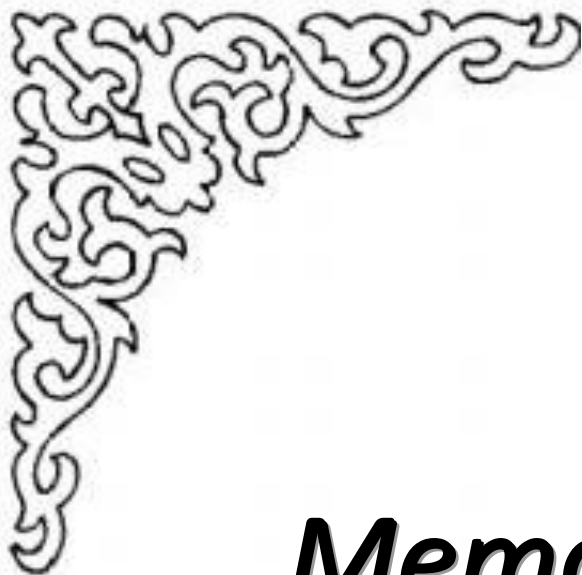




Memorable Times

**Lifescapes Writing Group 2012
Brantford Public Library**





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Lifescapes Writing Group 2012

Brantford Public Library

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

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Introduction

Lifescapes is a writing program created to help people write their life stories, to provide support and guidance for beginner and experienced writers alike. This is our fifth year running this program at the Brantford Public Library and *Memorable Times* is our fifth collection of stories to be published.

A limited number of print copies of each edition are available for sale. Alternatively, the library archives copies that may be borrowed and provides PDF versions that can be viewed online at: <http://brantford.library.on.ca/adults/lifescapes.php>.

As with many endeavours, this project would not have succeeded without the help of several people working behind the scenes. Notable among them is Joan Faehrmann, who introduced this program at the library five years ago. The 2012 *Lifescapes* program benefited immensely from her hard work and generosity (and excellent recordkeeping).

We would like to thank our guest speakers, local authors Mary M. Cushnie-Mansour and Lorie Lee Steiner, for sharing their insights into different aspects of memoir authorship. Lorie also provided invaluable editorial support and assistance.

Every year brings its own set of challenges to overcome and lessons to learn, and this anthology is a testament to the dedication and enthusiasm of seven women and six men with a strong commitment to writing. The memories they share will make you smile, make you think, and make you nostalgic for days gone by ... this is the joy and the art of storytelling.

We truly hope you will enjoy reading the fifth *Lifescapes* anthology, *Memorable Times*.

Robin Harding
Adult Services/Readers' Advisory Librarian
Brantford Public Library
Brantford, Ontario



Canada On My Mind: 1951

by Audrey M. Boggis Cichacky

The time had come for us to part. Saying goodbye to my home and family became very difficult as I looked at their beautiful faces. Each one had a slightly different expression; each one asked why.

"Why are you going so far away?"

As I hugged my little brother, Charles, who was almost ten years old, he asked me to bring him back a polar bear. I promised him I would try but it would most likely be a picture of one.

Next, was my youngest sister, Valerie. She was almost twelve years old by then and preparing to go to high school. She was a brainy little girl who we all knew would do well.

"Yes, Val I love you very much and I will be back some day to see you again. Help Mum and Dad and take good care of Mullygrubs."

Mullygrubs was her favourite doll that had been left out in the rain. The doll's hair was now all matted and her face was blotchy but Val loved her in a more grown up kind of way.

Bren, my younger sister, stood with tears in her eyes. She would now be the oldest one at home and much responsibility would fall on her shoulders.

"I will miss you Audie."

"I will miss you too, Bren."

The previous day, I had visited my oldest sister, Marjorie, with whom I had spent many good times.

Peggy, my traveler of a sister, had just returned from a four year stay in Australia . I listened to her carefully as she gave me much good advice which I would use many times over.

I gave my mum a big hug. Words were few. We knew how each other felt.

Now was the time for me to leave and my nerves began to play havoc with my frame of mind. I was frightened to be leaving my family. I was sad to be leaving behind all that was such an intrinsic part of who I was - my family, friends the beautiful countryside.

I snapped myself away from these thoughts. I had the adventure of my life ahead of me.

I had my important papers safely put away in my purse and kept them close to me at all times. They included immigration papers, passport and airline ticket.

I was on my way. My father had packed my luggage in the boot of the car and Peggy had traveled with us to London.

When I embraced my dad to say goodbye, I could feel the bond we had always had. He whispered, "I will see you in Canada. "

He really did mean for his wish to come true as he very much wanted to see Canada. He had informed himself of Canada by attending lectures and travelogues that were offered in our home city. I hoped his dream would come true just as mine was beginning to but I was aware that he was not a well man.

With all of these precious memories tucked near to my heart I boarded the train in Ipswich, Suffolk with my sister, Peggy, at my side.

Basil and I had recently become engaged and he would be waiting for me in London. Our plan was that he would emigrate to Canada in a few months. He was still waiting for his papers to be processed and once they were available he would meet me in Canada.

Transportation had become complex after the war and it was not unusual for you to have to wait for means of transportation to be assigned to you by the government. Sometimes the wait could take months as the planes had to be decommissioned from their service in the war.



Basil and Audrey in London, England.

June 3, 1951

Once we arrived at Liverpool Street station in London, I saw Basil waiting for me as we had planned. Together, the three of us had a bite to eat before we parted ways. Peggy went back home to Ipswich. Basil and I made our way to Heathrow Airport.

This is it I thought, no turning back now. With my mind clear and in focus, I approached the check-in counter only to find I had been bumped from my flight. Was this challenge just meant to test me? Well, I was soon to find out. Now or never, I thought. It had to be now.

Basil had forewarned me about the possibility of being bumped off my flight. He and I had rehearsed how I was to answer them.

"This can't happen. I am far from home and don't have any English money left."

This reply had the desired outcome. I was told that I would be put up in a hotel not far from the airport and I would be called when another flight became available.

The call came four days later. Fortunately, Basil was able to stay in London with me and once again, we made our way to the airport. This time all went well.

Basil hugged me and wished me well, "I'll see you in Toronto in September." He went on his way and I stood in line at the boarding gate.

Standing close to me was a group of people returning to Toronto. I listened to what their animated conversations. Eavesdropping intently, you might say.

"Did you here about the terrible group of bank robbers in Toronto?"

One of the group said, "Really?"

"Oh yes, they've held up five banks at gun point. Yes, killed a policeman too. They are still at large. It's getting more like Chicago every day."

Overhearing this conversation was not exactly a confidence builder for me. I stepped aside. All I could hope was that this news would not be on the front pages of 'The East Anglian Daily Times' for all my family to see. What would they think?

Time to board.

I entered the aircraft with trepidation for this was my first flight. Not to worry, I will sit back and enjoy the ride.

The aircraft was a turbo prop, Trans Canada Airlines, a TCA. The engines roared relentlessly through the night. The journey was long; giving me much time to think. Sleep escaped me.

I cast my eyes on the brightest star in the sky. I stayed focused on that star and believed that it was my guiding light and that the warmth of its glow would lead me safely to my destination.

On and on we traveled through the night sky. I could feel my excitement build as well as my apprehension.

Then, as the night turned into day, I discovered that my guiding light, my beacon of hope, was not a bright star but a light on the tip of the wing! I chuckled to myself and thought, oh well, it did the job for me anyway.

My first glimpse of Canada was a view from above. I saw the outline of the shores of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was a great thrill. Amazing!

Soon the captain announced the altitude and speed and that we would be landing at Goose Bay, Labrador. The landing was smooth and very welcoming after the long haul over the Atlantic.

Snow surrounded us as we stepped off the plane. Not much else could be seen.

With very little time to spare, I, along with the other passengers, boarded an airport bus which took us straight to the train station in Montreal. Within an hour, I was on the final segment of my journey which would take me to Union Station in Toronto.

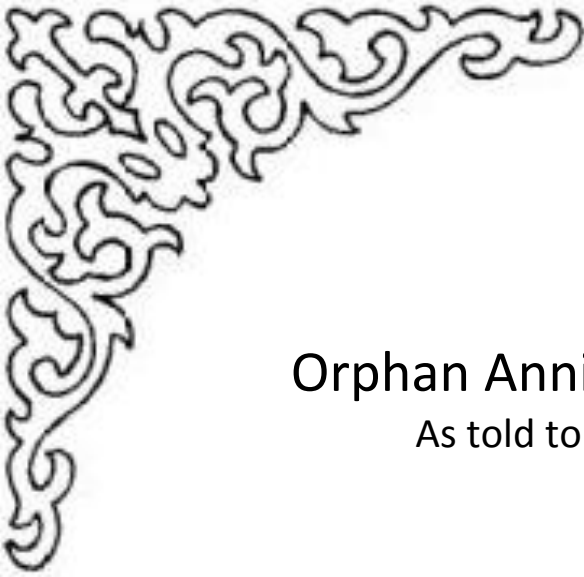
I settled back in my seat, closed my eyes and let my body sway with the rhythm of the train. I listened to the clickity, clack, clickity, clack of the wheels. Our train sped along the tracks, through the towns and villages of Cornwall, Kingston, Belleville, Grafton, Cobourg. All towns and cities that would, in the distant future, be significant to my children's and grandchildren's lives.

As my train moved closer to Toronto, I anticipated meeting my brother, Michael, whom I hadn't seen for three years. He was the first in our family to move to Canada and now I was the second to start a new life in Canada which began on June 7th 1951.



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.

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.



Orphan Annie: a Biography

As told to Bill Van Gaal

What follows is the incredible story of a lady I have known for nearly fifty years. Her life story is beyond belief and has been the subject of many discussions between us over the years.

Born in 1922 to a poor homesteading couple, both of whose families had emigrated from Eastern Europe, her second birthday was spent in an orphanage, the memories of which have haunted her the rest of her life. Her parents were married in 1916 in Southern Saskatchewan and had three daughters by the time the marriage broke up, with Annie being the youngest.

Their mother had attempted to continue on her own, but ultimately decided that the best future for her girls was to put them into an orphanage where at the least they would be fed, clothed and schooled. Times were tough for a young single mother with three children to look after with paying jobs being scarce to non-existent. The Great Depression and Prairie drought were already starting to be felt. The children were left in the care of the Catholic nuns at the local orphanage. None of the three girls were to see or hear from their mother again until they had grown, married and had children of their own.



Annie, her mother, and two older sisters in 1923.

The shock of being left by their mother and the discipline at the orphanage were traumatic to the young waifs, especially the two older ones who knew more of what was going on, and how life was meant to be. The older girls were housed in a different section of the orphanage and eventually lost track of their little sister.

Annie, upon finding herself abandoned by everyone she knew, developed behavioral problems for which discipline was both cruel and extraordinary. For the crime of bed wetting, which was no doubt worsened by the trauma she went through, *"they would take us into the bathroom and make us sit on the toilet for the rest of the night."* For not finishing a meal on time and other infractions of the tough rules set by the nuns, *"we were locked into a dark closet and not allowed out until the nuns decided it was time. We were told that the boogie man or something like that would get us if we made noise or cried."*

Sometimes I am sure they forgot that we were locked in there and I was afraid to make any sound. Sometimes they also made us kneel in the corner on beans that were put on the floor and we had to hold a glass of water until they said we could get up." Whether it was real or imagined the little ones were sure that rats and mice were in the dark closet with them and touching or running over them.

The long term effects of the discipline methods showed in her eighty-ninth year when Annie was hospitalized with a serious illness. While heavily medicated she had flashbacks and delirious recall of the times in the closet. Now in 2012 and in her ninetieth year she still cringes at the mention of this life experience.

As Annie aged at the orphanage and became stronger, there were times when she was taken away by a "relative" who needed someone to tend to small children while the lady of the house was ill or otherwise unable to look after her small children or babies. When they were done with Annie she was returned to the orphanage. Other times she was removed at harvest times and became kitchen help for these "relatives". As she vividly recalls, *"I remember that I had to stand on a stool at the kitchen table so I could knead and use the rolling pin to roll the dough for making perogies. That's where I learned how to stuff the filling and put them together."* The hard work was not confined to the kitchen but included milking, feeding the animals and other farm chores.

When asked about her schooling she replied, *"I did get some schooling at the orphanage when I was there and I remember starting grade one while I lived with a family who was good to me. I had to help the lady with the house and babies. I liked school and I think I went into grade two while I was there. Then the babies grew and I was sent back to the orphanage with all the nice clothes the lady had bought for me. The nuns took them all away and I had to wear the uniform again. I never saw those clothes again. I cried a lot when that happened because I had been happy living with them."*

She also worked in the orphanage kitchen. *"I think the lady who was the cook at the orphanage liked me because she would give me food I liked and sweets. We had to help with cleaning veggies, peeling potatoes and washing dishes and the pots and pans and a lot of cleaning up."*

When Annie was about ten years of age she was told by the nuns, *"Annie, there is a nice family that is going to adopt you and you will soon be living with them in Manitoba."* The family lived in southern Manitoba just across the Saskatchewan border. Their ancestry was similar to Annie's and the old folks spoke their native language, which Annie soon picked up and retains to this date. A total of fifteen children



The orphanage, circa 1926. Annie is in the front row, 4th from right.

had been born to the mother over a period of twenty-two years with twelve children still living, seven or eight of them at home. As had become her life's calling at that time, Annie had to help with the house and caring for the children, as well as some farm work when needed. Again she was loaned out to the relatives of her new family when they were in desperate need of childcare or household work.

When asked about her life with these folks she said, *"The mother needed help with the small children and the house. The daughter who did a lot of the work was getting married and they got me to do the work that was always there. I went to school when there was no need for me in the house or farm or at another family's place. I wanted to learn, but never really got the chance for much. I always enjoyed reading but I could only read at night when the kids were in bed and sleeping and the work was done. The teachers knew I liked reading and got books for me. The house had no electricity and I had to read by candle light because they couldn't afford to buy the coal oil for my lamp."*

At the age of fifteen she ran away from these people with one of their nieces, a good friend of Annie's. By this time Annie knew that the family had not adopted her but only "rescued" her from the orphanage to help them out. She soon realized she could not make it on her own and ended up being taken in by a family back in Saskatchewan, while the girl she had run away with went back to her own family. The two girls were to remain good friends for the rest of their lives. Annie stayed with the Saskatchewan family for about three years. She could not attend school while she was there and worked in the house and helped with children and farm chores until the man of the house died and the lady was forced to sell the farm. At this point in her life the only option open to her was to return to the Manitoba family. Life with them was no different than what it had been before she left at the age of fifteen. She explains *"I really had no choice at that time, I was alone and did not know where my real family was and had no education to speak of. I sure didn't want to go back to them, especially with winter coming and I knew that I would have to wash the long johns (several sets belonging to five or six*

men) by hand on the scrub board. It was always cold and my fingers were bleeding by the time I hung them outside on the clothes line to dry. Winters were a lot colder in those days especially on the prairies, and there was not much heat in the house."

During her stay with them WWII broke out and war related employment was booming in Ontario. One of the family's sons, who was married and had five children under the age of twelve, was a carpenter and house builder. He was offered steady work at good wages, building "war time houses" in southern Ontario. They decided to pack up and go immediately. Annie was offered the opportunity to go with them and have her train fare paid, in return for help with the children on the train and in the household until they were settled in the new home. Having very few options available Annie accepted and joined them on the trip to Ontario.

Of the trip she said, *"The train was full when we got on it and at every stop more and more people and soldiers in uniform got on it heading for Ontario. More and more cars were added to put all the people in. It was very noisy, dirty and hard to keep the little children clean and quiet. The seats were not like now, but only wooden benches and your backside got very sore from sitting, especially holding a sleeping or squirming child."*

Annie and the family moved into a large farmhouse and Annie soon started working at the Verity Works in Brantford. Her job there was to file smooth the gears on the gun turrets for the ships that were being built for the Canadian Navy. She met a girl her own age who offered her a place to live with her family. The home was a farmhouse in the country some distance from their job. Annie moved in with them and started to get a ride to their jobs in Brantford from a young man their age, who lived on the next farm and worked the same shift in a different factory close by theirs.

In 1942 she married the young man who was her driver. She moved next door into the house shared by his parents. They all worked the farm and continued at the factories for a time. The farm needed more full time help and soon caused them to quit the factory jobs to devote



Annie (on left) with sister visiting their now abandoned birth home.

full time to farming. Annie was an active participant in the farming operation and worked in the fields and did barn chores while maintaining the house and raising five children. Her husband's parents shared the house with them until their deaths. Annie lived on the farm and helped with the work until the death of her husband shortly after their 60th Anniversary. Today she lives in a condo apartment geared to seniors, on her own and pretty well independent. She never got a driver's license but that didn't stop her driving, albeit only the tractors and farm trucks. Her children drive her to

appointments and shopping and anywhere else she wants to go. She has slowed a little but doesn't miss too many birthday or holiday celebrations. Her legacy lives on with her eight grandchildren and eleven great-grandchildren to date.

Annie overcame the difficult times and the curves life threw at her and is now enjoying the closeness of family and friends.

Family Reunion

Annie did establish contact in the late 1940s with her two older sisters who had lived in Manitoba their entire adult lives. They visited Annie in about 1949 and had many stories to tell each other about their lives in and after the orphanage. One item of interest is that the oldest girl “rescued” her sister from a foster home and went to live with their mother’s mother. They were poorly treated there and both decided to leave while in their teens.

The old lady didn’t believe in banks and kept a lot of cash at home. She counted it at least once a week, while sitting on her bed with a loaded pistol beside her to make sure no one had taken any money from her. The sisters took \$50.00 from the stash and made good their escape. The old lady soon noticed it gone and got the Mounties involved. Before the girls could leave town the Mounties caught up with them and brought them in for questioning. When they had told their stories of hard work and un-grandmotherly treatment they were asked if the old girl had paid them at all. The answer was a firm no, whereupon the Mountie told them to consider the \$50.00 as payment in full and to be on their way.

Annie’s mother came to the farm in the mid-1950s to visit but there was no love between mother and daughter and no bonding. A second get-together about ten years later was no different. Her mother blamed Annie’s father for all the family troubles.

Annie did discover that two more half siblings were born to their mother, a boy and a girl. They made contact and visited each other, and a relationship continued throughout their lives. The stepsister lived in Ontario for a time after getting married and then moved to Alberta where her husband had been transferred through his work. Her stepbrother lived his entire life in the Yorkton Saskatchewan area and passed away a few years ago. On one of the visits Annie had with him he burst into tears while discussing their lives, saying



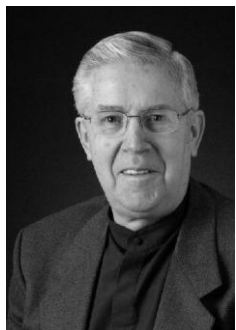
Annie, 2nd from the right, with all her siblings. Circa 1980.

to Annie “my mother made me work on the farm like I was a horse as long as I can remember. I didn’t even know I had three more sisters until after mother died. I feel like I don’t even know who I am, because I don’t even know who my father was.”

Annie found out from one of her cousins who lived in Sarnia that her father had moved to Ohio after separating from her mother and had started a new family there. He even named one of his daughters the same as one of the girls he left behind. Annie was in regular contact with the Sarnia cousin and they visited each other once in a while. Her father stayed in touch

with this cousin and planned a visit to his home in Sarnia. Plans were made for them to drive from Sarnia to Niagara Falls to see the attractions. Without telling Annie's father his real intentions, they made a stop at Annie's farm on the way to Niagara. The visit was cordial but there was no feeling of love or affection for the man who had deserted her so long ago. Her father, whose name was John, blamed his wife for all the troubles and hardship his children had endured. They never made contact again.

During the author's time with Annie discussing her life's story, she made the comment: "In *thinking about what my life was like in my younger years, it was just like the LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE book I read to my children and grandchildren.*" And that's how the title for this story materialized.

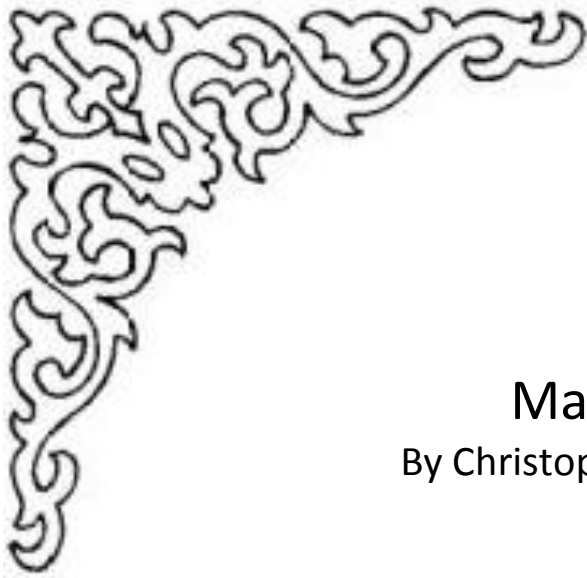


Bill Van Gaal was born in the Netherlands in Feb. 1942 and immigrated to Canada with his family in February 1951, settling first in Quebec. That July they moved to the Barrie Ontario area where he was raised. Bill dropped out of school in grade eight the day before his sixteenth birthday.

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 seven 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 six years and the next 12 as Local Union President. About this time (1999) 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-coordinator for the next three years, retiring in October 2002.

Being on the executive of his local union for a long time, and seeing the contribution made to the community by the Oakville United Way he joined their Board of Directors in 1990 until 1999. After becoming familiar with their workings he served as a campaign division chairman as well as campaign co-chair.

Bill is married to Sandra (48 years) and has 2 children and 5 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 Momentum Credit Union board member having served over 26 years, with the past 13 as President of the board. Genealogy and memoir writing are also on the agenda for the future.



Mauritius

By Christopher J.S. Fowler

It is easy to be flattered when your listeners seem to hang, breath-bated, on every word. With my Mauritian audience of poultry farm workers stumbling to understand the English, but hospitably anxious not to offend the visiting Guru, their rapt attention was enough to go to this speaker's head. Even though it may not have been genuine, I foolishly felt the euphoria. That was a mistake.

About 1991 I retired from the chicken breeding business. Shortly after, not ready to be redundant, I happily accepted an offer to help my old company's national franchise in Mauritius. Updating their Poultry Management Guide and giving technical advice was the job I knew best. I was alone for this first visit, all work, but Olive came the second time. That was a memorable holiday, but another story.

The plane from London flew in from the West. With the rising sun in my eyes I squinted to catch a glimpse of the island, shining green and grey in the dawn. Distant towering thunder clouds spoke of a storm passed, but today all was serene. Only 40 miles across at its fattest part, Mauritius is a tiny speck on even the largest maps, a volcanic 'zit' on the Indian Ocean's tummy. We flew low over jagged peaks, their thin crumbling spires like witches' talons

reaching for us, their bleak slopes scattered with rocks and boulders. To me sitting in cozy comfort, these were just pictures of strange, misshapen and grotesque mountains. Hollywood could have designed them thus. I looked eagerly beyond, to the tranquil lagoons and golden beaches beckoning.



*Tranquil lagoons and the golden beaches
of Mauritius.*

“Welcome to L’Ile Maurice. I’m Jackie.”

Jacques Sauvage, farms manager, greeted me with a non-Gallic handshake, in deference, I suppose, to the English speaking foreigner. I felt relieved that he talked my language, probably better than I did. All I could muster was “Wow.”

“Don’t worry,” he laughed, “We may be standing on a volcano but it is twenty million years since it blew up and hasn’t been active for a long time.”

As we drove toward Port Louis he waved an arm to the horizons. “This was once all volcano, rotted now, only the highest bits left to remind us. See the fields of sugar cane?” Another wave of the arm. “On those little hills to the right are tea plantations.” I began to worry about our safety as the car swerved with his latest gesture but it was a four-lane highway and, today, deserted.

Someone had said this island is British. Riding in a Citroen, passing French road signs and, in spite of Jackie’s steering, driving mostly on the right side, I wondered if Queen Elizabeth knew what was going on in her Empire. 200 years hadn’t quite been enough to hide the mere 100 of French “ownership”.

“Lovely weather,” I ventured lamely. The storm that passed a few hours earlier had left clear skies. It was hot, but not uncomfortable.

“That might well be the end of the rains for this year. Oh yes,” said Jackie, “We have seasons, just like you, except ours are never about hot and cold, just hot and hotter. In between we have a Dry time, and then there’s the Wet Season. You don’t want to have anything to do with that!”



The city of Port Louis.

My hotel was in a little town called Curepipe. It even looked French, and with such a name, ancient too. I’ve visited many places, including tropical islands but remember none so tidy, with dwellings so neat, sturdy. It was the same at the poultry farms when, in the days following, I began touring the Franchise’s business operations and talking to the staff.

“What fine structures,” I remarked during one of the management meetings. “Nothing like the poultry houses in India, in fact anywhere in Asia or the Caribbean. There they are adequate, but never so solidly built. Why spend money on solid steel window covers?”

Someone at the back spoke up, Creole but doing well with the English, "You should have been here last week when a cyclone came through. We were glad of the shutters then!"

Being a part of the first ever obstruction standing in the path of a series of 200 mile-per-hour winds would give anyone good reason to build thoughtfully.

I learned a little as we went along. Perhaps my Creole, French and Hindi speaking friends learnt something too. In that forest of languages I was afraid many of my acorns of wisdom would perish. Apart from Jackie's infrequent comments, some surprisingly astute questions from the groups gave me the idea that most was understood and even appreciated. I began to feel I must indeed be a real Guru. Doesn't pride come before a fall?

I talked and visited and inspected for nearly two weeks. There was much writing to be done, longhand, because in those old fashioned times, a ballpoint was my only weapon and the evenings short. I counted on the weekend for catch-up with the paper work.

On the second Saturday Jackie said. "Come on a picnic with me and my family. The break will do you good; get away from the chicken dust."

I imagined a pleasant sunny afternoon on the beach by a lagoon. After all, we were surrounded by them. "That would be wonderful." I smiled. The paper work could wait.

The Citroen held four in comfort, five at a squeeze. Jackie introduced me to his wife Dany, a smiling lady who greeted me happily as she wrestled their youngest on her lap. Marie Eve was objecting with vigor. It would have been, "I want to sit in the back with my brothers," but in French it came out as a torrent of sound and fury.



Christopher, centre rear, and the Family Sauvage.

Patently Jackie and Dany quietened her. As peace descended, I squeezed into the back seat to be introduced to their two sons: Sebastien, about fifteen, looking like a footballer and David a couple of years younger and, fortunately for me, lighter built. We sat shoulder to shoulder with no space for formal hand-shakes. I could feel my 'Guru' status slipping: no room for dignity in a family like this.

"No problem," I replied to Jackie's concern.

"There's plenty of room!" After all, I thought, it won't be a long journey.

Like their parents, the two boys were cheerful. Soon Marie Eve was smiling too and they were all singing songs. 'Frère Jacques' is my limit so I just kept quiet.

The road was narrow, hemmed by towering canes that curved in, nearly twenty feet above us. "Sugar," said Jackie. "This is a prime industry on the Island. It earns us much foreign exchange ... thanks to La Belle France, the Common Market, and, of course, Canada."

“Great!” I said, silently revising my earlier thought. This little country was no ‘zit’. The whole world should be so well organized.

We had traveled for nearly forty minutes. The sea must be very close, I worried. To my reckoning we had surely crossed the whole island already. Then suddenly we emerged from the cane ‘Forest’ and the road began climbing toward another sort of forest, with short trees. At home the kids would have been asking, “Are we there yet?” but not even Marie Eve was complaining. In fact everyone was getting excited, as if we were already there.

A short way into the trees Jackie pulled off the road. The family spilled out, grabbing baskets and bags, each of us carrying something. In moments we were a marching column tramping into the forest, going where? As it turned out, marching was a relative term. The two boys were soon out of sight, if not of earshot. Dany and Marie Eve set a fast pace, the youngest being anxious to catch up with her brothers, while Jackie, considerate as ever, walked beside me at a dignified ‘Guru’ pace: an opportunity for quiet conversation. I’m afraid my main concerns were sore feet and fear of twisting an ankle but to maintain the image I said nothing. Our path led steadily uphill.

“These slopes face the wind. Up here nothing grows much higher than three meters. Our cyclones make sure of that. What won’t bend breaks.” Jackie smiled. “We Mauritians are just like that, flexible.”

I know nothing of tropical botany but the shrubs around us could have been in the greenhouses at the RBG Burlington. “That’s drastic,” I said, “There are clearly more ways of surviving than I could ever have imagined.”

Increasing hunger began to pull my thoughts away from the feet. Where is this picnic spot? The path wound on among the greenery. I began to despair we’d ever eat. Suddenly there were cries and joyful whoops from up front. Jackie plunged ahead to supervise. When I finally reached the gap where everyone had disappeared, I took one step from the trees, and froze.



Mauritian landscape.

The pathway had become a cliff, me at its edge. Ahead and a few steps lower, was a ridge, narrow, crumbling, that spanned a twenty foot gap between the end of my path and a small upright pillar of rock. On either side of the ridge the ground fell away steeply, to depths I could only imagine. High up on that rocky perch stood Sebastien and David and, calling to me from just

below them, the rest of the Sauvage family. “Come on over. The food’s here and the view is wonderful.” Indeed, to me it all looked a bit like one of those movies they shoot in New Zealand, craggy.

I had once suspected that I had a fear of heights but after so many years of flying, surely that was all behind me? Not so. The chilling sensation that started on the soles of my feet swept quickly to the rest of my body. All I could see or think of was falling, loose scree from

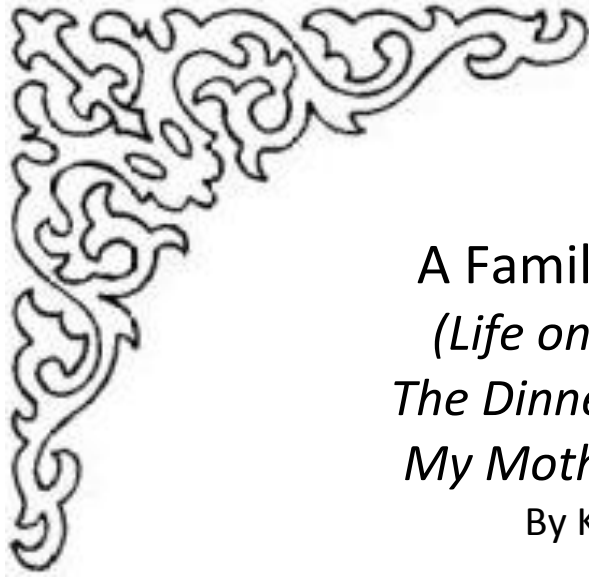
that treacherous ridge cascading into space about my head. I was deaf to my friends' calls and entreaties. Pride or not, there'd be no fall either. I sat on the ground.

"Sorry, I can't do it. I'll wait for you here."

So much for the picnic. The children enjoyed it anyway but Jackie came back over the ridge to keep me company. My Guru image was gone, certainly as far as I was concerned, replaced by shame. Somehow this didn't seem to matter to Jackie. Perhaps he realized, as I should have done, that an out-of-condition mid-sixties is a bit old for mountaineering.



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 emigrated 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 three years in New Zealand and four 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.



A Family Tryptich:
*(Life on the Street,
The Dinner Guest, and
My Mother's Legacy)*
By Kay Boyd

1 Life on the Street

Fourteenth Street in Owen Sound was my whole world until I was five years old.

My parents, Tom and Addie, lived in a rented semi-detached house when I was born. Later, when I was two or three years old, they moved up the street to a larger house with a side veranda and a door leading directly into a large kitchen. The rest of the house is only a fading memory, but then my sister and I played outside most of the time. The only thing that ever kept us inside was a runny nose and even that didn't always deter us.

In the winter we waddled around in heavy snowsuits or rode our sleds down the hill at the bottom of the street. It was a wonderful hill that took us careening right out onto a frozen river. One year during spring thaw, the river was beginning to open up but someone dared my seven year old sister to sled down the hill and onto the ice anyway. She took the dare and the ice was so thin that she and her sled slipped through the soft ice. She crawled out of the river and bawled all the way home, soaking wet.

Mother was not amused.

At one point my grandfather built us a bobsled that we used on a much larger hill up the street. It had a steering handle and two sets of 'skis' front and back, and it always felt dangerous. That didn't keep us from playing with it, of course, but Grandad was always in charge. A few years later, he built me a lovely new sleigh, painted red, with real iron treads on the runners. I remember him taking me along to the blacksmith's when it was ready. And you know, I have that sled still. I could never bear to part with it.

One particularly cold winter, Grandpa built us a real, honest-to-goodness igloo in the front yard. I'm not sure Mother was thrilled with the building, but it was great fun to cut the snow blocks in such a way that were able to make a snug and secure place to crawl into and get away from the wind. That igloo lasted until the beginning of spring that year and it made a mess of the lawn underneath. Grandad really had to work hard at fixing it to please Mother!

In the summer we had fun sailing homemade rafts on the river. There was a paper mill in the harbour area and sometimes the log booms would break and some of the smaller logs would float away and find their way in the shallow river at the back of the house. My maternal grandfather lived with us and Mom would admonish him not to take those logs out of the water, but he paid no attention and would grab some to store under the garage. When he had enough, he would build my sister and I wonderful rafts to pile along on the shallow river. One time we even put a small table and chairs on the raft to 'have tea on the ocean'. We were never in any real danger, though. The 'river' was more of a creek and probably not much more than two or three feet deep until it flowed into the harbour. We never sailed our rafts that far.

Playing in the rain was wonderful, too. There were no storm sewers on the street at that time and when it rained we dammed up the flow in the gutters and – when the water threatened to overflow or block the road – we would make a hole in the dam and watch the water gush down the street, picking up anything in its way. I learned how to fold paper boats and to fill them with a few tiny pebbles for ballast so they would fly along in the rushing water without tipping over. (That boat building skill would come in very handy later on when my own children were young.) By the time we finally went home, we would be drenched to the skin. I don't think Mother appreciated that very much but I don't recall that she was ever angry as long as we played in our bare feet and didn't get our shoes wet! Probably because a nice warm rain would keep us busy and out of her way for hours on end.

It was such fun to play outside that sometimes we forgot to go home to eat. There always seemed to be enough other 'mothers' on the street who would provide us with a cookie or some kind of sustenance to keep us going.

There was one family across the street that had 22 kids, including two sets of twins. Their father was a train engineer and seldom home, but the kids provided lots of entertainment for the neighbourhood. One of the younger boys usually had a puppet show on the go, and the little ones would gather on the front lawn to be awed and amused by his skill. Hide and seek was the game to play in the early evening, just before being called to come home. "Home Sheep Home" was our favourite version: whomever was 'it' would cover their eyes and count while the others would sneak 'home' to touch the tree before being caught out or found in hiding. There were always lots of kids to play and it would go on until the street lights came on – the signal for most of us that we had to get home. With my parents, it didn't do to be tardy.

Mother especially was strict and we were expected to do as we were told. (How times have changed!)

The kids in that family were allowed to have one 'guest' over for meals and one day it was my turn. Their kitchen table was almost as large as a room and they ate from what my mother referred to as soup plates, which were large shallow bowl-like plates. I'd never seen so much food piled on a table and as the platters were passed around the family hardly looked up. They simply shoveled the food onto their plates and kept eating. I'm sure I didn't eat very much because I had to behave at the table, and anyway, I was busy watching the whole exercise. After the meal, all the kids cleaned off the table, washed up the dishes, and the family brought out musical instruments and played in the kitchen. It was wonderful.

I remember going home and telling my mother that their entire house was made up of bedrooms except for the kitchen. Her response was, "So?"

They really were a wonderful family and my sister is still in touch with one of the younger girls. Each of the children grew up to be good people with their own businesses and all very successful. I guess there's something to be said for large families.

I had been about four when my parents purchased a house on the other side of the street and a block or two closer to town. The Tweedy House seemed a grand place. Two stories, a modern bathroom, central heating, a fine dining room, a full walkout basement and a long backyard reaching all the way down to the river. We needed a housekeeper. There was a detached garage where Dad kept his spiffy 1928 Chandler automobile, and we had our own telephone! There weren't too many people on the block with a telephone and a car. Sometimes the phone would ring and Mother would send me to a neighbouring house because someone was on the phone for them.

My mom and dad had a wonderful large bedroom and they slept in a solid brass bed. The mattress bounced on high coil springs and the brass was always polished. My sister and I were allowed in that bed when we were ill; it always seemed to make one feel better to lie ensconced in that huge high bed that smelled oh-so-slightly of Evening in Paris perfume or Old Spice cologne. I know I always felt safe and secure and would even feign feeling bad so Mom would let me lie in that bed. I think that sometimes she knew there wasn't anything wrong with me but gave in anyway. Of course, when I felt really rotten, she would whip me up into that bed immediately to be taken care. I do believe that was an important part of the healing process.

My sister and I shared a bedroom for most of our childhood. Sometimes I woke up in the night and Mother would bring cold milk and soda biscuits with hard butter on them. Milk was delivered in the night and if it was really cold, the top of the milk bottle would freeze and the milk underneath the frozen cream would have ice crystals in it. I loved that icy milk and soda crackers in the middle of the night.

We had a series of housekeepers during our time at the Tweedy House. I remember one that Mother was none too pleased with, who made us sit up properly at the table and she was very gruff. She washed clothes so vigorously that she washed the dots right off our pink-dotted 'Swiss' dresses! I always tried to sit close to the kitchen door and when her back was turned, I would run outside.

Then there was Peggy. I think I liked Peggy the best. She was a wonderful lady and could play the piano, although everything she played had the same rhythm. After evening meals she would sit with my sister and I on either side and bang out hymns. Our favourite was Bringing in the Sheaves. I know it irritated my mother because we sang off key and Peggy's playing left something to be desired, but Mom never said anything. One day Peggy knocked our Beatty wringer washing machine over because she didn't use the wringers properly, and she cried while Mother dealt with the water running all over the house. Still, Peggy stayed with us until we moved to Barrie and I always felt she truly liked my sister and I.

Electric refrigerators were beginning to appear on the market but most people kept an ice box with a drip pan that had to be emptied from time to time or a hose for the melted ice water to drain into the basement. The ice man came everyday and the back of his wagon was loaded with very large blocks which he could then separate into smaller blocks (with one or two thrusts of his ice pick) and carry into the house with ice tongs. There were always lots of chips of ice left in the wagon and he never minded if kids helped themselves on hot summer days.

The bread man also delivered bread and sweets daily but his deliveries were made in a horse-drawn wagon. Sometimes he would load a large flat basket and bring it to the door, but Mother always came out to the wagon to select whatever she wanted. When we ran out of delivered bread, there was a small store at the bottom of the street, Mr. Grady's Store. Mr. Grady's was run out of the front parlour of his house and he sold penny candy. Sometimes it could take a very long time, peering at all those wonderful candies, to decide just how to spend your one cent.

Eventually, though, the outside world would intrude into life on our street.

Have you ever felt a sense of foreboding? Nothing that you could put your finger on, just the feeling that all was not well? That's how I felt on the morning of September 3, 1939. I knew instinctively that I shouldn't bother my parents but I knew something was amiss as they sat across from each other at the Philco radio, speaking in whispers as they listened to a short wave broadcast from England.

Dad gave me one of those large pennies that we called 'coppers' and suggested I go to Mr. Grady's and get a candy. I bought a penny black ball, the kind that changed colour as you sucked on it. I think I was on the pink layer when I returned home to more hushed conversation, and to this day I remember black ball candies and especially the tiny coriander seed at the centre of the candy when I think of that day and Mother asking, "What are we going to do?"

I don't recall the answer, but the events of that day would change our lives dramatically. That was the day Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of England, broadcast that "the nation is at war with Germany". Six days later, on September 9, Canada also declared war and another era was born.

2 The Dinner Guest

Mother hung up the phone. "Girls, come in now," she called. "We are having Uncle Andrew for dinner tonight and he has no hands."

Mother was always abrupt, quite strict, and when she ordered we did as we were told.

My sister was about seven at the time and I was five. Mother wanted to explain to us that our uncle, my grandfather's nephew, had no hands. She wanted to prepare us so that we wouldn't stare, ask too many questions, and so that we would behave like ladies. Mother's dinner rules were well understood and she wanted to be sure that we didn't forget our manners. Uncle Andrew Gawley had lost both hands in a sawmill accident when he was just seventeen years old and now used a pair of iron hands that had been formed to provide him with the ability to carry on most regular activities. We were not to stare and we were to be seen and not heard. 'Twas ever thus.

She knew that she would have to present us to Uncle Andrew and she wanted us to know that were to shake hands with him when introduced. She explained that when he reached out his 'hand' that we were to take hold of his wrist area rather than try to grasp his iron hand. We practiced with Mother until she was comfortable that we could do what was expected.

I was young and inquisitive and had a lot of questions. How could he eat when he had no hands? How could he pick up knives and forks if he had no hands? How could he cut his meat if he had no hands? How could he eat peas if he had no hands? How could he manage Mother's fine china if he had no hands? Who looked after him? My little mind was awlirl but I dared not ask.

My sister and I waited for his arrival with quiet apprehension. When he arrived, Mother carried out the introductions and showing a great deal more confidence than my sister and I were feeling, we shook hands.

When we sat down to the table, Uncle Andrew reached inside his suit jacket and removed a set of cutlery that had been fashioned to work with his iron hands. I was fascinated. The knife, fork and spoon fitted into special places on his iron hands and he handled them with accuracy and great finesse. He had his own cup. It was metal and the handle had been designed for easy pick up. I was in awe of it all.



Uncle Andrew and his iron hands.

My grandad, Albert Grawley, lived with us and he, Mom and Dad, and Uncle Andrew chatted about the current news and family with ease. Mother had indeed served fresh green peas from the garden out back and it was amazing to watch Uncle manoeuvre each and every pea onto his fork. It was a memorable experience for my sister and I, and one that continues to amaze and inspire me.

I learned from my mother that Andrew had lost his hands in a buzz saw accident at the mill. There was no such thing as plastic surgery in those days, no OHIP, and certainly no physical therapy sessions. His father, Royal Grawley, had whittled a pair of wooden 'hands' that Andrew learned to use as he recovered. Then a few years later, not content to have a primitive set of steel hands and with the help of a blacksmith friend, he designed a pair of iron hands that allowed him to carry on with his life. These steel hands were flat and operated in one plane only. He opened a bicycle repair shop in Meaford and was quite successful. Over the years, with visits from time to time, I learned that he was a kind and gentle man with a very caring heart. One gets used to oddities and after some time I never gave another thought about him being handicapped. In fact, I don't believe he was handicapped, other than the strange stares from people who didn't know him. He attended my own father's funeral and I was so glad he had come.

Andrew suffered many setbacks in his early years. There were three children in his family. Andrew was a middle child. His mother died shortly after his younger brother Chesley had been born. His father, Royal, went suddenly and totally blind, and then there was the accident when Andrew lost his hands at the saw mill where he was working.

Before opening his shop in Meaford, Andrew worked with his steel hands as a tool and die maker in an Orillia factory making war supplies during WWI. He also left the shop to tour with Ripley's Believe It or Not all over North America, showing what he could do with his steel hands. He could lift objects weighing 200lbs with just one hand!

Uncle Andrew died in 1960 in his ninety-first year. He never married.

One of his iron hands is currently on display in the Meaford Museum along with samples of his writing. He wrote with a fine hand. He often wrote to Mother and I wish she had kept his letters. It is absolutely amazing that this gentleman not only survived but went on to lead a normal, busy, generous and contributing life. He was a true entrepreneur, whether delivering mail, running his own shop, appearing in worldwide distributed news, heading the Ripley shows, or fabricating new 'hands' for other amputees.

Sometimes we take that kind of courage for granted until, as we grow older and wiser, we begin to understand the greatness of some people. Much of what has been written about Mr. Andrew Grawley has been contributed by another uncle of mine, Dr. R. Beattie, a relative who himself achieved some measure of greatness with the formulation of '240'. Although that product has now been banned, Dr. Beattie (the son of my grandfather's sister Emilie) was a brilliant scientist and orchid grower in Guelph, Ontario. I am indeed blessed to have been born into such a wonderful and learned family. I like to think that maybe I inherited the Grawley tenacity, sense of humour, and curious mind.

3 My Mother's Legacy

My mother wore trousers, smoked cigarettes, and drove my father's pickup truck, not things that many women did in the early 1930s. I realize now that she was a 'feminist' although I'm not sure that word had been coined as yet.

As my mother grew old and her care became important to me, I found myself doing things I didn't really care to do but I wanted to make life as comfortable and as enjoyable as possible for her. One thing Mother really liked was to go out for lunch or dinner. I took her out at least once a week and sometimes more, mostly for lunch at the restaurants she liked. Those outings could be difficult as Mother sometimes rambled on and on. But sometimes they could be very interesting.

One day just a short time before she died, when she was in her early nineties, I took her to lunch at the Sherwood Restaurant in Echo Place. We sat at a table for two in the sunlight and I cannot remember how the conversation started but she began to tell me about hearing Agnes McPhail speak at a political campaign.

(I knew who Agnes McPhail was because Mother had mentioned her name very often while I was growing up and so I knew that she was a woman Mother admired. As I grew older, I had learned that McPhail had been the first woman elected to parliament in Canada. In fact, she was appointed as one of the ministers and held several important portfolios during her political career.)

Now, McPhail was elected in 1921 so that must have been in late 1920 or early 1921, and Mother would have been twelve going on thirteen. Agnes had been campaigning for a seat to represent Grey County and was to speak at the Orange Hall in East Linton. Mother told me that Granddad was going to hear her speak but that he hadn't invited his wife to go along. Then, after he left for the meeting, her mother decided that she too wanted to hear McPhail speak. She took Mother with her and they went on their own. One must remember that at that time, a woman's place was in the home or in the field – so to speak – and certainly not in the political arena. At any rate, Mother was quite taken with Agnes McPhail and all that she had to say.

While she was relating the story, I asked her what it was about Ms. McPhail that so impressed her. She said: "The other candidates talked about and made promises about what they would do if elected, but Agnes McPhail talked about 'what *could* be'." I suggested that she must have been a visionary and Mother agreed. "She had such a powerful voice and even though I was very young, I just knew that she was speaking for everyone, and particularly those men and women farmers who worked so hard for so very little."

Mother told me that she was absolutely certain that Agnes McPhail could do just about anything. "She must have been a very special woman to be elected at that time in history," I offered.

My mother replied, "Yes, and she was elected primarily by men inasmuch as it was the first year that women actually could vote, and the men weren't much happy about that!"

I remember wishing that I hadn't been born too late to hear Agnes McPhail myself. I guess I had been influenced by my mother more than I'd realized, although I hadn't really

appreciated it until then. (It was one of those *a-ha* moments.) Agnes McPhail promoted the concept that women should have equal rights and it was a tenet she steadfastly lived by. I know that I myself have benefited from her work, as I have worked an entire career in a man's world.

McPhail never gave up on her belief that women should be equal, but legislation providing for 'equal pay for work of equal value' wasn't enacted until I was well past fifty.

Mother was a stay-at-home mom and didn't go out to work until I was well into my teens. She worked in the retail industry, and I think her first employment was in The Metropolitan 'five and dime' on Colborne Street. She also worked at the White Bakery, Duncan's China, and then at Towers (which later became Zellers). She worked there until well into her seventies, finally retiring when my sister and I convinced her that she should quit while she was ahead. Many people in Brantford still remember her from all those stores. I can't count how many times people have recognized and remembered 'Addie' after hearing me about my mother and describing her. They light up immediately and tell me how well she served them in those jobs.

I too have always believed that women have much to offer beyond tending family and husbands. I worked at a college where many students were older women who went back to school to learn new skills and improve their lot in life, and it was my reward to be a part of their successes. And yes, it was also rewarding to encourage older men who struggled with many of the same challenges.

Some time after retiring, I met a young woman who had been a student in one of my classes years earlier. She stopped to speak to me and said "I just want you to know that you changed my life. You were the first person that ever convinced me that I could do anything I wanted to do, and I believed you. I want you to know that I now have my own business and it's very successful."

I was shyly embarrassed and I almost cried. Maybe I was that woman's Agnes McPhail.

In retrospect, growing up I didn't think that my sister and I paid a great deal of attention to much that my mother ever said, and like young people today, we probably didn't think that much that she *did* say was important enough to listen to. I now realize just how much our lives are shaped by our parents' beliefs, words, and actions, and the roles they played in shaped our current realities.

Thank you Mother for what you inspired in me and for letting me grow up believing that I too could achieve whatever I wanted to achieve ... but that is another chapter in my memoirs.

My name is Kay Ridout Boyd and I am the Mother of four successful and wonderful children, one daughter and three sons. I am retired from being an Academic Chair for many years at Mohawk College in the Adult Continuing Education Faculty. I studied Chemistry at Ryerson and worked for several years for Fisher Scientific Company in Toronto. I have been very active in the Brantford community having served on many boards and committees over the years including The Chamber of Commerce, St. Joseph's Hospital and Glenhyrst Art Gallery of Brant and so many more that I can hardly remember them all. I enjoy doing needlework, quilting, reading, writing and traveling ... and lots of other neat stuff.



Overcoming the Odds

By Leonard DaSilva

I was born June 2, 1979, six weeks premature and weighing 4 pounds, 1½ ounces. I was born with cerebral palsy. Doctors told my mother I would have to live in an institution and that I wouldn't amount to much.

My mother had to raise me on her own as my father left us when I was about two years of age. My mother always told me she wanted a boy and was very happy when she had me.

Growing up with cerebral palsy wasn't easy. As a child I got teased, picked on, and stared at by the other children while I walked down the hall at school, because of my disability. All I wanted to do was fit in and be like the other children at school and have friends to play with at recess. I had a few friends in elementary school, but for the most part I felt alone.

From the age of seven to eighteen I went to summer camp in Dunnville. Lakewood Camp is a camp for children with disabilities. During my time at camp I felt like I belonged and fit in and was not judged differently because of my disability. Going to camp allowed me to do things I wouldn't have had the opportunity to do otherwise. For instance, at camp I was able to go swimming, canoeing, play sports like baseball or hockey and do crafts. I went to Lakewood Easter Seal camp for eleven years and I will treasure the good times I had there forever.

Going to high school was challenging not only due to the workload which kept me very busy, but I also had some health issues to deal with.

I always dreamed about going to college or university as a child, but never thought I would be able to go. I applied to five colleges in 1999 and was lucky enough to get accepted to Fanshawe College in London where I studied General Arts and Science. Going to college allowed me to gain some independence and confidence in myself.

However, in January 2001 while going to college I had a major health scare and had to have bowel surgery. Doctors told my mom and I that most people who have the surgery I had don't survive. Thankfully, I did. I had to take a semester off from my studies while recovering from the surgery.

In 2002 I went back to school and began my studies at Laurier University in Brantford, where I developed an interest in psychology and sociology. I graduated with my Bachelor of Arts in Contemporary Studies with a minor in Psychology.

As a child I had always wondered what it would be like to live on my own, but never thought it would be possible. However, I believe that if you set your mind to do something you can do anything. At the age of twenty-four and with my family's support, I moved into my first apartment. It was a big adjustment for me, but with some extra help and a few modifications to the apartment, it became my place.

Growing up without my father has not been easy. I always wondered if I looked like my dad.

As a child I always blamed myself for my father leaving my mom and I. I always thought he left because of my disability. I believe anyone can be a father, but it takes a real man to be a dad.

My mom did a great job raising me on her own with no help from my father. At the age of twenty-four I decided I wanted to find and hopefully meet my father so I could ask him for myself why he wanted nothing to do with me. I mustered up the courage to try and find him on my own. I found his telephone number in the phone book and decided to call him. I was lucky enough to find him with the first number I called. My father and I talked briefly on the phone on July 16, 2004 and decided to meet for the first time the following day at Calahan's Restaurant.

I remember my first meeting with my father like it was yesterday: I got to Calahan's Restaurant first and I was sitting at a booth sipping a diet Coke while I waited for him. I glanced at the door a few times wondering if he would show up. I was lucky and after a bit he finally showed up – to my amazement. We talked for a bit that night and decided to see if we could build a relationship of any kind. I think my father and I met a total of three times the summer of 2004 and that was it.

On one hand I was relieved to find my father, but on the other hand I thought I made a mistake. During one meeting he told me that to him I was "a mistake" and he wished I was dead. I honestly don't know how a parent could say that to their own child. That memory still bothers me today, but I don't let it stop me from doing anything I want to do in life.

Shortly after graduating with my Bachelor of Arts degree in June 2007 I ended up back in the hospital in September 2008 with severe back pain and was in the hospital for 19 months. Of

that time, I was strictly bedridden for 9 months. Doctors again told my mother and I that I would not be able to walk and would be wheelchair bound for the rest of my life. I ended up battling severe depression during this time and at times I felt like giving up. However, again I was determined to prove the doctors wrong and began physiotherapy in April 2010. By the time I was released in May 2010, I walked out of the hospital.

Like everyone else, my life is full of obstacles and hardships. Whether it be financial difficulties, family problems, job loss or health problems, I have learned throughout my life to make the most of every day and to live life to the fullest.

Hi, my name is Lenny DaSilva. I am a young man, thirty-two years of age, who was born and raised in Brantford, Ontario. In my spare time I enjoy reading and writing. I also have a passion for helping people solve problems. I am an avid Toronto Blue Jays fan. I am currently looking at pursuing my Masters in Counseling and opening up my own counseling practice.



The House

By Lois Porter

Ah yes, the house! And what a house it was. We first moved to Sudbury in 1949 and stayed on an island in Long Lake, in a very basic cabin belong to Martin's university roommate. They were a Finnish family and the name of the island was "Rahula". I have no idea what that meant but it was beautiful out in the middle of a lake that was seven miles long but very narrow. We had to go the last hundred feet by boat. Our car, packed with personal and housekeeping objects, remained on the mainland.

Now I was fairly fresh from my parents' home and had not done a lot of cooking, so suffice it to say that fish soup, complete with eyeballs, was quite an eye-opener. But it was good and I was soon contributing my own version of home cooking on an old iron cook stove as well as an outdoor fire. At first we shared the old cabin with our hosts but soon migrated to the old ramshackle boathouse with its mice and spiders. Not to worry; it was free except for groceries.

Soon reality sank in and we were living in rented rooms and houses. One of these houses was one room in the home of a neighbour during which time we got a little dog called Snuggly. He weighed about ten pounds soaking wet and was cute as a button, with a little hairy

face and body, black and white with a personality to match. He was such a clown and so loving. Unknown to me, however, he was using under the bed as his own private toilet. Oh my! (Of course we heard about that. How *thoughtless* young people can be.)

Anyways, to make a long story short, my husband decided we had to have a house of our own. Sudbury was the first place we owned a home and what a home it was. There are many funny stories about that house. First of all, it was quite ugly: a tall, two-story insulbrick house with four windows, two up and two down, a front door and in time a chimney. There was no basement as it was built on solid rock so our only storage space was the garage and a small back porch on which I stood to hang out the clothes through a long narrow opening. They promptly froze solid in winter and had to be brought in and hung over the furnace to dry. This was a Coleman floor furnace, secondhand of course, which burned furnace oil and did a great job of heating the ground floor. It was installed under the main partition between kitchen and living room and there is a story about a fire when it was first started up but we won't go there. The upstairs was a different matter. It was very cold.

We moved in to this palace in May when it was twenty below and for a few nights we all had to sleep in the same bed to keep warm until we mastered the wood burning Quebec heater which stood in the kitchen. Not a good beginning in a new house. Many a time I bumped into this stove while doing the washing, which wasn't funny. There was just enough crawl space to service the furnace and for the rat to travel between the garage and the house. He was very active and we could hear him fall between the joists as he lost his footing. He finally met his Waterloo but not soon enough to suit me.

When our eldest son got pneumonia at eighteen months old, he was not allowed to come home from the hospital until the insulating was done. After that it was much warmer upstairs where there were two bedrooms and a bathroom. Well, a sort of bathroom. There was no running water in the house, so the water came through a pump at the kitchen sink with a wooden handle to pump up and down. In the bathroom there was a chemical toilet that had to be emptied every few days.

There was an outhouse out back that was very useful for this chore and every week the honey dumpers came and emptied the outhouse. It wasn't so bad in winter but in summer it wasn't so good. They usually came just as we were eating supper and very often they would hoist the full pail to their shoulders and walked out the lane eating an ice cream cone in the other hand. I remember that they made quite a mess at Christmas time when people would treat them to alcoholic drinks. (Well, you do the math.)

For some time our daughter thought she would like that job, but maybe it was the ice cream cone that attracted her because she soon outgrew this ambition.

That outhouse was very important to our children, as they and other neighbourhood children regularly climbed on top of it and then on to the garage. Sometimes they put a ladder up to the garage roof and went up that way. One day I was looking out the kitchen window and saw our less than two year old son on top of the garage. I turned a blind eye to that, feeling that if he could get up he could get down – and lo and behold, he did.

There was a clump of white birch trees in the front yard which the children would climb while watching for Nanny to arrive from Brantford. These were not trees with large trunks as

they were probably growing on top of rock so they swayed nicely in the breeze when the children would climb as high as they could. The older they got the higher they climbed but no one ever fell and Nanny would arrive bearing all sorts of goodies from southern Ontario, like peaches and pears and many vegetables which were very expensive in Sudbury, if available at all. Potatoes were a different matter as they grew wonderful, tasty potatoes in the Blezard Valley just outside Sudbury and were available at the Sunday Market which was just along the railway tracks.

I have no idea where we all slept in our small house when company came, with only two bedrooms and a sort of bathroom, a living room and a kitchen, but we found places for everyone and over the years my family visited time and again. We were always glad to see them and spend time with them as I was homesick for family.

Our laneway at this house was about eighty-five feet long and the abovementioned clump of white birch was nicely outlined against that ugly red insulbrick house. There was an outcrop of Sudbury rock along the left hand side, a garage at the far end and mountains of snow in the winter – so much snow we couldn't see the cars as they drove down the road. Martin had to shovel all this every winter. He didn't seem to mind and would still shovel snow if there weren't a few restrictions. I was glad I didn't have to do it.

We finally got grass to grow on that front lawn. It was difficult because of that rock outcrop and the lack of water (the well went dry every July and January and we had to truck in water). It would look wonderful for a few days until the smelter sulphur came across and burned it all off in a single afternoon. That is, if the kids next door didn't come over and dig it all up with their bare feet first. A garden of any kind was impossible at that time. All I ever got to grow was chives brought up by my mother from southern Ontario. The property went back a full block with a path to the street behind us. I think the plan was to put another road through there. It never happened. Many an afternoon I would dress the kids up and walk through this path to the store and buy us a treat, or just look at all the flowers in the greenhouse behind us and wish I could afford to buy some.

Inside the house, we fixed up the old cupboards and put in some new ones, painted them pink, put pull-up pink bamboo blinds on the corner window overlooking the yard, papered the walls with gray and pink paper, and tiled the floor with grey floor tiles. We added an island to the cupboards and with a double window in the dining area, *et voilà*, we had a kitchen. In the living room the floors were six-inch pine so we could hinge the bottom two steps for children's toys and the landing to house my hats plus a few other things. Oh yes, and a friend's husband made me a bookcase for beneath the double window in the living area and so we also had a living room, heated of course by the floor furnace.

The upstairs was a different matter. In fact, I really can't remember what I did in the bedrooms or in that famous bathroom. But it sufficed.

Our youngest son was a baby and his crib just fit in the hall between the bedroom doors. (I remember one night closing the bedroom door and catching his finger. That wasn't funny, of course, but sore fingers heal and children grow very well even in that climate.) There were two rollaway beds in the children's room and a dresser or two. I don't recall a closet.

Children in those days did not have the variety and number of toys that children have today; they had to be happy with a sandbox and the garage roof outside and just enough other toys to fill those two broom steps made into storage space. Outside it was a different story. We lived across a narrow road from a golf course with hills for learning to ski on and lots of trees for children to climb and play around. We used to walk over there frequently and it was a task to keep the children quiet, as well as the dog, while the players played through.

That is where I learned I wanted to play golf, although it would be years before I did.

Back inside, in the living room, there were two small square windows about a fireplace width apart. The fireplace never did get built but through those windows every night the glow from the dumping of the slag from the smelter would shine through and make the living room very comfy and pleasant. If one walked over and looked through one of those windows you could see the rivers of slag running down the slag mountain in Coppercliffe, a small town on the edge of Sudbury where Inco had its refining operations. The large and tall smoke stacks for which Sudbury is famous were also in that area and could be seen from that window. It was a pretty picture at the time. Little did we know the impact all that industry was having on our environment.

We lived in the house for seven years and all that time I knew we would have to move away. Sulphur was in the air at all times and it had become very hard on my lungs. So when the day came that Martin decided he wanted to be a teacher, I rejoiced (to say the least). It was quite a process but we persevered and finally went shopping for another house in North Bay, Ontario where Martin had been accepted to teach auto mechanics. First we had to sell the house, of course, and that went very easily. Another Finnish family bought it and built a new house around the old one. The property was beautiful and they knew the area. We bought that house for \$2500.00 and sold it for \$7500.00, which financed the purchase of a house in North Bay as well as a summer in Toronto while Martin attended Teachers College for two months.

Needless to say, I was front and centre when we bought the new house. It had a lovely bathroom on the ground floor. It did need some work but the old tub had running hot water, its ugly unpainted feet and sides were remedied with a can of paint, and we all loved that house with its three-foot basement walls made of cement and local rocks, its one-inch hardwood floors and its lovely oak staircase going up from the middle of the ground floor.

But that is another story, to be told at some future date.



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 and finally back 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.



The Avocado Tree

By Luz Kennedy

Once upon a time there was a farm, way out in the jungles of South America. There were lots of trees, big trees, huge trees, all over; they were tall and wide. There were birds, many kinds of birds, there were owls that woo at night, and doves, and falcons; there were yellow birds like in the song: "Yellow bird, up high in the banana tree ..." Flocks of blue and yellow parrots would fly by very often, making a lot of noise, talking to each other as they flew by. You could hear the monkeys growling in the distance and once a black panther was seen crossing our front lawn at dusk. Lots of snakes, and tarantulas, and bugs, big spiders, and many other weird creatures lived in the jungle.

A small creek would wind around making a soothing sound, with little fishes in it. And close by the creek, there is was: A BIG AVOCADO TREE extending its branches as though he wanted to hug the world. That was the jungle everyone saw for the first time.

A year later the big, big trees had been chopped down and were just lying on the ground dead! They had been replaced by banana plants that were coming up around the huge trunks, trunks too big to be removed.

The house was built. The avocado tree was saved from the slaughter and it was right there between the house and the creek ... full of fruit, beautiful big avocados that melted in your mouth.

From the moment my husband and I arrived with our two precious little girls, Patty and Sandy, the avocado tree was the centre of our activities. Early in the morning the girls and I would go and sit under the tree with all their toys and make-believe pots and pans to make little dinners out of leaves and flowers. Once in a while we would catch a little fish from the creek to put on the pot with make-believe fire.

The tree provided a wonderful shade from the hot sun and it was just the place to read, to rest and to enjoy the luscious vegetation around us and to let our imagination wonder of what the future would bring to us.

This is how we like to remember our wonderful avocado tree:

One day a big parcel arrived through the mail. Full of anxiety and expectation, we opened it and saw that there were all the materials needed to start a kinder school for the girls: story books, nursery rhymes, crayons, papers, construction paper in all colours, scissors, glue, instruction books, and more story books. The lessons started every day with a prayer and the national anthem. From then on, the time was ours to enjoy.

Little girls don't stay little. They grow up and they have to go to a real school. We had to go away to the big city and leave behind the peaceful nature that surrounded us. It was time to say good-bye to the avocado tree. We hugged him and told him we loved him and we were going to miss him. He just stood there very quiet but I felt a drop of rain on my hand. Could it have been a tear?

In the big city the girls were excited to go to a school and meet new children with whom to play, new friends, and new teachers. Our new house had a patio with only a lemon tree. For a moment, the thought of the avocado tree passed through the girls' minds but soon enough the many new relationships started to flourish and the avocado tree was sort of forgotten.

But the avocado tree had not forgotten them. He missed the children under his shade, the laughter and their songs, the games, the stories and the conversation. As the weeks and months passed by, there was no sign that the girls were coming back to the farm.

The tree felt so sad that he started crying. Big teardrops were falling on the ground, but there was no rain. A little bird came by and thought something was strange. What is happening to the avocado tree? He came closer and landed in one of its branches. "What is the matter with you?" he asked the tree.

"Why are you so sad?"

"I am missing the girls that used to come and play under my shade," said the tree.

"Where are they?" asked the bird.

"They are far away in the city," the tree replied.

"Could you write to them?"

"Oh, I don't know how to write. I learned the ABCs when they were here, but that is all," said the tree in a sad voice.

"Listen," said the bird, "I have an idea. You tell me what you want to say and I'll write the words in one of your big leaves. I can take the letter to them. What do you say?"

The tree stopped crying and joyfully agreed. After telling the bird a few loving phrases he watched the messenger go away, flying high. And he flew ... and he flew. He flew over trees, over shacks, over houses, towns, and rivers, stopping only to rest once in a while. It was a long, long journey. He was very careful not to lose the important letter he was carrying.

One day, the girls were in their bedroom playing when they hear a strange noise in the window. They looked up and were very much surprised to see



a bird with something in its beak trying to knock on the glass to call their attention.

They ran to see what that was about, and lo and behold, it was a letter from the avocado tree. What excitement they felt!

“Did you come all the way from the farm to bring us this letter? How is the tree? Is he still bearing fruit?” They had so many questions.

“I’ll tell you what,” said the bird. “You two sit down and write a nice letter to the avocado tree and I will take it back to him.”

“Yes, yes,” said the girls. “We’ll do that right now.”

Patty and Sandy took out a piece of pink paper and wrote the following:

Dear avocado tree,

What a nice surprise to hear from you. We miss you too. We live in a nice house with a patio that has a lemon tree in the middle and you know what? There is an iguana that lives in the tree. She is harmless but we are scared of her so we stay away and play somewhere else. We have a turtle that we call Baby. She is our pet. She roams around the patio but sometimes she comes in the house and hides underneath the furniture and we have a hard time finding her. Remember the snake that Patty killed with her tricycle in the corridor of our farm? Well, we do not have snakes here, but there are lots of lizards, very colourful and pretty. Some day we must go and see you.

Love, Patty and Sandy

They folded the letter, put it in an envelope, gave some food and water to the bird and made a sandwich for him to take with him.

"Bye, bye, little bird. Have a safe trip."

A few months passed by and another bird came knocking on their window again. This time it was a bigger bird and he had a serious look on him. The two girls looked at each other and ran to the window. "What is it, big bird?"

"I am afraid I have bad news for you. The avocado tree is dying and he wants to see you. Could you please come?"

"Well, we'll have to ask our Dad. Is it serious?" the girls continued.

"I am afraid so," said the big bird.

It took several days for the family to make all the arrangements to go back to the farm. When they got there, the girls ran to hug the tree. Oh! He didn't look very good. There was no fruit and the leaves were kind of pale. "I am not feeling well," said the tree. "I don't think I will live too long and I want to ask you a favour: when I am gone, please don't let me rot in the ground like all the rest of the big trees. I would like you to do something with my body."

Thinking for a minute, he continued. "Maybe you can make many crosses and give them away to your friends, and when you look at yours in your bedroom you won't see me, the tree, you will see the ONE who died on one and who LOVES YOU the most! Do you think it is a good idea?"

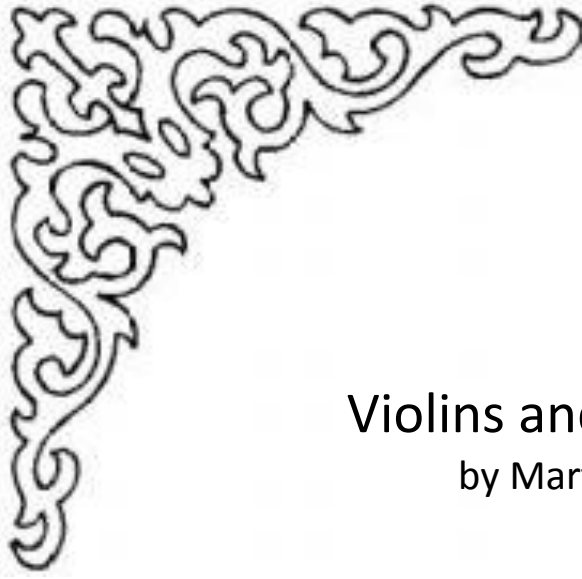
"Yes, yes," said the girls with enthusiasm and sadness all at the same time.

And to this day, the cross in their bedroom is still reminding them of the creator of trees and the Saviour of souls.



I was born in Colombia, South America on July 7, 1927. My childhood and teen years were very happy. When I met my Canadian husband, Denis, it was love at first sight. We married two years later and had three children: Patty, Sandra and Michael. During the early years of our marriage, we owned and ran a banana plantation which was literally in the middle of the jungle. When the children were very young, Denis fell sick with a liver disease and died within a year. As devastating as that was, I picked up the pieces and made the best out of life as a single mother.

In June of 1977, Denis' sister sponsored us to come to Canada. It was an enormous transition for all of us, coming to a brand new world, yet we all adjusted to our new life and new experiences. I am now a grandmother of 5 wonderful young adults. At the age of 84, I am still very involved in many activities. Of all the trials and tribulations God has handed me throughout my life, I would not trade any of those experiences for the world. I thank Him for bringing us to the best country in the world.



Violins and Fiddles, Etc.

by Martin H. Porter

Most of the population don't know a violin from a fiddle, but then most of the population don't have anything to do with either one.

The fact is, there is no difference. A fiddle is a violin and a violin is a fiddle. What determines which is which depends upon who is playing the instrument. If the player has a bunch of sheet music in front of his eyes, that player is probably a violinist who could not play much without the sheaf of printed notes. On the other hand a fiddler rarely ever depends upon sheet music, but plays by ear or from just plain memory, which he or she has done from the very first day of learning to play. But a fiddler can be a violinist and vice versa.

I know a girl, Kelly, who is an expert fiddler and a university-trained violinist. She was a fiddler first, in her younger years, until she entered the University of Toronto School of Music where she earned her B.A. in Music.

Now I don't know a lot about violinists except that the violin is a difficult instrument to master because it is a versatile instrument to master. It does not have the range of a piano or organ but it can be played in almost every key as, for instance, a harmonica, button accordion bagpipes or tin whistle.

So where does that leave me?

I grew up in Nova Scotia where there are numerous fiddlers and a much smaller percentage of violinists who played in churches and places like that. I knew lots of people who were known as old time fiddlers.

Our neighbor Alex Leslie was a fiddler with years of experience. A family of boys whose name was Shaw lived nearby and most of them were fiddlers who played at country dances and evening gatherings at the local school and at family functions.

So I was exposed to lots of situations where all I had to do was lend an ear to learn and memorize many tunes and polkas and waltzes and songs.

When I was in public school, in grades seven and eight, somehow I got the idea in my head that maybe I could learn to play the fiddle. I had my own money from being the local school janitor (while attending the same school), my Halifax Herald paper route, and selling either Gold Medal garden seeds, Christmas cards or Easter cards whenever they were in season. I also got jobs here and there working for local farmers for a dollar a day. I had lots of money.

So I got out the Simpsons catalog and found out that they had for sale a violin and bow for \$9.95. I sent my order in and a few days later I had a good looking violin. The very next day I took my fiddle and bow and went down to see Alex Leslie. Alex was retired and had lots of time on his hands so he was delighted to see me.

“Alex, how does one play this thing?”

“Well, first of all, this is a new bow and will first have to rosin it.” (A cake of rosin came with the violin.) “Then it has to be tuned.” (A tuning pipe came with the violin too.)

He showed me how to tune the strings, and we were ready to play! He got his fiddle from under the chesterfield and showed me how to hold the instrument. He told me to just listen and do what he was doing. By the end of an hour or so I could almost play Red River Valley, an old tune everybody knows. So it went on from there. I learned to play the dozens of tunes I had been hearing from other fiddlers when I was younger. That’s how I got started. That first song I learned to play is still one of my favourites.

Once you have learned to play one tune that people can recognize as a tune it becomes easier to learn other tunes and after a reasonable period of time you have quite a repertoire of tunes.

All of these tunes were of course committed to memory; all you have to work with is a fiddle and a bow, two working ears, and five fingers on the left hand – provided that you are right-handed to begin with. Left-handed people, of course, are in the minority and they have two choices. Number one, learn to play a fiddle as it is strung for a right-handed player, or number two, switch the strings around opposite to the normal way ... which makes that violin useless to a right-handed player.

One time when we were visiting somewhere there was a group of fiddlers playing on the stage. I noticed that one of them was a left-hander. He recognized me in the audience and motioned to me to come up and take his place in the group. I went up on the stage and told him that I could not play a left-handed fiddle. He showed me that his fiddle was a normal right hand strung instrument. So then I learned something that I did not know before.

He had learned to play a right-handed fiddle although he was left-handed. I would think this would be a difficult exercise.

All of these happenings are fond memories, of course, and I have many of them from over the years that I intend to write down later. But WWII intervened and for three years or so I was in the RCAF so I had other things to do. There was no fiddle playing during those years.

Now back in 1943 the war going on in Europe but it involved the whole world. Airplanes started flying over our farm near Pictou, Nova Scotia. I used to worry that some day their planes could be dropping bombs on us. These airplanes were friendly, of course, and I happened to know some of the kids flying them. I thought to myself: if they can do that, so can I. I'm just as smart as they are, and smarter than some.

I sold my violin and mandolin and said goodbye to everyone I could get in contact with, including my eight siblings and my mother (my father had passed on by this time). I said goodbye to the dog and the horses and left Nova Scotia to join the Air Force, not knowing what might become of me in the days to come. After taking several courses here and there while training as air force personnel, I ended up one day at the Number Eight Service Flying Training School near Brantford, Ontario, which I have written about in other stories.

But let's get back to violins. While stationed in Brantford I met my wife Lois (whom I have also mentioned in other stories). Lois had five grandparents in Brantford, all within walking distance of her home. Christmastime arrived and we were at one grandmother's home for Christmas dinner. Then we went to another grandmother's home in the evening for further festivities. While there, Lois' aunt May Buskard was playing the piano. I mentioned that I played the violin but had sold it when I joined the Air Force.

Grandpa Buskard disappeared for a few minutes. He went up into the attic of the old house and shortly reappeared with a violin and bow that had been up in the attic for many years.

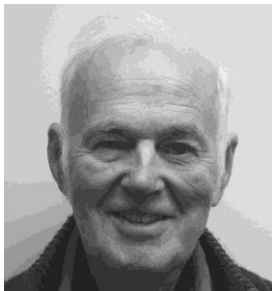
"Here," he said, "is an old violin. For what it's worth."

I couldn't believe my eyes. It had a lion's head at the end of the fingerboard instead of the usual scroll. I had never seen anything like it before. So I tuned it up and we played together.

Grandpa said "You can borrow that one awhile."

That was sixty years ago. Grandpa is long gone and I still have the violin. It is one of my precious possessions and I play it often. My family thinks it should be kept as a family heirloom where it would be stored in another attic or hung on someone's wall and never be played. But it had already lain in an attic unused, and I don't want that to happen again. I have expressed the wish that it be given to the aforementioned Kelly after I am gone or have no more use for it. She will play it as it is supposed to be; an attic is no place for it.

And that's my little story about fiddling and violins.



I was born in Elmfield, Pictou County, just after midnight on July 1, 1918. When I was eight we moved to nearby Three Brooks where I started school. In 1932 we moved to Bay View in time to start grade eight. I farmed there until age 22 when I joined the RCAF and served in Canada and overseas until war's end in 1945. I came to Brantford and married Lois Buskard in 1947; we have three children: Beth, Gerald, and Tim. I have attended the University of Toronto, the Ryerson Institute of Technology, and Teachers College. I spent ten years in the automotive business prior to teaching automotive classes in secondary schools and Fanshawe College until 1984. I celebrated my 90th birthday on July 1, 2008. I have five sisters and three brothers; one sister passed away at Christmastime 2011, the first break in the family. I am presently writing my memoirs.



The Old Pink Bobbled Lamp

By Olive Fowler

“DON’T TOUCH THE LAMP!” I yelled. The thoughts of seeing my precious lamp in pieces all over the floor nearly sent me berserk.

I was talking about the old, old, pink, bobbled oil lamp which stands over 20 inches and has been cherished forever in the family, or so it seems to me and so I was told by a relative. It belonged to Nanny, my mother's mother, who lived in a row house in Kirkdale, a district of Liverpool.

I used to go and stay with Nanny before I started going to school, and then again later during school holidays. Mother and I would take two rattling tramcars with dazzling sparks flying from their overhead wires to get there. Usually I felt sick when travelling on these contraptions but managed to hold it back until we got to our destination. Mother would pack a small bag for my clothes, asking “Have you brought your crayons and a book or two?” She didn’t really need to say this as Nanny had many books of her own. One series of books was written by Hall Cain. (He wrote many about the Isle of Man, where I went for some of my summer holidays. I really enjoyed them, a sort of Dickens type. I haven’t found them ever again.)

I'm not sure if Margie, my sister, went to neighbours while Mum took me. This has been lost in the bygone days. But it doesn't matter; this is my time, my story.

Jumping off the tram we went down a very narrow alley also known as the cooey. If I stretched my arms out now I could most probably just about touch both sides. It was dark even on a sunny day. It didn't seem to want to embrace any sunlight. If you went flying past Nanny's tall wooden gate, on the right hand side you came to a mysterious building with narrow, oblong vertical windows which were about 3' x 1', yellowed and dirty with age, covered with heavy gauge wire.

My mother's younger brother, Eddy Doyle, lived with his family back-to-back with Nanny's house. Cousin Edna and I would try and look in but the dirt was too ingrained and the noise that was emitted into the cooey was more like tortured animals than any other sound that I knew. When I was older Uncle Eddy told me that "it is a Jewish Synagogue and they are singing their Hymns every Friday. " Why they didn't tell us the truth then, I don't know. It would have saved many gruesome mental pictures.

The gate into Nanny's house was a tall, wooden, slatted one with no distinguishing signs but I knew which was hers even if I could not reach the latch. Mother would open the gate and I would dash in to be greeted by my small, slightly rotund grandmother. She always seemed to have a smile on her face and arms open for hugging you. "Well, you have grown another few yards," she would say, hugging you gently but closely. Mother would hug her too and then she would be bustling around to offload cooked meals and other goodies.

Perishables would be put into a wire mesh-faced box known as the safe, which lived in the outdoor shed, out of the light and away from such creatures as mice.

Refrigerators were not on the agenda yet, nor would be for many years to come. Mother did have an ice box for which we had to buy a lump of ice to place in a holder, and then it melted and we would have to buy another lump before a puddle formed on the floor. Other raw goods sat on a very small window sill stacked high but never fell the 25 feet or more to the yard below. Eventually Mother did buy a real refrigerator. Nobody else had one and she was so proud of her new acquisition. It was so small it sat underneath the countertop, and contained two shelves. It didn't have an ice maker. Who on earth in England would need an ice maker? No ice cubes in our whisky, please.

When our older sister Eileen came home from America, sometime after 1951, I was as awe struck with her beautiful clothes as I think she was with our itzy fridge. She looked and



Ann Elizabeth Doyle

wanted to know, "what's that?"

"It's the refrigerator," I said (and I thought they always said she was the smart one of the family.)

She was awe-struck, and then she burst into real belly laughs. "The refrigerator?" she finally squeaked out, still curled up with her laughter. "I can walk into mine."

Oh! I thought. Here she goes, she is Americanized already. Everything they have is always bigger and better. Of course, when I visited her home in Lorain, Ohio much later, I saw her refrigerator and she could walk in and park a small car in it too. So don't ever judge before you know all the facts. But I digress.

Arriving at Nanny's brick row house one walked up her private walkway with its high wooden fence separating her from the neighbours and past the toilet with a ventilating, heart shaped hole in the wooden door. Only a man would build the toilet next to the back door. Although, when I think about it now, when you have had quite a long ride on the downtown bumpy electric trams it does seem the best place to have such a convenient convenience. And the coal shed with a lace curtain over the window: was this the height of fashion, or to stop burglars helping themselves?

Quick right turn, round the corner, on the right hand side was the shed. There was the larder, (a 2'x2' wooden box) with a wire mesh front protecting food that needed to be kept cold). The safe was conveniently close by and out the way of any roving mice. The big galvanized dolly tub, with the dolly pegs resting in its place just waiting for the Monday morning wash to be started, was also kept here.

It was a matter of pride which neighbours were the first to have their washing hanging out on the rope line on Monday morning.

There were shelves on the left side of the shed; I can't remember what they held except for the bottle of "Tizer", a fizzy pop of an indiscriminate nature but full of bubbles which made you burp and everyone else to laugh. There were usually a couple of bottles of stout, a heavy type of beer that Nanny kept for her and her sister Florrie on Saturday nights after they had been to the film house. (They were very deaf and one would ask the other, "what did they say?" The audiences would shout "ShurrUp!" while my sister Marjorie and I would slide lower in our seats with embarrassment.)

The door from the shed to the house door was about two feet away and when you walked in, there always seemed to be a glow emanating from somewhere. Either from the fire place which was glowing with the coals, or from the pink bobbed lamp if it was late enough to need a light, or both.

Sometimes Mother would take me to Nanny's house for up to a week at a time. Nanny and I would have our meal in the evening and then she would read to me from books written by Hall Cain. (I've since looked him up on the internet and found out that he was a prolific writer. Still, I can't remember what his stories were about, just that either they were about the Isle of Man or that he came from there.) After my bedtime cup of cocoa I would undress by the fire if it was cold and then Nanny would light one of her candles. She walked to the flight of stairs which ended up at ... the ceiling? Actually, there was a long stick with a metal hook on the end hanging on a nail on the wall. The hook was navigated into a ring which was hanging from the

ceiling. Nanny never had any trouble executing this rather awkward move. A deft movement with the two objects pushed the ceiling up and out of the way, and we continued up another set of stairs to Nanny's bedroom.

I was then escorted up a similar set of stairs to my bedroom. A bedroom *just for me*.

There was a very tiny window which I don't think opened (at least, I never saw it opened). After we said my prayers, Nanny would tuck me up and then she would retreat down the stairs, pulling the ceiling-floor back down so that I wouldn't fall down the stairs in the night. It was extremely scary, very dark except for the subdued glimmer from a street light. Fortunately I didn't take long to fall into a deep sleep. I was not even awake long enough to worry what I would do if I needed to use the "guzzunder". (For the un-initiated this was a china pot shaped like a tea cup but much, much larger and it saved the necessity of going through the layers of the house and all the way out to the outside toilet.) I was extremely shy even with my Nanny so I would never have used it.

These memories sometimes jump into my head without so much as a 'by your leave', and I am always happy to have such warm thoughts about a mostly happy childhood, especially ones about Nanny. One of our granddaughters, Tammy, always looked up at the lamp on the mantle shelf whenever she visited with us as a child. "Tell me about Nanny's pink lamp," she would ask. I am not in the least bit pessimistic about my demise but hopefully I shall have a few more years of writing, china painting and golfing before I go to where ever good guys and gals go when their past due date arrives. On that day, Tammy will get Nanny's lamp.

In the meantime, it's my turn to take care of it – even if that means yelling "Don't touch that lamp!" when people get too close.



The pink lamp.



Olive is shy but determined in all of her pursuits. She taught school until she married and her life started again in Canada. She milked cows, became a house mother at a school for delinquents and learned to sex chickens so she could join her husband, Chris, in India. Now she is retired—at last.



Adventures in a Wheelchair

by Paul Benoit

If you've ever been skiing or played any outdoor sports, you know how much fun it can be. Using a wheelchair can be fun as well, and here are just a few of the adventures I have had so far.

I am going to start with a couple I had while in school. In Montreal, where I was in residence, the staff was throwing a party on the back porch of the institution. We lived downstairs and had to go upstairs to attend school. So the staff threw the party and everyone was invited, including parents. There were two doors that led to the outside; one had a ramp and the other just had stairs. Because they were both closed I couldn't see which was which. I mistakenly took the door that led to the stairs and I was going pretty fast. I went out the door and bounced down the steps, surprisingly without flipping over. I was scared but luckily I didn't hurt myself. My mom was at the bottom of the steps, screaming as I went flying towards her. When I hit the bottom, I was laughing because it was so much fun.

A few years later I was driving down the hall in my school when the power went out. I just happened to be on the third floor. The school had to be evacuated so they got four students to take me out of my chair and carry my down the steps. They placed me on the floor then had to go back up for my wheelchair. After they brought my chair down they picked me up and put me in it and we went outside. It's a good thing that there wasn't a fire or they would have had to bring me outside and leave my wheelchair behind.

Another time I had an adventure at the First Baptist Church on West Street, when I took the elevator up to the sanctuary. The minister announced during the service that the elevator had stopped working and everyone had to take the stairs. They told me and three others in wheelchairs not to worry because the fire department was on their way. When they arrived they had to carry each of us down, one at a time, with four firemen for each of us, two on either side. You can just imagine how heavy a wheelchair is.



Four firemen.

Another adventure happened when I was at camp. I was in the ball park for a barbeque and on the way to see a friend. I knew that there was a hill in front of me, but I was going too fast to stop and went right down it. Luckily, half way down the hill there was a tree stump. Either I was going to hit it, or I was going to end up in the lake. I did hit the tree stump and it kind of jerked me in my chair. I wasn't hurt, but I was terrified.



Paul and friends.

My latest adventure in my wheelchair happened one night after visiting a bar. I may have been a *little* intoxicated. While driving down the street I lost control of my chair and ended up in the ditch with my wheelchair on top of me. Fortunately I had a friend with me and he went to get help. When help arrived

they called a bus to take me to the infirmary. It took two people to get the wheelchair off me and to pick me up. When I got back, the nurses asked me a lot of questions because they thought I had amnesia, but I was alright.

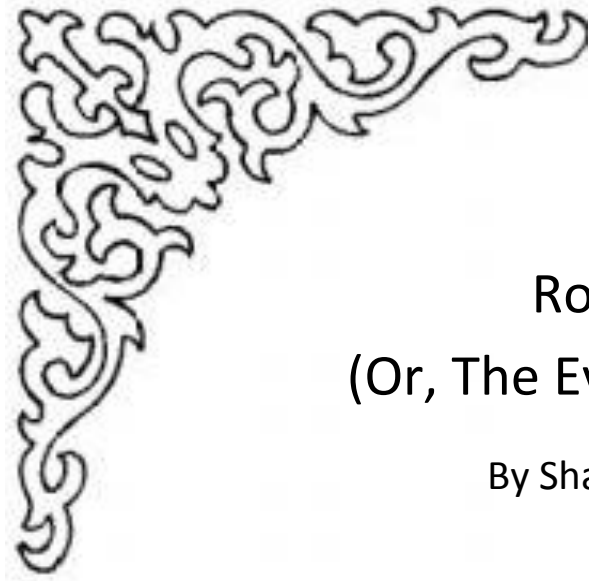
I guess that once my chair gets going it's hard to stop!

So as you can see, being in a wheelchair can be quite scary yet also fun and adventurous. These are just a few of my great wheelchair adventures and I hope you enjoyed them.

But please don't try this at home. I'm a professional.



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



Roxanne (Or, The Evil School Bus)

By Sharon Bolger

In 1987 I was in my late thirties and playing the role of big time superwoman while my life contrarily spiralled out of control. My marriage and my faith in my church and God was quickly unravelling. Caring for my two daughters (Lora seven, withdrawn and delicate: Sarah nine, outspoken and headstrong) was a challenge, and so was my seventeen year old son caught between adolescence and manhood. I was working for the Canadian Red Cross, taking the most difficult high school classes and a college prep-biology in anticipation for three years of nursing – a lifelong dream I was determined to fulfill. And if that wasn't enough, I played host to my brother and his wife who moved to Brantford and brought along their own set of unique troubles.

Then entered ... Roxanne.

Roxanne provided a malevolent twist to my growing complications! I gave the wagon the name Roxanne after a girl from my grade eight class who was my tormentor. I was introduced to Roxanne, the car, when the minister of our church offered me the use of the wagon in exchange for driving eight students, two of which were my own daughters, to our

church school a distance in the country. I couldn't refuse because having a set of wheels of my own was a godsend, or so I thought.

In remembering my experiences with that notorious wagon I can't help but think of Stephen King's horror classic, "Christine." In the 1983 movie a 1958 red and white Plymouth Fury takes on an evil personality and also has a disturbing affect on Arnie (Keith Gordon), the teen who purchased her. Arnie's discovery of "Christine" seemed destined and perhaps Roxanne was destined to be mine for a while. She became the school transportation when a member of our church bought the wagon but discovered she had complicated and expensive electrical problems that he could not afford to repair. Her mechanical issues were clearly serious and should have raised many red flags for our Minister, who in a moment of mortal weakness decided she'd make a great school bus! He obviously believed in miracles and the Canadian Tire Service Center where Roxanne went for repairs an embarrassing number of times.

Roxanne's glamour and allure was one dimensional. The soft blue leather seats hugged your sides and cradled you in position. Her shiny perfect navy blue paint, wood panelled sides, tinted windows and regal shape deceptively caught me off guard until she choose to reveal her true self.

My first frightening incident which was by no means the worst of them. I was driving down the back road highway from the church school with my youngest daughter in tow, and suddenly lost *all power*. The engine stalled, lights went out and the brakes went dead, which meant it took a powerful strong leg (or two in my case) to slam them down to the floor. I miraculously managed to force the wheel enough to get off the road and stop. Before that day I didn't understand the concept of an all power vehicle, nor what happens when all the lights go out. Hairs on my arms stood up and my heart was racing while I sat there pondering the outcome if this had happened on a busy highway. I said my prayers and turned the key. She started up on the first try. If it is possible for a car to have a soul, was she warning me of her dislike for me and the power she could use against me? That evening I reported the incident to my minister who had me bring her into the Service Center. After hanging their heads into her hood for hours and clanging on her insides the mechanics announced she was fixed. Right!

My overall experience as a bus driver was not a pleasant one. Not only did I deal with an evil wagon, I also had issues with three pre-teen girl passengers. It was a rude awakening to discover Christian kids could be bad. Nasty bad! Shouldn't they have had little halos and perfect manners? No, they were saucy, rude, arrogant, spoiled and constantly testing my authority. Or was it Roxanne's influence, much like the affect "Christine" had on Arnie and anyone who sat in her? While Arnie worked on restoring the Plymouth he changed from a nerdy teen to a withdrawn, humorless, and yet more confident and self-assured young man. In one scene Christine attempts to kill Arnie's beautiful girlfriend, Leigh (Kelly Preston) by causing her to nearly choke to death on a hamburger. Leigh notices that Christine's dashboard lights become glaring green eyes, watching her during the incident. Anyways, the theory was that "Christine" was bound to the spirit of the original and violent owner, Mr. LeBay. Can it all be possible? Stephen King made a lot of money with the movie trying to get us to believe it was.

Undoubtedly there was a change in me after driving Roxanne for several weeks. (Hey – it's comforting to blame my conduct on a wicked car.) I was normally passive and held everything inside. One day I behaved very uncharacteristically when I kicked one of those belligerent girls out of the car. Within a few seconds I realized what I had done and I begged her to get back in, but she stubbornly refused. It didn't sit well with the church minister or the parents but I think Roxanne was in her glory.

A few weeks after my first scare came a more daring test of her clout. I had all eight students on board when I came to a declining V-shaped intersection. That day there just happened to be a transport truck approaching the other stop sign at the same time as I approached mine. Seconds before reaching the stop Roxanne killed all her power. Maybe she was evil, but I had a mighty strong angel help me apply the brakes. I was able to stop the wagon just before sliding under the transport's trailer.

That would have been a scene to rival any in "Christine"!

My darling tormentors were too busy snapping and teasing one another to notice our near tragedy, but sweet ten year old Daniel's pale wide-eyed frozen stare will remain etched in my memory. Once again Roxanne went to the Service Center. Mechanics bent their heads under the hood and after a few clangs and bangs she was declared fixed ... *for sure*.

By now it was winter and for a time Roxanne seemed to behave. There were occasions when she wouldn't start but that was normal for an older car. I hadn't had a mysterious happening for a while and I was feeling confident that Roxanne and I had made peace. But she was only building my trust for the big finale. It happened on the top level of Brantford's downtown parking garage on an icy January day. If it was vengeance Roxanne was seeking she designed the circumstance to perfection. I had my most precious passengers with me, my two daughters. I backed out of my parking spot, gave her some gas, and headed in the one-way direction to get to the lower level exit. The ends of each level of our parking garage have gates that swing open to dump snow. (For the record, I did not believe those gates would stop a car.) I was approaching the east end with my hands gently coaxing the smooth leather steering wheel to the left. The gate was directly in my sight getting closer by the second. Did I mention it was an icy day? Well—she did it again! Off went the lights, silent went her engine and dead went the brakes with the green gate looming before me. I pushed harder than I had ever pushed before with my two feet on the unresponsive brakes. I felt helpless as I heard my daughters in the back seat cry out in unison.

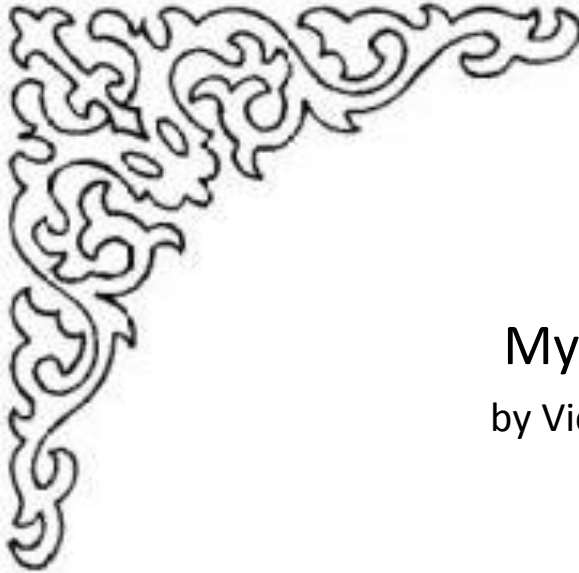
"Oooooooooohhhhhhhh MOM!"

You are probably asking yourself: did we smash through the gate and dangle half way on and off the top level of the parking garage? All I will say about the end of the story is: thank God for big strong angels! And after that, "Christine" – I mean, Roxanne – was laid to rest.

For good.



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.



My Mom

by Vickie Iorio

Have you ever had someone in your life that was special to you? I did! That person is my mom, Ruth.

She was born and raised in Goderich, Ontario on September 8th, 1938. She was the youngest of six and faced many hardships. My Aunt Margaret and Uncle Sid raised her because her parents died in a fire when she was small. She had brown hair, blue eyes and great hugs. Mom had a very positive outlook and a great sense of humour and loved to make you laugh. Sometimes it's hard to believe that my aunt and my mom were sisters because my aunt was a very impatient person and my mom was more laid back and easygoing. She had a lot of patience and always taught me to try and do as much as I can for myself. She mostly did factory work, at places like Levi's, Penmans, and Westinghouse. She always found work and she worked hard every day.

A lot of people say I look like my mom. I like to think that I have inherited my mother's gifts of patience and a good sense of humour too. I remember her generosity and kindness; she would always try to put everyone before herself.

Mom used to say to me: "Vickie, take your time and don't rush things. There is time for everything and you only live once."

She also used to tell me to be positive about things going on in my life, because everything happens for a reason and it will all come out in the wash. "Don't wish your life away," she said; "it will happen soon enough." When we used to go out for lunch, my mom used to tell me that I have a champagne taste on a beer budget.

My favourite thing was when we used to go home on the weekend to go shopping together and have Sunday supper. I miss that a lot. My mom would give me good advice. I feel very fortunate to have had her in my life because it takes a special person to take care of a person with special needs and she did this all on her own.

When I moved away from home and started to become independent she said that it was hard for her to have me out on my own but she was proud of me. My brother was ten years old when I moved and he was upset too. He ran away for three days because he didn't know how to tell me that he didn't want me to move. My mother was so worried, she called the police. They found him hiding in a park.

I remember how my mom used to take me to the park and put me on the swings, smiling. Once when I was seven years old my brother Rick wanted to play Hide and Go Seek, so he picked me up and hid me in the cupboard. My mom came in from hanging laundry and my legs were sticking out.

"Vicki, how did you get in there?" she asked.

"Rick," I said.

But Rick denied it. "I don't know how she got in there," he said.

It was so funny to see the look on her face!

My mom was a volunteer. She worked once a week at the Brantford General Hospital, transporting laboratory samples.

She loved big dinners and always wanted to have company over to visit. She enjoyed walks outside in the summer and took me with her sometimes.

My mom's favourite show was the Young and the Restless. We watched it together, and I know she liked the character of Katherine Chancellor.

It took a lot to make my mom mad, but we knew when she was mad because she would call you by your full name. And if something was wrong, she would know it. I would always say that "Nothing was wrong" when she asked, but she wouldn't stop asking until I told her what it was.

As well as being my mom, she was my best friend. My dad used to tell my mom to "Stop treating her like a baby. She has to grow up sometime." But my mom was always there for me. I was the youngest and she had a big heart.



Vicki and Ruth

I remember going to camp and the girls in my bunk telling me that there was no such thing as Santa Claus. When I got home from camp I told my mom that I found out that there was no Santa and she was so angry. She said, "Well, you better be good anyway or I am taking all your presents back to the store."

I will always remember that day. I will never forget the joy she brought to my life.

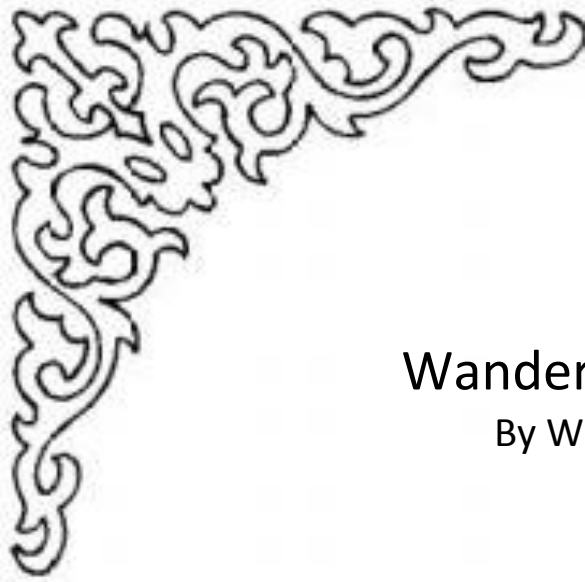
A couple of days before she passed away, we made plans to have me come stay overnight for Christmas Eve. Unfortunately a brain aneurysm took my mom's life Monday, December 20th, 2004.

I couldn't believe it at first. I was home on Sunday for supper and she looked fine. When my brother and sister-in-law came to tell me that she had passed away, I just didn't believe it. How this happen? How can someone so special be taken away so suddenly? It changed everything.

My mother will always have a special place in my heart. I wouldn't be the person I am today if it wasn't for my mom, and I was fortunate to have her in my 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.



Wandering Wayne

By Wayne King

For me, walking to school was as much about the journey as it was about the destination. My entire elementary school career, from the time I started Kindergarten in September, 1951 until I graduated from Grade Eight in June, 1961 was spent at Edward St.



Edward Street School as I knew it.

School, in St. Thomas, Ontario. In those nine years I calculate that I walked to and from school seventy-two hundred times. At one kilometer per time that's a total of seventy-two hundred kilometers or the distance from St. John's, NL to Vancouver, BC.

Walking complemented my schooling because the sights and sounds surrounding the journey stimulated my maturing brain cells and nurtured my creativity. As a bonus, walking was a healthy way to work off the ever present excess energy of youth, which allowed me to sit patient and stress free in class.

The walk was a moveable feast - a different experience every day. The mix of friends changed throughout the trek. Some joined me. Some left me to pursue other business. I was not just walking I was playing and incorporating my surroundings into my games. A few of my favourite activities included playing guns, trading Davy Crockett cards, competing for marbles and throwing snow balls. Girls skipped to school and played hop scotch. All kids played tag spontaneously.

Sometimes I started the walk to school with sister Janet, but we often separated to be with our friends in pursuit of our own gender specific interests. Larry and Paul were neighbours who were my age so we often played and walked together. I usually hung out with my lifelong friend, Kerry or another friend, Brian, both of whom lived closer to school than I did. I usually met my friends in front of one of our homes or called for them.

The walk started no later than eight-thirty a.m. when I exited my home at the western end of Barwick Street. Reaching the end of our driveway I turned to my left and there, a hundred meters ahead of me, loomed my neighbourhood's dominant feature, the old cement bridge separating the western "island" of Barwick Street from the rest of the city proper. Ramps rose sharply upward to the main span or platform on both the eastern and western approaches. There was no special provision for pedestrians or cyclists so all forms of transportation shared the roadway, which was just wide enough to accommodate two cars, side by side, although it didn't look like it. The edges were guarded by five foot high matching cement parapets, two feet wide at the top. I confess that I occasionally used the parapets as a highway. Yes, I ran across the top even though I knew I shouldn't. If something unexpected happened, it was a long way down.

Its height and location made the bridge an excellent observation post. I could watch



The bridge in 2011, from the south. The centre cement ramp was replaced in the '70s. Note the parapet where I used to run.



Looking east from the bridge. In the distance Barwick dead-ends at the Manitoba jog. Manitoba Street School was located on a double-sized lot at the extreme upper right.

over my kingdom for hundreds of feet in all directions. Occasionally, the quietness of the neighbourhood was broken when a well laden freight train thundered and roared down the rail line and under the bridge.

Living on "our side of the bridge" Janet and I as well as a few other kids – the Wilson's, the Stuttle's, the Newberry's, the Riley's and the Reynolds' lived the furthest from school of anyone else. We played together and knew our small

neighbourhood intimately. But the moment I descended the eastern ramp of the bridge and crossed Flora Street I was off of “the island” and entering familiar, but different country. I knew most of the families who lived along both sides of the next block of Barwick and on the adjoining streets as well. A number of my friends, including Kerry and Brian lived in this first long block of Barwick that ran between Flora and Hughes Streets. On the other side of the



Me, nine years old, with my CCM bike.

bridge I enjoyed the luxury of a cement sidewalk for the remaining five blocks of my walk. On sunny days the sidewalk doubled as a Roman arena for hunting down ants with a magnifying glass. It was perfect for bouncing balls of all sizes as well as creating colourful hop scotch patterns.

The next street crossed was Hughes Street. This last block of Barwick Street dead ended at Manitoba Street. Just before reaching the end, I could glance to my left to check on the pole mounted fire alarm box. Pranksters set off the alarm occasionally, but I never considered that

form of prank viable. I knew I would be caught by quickly responding fire fighters or observant local home owners, who knew each child by sight.

To my right stood good old Manitoba Street School, which had been closed after many years of distinguished service to our neighbourhood. Its place was taken by my school, the newly completed Edward Street School. To me Manitoba was an impressive structure, towering two storeys high with a centre gable and a belfry that made it even higher. Its solid wood, double front doors faced down the centre of Edward Street, which ran due east. Because of its position on a jog in the road the old school dominated the approaches from Edward, while it was almost invisible from Barwick. It seemed as if the old girl stood as a guardian angel for all the students coming up and down Edward Street.

Passing the school and the alarm box, I crossed Manitoba Street, made a quick ninety degree turn to the right and walked for fifty feet to the next corner where another ninety degree turn, this time to the left, placed me on Edward Street. I was now half way to school. Three more blocks.

I usually walked on the north side of Edward Street for the rest of the journey because that was where the action was. My fellow scholars continued to emerge from their homes to join the procession to school. The final three streets crossed ran perpendicular to Edward Street. Edward Street was a gravel road. It sloped down from Manitoba, bottomed out at Alma and then rose up toward a slight ridge at Balaclava Street.

Many milk and bread delivery routes still used horses in the fifties and Edward seemed to be a major thoroughfare for them. Oftentimes what us kids called “horse buns” decorated



Manitoba Street School

the centre of the road. If they were fresh and the weather was cool the “horse buns” would emit a steady stream of steam. When “horse buns” appeared I stayed off the street, but I did dare others with cries of, “Bet you’re scared to touch it.”, immediately followed by their rejoinder, “No, I’m not, but you are.”

The most exciting feature of the first block on Edward Street was Johnson’s variety store, at the corner of Alma and Edward. Harry Johnson, the owner, was tall, white haired with fair skin highlighted by a ruddy complexion. He invariably sported a large white apron which was worn, when cool, over an old, tweed sport jacket. The store usually opened at 8:30 to tempt us kids into purchasing candy on the way to school.

Janet and I were fortunate that our parents gave us each a nickel occasionally. A nickel could purchase a surprising amount of candy. When a kid exited the store with their treasured candy, it was the custom to call out, “No bites, no nibbles, no licks, no nothing.” You had to let the generality of the school population know up front that you didn’t want to share. However, it was not a definite stance and I would relent if gently cajoled by a friend. If anyone forgot to utter the warning, some kids would quickly cry out, “Bites” which was perceived as an automatic obligation for the candy rich kid to share. Although I did not recognize this cry as valid when applied to me, it gave them an advantage over you. I might reply in a smart aleck manner “I’ll give you a bite.”

Crossing Alma Street I entered the next block. Halfway down lived a local homemaker who made her own taffy apples, for sale, at a nickel each. Taffy apples were the crème de la crème of candy, the desirable item to secure, along with its even rarer cousin, the caramel apple. When a careful study of each apple for signs of uneven candy coating and apple blight ensured that the apples passed the quality test, I paid my nickel, the tray of taffy apples was presented and I chose the most desirable apple from the tray as it stood proudly on display with its fellows. Purchasing a taffy apple was a major undertaking because its consumption took time and we were now close to school.

With my candy or candy apple in hand I rapidly approached Balaclava Street. This was the only place on my walk where a Safety Patrol Boy was stationed. He was always a boy, aged twelve or older. There was no provision for Patrol Girls. The Patrol Boy wore a wide, white Sam Browne type of belt as his sole sign of office. Patrol Boys used their arms to signal a halt or to wave us through. They were not allowed to stop cars, but they were empowered to report any untoward behaviour of their fellow students to the principal. Since they were peers it took a lot of provocation for them to turn you in, except in the case of some whose power went to their head.

The south side of this block of Edward was almost wholly taken up by Edward Street Baptist Church. It was a simple wood frame building with grey insul-brick siding.

This last block of my journey was interesting because of the people who lived there. On the corner of Edward and Balaclava streets was a dark house that all of us kids thought must be haunted because it looked like it should be. Adding to our foreboding was that the older lady who lived there was rumoured to be a witch. Her weird looks accentuated by wild, white hair exploding from her head seemed to prove it. However, she never bothered anyone to my knowledge. Even so I watched her closely as she moved about her yard tending her garden.

Halfway down the block lived the Takayesus whose daughter Trina was physically handicapped and wore steel leg braces. She was a nice, quiet girl and I, as well as many other kids, would often stop and offer to help her get to or from school. Trina was always well dressed. Her parents invariably rewarded us with a gift of candy. Two doors down stood the residence of Harry Johnson of variety store fame.

One house past Mr. Johnson's was the corner of Edward and Inkerman Streets. Here, I usually turned left onto Inkerman Street, walked across the street and there I was on the boys' side of the school yard. Despite the temptations of the walk, I always arrived before school started at nine a.m.



Edward Street School, June 30, 1960. Last day of school and Kevin Kitchenham's ninth birthday.

He is front and centre.

(Image courtesy of Elgin County Archives)

Wayne was born and raised in St. Thomas, but has lived in Brantford for 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.