my two siblings, Desmond (left) and Brenda (centre)

Once we got to the Runtles' home, Aunt Edith (that's what we were to call her) made us hot cocoa and tucked us in to a nice comfortable bed. My brother cried all night, and so I didn't get much sleep myself.

The Runtles were very good to us, although Aunt Edith was a somewhat somber sort of person, but Uncle Percy (that's what we called him) was quite a jolly man and used to make us laugh a lot. It must have been close to Christmas when we arrived in Halstead because I remember Uncle Percy taking my brother and me to visit some of his relatives in Colchester, where we were made very welcome.

My mind has become a complete blank when it comes to remembering a lot of what went on at that time. I don't remember where we went to school but I do remember the park we used to play in and the sweet shop around the corner of the street where we were staying, and buying "gobstoppers" and "sherbet dabs," so the Runtles must have kept us in pocket money.

Uncle Percy was a watch and clock repairman and he had a room that was filled with clocks that were always ticking and chiming away. I loved being allowed in that room when he was working. I don't know exactly how long we were there before Aunt Edith became sick, but I do know we had to leave and go to some other foster home. This time my brother and I had to split up and go to different homes. We were very unhappy about that and I don't know what exactly the problem was but when mum came to visit us there was something that obviously didn't appeal to her about our accommodations and she took us home with her.

Part II

When we returned home from Halstead my mum and dad were in the process of moving house again—this time two houses down the block. I thought that was great because I was a little afraid of being in the other house sometimes because I thought it was haunted. Considering its age it probably was. I was always scared to go up into the attic where mum sent us to play sometimes. I have often found myself there in my dreams. I liked the house we moved to as it was bright and airy, although it still looked out over the cattle pens. We children weren't there for long though. The bombings in London had intensified, and since we still lived behind the gunpowder factory my mum and dad thought it prudent to send us away again. This time I was sent to my maternal grandparents and my brother and sister were sent to stay with our Uncle Len and Aunt Nell, who didn't have children of their own.

Before we were sent away again I have vivid recollections of visiting my young aunt who lived with my paternal grandparents just down the street from us. I used to go every Saturday evening for a few weeks to watch her get ready for the Saturday



My grandfather, Fred Pettit

night dances held at our local town hall. I thought she was a most beautiful woman and she always had the loveliest dresses and silver shoes. Eventually I was sent to stay with my maternal grandparents.

The house my grandparents lived in was a quaint thatched roof cottage in a little village called Much Hadham that was well out of bombing range. My grandfather was a jolly man, always ready with a laugh and a joke, which seemed to annoy my grandmother as she wasn't a very tolerant person and was quite stern. Granddad raised chickens and grew a large vegetable garden so we weren't suffering the rationing of food that was going on in other parts of England. He also grew a lovely flower garden.

It wasn't long before my sister and brother were sent back home again. I guess my aunt found them too much to handle. I stayed on with my grandparents though, and I believe that was partly because grandma had a young daughter at home with a new baby. Her husband was in the army and so I guess they were grateful for the extra help.

Sometimes I would go visit Aunt Nell and she would make up a picnic of cheese sandwiches and bottles of tea to take to the field where Uncle Len would be ploughing. We would sit under a haystack or straw stack to eat our meal. They don't make hay or straw stacks any more. Often on our trips we would pass a house with these enormous statues in the garden, which really fascinated me. I eventually found out many years later

that they were sculptures that were made by the famous Henry Moore who happened to live there.

The last time I was there was in 1997 and at that time the statue of 'A Reclining Woman' was still on the grounds of the museum, however, I think shortly after my visit the statue was stolen and I don't know if it was ever recovered. It would have taken an enormous effort to have done that. Henry Moore also made an enormous statue which he dedicated to the villagers of Much Hadham. It stands in one of the fields nearby the museum and is very impressive.

While I lived with my grandparents I attended the village school and on the way to and from school I had to go by way of Station Road that was occupied by an army battalion. They had set up camp along the road under the trees and there were army trucks, machine gun- carriers, tents and various other army related paraphernalia. Some of the soldiers were Gurkhas from the Indian army.



Henry Moore's statue made for the villagers of Much Haddam

There were other evacuees in the village whose parents owned country cottages there. They had their own school and riding stables and weren't allowed to hobnob with the village riff-raff.

One day, as I was strolling home from school I heard a plane engine. Suddenly there was a rat-a-tat-tat of machine gun fire. It appears that one of the enemy planes had been scrambled by our spitfires and had flown over the field that I was walking through and taken a pot-shot at me. I immediately dived into the ditch to avoid it. Shortly after I arrived home there was a horrendous crash. When Granddad came home he told us that a

plane had been shot down over Stanstead Aerodrome (which is now the large Stanstead International airport.) That was something I'll never forget because it was so frightening.

I loved being at my grandparents place and was there when my youngest aunt married her soldier fiancé. That was a great day and every one was very happy and the weather couldn't have been more perfect. I have been wondering, how is it some things stay in the mind and yet others go away completely

When I was thirteen my mother came for me and took me home again. The bombings had quieted down considerably and my mother had started to go out to work. She needed me to help with household duties and look after my brother and sister. By this time they had moved house again and that was because the "Romeland" had been demolished when at last the gunpowder factory had been bombed. Fortunately, the land mine that was dropped fell in the adjacent watercress beds, if it hadn't the whole town would have been blown up. That was in June 1941.

In 1945 we were being bombed by guided missiles. They were called V2's. They would just fall out the sky, from nowhere, or so it seemed. On one particular afternoon after school, I had intended to return my mothers library book to the library but had forgotten to take it to school with me. This turned out to be very fortunate for me but, I'm afraid, unlucky and devastating for many of my school-mates that lived in the area, for while I was at home getting mum's book, a V2 fell and exploded in the middle of the street that housed the library and lots of shops and houses. Some of my schoolmates were among the casualties. It was a very sad day and I suddenly saw the enormity of it all and came to realize how sheltered I'd been. Shortly after that, a missile fell on a football field one Sunday morning where some of the boys from school played football. Some of those weren't seen again. There was one particular boy I used to wait at the school-bus stop for but he wasn't on it the next day, or ever again.

Shortly after that the enemy was also sending over things we called Buzz Bombs. These were like small, remote controlled planes that made a funny droning sound. When the engine shut off the plane would crash and blow up. As with the guided missiles, we never knew where they would crash. My friends and I would stand outside and watch them when they appeared and as soon as the engine stopped we would dive in the air-raid shelter. Every family had a shelter in their back yard.

The war in Europe ended in June 1945. Everyone was so happy. In the sub-division where we lived everyone immediately put their collective heads together and arranged an enormous party. They all pooled their resources and set out long tables of food and drink and got into the party spirit. My mum was dressed up as Al Jolson (one of the first black entertainers) and sang and danced for us. I would never have thought she could have been so jolly. We danced with boys we wouldn't have been seen dead with under normal circumstances. The party was still going strong after midnight and I imagine quite few of the folks got smashed.



Me with my paternal grandparents

We lived just across the street from my paternal grandparents. We went to a lot of family get-togethers there. My grandparents had seven children and so there would be numerous aunts, uncles and cousins gathered together. Those were my very best and happiest times.



I was born in England on January 19, 1931. I spent a good deal of my childhood being evacuated to several places during World War II. I met my husband-to-be in 1948 and we were married in December, 1950. We then went to live in Cornwall where my husband was serving in the R.A.F. Our first son was born in Redruth, Cornwall on December 31, 1951. After my husband left the R.A.F. we returned to my home town of Waltham Abbey where our first daughter was born in May, 1952. In 1957 we immigrated to Canada. Here we lived in Oakville for several years where we had three more children, two boys and a girl. We moved around a lot at the whim of my husband to Burlington, Hamilton and finally Brantford. My husband and I separated in 1976 and divorced in 1984. In 1996, shortly after I retired, I lost a son to suicide. One other son lives in California with his wife and three children. Another son lives in Hamilton. My two daughters live in Brantford. They each have two children. I also have two great-grandchildren.