



Footprints in Time

Lifescapes Writing Group 2013
Brantford Public Library

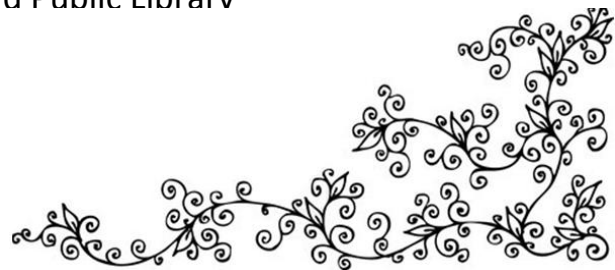




Footprints In Time

Lifescapes Writing Group 2013

Brantford Public Library



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

Editorial team: Robin Harding, Lorie Steiner

Photo editing: Geoffrey Moyer

Cover by Robin Harding

Copyright ©2013 by the authors

ISBN 978-0-9810538-5-1

Brantford Public Library Press

173 Colborne Street

Brantford, ON N3T 2G8

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
<i>Searching for Connie</i>	7
Anne Kittridge	
<i>Hetty's Prize</i>	16
Audrey Mary Boggis Cichacky	
<i>Pot Hunters</i>	22
Bill Van Gaal	
<i>From Tranquility to Calamity</i>	28
Douglas K. Summerhayes	
<i>Scott's Folly</i>	41
Karan Stemmler	
<i>Dancing Makes You Smarter</i>	48
Kay Boyd	
<i>A Crossroads</i>	54
Marlene Dayman	
<i>Transplanted in Canada</i>	63
Mary Hurman	
<i>The Effects of the C Word in a Family</i>	73
P. Sloat	
<i>Adventures After Turkey Point</i>	85
Paul Benoit	
<i>The Gift Horse</i>	87
Richard Dayman	
<i>The Haunted House</i>	95
Sharon Bolger	
<i>Wheel on My Wheels</i>	98
Vickie Iorio	
<i>Adventures in Hitchhiking</i>	101
Wayne King	

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 sixth year running the program at the Brantford Public Library and *Footprints in Time* is our sixth collection of stories to be published.

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

On behalf of the library and this year's participants, I would like to thank the guest instructors who so generously offered their inspiration and guidance. In order of appearance: Dr. Ross Pennie, author and physician; Joan Faehrmann, librarian and veteran *Lifescapes* leader; Larry Brown, author and instructor; Penny Mackenzie, library board chairperson and English teacher; Lorie Lee Steiner, magazine editor and writer; and Wendy Oliver, memory book aficionado. Our writers and their writing benefited immeasurably from your experience, enthusiasm, and wisdom.

For myself, I can only say that it has been a pleasure and a privilege to work with this group of dedicated and engaging writers. Their stories are both unique and universal – memories of individuals triumphing over and through adversity, and testaments to the power of community and family. I have enjoyed reading each and every one of them, and I hope that you too feel the joy and sorrow encompassed in this latest anthology, *Footprints in Time*.

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



Searching for Connie

By Anne Kittridge

It was nearing the end of July 1935. My Mum sat back in her comfy chair in the bright sunny living room, holding her large expanding stomach and smiling quietly to herself. The sky was blue, the sun shone brightly, and the birds were singing and chirping in the garden, as they ate the seeds that filled up the bird feeder. Other birds sitting along the hedgerow would quietly watch my Dad dig away in his back garden, where there was often the chance some unlucky worm would be dug up, then sparrows or blackbirds or thrushes and even tiny little English robins, would swoop down and gobble it up. Cheeky little bluetits preferred the strings of peanuts that were always hung on the lowest branches of our tree, just outside the kitchen window.

My mum tapped her feet in time to the music as the radio softly played.

... I'm in the mood for love ...

It was five years before the Second World War was declared, and although my mum and dad didn't have much in material things they were content and looking forward to the impending birth of their first child. Resting on the floor by the side of her chair was a book. A

Penguin paperback romance, which was first published in England in 1935, and cost 6d (sixpence). It was extravagant to spend 6d on a book, but when you are pregnant, time alone with a good book is a luxury you enjoy while you have the time.

My dad had to go to work and so he asked a kind neighbour, Mrs. Jarvis, if she would take Mum for her monthly check up at The Firs Maternity Home on Mansfield Road, very close to the centre of Nottingham. This was where she was booked to give birth to me, her first baby. My dad arranged to meet them there. It was early afternoon when she went in to see the doctor, he carried out the usual routine examinations, told her everything was fine. Both she and her baby were healthy; she had one more month before giving birth. Suddenly to my mum's astonishment, the doctor suddenly smiled, looked at her and then quietly told her she was expecting not one baby but two. Twins!

What a shock, what a surprise. The doctor then told her he could tell her what her unborn babies were if she wanted to know. How could he? This was 1935! He said he could tell the sex of an unborn baby by their heartbeat. He listened to each heartbeat and told her the baby on the right was a girl ... then he listened to the heartbeat on the left and smiling told her that the baby on the left was also a girl. Both of us were in the breach position, but that was fine, as we had one more month to turn before our due date.

Mum and Dad were so surprised and extremely delighted once they got over their initial shock. They had tried for six years to have a baby and now suddenly they found they were expecting twin girls. My mum and dad went home in a daze, determined to finish getting the room ready for – incredibly – two baby girls.

Quite suddenly and unexpectedly that same night my Mum's water broke and she went into labour prematurely. Much too early. Mum was quickly rushed into the hospital for the impending births. The doctor's knew it would be a long delivery as we were both side by side still in the breach position. The labour was long and very difficult.

I was born first, followed eventually by my identical twin sister, both of us weighing about the same, and perfectly healthy. We were placed in our own tiny cots and looking at us you couldn't tell us apart. We looked exactly the same, both had thick black hair yet we had a wave on the opposite side of our heads. This was the only way they could tell us apart.

We had safely arrived into this old world of ours on Tuesday July 30th, 1935.

After giving birth, which was a long complicated labour, the doctor's declared both babies fit and healthy. My mum had gone through a hard time giving birth, but now she had her two tiny girls to feed, love and nurture. She was happy and so was our dad when he was finally allowed in to see us during the very strict visiting hours.

On Thursday August 1st, 1935, a nurse brought both of us from the hospital nursery and placed us into our eagerly awaiting Mum's arms to feed. Mum cuddled and loved us as she fed

us both and later the two of us were taken back to the hospital nursery while Mum rested. Our Mum lay in bed in wonder and amazement, yet a bit worried too. How on earth she was going to cope with two babies instead of one!

When it was time for our next feed, the nurse appeared in the doorway and was only carrying one baby into the sterile white room, Mum wondered where her other baby was. Then two doctors followed the nurse into the room and drew the curtains around the bed. Their faces were serious as they sat down and Mum began to feel a nagging fear in the pit of her stomach.

I was being held by my mum and of course crying loudly to be fed. Over the noise of my crying one of the doctors said, "Mrs. Taylor, we have some very sad news". There was a long pause and then he placed his hand on one of hers and said, "One of your babies has died."

My mum, of course, was totally devastated and inconsolable, not wanting to believe what she had just heard.



My Christening

There were twelve beds in the ward, six on each side of the large white-walled room. Everyone could hear my mum being told this devastating news and the ward went quiet; you could have heard a pin drop. Why did they not wait until my Dad was there so they could tell them together? Not a word was said to explain how or why my twin sister had died. Looking back I can only assume it was what we now call a crib death.

Throughout my life I have been told by different people that the surviving twin is always the one who took the most food before birth, and yet how could this be, I now reason ... when we both weighed practically the same! I know many surviving twins were often told this, and then they very often go through their lives, not only feeling guilty for being the one to survive, but also believing their greed harmed their twin. Of course we now know in this day and age it is definitely not true.

Growing up I had a normal relatively happy childhood and yet I always felt as if there was something missing in my life. Nothing could take away the feeling of loss. I have always felt as if I am one half of two and it is a very lonely place to be. I miss my twin sister. I always have and I always will. What would she have been like? What kind of person would she have been? We looked alike, but would we our personalities have been the same? These are questions I have always wondered about. I miss her on our birthday, I miss her at Christmastime, I miss her all the time. How can you miss something you have never had and yet you do? If I look in a mirror, can I see her? Sometimes I think I can, then realise it is me!

I never knew my twin's name. I found out recently that when Dad went to register our births while Mum was still in the hospital, he also had to register my twin sister's death. To register us both, he had to choose a name to put on our birth certificates and also my dear twin's death certificate

It has taken me 77 years of searching ... searching to find out where my twin is buried. I was recently told my twin sister was buried on August 2nd, 1935. Our Dad had to fetch her tiny body from the hospital where she was gently placed in a small plain wooden box. Then Dad had to take her on his bike to the cemetery where she was buried. My Dad rode his bike everywhere, so why not there? He couldn't afford to do it any other way



City of Nottingham

My Mum never knew where my twin was buried. Through the years I have started many times to ask her questions about my twin ... because I am a twin without a twin. A twinless twin.

I never got any answers. In fact, when my Mum was almost 80, I went from Canada back to Nottingham where my roots are and always will be. I stayed with my parents in Nottingham England at our family home.

One day Mum and I were sitting in a small cozy cafe where we had had a delightful lunch. I remember we never knew the name of the café but my Mum always jokingly called it "Beans with Everything!" The food was good, the people friendly and if I close my eyes, even now I can smell apple pies and meat pies as they baked in the huge ovens in their kitchen.

Mum and I sat talking in the same café and there were beautiful twin babies with their parents at the next table. Of course after admiring them, our conversation turned to babies. I began to ask about my twin and our birth, Suddenly I heard her voice crack and saw tears come

into her brown eyes. At almost 80 years of age, losing her baby all those years ago still made my Mum cry. I realised then she had been crying inside ever since.

I couldn't continue to ask her any more questions. How could I?

Does grief ever go away? I feel sure the answer is no. It is always present in your life and feels as if you have lost a part of yourself. You may forget for a while, but it always comes back. My own life has been a lonely journey. I have spent much of it trying to fill in the missing pieces. A bit like fitting the pieces of a jigsaw together, I suppose.

One day I was talking to my sister and I mentioned to her that I was still trying to find out where my twin sister is buried and whether she had ever been given a name. I was very surprised when she said quietly "I can tell you ..."

She then told me Dad had talked to her about my twin sister one day shortly before his death. He told her he had named my twin sister Connie. When Dad went to register my twin sister's birth and death he had to quickly give her a name.

He chose Connie because his sister's best friend was called Connie. I imagine it was the first name that came to mind. Looking back, I realise now what a terribly heartbreaking thing my Dad had to do when he took his dead baby to be buried.

I can only guess at the feelings of sadness he must have felt carrying his tiny baby daughter to be buried. He must have taken Connie in her tiny casket on his his rusty old bike to her funeral.

He never talked about it to anyone until a lifetime later, when he talked to my sister. I remember when I was growing up, if I asked any questions about my twin, silence would suddenly descend on the entire room and eventually I quietly learned not to ask.

Many years ago, a well known child photographer was asked by a family he knew, to take photographs of their twins right after their birth. Everyone noticed that after they were born, they were very distressed and crying inconsolably in their separate cots. As he was waiting to photograph them, a doctor eventually took the two babies and placed them gently side by side in one cot, side by side as they had been before birth. Immediately the twins placed an arm around each other and stopped crying. They were missing each other. Twins share a very special and extraordinary bond after having spent months together in the uterus before birth.



Twins

Once on a bus trip to Gaspé in Quebec I met two wonderful middle aged men who were identical twins. We started chatting and I confided to them that I was born a twin. I told them how lonely I have always felt, even in a crowd.

I didn't really expect them to understand.

I was so surprised when one of them said "I know exactly how you feel. You feel as if your life is like a pie ... complete and yet with a piece missing. He was so right. They did understand.

A few years ago I took a poetry course and one part of the course asked me to write a poem to someone who wasn't there. Of course the only person I could write about was my twin sister.

I have lived in Canada for over 40 years and I have always felt a yearning for my twin sister. I feel the need for her all the time. I think of her and want to confide in her. I will never get over the feeling of loneliness, of her not being here with me.

Reading a book about twins recently I discovered single twins often buy things in pairs this is something I have unknowingly always done.

When we decided to emigrate to Canada, one of the last things my Mum said to me was "Anne, you've been looking for something all your life. I hope with all my heart you find what you need in Canada".

About three months ago I sat contemplating life without my twin and wondering how different my life would have been had my twin sister lived. I suddenly decided to contact my friend Geoff who knows a lot about Ancestry and Genealogy and ask him for help. I sent him an e-mail and was very surprised when unexpectedly he found and e-mailed me back the pages registering both our births and also my twin sister's death registration, all written by hand.

I couldn't believe that after 77 years I finally know my twin sister's name and also have copies of our birth registrations as well as Connie's death registration.

After printing them out I sat holding them in my hands and cried.

Within a few days I contacted the Cemeteries Department in Nottingham, UK and a wonderful girl named Rebekah told me many of the old cemeteries in the City of Nottingham have been closed. I felt sad when she told me this but then realised we are talking about 77 years ago.

Weeks went past and I and Rebekah, exchanged many e-mails, Rebekah told me she should be charging me £25 (25 pounds) per hour for her services but I certainly couldn't afford to pay this!

However Rebekah continued to search old Nottingham cemeteries for me, looking for Connie Taylor.

Nottingham is a very large city and many old cemeteries are closed and some even have houses built on them now. The weeks dragged by with Rebekah telling me which cemeteries she was still searching, all of them from so long ago. Many records have been destroyed and if there are any left, they are very often on microfilm.

Each cemetery Rebekah searched she told me the name of, and each time she came up negative. Months went on and Rebekah was like a dog with a bone; she couldn't let go. Time passed slowly by and then ... silence. I thought my lifelong search had once again come to an sad end. Sitting in Canada waiting to hear was very frustrating and yet I had hope deep within me.

One day I received a wonderful exciting surprising e-mail from Rebekah telling me she had finally found Connie and she knew exactly where she was buried. I just couldn't believe my luck.

Connie is buried in The Old Basford Cemetery close to the centre of Nottingham. It has been closed for many years now, meaning no more burials, but it is maintained really well.

Rebekah kindly sent me a map of the cemetery and marked the exact number of Connie's grave. I felt like rushing across the ocean and giving Rebekah a huge hug, but of course I couldn't, so I cried instead.

How do you thank someone who has changed your life?

I have found her, I have found my twin sister, my other half. I know exactly where she is in the world. I now have a feeling of fulfillment, calmness and peace in my life. When I knew which cemetery Connie is buried in, I went online searching for photographs of my dear sister's resting place. I did find some photographs and left a message for the owners of the website saying I had just found out where my twin sister was buried after 77 years and thanked them for showing me where she is and telling them I had "borrowed" some of their photographs.

The cemetery is old, the gravestones which are still there are green with moss, many on the verge of falling over. The carved names are hard to distinguish.

Not too many people are left to take flowers and tend the graves and yet the grass is cut and the whole old cemetery is clean and well cared for. I am so thankful to see this.

Almost by return came an e-mail from a wonderful lady named Karen saying how happy she was for me and I was very welcome to any of her pictures. In fact if I would send her the map of the cemetery, being as she only lived a short distance away, she and her husband, would go and find Connie's grave for me.

Karen and I are still in touch and she not only found my sisters grave, but she kindly took a gorgeous bunch of red tulips and placed them on Connie's grave. Here is the prayer Karen said as she placed her red tulips on the ground:



Dear Connie.

You were only with your twin sister Anne for two days, but you have not been forgotten. I feel so very honoured to be a conduit between you both as I stand close to where your earthly remains were placed.

I send you so much love from Anne, and hope that the bond of two sisters which was partially broken by your untimely death is strengthened once more now your resting place has been found.

May the Angels continue to keep you safe in God's loving arms.

Amen

With news like this I had to tell my dear family and friends, many of whom are still living in England. They are all as thrilled as I am at finally finding where Connie is, Connie, my other half.

Connie is now visited by many family members and many friends. It makes me happy to know Connie is at long last being acknowledged. She was born, she lived for two days, and she died.

I hope and pray my dear Mum now knows where her other twin daughter rests.

Connie now has a wooden cross made by my friend. Flowers are placed on her grave and unknowingly my very favourite rose has been planted on her grave. It is the Peace Rose. A very delicate pale cream rose, tinted pink around the edges of each petal. Next spring I am going to plant a Peace Rose here where I live, here in Ontario, Canada. For myself and for Connie.

I am getting old now, but I have one more journey to make, and I will make it with love in my heart, and a sense of sadness, but also a feeling of fulfillment. My journey will take me back home to my twin. I will then feel as if I have completed my journey. I am whole. The only other thing I can wish for is that when I die my ashes will be taken and placed with my twin, my twin sister Connie. We will be together once more. Then I will have come full circle in my journey of life and death.

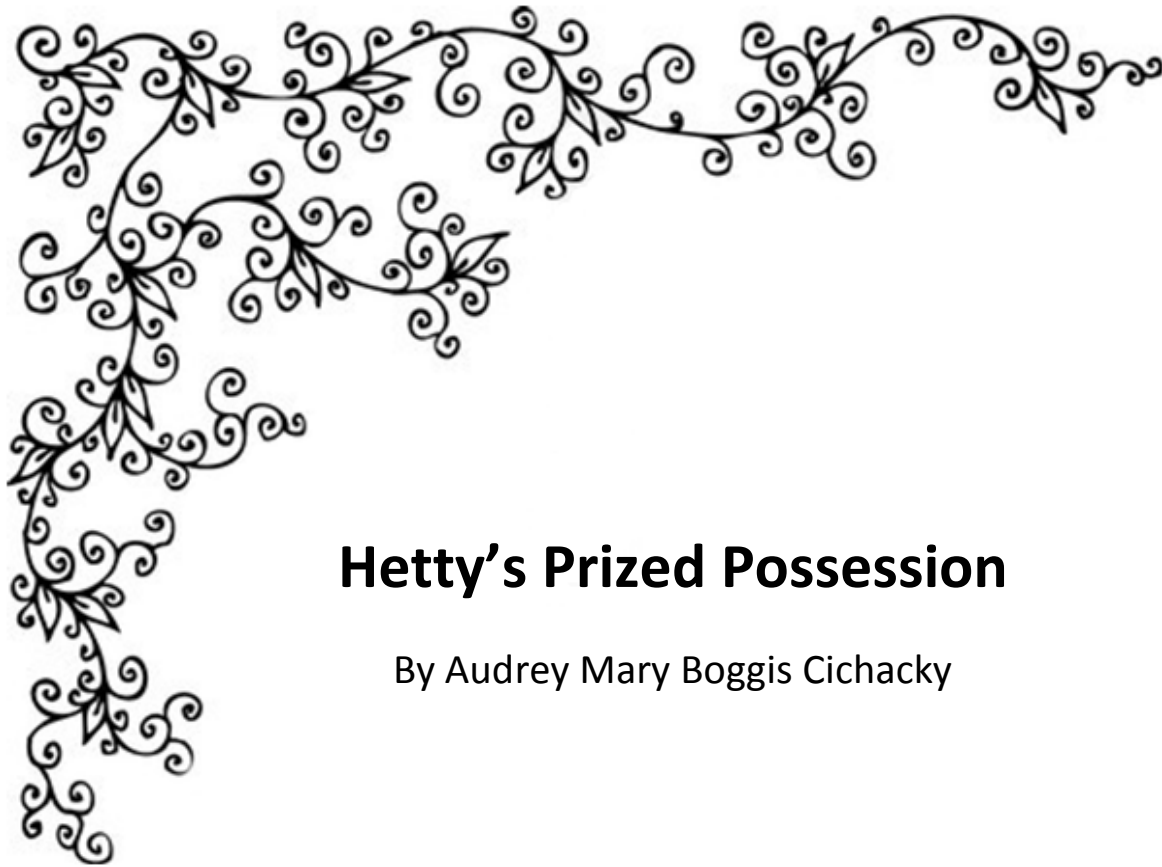
I will be complete. My search is over.



A wooden cross for Connie



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



Hetty's Prized Possession

By Audrey Mary Boggis Cichacky

The sun rises slowly over the gently rolling country side and casts a golden glow through the mist covering the meadows of this little Suffolk village and surrounding areas.

Just outside the village, on the narrow road, Hetty drives her motorized, red milk wagon completing her early morning delivery of milk in bottles to all the cottages, farms and stately homes.

She has traveled along these roads since she was first posted here at a dairy farm, as a "Land Army" girl during the First World War and she is most familiar with every turn and bump in the road. Hetty remembers her first months here in the country and how proud she was of herself that the authorities had placed her in charge of a herd of Jersey cows. Now country life has become her way of life and she, as many others in the country, is up at dawn, busy completing various chores that are a part of country life and commerce. There are many chores to be done. Hetty's customers like their milk to be delivered early so that they have the cream from the top of the milk bottle for their tea and the milk at the bottom to make their porridge.

Today is a special morning for there is something different happening. Hetty is on a mission to finish her work early enough to attend an auction taking place in the village and Hetty very much wants to be there. She had learned quite a while ago that one of the stately homes had been sold and today the contents would be auctioned. Hetty has her mind set on finding that something special that would give her a pride of ownership of something exquisitely beautiful. She believes that having something like this in her own home would boost her pride and status beyond being just a milk lady. She has observed how the wealthy live in their estates.

Hetty turns up the long driveway toward the beautiful red brick home standing so elegantly. Hetty can barely hide her excitement and anticipation as she parks her wagon and slowly walks toward the home noticing the many large paned lots windows and the massive dark, oak doors. She raises her hand to grasp the oversized door knocker shaped like the head of a lion and knocks assertively – twice and then waits.

This is a home she has visited everyday but has never seen beyond the front door. The door opens slowly without a squeak and the doorman appears.

"Good morning. Are you here for the auction?"

"Yes," says Hetty.

"Come this way please. I will show you the items which are on sale today."

Hetty walks slowly so as not to miss a thing. With her eyes not missing a single detail, she moves down the huge hallways with high ceilings and walls adorned with oil portraits of the various ancestors and descendants who are associated with this manor as well as other people of notoriety and status. She stops in front of the full portrait of Queen Victoria. On either side of Queen Victoria, are two long and wide windows that look out to the carefully manicured formal back gardens. Heavily lined drapes of regal red hang on either sides of the windows and braided cords and tassels pull the drapes back with grace.

Hetty reaches the room where the items for sale are on display. There are several items that catch Hetty's interest and she carefully looks at each one of them. She smiles when she sees a grouping of "Royal Dalton" vases. They stand about nine inches tall and are narrow at the top and wide at the bottom. They are glazed in a gentle but rich moss green with royal blue and grey design details.

"This is just what I am looking for," Hetty exclaims. From that moment on, she doesn't take her eyes off the Royal Daltons.

The bidding begins and Hetty focuses her attention on the auctioneer.

The auctioneer calls out, "Who will give me ten? Ten for these exquisite Royal Dalton vases. Dated 1860. Ten? Who will bid ten?"

"Who will give me five? Five? Five. I have five."

The bidding suddenly heats up.

"Six? I have six."

"Do I have seven?"

"Seven from the gentleman wearing the brown fedora."

Hetty not wanting to take chances on losing the vases calls out her bid.

"Eight pounds."

"Who will give me nine?"

"I have nine. Ten. I have ten. Eleven. Twelve? Thirteen. Fourteen?"

Things are not looking good for Hetty. She becomes very anxious and impulsively thrusts her hand into the air and shouts, "Twenty, twenty!"

"Twenty going once. Twenty going twice. Gone to the lady in the bright red sweater. Madam, they are yours at twenty."

Oh my, that's a lot of money, thought Hetty as she carefully wraps the two vases in a blanket and places them in the well used old wooden milk crate. *That's O.K. I'll not worry about how much they cost. I'll think about that another day.*

Hetty Returns Home

Hetty carefully places her special cargo in the back of the milk wagon and grips the handle, turns the crank and the engine soon begins to purr happily. She drives away from the house and slowly turns right on the laneway that will take her home. It's a beautiful laneway lined with mature walnut trees with crowns of luscious green branches that meet at the top to form an archway which seems to smile down on Hetty as if to say, "Well done Hetty. You've had a good day."

She makes a left turn on to the main road passing by St. Mary's Church which stands peacefully in a pastoral surrounding of meadows where a few cattle graze and the River, Fynn and the river, Lark, flow gently. The red milk wagon makes a little jog in the road then up over the "Old Hump Bridge" and Hetty drives past the house where she once lived a long time ago. She passes the "Bealing's Boot", a local pub, and continues up the hill past the dairy where she had begun her day. She travels straight ahead and she will be home in a half an hour.

She sees a window full of happy faces to greet her once she arrives home. She has been away longer than usual today on account of her being at the auction. Her children watch with excitement as Hetty carries her treasure from the wagon and into the house.

The children chorus, "Can we see? Can we see?"

Hetty's husband, Charles, watches with interest. "Nice choice Hetty," he says as he picks up one of the precious vases."

"Lovely, Mum. Coo, we really like them."

"Can we go out to play?" Mike, the oldest brother asks.

Husband Charles asks, "How much did you pay for these Hetty?"

With a twinkle in her eye she answers, "Ten pounds."

He smiles as if he knows she is doctoring the price.

Everyone listens intently as Hetty explains what these vases mean to her and how carefully they must be handled because they are very old and fragile.

"We will place them on the mantelpiece where we can all see them and they will be safe.

Everyone listens to her with quiet respect.

Soon it would be Hetty's birthday and at this time she couldn't begin to imagine what her eleven year old son, Mike, is thinking as he witnesses his mother's great joy with the "Royals", as the vases are now called. He begins to plot a special mission of his own. His mission is to make her even more beautiful vases and give them to her for her birthday. He would fashion for her two of the most beautiful vases she would ever see.

Mike is a curious creative young boy with never ending ideas. Every day he does a paper round which gets him up early in the morning and takes him around the heath and open country side. This is where he finds the material that he would make into a treasure for his mother.

There had been an air raid the night before and there lying among the bushes are two unexploded incendiary bombs. There is not a speck of damage on them. They will be perfect to make into beautiful vases for Mum.



Hetty

He hides his find in his satchel and brings them home. He spends many hours working on his project when he knows his Mum and Dad are away from the house. Often he works in front of the fireplace where the “Royals” sit on the mantle. The “Royals” are filled with childish treasures such as candy wrappings, jokes, secret numbers and the soon to be added two detonators. from the soon to become companions to the “Royals”.

One afternoon, Hetty, while dusting the “Royals” notices all the stuff that is now spilling out over the top of the vases and with some agitation she begins to empty all the paraphernalia out of the vases. She does this as everyone in the family sits around the fire place enjoying its warmth. Piece by piece, she throws all the contents of the vases into the fire. The radio is on and ‘Vera Lynn’ is singing “Bluebirds Over the White Cliffs of Dover” when suddenly there is a big bang from the chimney, startling all including Hetty.

“What happened? Did we get hit?” The soot rolls down the chimney covering everything in its way.

“Oh, no,” Mike exclaims. Worried. “I should have told you I put detonators in one of those vases. Sorry. Sorry. I will clean up the mess.”

Immediately Mike exclaims, “Here, Mum. Open up your birthday present.”

Hetty with big eyes says, “Thanks, Mike. What are they?”

“Vases, Mum. I made them myself.”

“Very, very nice. They can rest on the piano. What did you make them from?”

“Incendiary bombs, Mum. They don’t look like bombs now do they? I cleaned and polished them many times over. You really do like them don’t you?”

“Yes, I do.”

With a pleased smile on his face, Mike gathers together all the stuff to clean up the mess.

Hetty helps him but does warn him, “Don’t ever pick up anything like this again.”

She carefully places the ‘Royals’ and the well-fashioned empty bomb casings on the mantel where they could be individually admired, safely, at a distance, for many years to come.

Epilogue

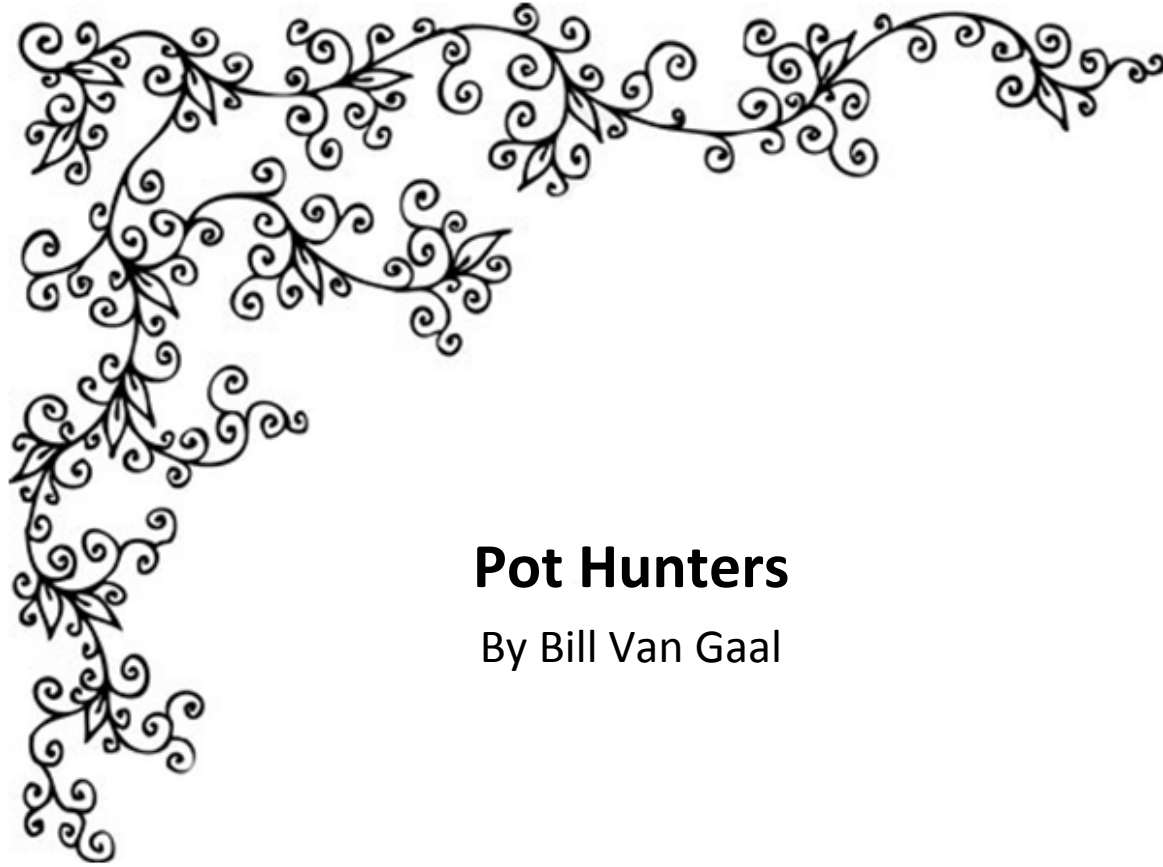
What happened to Hetty's birthday present from her son, Mike, is a mystery. Perhaps they adorn the shelves of a military museum.

Almost a decade later from the time of the auction, Hetty immigrated to Canada in 1956, she brought the "Royals", the precious Royal Daltons, with her. The vases, as elegant and as revered as ever, were wrapped once again in blankets and packed in the old wooden milk crate with the words 'fragile' and 'handle with care' written boldly in black letters on the outside.

The legend of the "Royals" continues to this day, as does the spirit of Hetty, my mother.



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.



Pot Hunters

By Bill Van Gaal

The inspiration to write this story came to me during a visit to the place of my birth in September 2012. This was my first visit to the Netherlands (Holland) since 1951 when I immigrated with the rest of my family to Canada as an eight year old.

After our arrival at Schiphol airport in Amsterdam, my sister Liz, who made the trip with me, and I were taken under the protective wings of two of our first cousins with whom we stayed during our first week. Plans had already been made prior to our arrival, to visit Stevensbeek, the village where our family had lived. On our first Saturday there we were told "Tomorrow we will drive you to the village where you were born and we have arranged an afternoon visit to the home you lived in before leaving for Canada. That house is now owned by one of your cousins and is little changed since you left it." After lunch on Sunday we set out to rediscover our roots. Stevensbeek is a small village in the province of Noord Brabant and is located in the southeast corner close to the borders with Germany and Belgium.

As we were approaching the village, Christien, a cousin who was driving us, said: "There is a nice little café in town and I think we will stop there first for a coffee and sweets."

The Dutch like their coffee and sweets and I do also; I come by it honestly. The sight of the Parkzicht Café (which translates to Parkview Café) brought flashbacks of memories to me. I also noticed that there were many people sitting at outdoor tables. After parking and walking into the patio area of the café, most of the patrons were staring at us and I thought they looked somewhat familiar.

When we went inside there were many people standing around and sitting at the tables. The sun had been bright outside and it took a few minutes for my eyes to adjust to the darker interior. On looking around at all the people I was immediately drawn to a man standing at one of the tables looking at us. He could have been my father's twin, they looked so much alike. My sister gasped and I said "My god, that guy in the white jacket looks just like dad. That is too spooky, he must be related to us somehow." By this time we had figured out the real reason for visiting Stevensbeek was to have a family reunion and get to meet our family from across the pond. In all about 70 people were there including 35 to 40 actual first cousins. Dad was raised in a family of 13 children.



Left to right: Bill's father's look-alike, Bill's sister, Bill

I was drawn to the gentleman who looked like Dad and saw from his name tag that he was the son of Dad's brother. We introduced ourselves and after getting to know each other a little, he asked, "Do you remember when we were young our fathers used to take us hunting with them in the bush at the edge of town?"

I have memories of my father and others hunting rabbits with a ferret that they would put into a rabbit tunnel, after nets had been put over the escape tunnels that usually numbered two or three. The rabbit was chased out of his hole by the ferret and into the net. The next destination was mother's cooking pots, hence the name 'pot hunters' that was given to people who, usually through economic necessity, hunted illegal game to feed their families. Dad also set snares from time to time for rabbits that were overrunning the woods and raiding crops and gardens.

The woods outside Stevensbeek at that time were a private hunting reserve, and as such closed to legal hunting by anyone other than members. Dad's lookalike told me, "Your father and mine, as well as another brother who lived here were known locally as the 'stropers' (poachers) of Lactaria" which was the name of the hunting reserve area.

After our arrival in Canada in Feb 1951, we settled first on an island in the Ottawa River across from Pembroke, Ontario in the Province of Quebec. A farmer there had sponsored us to come to Canada. When the snow finally melted late in April, Dad took my younger brother and me hunting one Sunday afternoon. He had a shotgun, my younger brother and I had make-believe guns. After what seemed to be an eternity slogging through the wet countryside, Dad saw an animal on the move and took aim, fired the gun and the animal went down. We walked toward it and were soon overpowered by a strong putrid smell in the area. Dad was determined to bring something home for the pot, so he tied string to the back legs and in spite of my protests, I had to drag it back to the farmer's home.



*Map of Stevensbeek after development in the 1950's and 60s. Prior to that the bottom right corner was all forested.
(Dorpsvisie Stevensbeek project, Buro SRO)*

Dad knocked on the back door and waited for the farmer to open it. Language was a problem because Dad had learned some very basic English before leaving Holland, but Mr. Kennedy, the farmer, spoke only French. Through sign language he communicated that we wanted to eat this thing. Mr. Kennedy almost fell off his porch with laughter at the thought of cooking the skunk we had shot. It was quickly gotten rid of and never saw the pot.

From this first home in Canada we migrated to Ontario, where in 1955 Dad purchased a farm with 100 acres of land north west of Barrie. Our postal address was RR#2 UTOPIA, which seemed like the proper address for our new home. The farm was on the edge of what is known locally as the Minesing Swamp. At that time it was a wilderness area, some 6,000 hectares in size (or in what I understand better, 15,000 acres.) The Nottawasaga River runs through the swamp. In winter, when feed becomes scarce in the swamp, the resident deer, which are plentiful, climb up the bank to farmers' fields and forage on the winter wheat that is planted for the next summer's harvest.

When the need was there to supply meat for the family to eat, my Father and I would go to the area where the deer fed, shortly after dark. He with his gun and me carrying a five-cell flashlight. His hunting rifle was an old Lee Enfield 303 caliber of WW 2 vintage that kicked like a mule. My job was to stand behind him and scan the horizon with the light over his shoulder, and if the deer were grazing their eyes would shine like little lights. Dad would line up his shot with me holding the flashlight over the gun so he could get a good aim at his target. Not being as tall as him yet, I was 13 or 14 at the time, I could not direct the light where he wanted it at times.

To solve this problem, he attached the flashlight under the rifle using a block of wood he had carved to shape and taped to the bottom of the gun. As we set out one evening with his new invention in place he soon spotted deer in the field. He took careful aim and pulled the trigger; he missed the deer and his handiwork also failed. The recoil of the rifle caused the flashlight to open at the front and back with the batteries and bulb and the lens being lost in the snow. I got my old job back a few days later after he had purchased another flashlight. This hunting was to fill a need, to feed a family of six.

When I grew up, I followed in my Father's footsteps and also took up hunting at the age of 16. In 1967 I hunted for my last time after two unpleasant experiences, the first one being on the opening day of the duck season. My partner Don H. and I were set up in a blind well before first light on a large pond. On the other side of the pond there was a group of three hunters in a blind. We were somewhat concerned about them because they were making a lot of noise and talking loudly. After first light, some ducks came in and flew low over the pond, these three hunters (I use the term loosely) shot at them and pellets from their shot landed around us and a few actually hit us, but not causing any injury. We went to another location after this because we believed these hunters were under the influence and we did not want to be near them.

The next month I went deer hunting with the same partner and he shot a deer. We were on the top of a high rock face and saw the deer walking below us, Don took aim and fired a shot, instantly killing the deer. We made our way down toward the deer by going quite a distance out of our way in order to find a safe route down the cliff. When we approached the site of the kill we heard people talking and saw four men starting to field dress our deer. During the heated discussion that followed, two of the guys pointed their guns in our direction and said: "This deer was shot by us and you two need to get the hell out of here quick, if you know what is good for you." Under the circumstances we reluctantly complied. It was a good hour's walk back to the car and then a 15 to 20 minute drive to the nearest public phone, since cell phones had not been invented yet. We decided to forget about the deer and go home.

Those two experiences during Canada's centennial year were enough to convince me that I did not want to hunt anymore and I have not fired a shot since.

My father also quit hunting, although he never told the family of his decision. Dad passed away in 1986 at the age of 73. I learned of his last hunting experience in 2011, at the wedding reception of one of my nephews. During the course of the evening I got to talking with my sister-in-law's brother. I knew that my brother and father used to go deer hunting with Buck (his real name). Buck asked me, "Do you know that your Dad quit hunting after he shot his last deer?" My reply was a surprised "No." I knew Dad had not hunted for a long time but he had always said it was because it was too hard getting around in the bush.

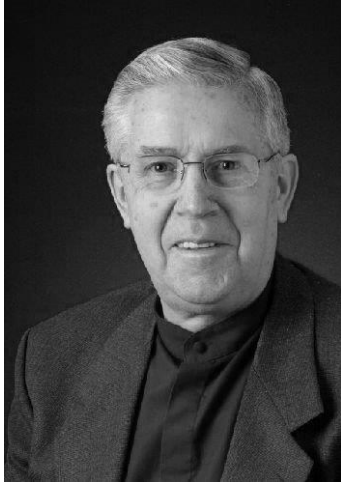
Buck said, "It was because of what happened when he shot his last deer. During the hunt we had your Dad standing watch on a deer run with a big clearing in the bush in front of him. A big buck with a huge set of antlers came crashing through the woods and stopped right in front of your Dad on the far side of the clearing. He aimed his gun and shot the deer dead, but as he pulled the trigger the buck turned his head toward your Dad and looked him straight

in the eyes. The rest of us were nearby and went to the clearing and field dressed the deer and took it to a butcher shop for cutting and packaging. I then distributed the meat to the hunting party giving your dad the choicest pieces because he had shot it. Your Mother cooked a roast from that deer soon after and when it came time to eat your Dad could not eat any of it."

Dad later told Buck: "When I tried to put some of that meat in my mouth, all I could think of was those big eyes looking into mine just before I dropped him. I won't hunt or eat any game for the rest of my life." And he didn't.



Left to right: Bill, Wim W., Bill's father. 1955.

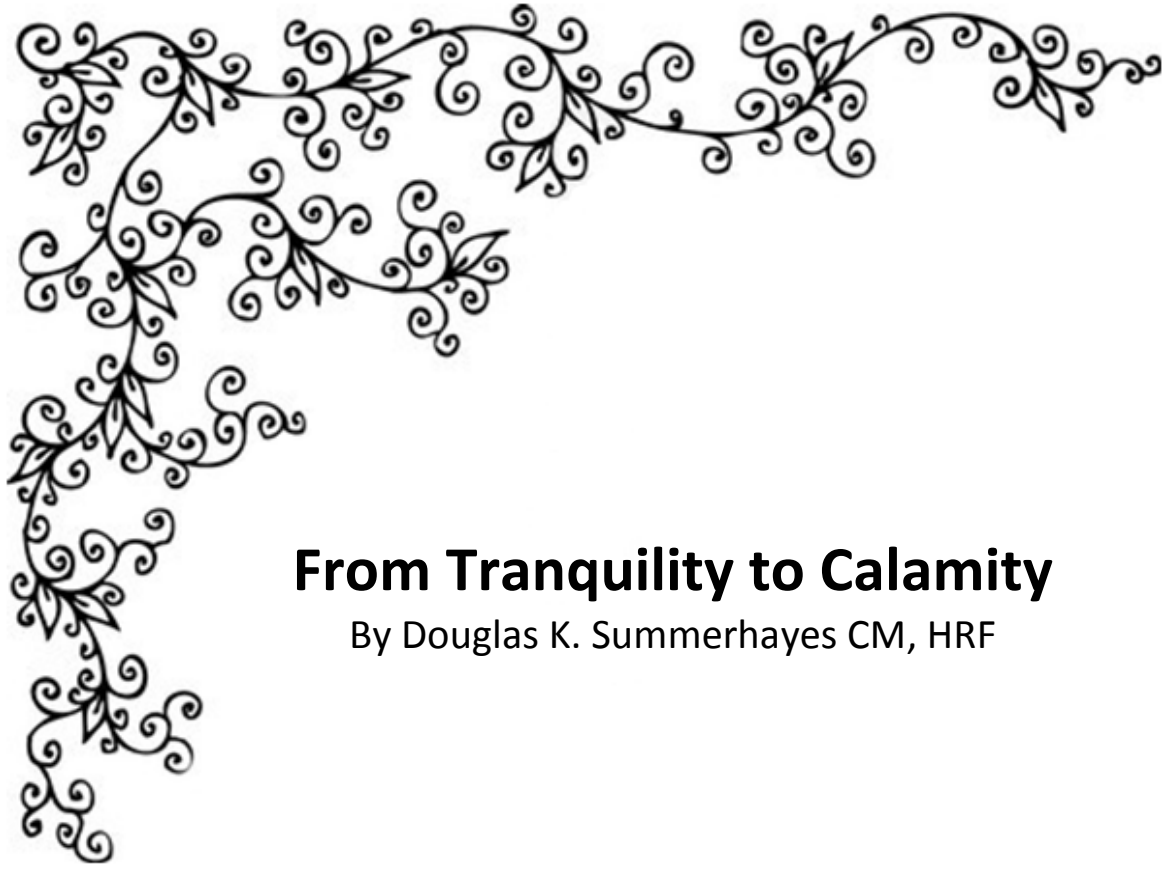


Bill Van Gaal was born in the Netherlands in Feb. 1942 and immigrated to Canada with his family in Feb. 1951, settling first in Quebec. That July they moved to the Barrie Ont. area where he was raised. Bill dropped out of school in grade 8 the day before his 16th birthday.

After a period of travel and adventure and many jobs he started working at the Ford Motor Co. in Oakville where he was employed for 40 years. For 7 years he worked on the assembly line taking an interest in the workings of the union, Local 707 UAW. He ran for the position of Union Steward and was elected to that position for 12 years. Always looking for new challenges he ran for and was elected Vice President for 6 years and the next 12 as Local Union President. About this time (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 3 years, retiring in Oct.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 (49 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.



From Tranquility to Calamity

By Douglas K. Summerhayes CM, HRF

*Tranquility: A rural community in Brant County, Ontario, Canada.
Calamity: Disastrous events marked by great loss and lasting distress.*

My Early Years

I was born June 11, 1930 to William Henry Summerhayes and Eva Renee (nee Ashby) Summerhayes. I was the middle child in a family of five siblings. Lloyd was born in 1918, Franklin in 1920, and my sisters Barbara and Ruth were born in 1933 and 1937 respectively. My early life was quite normal and *tranquil* (with a few exceptions). We grew up on a one hundred acre farm, in a rural farming community called Tranquility, in the County of Brant, five miles north of the City of Brantford, Ontario.

My father was a builder of barns, homes, cottages and other structures including industrial and commercial buildings. About 1920 he started a lumber and building materials company as an adjunct to his building business, to assure a steady supply of materials for his building operations. He began to sell lumber to farmers and property owners in the surrounding communities.

The office was located in a small addition to our home. In the early stages of their business my mother assisted him as his partner, office help and bookkeeper. From the 1920s to the 1950s their business grew quite rapidly and was incorporated as Summerhayes Lumber and Construction Ltd. A saw and planing mill was located in a large three bay building and a carpenter shop in an abandoned chicken coop, both of which stood behind our home.

One day when I was four years old, I was out in the mill watching my father saw lumber. The machines were run by line-shafts and belts connected to a large gasoline engine and in order to shut the mill down, he had to go outside to shut down the engine. That day I decided that I wanted to saw a piece of lumber like my dad. When he heard the noise of the saw hitting wood that I had picked-up and shoved across the saw-table, it scared him so much that he rushed back into the building and, with a knee-jerk reaction, grabbed me and threw me across the building. I landed in a pile of shavings at the end of the planer. He then came over to see if I was all right and held me tight.



Young Douglas in front of the original office, 1935.

When I was about five years old, Russell, a farm hand that my father had hired to look after the animals and chores around the farm, decided to repair some fencing. He hitched a team of horses to the wagon and loaded a roll of fencing, some fence posts and tools onto it. I climbed onto the wagon and pleaded to let me go with him. He relented and off we went. When we reached the fence at the back of the farm, he instructed me to stay on the wagon and watch. All of a sudden one of the team of horses took off running across the recently ploughed field. I was bumping up and down as Russ chased after the wagon and soon I rolled off the side of the wagon and under the rear wheel. Fortunately for me and for Russ I landed in a furrow and the wheel rolled over me without injury, although I did lose consciousness. He called my Aunt Isabel who lived across Powerline Road to take care of me while he chased after the wagon and team of horses. She picked me up and carried me about a half-mile to my home on the St. George highway. When I woke up a doctor was checking me over for injuries. My parents were extremely angry with Russ for letting me go with him and my dad went to the barn and took a big leather strap to discipline the horse that had started the runaway team.

I attended Tranquility school, a one-room school housing grades one to eight. It stood across Highway 24 from our home and my dad's office and lumberyard. The older boys and girls were tasked with ringing the large bell in the bell tower, by pulling on a rope that came down through the ceiling into the library. It was used to call the students back into the school at the end of recess and lunch break.

The bell was tethered to a roof member by a rope to prevent it from turning upside down. The boys, including myself, delighted in pulling the bell rope so hard that the rope tethering the bell would break and the bell would turn and remain upside down. This meant that the person doing this would have to get the ladder and climb-up into the bell tower to repair the bell, by installing another rope or re-tying the existing one to the roof member. Of course it meant that two or three other boys would have to be recruited to help for safety reasons. We were overjoyed with this task as it usually took at least one hour of school time, or as much time as we could possibly expand it, away from our schoolwork to complete. We would always tie the tether rope in such a way that after another week or two of bell ringing the knot would come undone, allowing the bell to have to be repaired yet again. This process always ended with the 'culprit that did this dastardly deed' receiving at least three licks of the strap on each hand, supposedly, to deter anyone else from doing it again. However, it happened quite regularly, as it was a small price to pay for adding interest to your school day.

My Teen Years

I attended the Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School from 1944 to 1948 for my secondary school education, followed by a ten-month stint at the Day's Brantford Business College for business training.

In my teen years I worked for farmers in the neighbourhood during thrashing time and as a labourer in the lumberyard piling lumber and loading trucks during summer vacation and on weekends. At age sixteen I started to drive truck for Summerhayes Lumber, making deliveries to construction projects and homeowners throughout Brant County.

In 1938 my parents rented a cottage for a month at Turkey Point. They liked it so much that in 1939 they purchased the lot next door to build their own cottage. It had a giant hole on it that was filled with water. They hired someone to haul sand to fill it in order to build a family cottage. I went to the cottage with my family every weekend during that summer, and for at least one month each year after until I was sixteen.

I spent a lot of time on the beach talking with several retired gentlemen to learn as much as possible about their lives, family and business ventures. I had blond hair at the time, that turned almost as white as theirs from the sun; consequently they called me "Whitey".

When I was about twelve years old my father took me to McCall Boat Works in St. Williams, where we purchased a new boat and an old Johnson eight-horsepower outboard motor that I could safely operate. Three years later, he purchased a brand new sixteen-horsepower Johnson outboard motor so that we could go fishing further out into the lake.

Just running around in the boat lost some of the excitement, so I made my own surfboard from a piece of 3/4-inch fir-plywood, a dowel handle to hang-on-to, and a thirty-foot

long towrope fastened to the front of the board with a rope yoke. It made a perfect surfboard to be towed behind the boat. It was great fun to go out and ride on that board.

I got tired of bailing water out of the boat by hand with a tin can and one day saw a piece of equipment called a 'stirrup-pump' when I was in Canadian Tire. It looked to be perfect for pumping water out of the boat, thus eliminating bailing by hand. I purchased one to try-out. It worked so well that my older gentlemen friends and other boat owners asked, "Where did you get that? I would like to get one."

Well, I very quickly replied, "I will bring one for you next weekend." The next weekend I arrived at the beach with six of them, to which I added 50% to the price that I had paid. Before the day was done, I had sold all of them and taken orders for another twelve. I was thirteen at the time. That was my first venture into the world of marketing that became my lifetime career.

The Family Business

My father was a builder of barns, homes, cottages, and other structures including industrial and commercial buildings and a dealer in lumber & building materials for many years. In 1944 he decided to expand the company and purchased the Davidson Planing Mill Co., a lumber business in Tillsonburg, Ontario. It was incorporated as Summerhayes Lumber (Tillsonburg) Ltd. This firm was operated until 1960 when the decision was subsequently made to close it and concentrate all of our efforts on our business operations in Brantford.

Upon finishing Brantford Business College in 1948, I advised my father that I was planning to go to work at the Elliott-Wedlake Hardware Store on Colborne Street in Brantford. Dad said: "We are planning to build a larger office building that will include a showroom facility where you can establish and run your own hardware store." This was an offer that I considered too good to pass up, resulting in my joining the family business as a sales/estimator in October 1948.

In 1948 construction of the new building consisting of a modern office and a hardware and building materials showroom of about 4000 square feet was implemented on the property adjacent to our home. This was the first time in Ontario (or possibly Canada) that a lumber yard had a modern building materials, hardware, housewares, power tools and paint showroom as a part of it's business venture. It was built during the fall and winter months, permitting the firm to continue to employ its construction personnel, rather than lay them off during a traditionally slow period for the construction business. Key



Office and showroom, 1949.

personnel remained employed and were therefore available for the following construction season.

I was assigned the responsibility of planning the showroom layout. It became my job to acquire the entire hardware, housewares, and paint and power tools inventory. I was also tasked with designing and building all of the display fixtures required to furnish the building materials and hardware showroom facility. I not only had to decide what merchandise we would purchase to have available, I had to deal with the suppliers to order the products we would sell – receiving it and counting every nut, bolt, and piece in the half finished and unheated warehouse in the bitter cold of winter. The new building opened with much fanfare in March 1949, the same month and year that Bell Canada eliminated switchboard operators, implementing instead the dial telephone system in Brantford and Brant County. As a result of this advanced communication technology, we installed a new PBX telephone system to efficiently route calls to extension telephones in our office and showroom. Building this facility proved to be an excellent business decision and sales grew rapidly.

At the same time a home improvement and renovation department was established. It included the design, sale and installation of kitchens, bathrooms and swimming pools, thus expanding our construction business and offering our contractor customers an opportunity to use their work force as sub-contractors to carry out this work.

The next business expansion came in 1950. A facility to manufacture prefabricated wall panels for building homes was established. These building components were sold to contractors, who were building many homes for returning veterans following the Second World War. We also prefabricated cottages and garages for resale to the consumer public and expanded our manufacturing operations to include the fabrication of windows, door units and other wood products. We started to design and manufacture wood pallets, boxes and crates for use by our industrial customers, such as Hussman Refrigerator Ltd. and Keeprite products Ltd., to be used in their manufacturing process and for protection of the products being shipped to their customers.

On October 20, 1951, I married the love of my life, Donna Patricia Birdsell. We had four wonderful children: Heather Anne born May 23, 1952, Pamela Gaye born March 28, 1954, Douglas Gregg born December 16, 1956 and Earl Jeffery born December 9, 1961. Pamela and Jeffery were diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis as small children, and as a result Donna and I founded the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, (now Cystic Fibrosis Canada). Pamela died on Labour Day Weekend in 1980 and Jeff is now 52 years old.

A Unique Warehouse Building Design

Hurricane Hazel hit Southern Ontario and the Brant County area on October 16, 1954. Our firm had received a contract from York Farms Ltd, a division of Canada Packers Ltd. to

construct a large warehouse at the Brantford Airport. It was a unique design, using a plywood box beam structure that was the first to be built in this area.

The roof beams were thick and long and assembled on site. The planks used to form the top and bottom chords had to be joined by using what is called an 18-inch scarf joint. I was assigned the task of locating a machine that could be used to mill the scarf joint, but we were unable to find a machine built specifically for this purpose and had to improvise. I located a very large radial saw, with an arm that would be long enough to allow the saw blade to travel a sufficient distance to make the scarf-cut necessary to join the pieces together. The box beams were then lifted into place and connected to long fir posts. Each 100-foot box beam was cantilevered over a post in the centre, providing a 50-foot clear floor span between each post. They were then joined together on a post in the centre of the building and one at each sidewall.

It was half-built with three sidewalls, one end wall and half of the roof structure almost completed, when Hazel hit. Two 200-foot roof beams with the roof joists were installed but without sheathing applied, and one 100-foot roof beam with only tie joists attached had been installed and left for the weekend. That's when Hurricane Hazel hit the Brant County area, lashing it with hurricane force winds. It roared into the building pushing the 100-foot roof beam over against the next completed 200-foot roof beam, breaking it and forcing the whole structure about 24-inches out of vertical plumb. Fortunately the whole building did not collapse, proving the superior design and construction used in the building process. Three cranes were employed; one at each sidewall and one at the centre of the building, to pull the building structure back to within 4-inches of vertical plumb, and complete the project without further complications.

Land Development

In 1955 our family joined with the Thorpe family to form Thorsum Associates Ltd. and acquired a 100-acre property in Brantford Township, on Highway 24 just north of the lumberyard and just south of the Veterans Land Act Development. The property was quite heavily wooded with poplar, spruce, and pine trees, and a new housing development called Greenbrier opened in the spring of 1956. Our prefabricated housing wall panels were used in building the homes in this development. This venture was so successful that my brother Frank and his partner Bruce Thorpe went on to become major developers of residential subdivisions in the north end of Brantford.

Donna and I built the first house in Greenbrier at 16 Brier Crescent in 1956 and moved in just after New Years Day 1957. It was the second house we owned. It was located on a curve where we could look down the street to where Greenbrier elementary school would eventually be built and we would be able to watch our children walking down the street as they went to and returned home from school. Our children loved to play in a forested area of Greenbrier and to rake the fallen leaves into a large pile each fall to jump and play in before burning them to roast marshmallows in the evening.

One day our daughters came home all excited. They had found a large multi-coloured granite rock along the street on their way home from school and would not be placated until I agreed to go to the lumber yard and bring home the forklift truck to bring the rock home and place it at the end of our driveway. They affectionately referred to it as their wishing rock, and spent much time sitting on it wishing for various fantasies to come true, especially they wished for a cure for Pam after she was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis. I think that our children still think of it as their most favourite of all the homes that we built and in which we lived.

My father died in 1956, in his 66th year. My brother Frank became President and General Manager of Summerhayes Lumber and Construction Ltd. The business grew exponentially for the next six years, as did our bank debt, contrary to our father's words of warning. This would prove to become an immense problem, when the company our father had started and built to be the largest lumber & building supply company in Brant County was forced to close in 1964.

The DEW Line

In 1958 Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker decided to collaborate with the United States in building a Distant Early Warning System (called the DEW Line), consisting of radar installations in the Northwest Territory in the far north of Canada, near the Arctic Circle. It was intended to protect the North American Continent from possible attack by Russian aircraft during the Cold War period. I saw an advertisement placed by the Canadian Department of National Defence [DND] for bid proposals to manufacture prefabricated wooden radar buildings that would be used to house specialized electronic equipment.

I persuaded our firm's management to let me obtain plans and specifications for the prefabricated buildings in order to submit a bid. We were successful in obtaining the contract and it proved to be a sizable undertaking. The buildings were constructed with 8-inch wall panels, 12-inch roof panels and 12-inch floor panels covered on both sides with an inch thick exterior grade fir plywood. The cavity space was completely filled with Fibreglass insulation. The plywood had to be glued to the wood frame and fastened with galvanized steel ardox nails. No steel fasteners, including nails, bolts or steel plate connectors, could penetrate the panels from the outside to the inside, to prevent transferring cold or frost to the inside of the building. All of the panels had to have a special tongue and groove splined connection with special urethane foam strips glued to the edge of each panel to prevent air leakage. The wall, floor and roof panels were fastened together with a special cam-lock device operated by a key from the inside of the building. Starting from one corner of the building, each panel had to be clearly numbered in sequence, with arrows pointing to the next panel for connection in the proper



Doug at the DEW Line building assembly.

sequence. There were no windows and the panel with the single door had to be constructed in the same manner as the walls. On completion each panel had to be placed on a special skid type pallet numbered in the sequence that they would require to be unloaded for erection. Special instructions and drawings had to be attached to each palletized set of panels, in a weatherproof envelope, for each building shipped. It proved to be a successful and profitable venture.

The Impact of Federal Sales Tax Applied to Building Materials

In 1960 the Canadian Government implemented a substantial federal sales tax on lumber and building materials. This meant that sales tax had to be paid on all lumber or wood components used for remanufacture, at the time of purchase. Any lumber and wood components that were used in the manufacture of products for resale would, however, be exempt, if these purchases were made by a firm that was incorporated solely for production of remanufactured goods and specifically for production or distribution of goods used in the manufacture of industrial products, the tax had to be paid at time of purchase and then an application for tax refund submitted for reimbursement. This was a process that could take up to six months after submission, putting a financial strain on both our manufacturing and retail operations.

A decision was made to restore the dormant corporate structure of Summerhayes Lumber (Tillsonburg) Ltd, renamed Summerhayes Industrial & Wood Products Ltd. All lumber, plywood and other components that would be required for manufacturing would not require sales tax because a separate place for storage was maintained on the property. It would become the manufacturing company associated with Summerhayes Lumber & Construction Ltd.

My own Business at Last

My brother left Summerhayes Lumber & Construction Ltd. in 1962 to pursue other business interests and I became President and General Manager of the company.

In 1963 I was named National Building Supply Dealer of the Year for all of Canada by Building Supply Dealer magazine, published by McLean-Hunter Publishing Company. This award was for maintaining and expanding winter employment, which was a time when most lumber, building supply and construction firms laid their employees off for the winter season.



Dealer of the Year, 1963

This award was more significant as it was accomplished during a time when the economic conditions globally and in Canada had flattened or indeed was in a downturn. The Canadian Minister of Labour, the Honourable Allan MacEachen, presented me with the award and a new Ford Econoline pick-up truck.

In 1964 global economic conditions worsened and our bank manager became concerned with the downward trend in sales and profits. The substantial debt inherited when I took over as President & General Manager came back to haunt me. The Bank of Toronto called in our loan forcing the decision to close Summerhayes Lumber and Construction Ltd.

New Ventures

In 1964 a decision was made to concentrate our energy solely on the operations of Summerhayes Industrial & Wood Products Ltd., which had a solid base of contracts providing substantial sales and cash flow. We retained our existing customer base and during 1963 and 1964, very large contracts were obtained from two customers in the United States.

We were contacted by J.W. Greer Company in Wilmington, Massachusetts to produce special laminated insulated panel components for their new Canadian operation. These panels enclosed conveyor lines that cured chocolate products produced by their customers, the Robinson Chocolate Company in Scarborough. The panels consisted of an insulated wooden frame and hard board panels with a vinyl surface glued to the outside.

The very first panels that we produced were shipped out but then I received a telephone call from their Canadian manager. He had a very quick temper and was so angry that I thought the telephone lines were about to melt. He yelled, "What the hell did you do wrong in manufacturing the tunnel panels? They have waves in them like an angry sea."

I agreed to meet at his customer's plant the next day. When my factory superintendent and I arrived, we learned that many of the top executives and some of the sales and



Doug in 1962

engineering personnel from the head office in Wilmington, Massachusetts had been there the day before for the start-up of the production line at Robinson's. Some smart-ass salesman, trying to make himself look important, had said, "Can't you Canadians make anything right? Look at the waves in those panels all the way down the line. We don't have problems like that in the U.S." When we saw them we agreed that something untoward had happened and assured him that the drawings and specifications had been totally followed to the letter. We agreed that we would go back to the plant and make two or three panels to bring to his plant in Toronto, right out of the press the next week. We further assured them that we would do research to determine what caused the distortion and take steps to correct the problem. We returned home and immediately started calling our component suppliers to discuss this problem. We

came to the conclusion that, since the chocolate factories had very high levels of humidity, this moisture was likely being absorbed into the hardboard sheets covering the panels.

The absorption of this moisture caused the hardboard to swell and each sheet to bulge out, causing distortion in the areas not attached to the framing. Further collaboration with the suppliers of the component materials determined that if the hardboard facing panel components were pre-expanded by soaking them in a tank of water for six hours, then removing them to be left covered with a tarpaulin under a heat duct for at least twelve hours, usually overnight, the hardboard panels would expand sufficiently to reduce, if not totally eliminate, the expansion problem when assembled and installed in the high humidity atmosphere of the chocolate producing factory. We then located a product manufactured by National Adhesives Co. in Toronto that would bond the water soaked hardboard panels to the wood frame. This method of manufacturing panels worked so well that we became the sole producer of this component for all of the J.W. Greer factories in North America and the United Kingdom.

Our next venture came about after a game at the Brant Curling Club one evening in 1964. My friend Alex and I were talking about Studebaker Co. moving their entire automobile assembly operations from South Bend, Indiana to concentrate them at their automobile assembly facility in Hamilton, Ontario. He said, "They will need someone to export pack the automobile parts to be shipped to their overseas assembly plants, why don't you try to get that contract."

I replied, "That's a good idea but we do not have the track record and expertise for an undertaking of that scope and size." Then, "Do you think it would be possible for us to obtain a contract of that magnitude?"

More discussion followed and he said, "You will never know if you don't try."

He was an engineer at Cockshutt-White Farm Equipment and had experience supervising their export packing and shipping operations. I quickly determined that he would be a great help in such an undertaking and said to him, "Will you join with me to try to obtain this contract? Then, if we are successful in obtaining it, will you help to set up the operation?"

"Yes!" he replied. "It will be a challenge that I would like to undertake."

I called Studebaker in Hamilton and made an appointment to meet with their Vice-President of Purchasing the next week. When we arrived at his office, there were five other gentlemen present to hear our 'pitch'. We outlined information about our firm and indicated that we would like to present a proposal to them regarding the opportunity to undertake their export-packing program. They listened patiently, and then Mr. Wilson said, "That all sounds interesting, however, we question your ability to take-on and perform a contract of this size without previous experience and are seriously considering to go with Livingston Industries."

I replied, "Have you let the contract yet?"

“No, but we have all but decided to do so.”

“Mr. Wilson, do you have more than one proposal?”

“No! But there is no one else in the business capable of doing it.”

I leaned forward. “Mr. Wilson, my understanding of good purchasing practice is to receive and review proposals from all possible suppliers and then make your decision. We are prepared to give you an alternative proposal and you are telling us that you are not willing to consider it.”

His colleagues looked stunned at my audacity, but I knew that we were not going to get further consideration, so what did we have to lose? He was angry and embarrassed. “What do you need in order to submit a proposal?”

I said, “We would like you to arrange for us to visit the export division of your automobile manufacturing facility in South Bend in order to observe the packing methods in use there. We want to know what their process is and what materials they use to protect all of the metal parts from rusting and the relative cost of such materials.

He agreed with this request. “But you will not obtain the costing for the boxing from us. You are in the box making business and that will be up to you to determine.”

Alex and I were off to South Bend in short order to gain as much knowledge from their packing personnel as possible. One evening we invited the packing plant manager and his plant superintendent to join us for dinner, asking whether they would be interested in moving to Canada to run the packing operation for us if we were successful in obtaining the contract. Before we left to come home they indicated that they would indeed be interested in taking us up on such an offer. We did obtain the contract and that is exactly what happened.

We rented a 58,000 square foot warehouse on the dock from the Hamilton Harbour Commission to carry out this endeavour. It was a short distance from the Studebaker factory, which greatly facilitated obtaining component parts from their suppliers until Studebaker discontinued their overseas assembly operations in 1955 and we closed this operation.

Next, Canadian Westinghouse Ltd. invited our firm to participate in a project they called QI for Quality Improvement of the products they manufactured. This was an exercise where they selected a number of their suppliers to participate in reviewing their production methods for products that had become problematic in performing to the quality level that they desired to establish. Our firm was assigned the task of reviewing the production of a wooden base required to isolate the transformer coils from the steel tank inside of the oil cooled transformers to prevent it from shorting out and exploding. The bases that they had been using were coming apart and failing to provide the level of protective separation that was required. We submitted a proposal utilizing the same glue that we had been using to produce the enclosure panels manufactured for the Greer Co. This proved so effective that when

Westinghouse undertook destructive tests to determine whether the wooden bases would fail, as others had, the glued connections remained strong to the point that only the wood in the components was destroyed. Our product passed with flying colours and became standard for use in their transformer production.

Our customer list continued to grow rapidly until 1972 when a deep global recession began. Our customers either ceased to exist or decided, with some pressure from their unions, that they could utilize their reduced production resources and capacity to better advantage by producing their own packing crates, boxes and pallets. Sales fell and this company subsequently closed.

My career may have started in Tranquility but it was built upon one exciting calamity after another! Eventually, however, It did settle down when I went to work with a number of other firms as an independent Contract Marketing Agent and Project Management Consultant for the balance of my working career. After all, my personal and family life would prove tumultuous enough ... but that's another story.



*Donna and Doug at CCFF-AGM
Ottawa, 2010*

Footprints in Time

I was born June 11, 1930 and grew up on a one hundred acre farm in a rural farming community called Tranquility, in the County of Brant. I worked at my fathers business, Summerhayes Lumber and Construction Ltd, while pursuing a career in marketing and business management. My business career has spanned over fifty years.

I became a founding Director of the Canadian Wood Pallet & Container Association in 1967. I acted as Secretary-Treasurer and the first Executive Manager for three years and was a member of the Board of Directors until 1971. I joined the Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO) in 1994, becoming a Volunteer Business adviser until 2006, completed ten overseas assignments and twelve assignments in aboriginal communities in Canada, as well as serving for six years as an in-house Volunteer Adviser at the Toronto office.

I have been very active in numerous community organizations, including serving six years on the Board of Directors for Enterprise Brant, seven years as a member and charter president for Ichthys Theatre Productions and a two-year term on each of the City of Brantford Economic Development Advisory Committee and the Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Advisory Committee. My wife Donna and I founded the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation (now Cystic Fibrosis Canada) in 1959. I was President until 1962 and a member of the Board of Directors until 1966.

In retirement I am now writing stories about various events and experiences that shaped my life.



Scott's Folly

By Karan Stemmler

You've probably heard of a person having a black cloud hanging over their head. My youngest brother seemed to have a gossamer-grey coloured cloud over his. Mercifully, it has lifted.

My brother's name is James Durham Scott Thomas. When we were kids we would tease him by calling him Germs Dew-worms Snot Thom's Ass, which really angered him. In retrospect I realize we were bullying him but back then we thought of it as simply having a little fun at his expense. My brother Gregory had the middle name Buchannon and we made fun of that too; by calling him "Buchi-boy". Kids, eh?

Scott had a reputation for messing up and once he lost his friend's wee dog on a freezing winter day. Well actually, his nephews had lost this poor thing by following Scott's example, which was to let the dog run loose in a strange city.

My telephone rang one very cold Saturday morning in 1982.

“Mom, we’ve lost that little dog Uncle Scott was watching, and we have been looking all over for it. Will you help us?”

What could I possibly reply but “Of course,” and hugged my sweater close to my body. Inside my house it was cool but outside it was awful.

I dressed myself in so many layers I had some problem moving about, and headed off to my brother’s place. I caught up with the boys near their uncle’s house. They were hollering, “Taffy, Taffy!” and my son informed me that the dog’s name was Taffy. Did he think that I thought they were yelling for candy?

We began our search using all of the help that could be recruited. There were seven of us. We looked in yards, playgrounds, parking lots, and anywhere and everywhere. Darkness fell and we hadn’t found the wayward dog.

Someone telephoned the radio station and the animal shelter, but no dog of Taffy’s description had been found. Scott burrowed his tongue in his cheek, sighed, then said: “Well, tomorrow we’ll get up very early and search until we find Taffy, okay?”



Trevor and Aaron

It would be another freezing cold day if the weather forecasters were correct. We had been having a record breaking cold snap, and that pitiable, tiny dog was out there lost. Dead? Alive? We did not know.

Early Sunday morning was bright and cold. My son and I were up and preparing ourselves for another day of searching when our telephone rang. Scott was on the other end of the line. He told me that Taffy had been spotted about ten blocks from where Trevor and Aaron had lost him. I told my brother that we would be over to his house soon.

We all loaded into two vehicles and headed off toward Mohawk Park. (Scott’s children called this park Hommark Park, many years later.) Taffy had been seen in that general area so we spread out to cover the entire field known as the Glebe property. An actual search party would have been impressed. Everyone was calling the dog’s name. We could hear “Taffy” coming from every direction, and in many voices. We had more recruits come in shifts so that the others could have warm-up time. That small creature had to be freezing, or dead. It was definitely in jeopardy.

“I see Taffy,” we heard someone call. “Taffy! Taffy!”

We all ran in the direction of that voice, and we were bellowing “Taffy” too.

Suddenly, we heard Scott's voice. "You #\$%^ dog!"

Taffy was running away from us! After about a half an hour we finally had the dog back in captivity. We slumped in happiness and exhaustion, and trudged towards our cars to head homeward for warmth and rest.

Tuesday evening I answered my telephone. "Guess what?" Scott asked me. "That damn dog has pneumonia. I hadn't fessed up to his owner about the weekend escapade and now I've got a vet bill to pay. That #\$%^ dog!"

Scott's Folly Re-Visited

My brother Scott continues to be a source of tales to relate. I've told you the Taffy story, so here is another one.

Lynn called me on the telephone and she was laughing so heartily I could hardly understand her. I managed to get her coherent enough to realize that this was another "Scott incident", as she called them. He had been watching a budgie for the same fellow who owned Taffy, the little dog, if you can believe that! Because my brother is an animal lover he does not like to see them in captivity, so he had this free-flying budgie enjoying itself in his apartment. Whether Scott is stupid or careless, I am not yet certain.

Anyway, my son Aaron went to visit his uncle and as was his custom he opened the door and walked in.

The bird flew out, to begin its holiday in the great outdoors.

The telephone call from Lynn was to obtain my help in finding this creature. Her husband, my brother Joe, was the first person Scott had thought of to call on for help. Lynn's job was to find people willing to help with another animal hunt. A budgie bird hunt in Ontario, in the autumn, sounded like too much fun to pass up, so I said I was in.

When I arrived at my brother's house I was told that the bird had been seen once since it flew out the door, and the boys were hot on the trail. By the time I came upon the posse there were five or six people carrying ladders, butterfly and fish nets, and a bird cage. I had to laugh at the spectacle. Scott was chastising himself (again), and others were teasing and laughing. "Only to Scott" became our motto.

Once again we spread out in our search-grid formation hopefully for the last time, and everyone was calling for this lost bird. We heard "Perky", "Birdie", and bird sounding calls being voiced all around the neighbourhood.

We looked for over an hour before there was any sighting of the bird. Scott came hurrying down the block carrying a ladder. Lynn followed behind with a butterfly net. She

motioned that she was catching him up in the net since we all figured that he was goofy by then. The ladder was thrown up against a tree and brother began to ascend. He reached back for the net then scurried up higher into the tree. All of this took place in seconds, but by then the bird had flown away. Foul language filled the air and it wasn't just coming from Scott's mouth. I truly believed that we were going to have a corpse to return to the owner this time.

Someone hollered that Perky was flying toward the next block. We split up our posse, one half going up the street and the other half heading around the block. All of us were determined to get this hunt over with. More ladders were being touted around the neighbourhood. There were also lots of spectators, because let's face it, we were entertaining. Where else could you watch something this silly for free? I wanted to give up but since my son was once again a co-culprit in this fiasco, I persevered.

We scurried down the street like vagabond gypsies. Vehicles were stopping and the occupants enquired as to what we were doing. The darkness came so we were forced to abandon our search. We didn't want to but we could not see to search any longer. My head was thumping by then and I just wanted to go home and hide in my dark bedroom. I thought that the search was moot.

The next morning at the crack of dawn we resumed our hunt. I am not sure of the details now, but in a short time we had the wayward budgie captive in his cage. He must have tired of his taste of freedom.

We all warned Scott not to agree to care for anyone's pet again!

He has had a variety of pets of his own since that time. His dogs were exceptionally well-trained and obedient. Trapper, a gorgeous yellow lab, was an excellent dog around children. Scott has three of these (kids, I mean) and he (the dog, I mean) was very gentle and protective. Trixie was a foundling. My brother taught her to hold a fish in her mouth and release it on command when he took her fishing with his family. She too was a very friendly, obedient animal. Both of these beloved pets have passed on.



Sarah, Devin and Heather

The lesson to my brother is: Care only for your own pets. You have much better success with them.

September 27

My brother Greg was getting married and on the morning of that day my brother Scott decided that he needed the oil changed in his car. (Not to call him a procrastinator, but why then?) He changed the oil himself then hurried off to the car wash to clean the car. Scott returned home and cleaned himself up for the wedding. (Apparently he looked “spiffy” in his new suit and gorgeous cowboy boots.) The order of events that day still baffles me, because then Scott went out to his car and backed it into the garage where he was planning to decorate it for his brother’s wedding. Of course he stepped from his vehicle directly into the pan of dirty oil he had earlier drained from the car.

I can only guess at the variety of cuss words he must have uttered and I’d bet he shed tears when he looked down at his new duds.

Time was running short for him to get to Greg and Diane’s wedding so he had to accept the fact that he was going to have to wear the oil stained outfit. In true Scott fashion, he fixed himself up the best he could, all the while chiding himself.

Back in the car again he started to drive to the Mohawk Chapel. He was thinking about the historical significance of his brother’s wedding being held in the beautiful building that our three-times-great grandfather had helped to build 197 years before. Our family is proud of this fact.

Scott arrived at the Mohawk Chapel late and stinky and related his newest adventure to everyone. We could only gape at him before bursting into laughter.

Scott offered to drive three of our elderly relatives to the reception. During the post wedding procession they were honking the car horn and enjoying the day. Colborne Street West was under construction at the time and Scott had to manoeuvre around raised manhole covers and other obstacles. Suddenly he heard an awful noise. He had hit the underside of the car on something. Out of the car he climbed again. Whatever he had run into had pulled the muffler into the gas tank and fuel was leaking out. Fire trucks were



Family photo at the Mohawk Chapel. In back: Diane and Greg. In front: Uncle Gord, Mom (Helen), Cousin Leone, Uncle Ned, and Uncle Jack

called to hose down the area and by then Scott could have used a hosing too, not just because of the state of his clothing but to cool the stream of cusses that were coming out of his mouth.

Scott with the three elderly relatives in tow had to walk over the Lorne Bridge to the reception hall on King Street. They were now, late, hungry and Scott was a mess. He related his newest disaster to us all, and “Only to Scott!” became our motto as we lamented his luck.

Three More

At Scott’s 50th birthday party I related a couple of incidents from his life for all of the guests to enjoy.



Thomas family, 2001

These are those anecdotes:

Many years ago Scott was hiking in the country when he came across an old, apparently abandoned farmhouse. He went inside and was surprised to see some nice antique furniture which he was admiring ... when he heard a male voice say: “What are you doing in my house?” Scott turned to see an elderly man holding a shot gun aimed at him!

Scott got out of that plight only to land in another some years later.

He was travelling to Nairn Center and along the route he picked up a hitchhiker. This fellow turned out to be a very scary, peculiar character. As the miles passed, Scott’s mind was furiously working at trying to find a way to get this freak out of his car without angering him. Finally a gas station appeared and my brother told this guy that he needed gas, but in reality he

did not. They pulled up to the pumps and Scott convinced this weird hitchhiker to go to the washroom since the next one would be miles away. As this weirdo was walking towards the restrooms, Scott sped away, uttering prayers the whole time.

He later told our family that he was really frightened by this man and he never picked up a hitcher again. Scott did have another occasion to pray though.

An old Volkswagen bug that he owned did not have working doors so Scott hopped in through the window. He felt something that he had never experienced before and doesn't want to ever again. The spring from the rickety seat had snapped and had gone up his butt! He sat there in pain for some time before help arrived, but he was rescued from this strange mess.

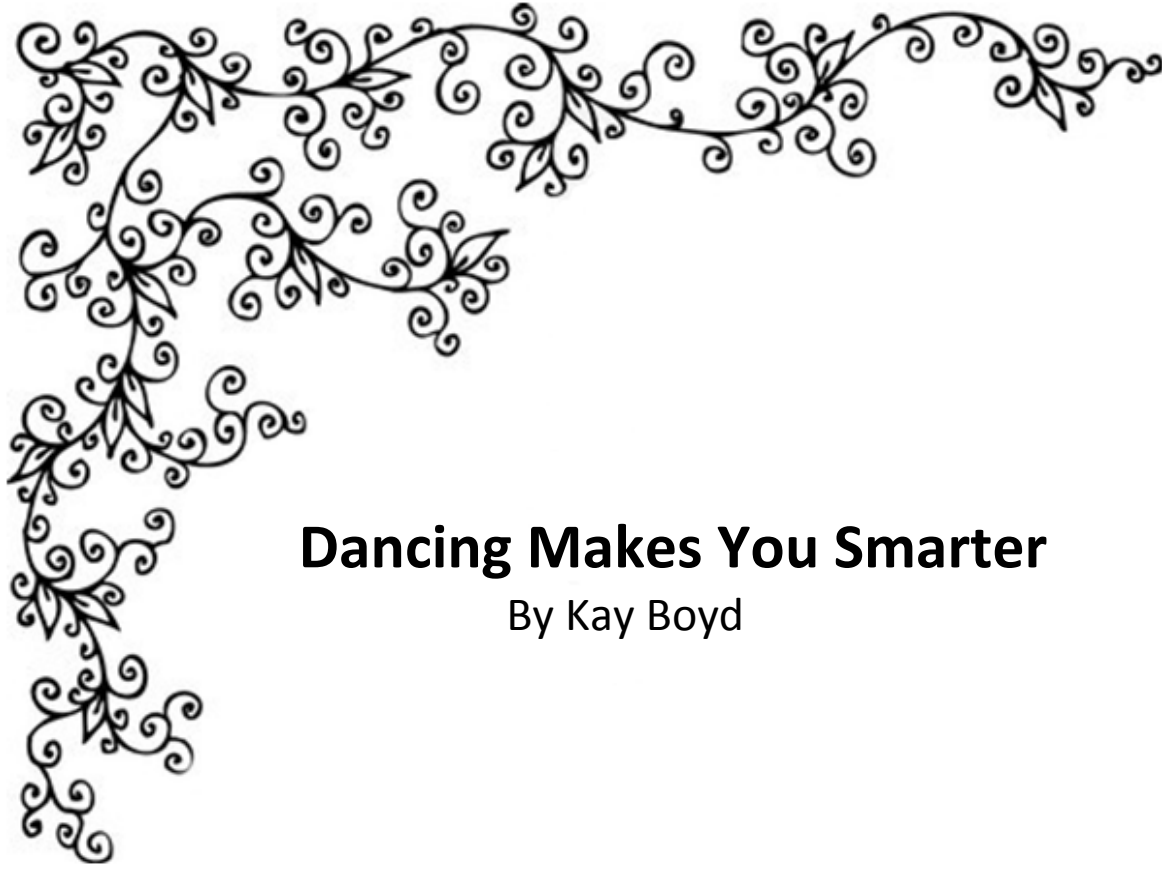
Of course, we continue to retell the story, much to his chagrin. Our mom actually found a comic strip depicting "the spring up the butt" and she hung it on her cork board for all of us to enjoy.

He sure makes life interesting doesn't he?



Karan M. Stemmler (nee Thomas), has always had an interest in writing and her family continually provides her with stories to tell.

The Thomas family now has 14 8th-generation Brantfordians in it.



Dancing Makes You Smarter

By Kay Boyd

My mom and dad were the smartest people in the world, and now I know why. A recent study of senior citizens, reported in the New England Journal of Medicine by Richard Powers, came to the conclusion that frequent dancing apparently makes you smarter!

My parents were social dancers and when I was a young child they would go out dancing and take my sister and I along. My earliest memories are of going to dances at a country hall called The Rockford Casino, on the outskirts of Owen Sound where I was born. Mother would bundle us up for an evening out where she and Dad would dance the night away while my sister and I would fall asleep in the late evening on a pile of coats in the cloak room or simply tucked into a corner and covered with a blanket until the music ended and we all went home. There were usually several other little kids in tow with their parents and we would often play together, running thither and yon around the dance floor. No one seemed to mind – at least, not that I remember, although I'm sure we did annoy some of the dancers. My mom told me

once that, when my sister and I tired, we would ask to go home but Mom would say, “Just one more turn around the floor.”

I tell my friends that I grew up in a dancehall. My mother told me that she used to take us to dances with her and Dad when we were still in a pram. The pram would be settled into a spot somewhere under the watchful eye of our parents and their friends as they danced. Going out for an evening of dancing with the family is a concept of a night out that no longer exists today. Years ago public dance halls were not licensed to sell spirits but I do remember that people took frequent trips to the parking lot where the liquor was stashed in the trunk of a car. In later years, some dance places provided ‘set-ups’: ice buckets and soda pop mixes that eliminated the trip to the parking lot. Still illegal, but not as clandestine as sneaking out to the trunk of a car. The ladies would carry the liquor in their purses to keep it out of sight.

As we grew a little older, we danced with Dad who was smooth and slick on the dance floor. Our dancing wasn’t limited to ‘round dancing’ and we learned how to square dance, waltz, fox trot, quick step, and the Scottish reels and drills. I learned to ‘do-si-do’ and ‘allemande left’ with my dad or mom as partner at a very early age. What fun it was, ‘dipping and diving in the ocean waves’.

Mom and Dad seemed to have unlimited energy and would dance almost every dance until the music ended, the orchestra played their theme song for the final dance, then the National Anthem – and at last, it was time to go home.

We moved from Owen Sound when my Father was appointed Manager at a new feed mill in Barrie. The top floor of the mill was a huge dance hall and had a ‘sprung floor’, a system of building a floor so that it was more resilient. All kinds of people showed up for the weekly social dance on Saturday night. Since it was the war years, many soldiers from nearby Camp Borden attended the dances too. As manager of the mill, my dad was the informal host and spent much of the evening – when he wasn’t dancing with Mother – making sure that every lady was invited for a dance. Mom loved to tell the story about how, on one evening, she had been invited to dance with a gentleman who told Mother that he didn’t care much for the “short and balding man who runs the place”. Mom never told her dance partner that the short, bald man was her husband!

The orchestra was from Toronto. Russ Creighton and his Country Gentlemen, a ten-piece band, often appeared with a regular floor show. My favourite performers were a young couple who tap danced and sang. Sometimes a magician performed exciting tricks to entertain the audience. There was the singer, Sally McNeil, who had her trunk of long fancy evening gowns and the requisite long flowing handkerchiefs. Her husband played in the band. Sally used my father’s office to change into a different long gown each time she sang. She was blonde and beautiful and with her low-pitched voice, sounded and looked much like Doris Day – at least, I thought so.

One of my favourite song and dance routines performed by the young teen tap dancing couple went:

"... Kiss me goodnight, Sergeant Major, tuck me in my little wooden bed. We all love you, Sergeant Major, when we hear you bawling, show a leg ..."

Toni sang, pretending he was drunk, hanging on to the mike stand and appearing to need its support.

After the song he and his partner Clara accompanied the band, breaking into a rhythmic soft shoe tap dance to the delight of everyone. On floor show evenings, Dad would let my sister and I watch from the top shelf of the coat check room that looked out over the dance floor. I think it was then that I formed my desire to learn how to tap dance.

To celebrate family special events, Dad would take the family to the Sunday afternoon dinner dance at the Old Mill in Toronto where we would dance to the tunes of Bert Niosi. The CBC broadcast the music directly from the Mill and so when we weren't there, we would listen to the music on the radio and dance around the house.

When we moved to Brantford the dancing continued. Mohawk Park had a fine old pavilion with a beautiful oak 'sprung floor'. There were no tables and chairs, just benches nestled along the perimeter of the dance floor where people sat waiting to be invited up to dance or walked about hoping to catch someone's eye. The hardwood floor was surrounded by a promenade railing and I often sat perched on the railing and watched everyone on the floor. Mom and Dad operated the concessions at Mohawk Park in the mid-forties and on Saturday evenings, while looking after the snack bar, took time out to dance to the sounds of the big band era. It was at Mohawk Pavilion that I heard such notable bands as Wayne King, the waltz king, and other big bands including the Dorsey Brothers. Since Brantford was home to the army's No. 20 basic training centre, that dance hall too attracted lots of recruits as well as young ladies in town who were anxious to meet a prospective beau. The orchestra usually playing at Mohawk Park was Tim Eaton and his band. That local group played at other dance halls as well. It was the swing era and every big band played the most popular tunes of the day – Sentimental Journey, In the Mood, When You Wish Upon a Star, Stompin' at the Savoy, Tuxedo Junction, and of course, the love songs like I'm Getting Sentimental Over You. Dancers would snuggle up and slow dance to the melodies. I loved to watch my mom and dad so close during those tunes. All seemed right with the world.

It was a time when the Jitterbug was at its peak and some dance halls didn't allow the jitterbug; however, one end of the dance floor at Mohawk was roped off especially for it. That was not one of my dad's favourites, and he never did master that style. His forte was the fox trot and the waltz. I loved to waltz with my dad. I can remember sailing around the floor on my father's arm, dipping and swaying to the wonderful music. In fact, my dad and mom were such fine dancers that they were both sought after as dance partners.

Unlike today, most people went to dances with groups of their friends rather than in couples, and girls danced with the young men who had the courage to approach and ask for a dance. Even my mom and dad danced with other people during an evening, fully cognizant of 'dance etiquette'. If the gentleman asking for a dance was shorter, or younger, or older, my mother always told us that it was quite rude to refuse a dance request. Dad made it clear that any gentleman worth his salt should accompany you back to your seat at the end of a set, which was usually three musical numbers. It was polite to be gracious, even if the gentleman couldn't lead well. My sister and I danced so much that when partnered with a poor leader, we often took over! Not a good idea.

As teenagers we would go in groups to the local halls. There was the Tic Toc Club above the shops on Colborne Street. It was at the Tic Toc that I also experienced tap and ballet dance instruction, and when that hall was burned out, I lost a brand new pair of silver leather tap shoes and my pink silk pointe shoes that I'm sure my parents paid a great deal of money for. I cried when they were lost in the fire.

There was a popular dance hall behind the Capital Theatre (now the Sanderson Centre) on Darling Street and another above the old Dell Automotive Building on Dalhousie Street where the Graham Bell Hotel was built, as well as a fairly small dance hall above the shops on the west side of Queen Street between Dalhousie and Colborne. An enormous ballroom in the old Arcade building which stood at the corner of Queen and Colborne had a mirror ball that turned on the ceiling, casting magical shadows which seemed to sparkle in time to the music.

Farther afield, another popular dance spot was the top floor of the Masonic Hall in Galt. If we were lucky, one of our teen friends would be able to borrow the family car and we would pack it full of friends and head off to Galt (now Cambridge). Unlike my father, I loved to jitterbug, and the Masonic in Galt attracted some of the best male jitterbugs in the area. I can remember dancing with a fellow who was a whiz at jitterbug and when I danced with Bobby, we would clear the floor and finish to rousing applause. In fact, I dressed to jitterbug, being sure to wear dark tights that kept me covered well and maintained my modesty and a huge full skirt that allowed freedom of movement. I remember attending a dance in the Guelph arena where one of the famous big bands played Perdido, and I jitterbugged with the same partner from Galt. Again he was a great leader and again we cleared the floor! The band played a few extra bars and they too applauded when it was over.

We cannot forget the dance hall in Port Dover. The Summer Gardens Pavilion. What a place that was. Port Dover was known as a party town and had earned that reputation honestly. Between the Erie Beach Hotel and the Summer Gardens, it



*The Summer Gardens Pavilion,
Port Dover*

seemed like one long party all the time. Our escapades at Port Dover would make an entire memoir ... if we dared tell those stories!

While I was a college student at Ryerson in Toronto we trooped to places like the Palace Pier and the old Mutual Street arena. If one of our friends had a car, we would often make the trek to Oshawa to dance at the Jubilee – lovingly called “the Jube” by young students.

Sometimes it would be the Balmy Beach Canoe Club at the west end of Queen Street by the



Palais Royale circa 1930s (City of Toronto Archives)

beach. By that time, the Twist was all the rage and fine ballroom dancing had almost disappeared. The Palais Royal in Toronto has undergone several facelifts and is one of the last of the popular dance halls to survive, albeit now used for wedding receptions and other banquets for the most part. I went on my first date with a future husband to hear Bill Haley and His Comets at that grand place, a very long time ago. The hall lasted, but the marriage didn't! He wasn't a very good dancer anyway.

Another famous dance hall, the Brant Inn in Burlington, featured many of the big bands of the time, such as Les Brown and Glen Miller, and was a popular spot for celebrations of one sort or another. My sister did her nurse's training at St. Joseph's in Hamilton and the graduation ball was held at the Brant Inn. I was attending college at the time and so I invited a young man from Toronto to accompany me to the ball. He was a very proper Englishman and showed up looking quite spiffy in a white dinner jacket. The local lads were not as sophisticated and the worst part of the evening was that each time Colin went to the loo, someone would ask him to bring a bucket of ice. I guess he looked like a waiter to most people!

And of course there was the Highlands between Galt and Preston where most of the annual Fireman and Policeman's Balls were held. We danced at a place called Rosslyn Grove and sometimes at the Preston Scout House. Most of those places are now gone. I'm sure that many young men and women met their future spouses at those famous spots. I have a photograph of our group taken at the Fireman's Ball at the Highlands. It's hard to believe that I was ever that young.

In the summertime, it was the outdoor dance halls that kept us entertained. We had many fine evenings as a family at the Sauble Beach pavilion that boasted a terrazzo floor. That place has disappeared as well, having been torn down years ago.



*Sauble Beach Pavilion
marquee, circa 1950*

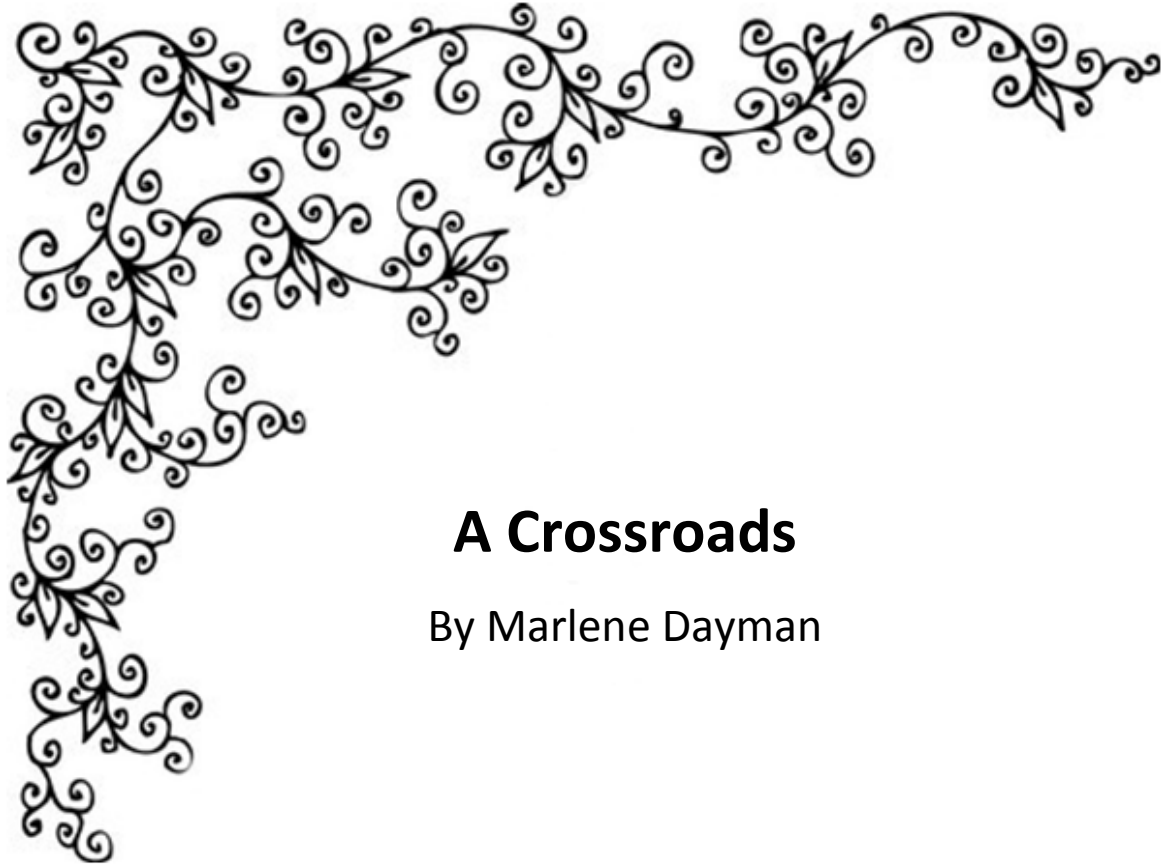
When we weren't dancing in the public halls we were dancing at home. Mom would move the furniture out of the way in our large dining room, put on the record player and my friends and I would dance, with Mother taking the lead. I'm sure she taught most of my young friends how

to dance. Often, my dad would come home from work, grab my mother, and they would take a turn or two around the kitchen to whatever music was playing on the radio.

The 21 year study of seniors concludes that dancing staves off dementia and prolongs life. My mom lived to well past ninety and retained her mental acuity right to the end, and so I believe that dancing does make you smarter and live longer. It worked for my parents! I hope it's working for me.

Dance, anyone?

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.



A Crossroads

By Marlene Dayman

"I have a surprise for you," my Dad announced out of the blue one very ordinary afternoon. "Would you like to go to Pennsylvania?"

Now that doesn't sound so very exciting in this global society in which we currently live. But in 1967, to a 16 year old farm girl to whom a vacation was a Sunday drive with her family through rural Ontario looking at corn fields, this was BIG ... very BIG! My dad explained that Lions Club International had organized a youth exchange between Ontario/Quebec and Pennsylvania youth and the local Lynden Lions Club wanted to sponsor someone. My dad wanted that someone to be me.

"Who, *ME*???" ... Yes, ME!!!

Did I want to go? "Most certainly!!!" I would be honoured.

Little did I know that this was just the first of several opportunities that would surreptitiously find me over the next 18 months to forever change who I knew myself to be!

I was sitting precariously at one of many crossroads in life. Life had been good but very sheltered. My exposure to life beyond the farm and rural community in which I lived was limited. My options for a career direction in the late '60s as a female were limited to: teaching (which in my mind, would mark me as the spinster schoolmarm), secretarial duties (not very exciting), and nursing (which my aversion to blood would make difficult). I had decided at the tender age of nine to curb dreaming of my future since, in my experience, dreaming most often ended in disappointment. I had little control over the events and decisions to be made in my life; so I just let life opportunities find me and left the controls to others. Consequently when I reached this crossroads, I didn't have any big dreams or plans for my future. The usual path of marriage and children seemed a remote possibility. I was really disenchanted with school despite my proficiency in such pursuits. I had no real plans beyond grade 13 until one day life intervened when my guidance teacher called me to her office in March of my final year, to talk me through those limited options. None of them appealed to me. What a shame that today's wide variety of options could not have been presented to me back then! Not showing one iota of her frustration, Miss Kelman patiently guided me in alignment with my enjoyment of young children to finally consider "kindergarten teacher" as a possibility. Thus I applied to Hamilton Teachers' College, aborting my father's lifelong dream of his children being university graduates. In 1967, this was a one year post-secondary programme with no university degree required. That would change the following year but for me no degree was required.

It was the summer between high school's end and the beginning of Teachers' College that this new adventure had found me quite unexpectedly.

As the day approached for my departure, my dad casually mentioned that new travel arrangements had been organized. I would be going alone. Amazingly that didn't frighten me. As life had already taught me was best, I trusted and allowed it all to unfold.

Sometimes being naïve is an asset, even in that era. As a parent now, I doubt I'd let my daughter travel alone by bus with stopovers in Buffalo and Williamsport bus stations on an overnight trip to the semi-unknown destination of Allentown, a city the size of Hamilton. But that is exactly what happened after I boarded a bus in Hamilton with quiet anticipation, late one afternoon.

It was dark. I arrived in the crowded Buffalo bus terminal, suitcase in hand, knowing only that I was to be met by someone wearing a Lions Club vest. When no such person materialized upon my arrival, I nervously found a seat amidst a sea of multi-national faces, so very foreign to my current life experience of Anglo-Saxon farm folk. I felt a message of *Trust!* ... and so I did. Then I heard my name throughout the terminal: "Would Marlene Thompson please come to the counter?"

Imagine a shy young girl from Orkney, Ontario being 'announced' in such a famous metropolis, in a foreign country! It felt surreal to me, offering a feeling of importance that I had not previously known. My trust rewarded, I found a warm, friendly family as pre-arranged, awaiting my presence at the counter, excited to be showing me the sights and sounds of Buffalo. Would I like a soda?

“Now what is a soda?” I asked.

And before I knew it, I found myself seated by a sleeping, elderly man oblivious to my presence, on an overnight bus journey to Williamsport Pennsylvania, home of the Little League (“Baseball, didn’t you know?” No, I didn’t). A ferocious storm closed roads and brought down hydro lines that night as I slept peacefully aboard the bus surrounded by strangers. Because the storm caused our bus to be rerouted, we arrived in the tiny Williamsport bus terminal an hour earlier than planned ... at 5:00 a.m. As I perused the room housing only a counter and some repurposed church pews, I espied a friendly man of colour behind the counter and a drunken, disheveled white man asleep on one of the pews. *TRUST*, that little voice echoed. My book to the rescue, I spent the next hour in trepidation safely ensconced in the unfolding story both on paper and in real life. An hour later, at the prearranged time, a couple (of grandparent status) arrived in the familiar Lions club paraphernalia to enfold me safely into their care and the warmth of their home, treating me to familiar, mouth-watering and comforting smells of a sizzling breakfast before showing me the local attractions.

Finally I was on the last leg of my journey to Allentown. I knew little of my destination, the rural area of Neffs, outside of Allentown, west of Philadelphia and south of the Lehigh Valley Pennsylvania Deutsch area. Once again I knew only to look for the familiar purple and gold Lions vest, my link with home and safety. I was about to meet a family who would hold me close to their hearts while I held theirs close to mine for the rest of my life.

The Hoffman family had arrived in full force to take me home and to a whole new experience of life. I had never been exposed to the physically challenged in my few years nor had I any knowledge of Pennsylvania ‘Deutsch’ (German, “not Dutch”, they insisted). Hence I was simultaneously exposed to a whole new culture as well. And thus I settled into their lifestyle, instantly feeling their love and caring and ‘knowing’ that I belonged there. When they asked me later in the day if I wanted to stay, I was dumbfounded. Little had I known that the plan had been for me to be with a different family and another girl yet- to- arrive, had been planned to be *their* exchange guest. But they too had felt the connection between us and wanted me to stay and thus life conspired to make me their ‘Plan B’. I was delighted!

Father Hoffman (as he henceforth became known to me) had been a young married farmer with three young children just like my father when he contracted Polio. This was at a time in the ‘50s on the cusp of trials of a new (and now widely used) vaccination hoped to prevent this disease which had ravaged the lives of many families of that era, rendering those who survived it, physically challenged in some way, often without use of their legs. (Incidentally, I was later to befriend a woman whose father, during that very same year, had been lucky enough to receive this experimental inoculation and escaped the disease with few repercussions.) But that was not to be the future of this amazing man.

In a wheelchair, now a decade or more later with plans of farming put aside, Father Hoffman had made lemons into lemonade. He was now a highly successful, well respected and active insurance agent in the rural town area of Neffs. His modern ranch style home set atop a hillside amongst familiar cornfields, had been built to accommodate his needs totally. He was

self sufficient in this scenario, seamlessly rolling from his car in the garage, throughout the house onto his beautifully landscaped patio and beyond. His clients came to *him*, introducing themselves at the door via intercom while he let them into his office with the push of a button at this desk. I was fascinated! Remember: this was 1967, not 2013, the age of all things technological. This pitfall in life had made him strong. He had a friendly presence of confidence and good humour. In an instant, he blew away all my preconceptions of the helplessness of physically challenged people!

Mother Hoffman was everything you would picture a Pennsylvania Deutsch mother to be ... warm, friendly, full of laughter and merriment, inclusive. Our first day together was spent at a family wedding. Shirley, Jan and I already felt like sisters and Mother Hoffman was oft heard challenging relatives to guess which two were her daughters. I was invariably one of their choices. I was delighted. Ever after I was referred to by their family as their “adopted daughter”. I felt like I belonged and I was valued on Day 1. On Day 2, I accompanied Father Hoffman and daughter, Shirley to a Lions Club meeting to meet our sponsors and thank them. Again I felt the celebrity status I had never before experienced as well as their friendly warmth. It was obvious that Father Hoffman was well loved and active in their community.

Day Three took me to Neffs Church where yet again I was welcomed and was astonished to be told that my Canadian offering for the plate was worthless as foreign currency. How could that be?! I felt insulted and confused! This was culture shock of a minor sort. Here I once again witnessed a community coming together upon our arrival as many men appeared out of nowhere to carry Father Hoffman in his wheelchair up the 15 steep cement steps to the church entrance. What trust that took on his part daily. To me it looked to be a scary ride! This was trust on a whole different level ... but he had perfected it.

Day Four introduced me to Vietnam and its reality in American life as we gathered with the Hoffman family to bid farewell to a cousin who, at age 18, was leaving for the war, never to return. So many of Jan and Shirley’s friends, newly graduated from high school and filled with



Shirley and Steve Reynolds

dreams for the future, arrived another night for a summer party to welcome me to their community. Discussion soon centred around their plans post high school and deportment to Vietnam to eventually meet the same fate. Little did I know that I would return a few years later for the wedding of Shirley to a Vietnam war vet, Steve, who had lost his legs in a land mine explosion in this devastating war involvement. It was a mystery to me in my life far from war and its ravages, how and why they could not only accept this situation but do so with pride rather than merely with resignation. It still remains a mystery to me to this day.

Over the two weeks of my visit, one by one all of the myths born out of my ignorance and lack of experience with the physically challenged were dismissed. The Hoffman family showed me how time after time. As we travelled to Philadelphia, for a day of American history packed into their 'historic cobblestoned mile' complete with interactive costumed guides, I learned that preconceived limits could be overcome. A day in New York City produced a private wheelchair tour of the United Nations building ... again that celebrity status ... and a day of fun and exploration ending at Radio City Music Hall with the famed Rockettes dancers and a stage performance of Barefoot in the Park. The Hoffman family worked as a unit to seamlessly make all things possible and fun as they took turns riding and /or pushing along behind or in the chair on Father Hoffman's lap, lovingly draped across him despite their teenaged size. Another day took us through the Pocono Mountains and to Dorney Amusement Park for my first (and last) roller coaster experience. I hesitatingly tasted the delicious Pennsylvania Deutsch molasses-based 'shoo-fly pie' and potato-laden 'scrapple' ... *not* the game called "Scrabble", as the long-standing joke between us became when asked if I wanted some. I was immersed in Hex signs (found mostly painted on barns as symbols of love and good fortune) and sayings such as "The hurrier you go, the behinder you get" and did you know that things like hair ("hairs") are referred to in the plural? Thus I repeatedly heard my new sisters commenting, "My hairs are getting messy."



*The Hoffman family, New York City, 1967.
Standing: Terry, Shirley, Jan, Marilyn.
In front: Paul.*

By the time that Shirley and I returned to my home in Orkney, Ontario for her two-week visit with my family, I felt that my spirit had been renewed. A whole new world had opened up to me. My shyness was being overcome, my feelings of "not enough" slowly edged towards "special" or "valued" and I felt very much as though I belonged. Mother Hoffman had sent along a surprise birthday gift for me just a day after I left her ... despite my efforts to keep that date a secret. I found myself looking at life through a very different new filter of possibilities. My spirits soared as they never had before! I was part of a much greater whole as my world expanded.

The following years included regular letters of correspondence between us, family trips between our families and their homes for weddings and vacations as well as the so -exciting Christmas box which would travel for decades between us, even when we all had children. I still treasure some of those very special gifts! We were forever connected, not merely passing by each other momentarily on the journey of life.

When, in the late '80s, I received a heartbreaking letter from a now 50-year-old Mother Hoffman gently informing me that she had ovarian cancer and that it would most likely

end her life, I was absolutely devastated. A few months later, with my husband and three little boys in tow, I made my last visit to bid her goodbye. Her daughters had called me to say that she needed to see me before she would let go. "Could you come?"

"Of course!"

Her medical test results indicated that her organs were shutting down and that there was no possible way for her to still be alive but her strong spirit prevailed and we spent one last weekend together lying side by side in bed, talking sporadically during her conscious moments, just knowing each other's presence when she was not, spirit to spirit. She died as soon as we left for home. What a gift she had given me!

Vacations to visit the Hoffman family have ensued. When Shirley called many decades later, to say that Steve had succumbed to the after effects of Vietnam's dreaded Agent Orange chemical spray, we left immediately to be with them. Despite the suffering which he endured for the rest of his life, he had lived a very rewarding life with Shirley and their three children, as a Scout Leader, camper and active community member to whom family was most important. He too was a lesson in living life to the fullest in spite of physical differences. They were not limitations to him. He was blessed to live amongst a family and community that had learned that lesson well and was extremely supportive of all of his ventures.

Father Hoffman left us just a couple years ago, a result of age and the aftereffects of polio on his body. His spirit was strong til the last year however, always friendly, engaging, organizing card games always concerned about others and very much a beloved head of his now large family. It was a relationship that I cherished and held over many decades.

Now don't misunderstand – I come from a loving, caring family, the oldest of four, with a huge extended family on both sides. Family and church were the core of our life. But my inherent nature of shyness and the busyness of life on the farm put me into the caretaker role much of the time. The childhood loneliness of rural life left me ill equipped for social life. Being two years younger than my school peers made social connection difficult, and getting top marks despite that, marked me as a "brownie" ... I guess now I'd be called a nerd. I wasn't good at sports. Music was not heard in my home on a daily basis so I wasn't hip or current. I couldn't join afterschool groups without personal transportation after bus hours. Thus I formed a personal perception of myself as a loner with some casual friendships, as someone who didn't necessarily fit in.

But all that was now changing as I was exposed to new experiences, people and places. I began to open up as the petals of a rose basking in the warmth of the sunshine burst into full bloom.

That blooming process continued as my life turned on its axis over the next two years. It was further enhanced by a trip with friends to Expo 67 in Montreal and a year at Hamilton Teachers' College where I met my best friend Brenda in gym class the first day and teamed up with Jerry and Pat for the year. The four of us explored the fun side of life, opening my eyes to

enjoying life fully with peers, both male and female. They were just that ... friends ... but paved the way for the end of that year when with more confidence, I met Dick and another chapter in my life began to unfold. He is now my beloved husband and best friend of 42 years, father of our three sons and grandfather to our two very special granddaughters.

Other life events conspired in that time period. A couple in my childhood Church who had observed me teaching children in the church, noted my talents and as current head of the small local school board, Lloyd suggested I apply for a local kindergarten position. This led to an interview where I was offered the job, on condition that I take the summer course in primary education.

Alas, a conflict! After six years of commitment and participation in 4-H clubs, learning how to cook, sew, create, dye fabrics, garden and much more under the guidance of local volunteer people, I had been awarded a special honour. 4-H International had chosen me as



Marlene meeting Royal Bank of Canada officials, sponsors of the 4-H Interprovincial Exchange programme. Dundas Star, 1968

youth and be part of that dialogue. But I certainly would take the Primary Education course the following summer. That little voice reverberated in my heart once again: *TRUST that all things will come together for the best.*

Thus it came to be. I traveled to Winnipeg and on to Clearwater, Manitoba to once again be immersed in the lives of another family ... to be celebrated by their community and their extended family, to see new places and learn new viewpoints on life. In addition, my lifetime passion for travel had been kickstarted. The Olsons eventually packed up their family to visit mine in Ontario and sometime later my parents visited them on their way West. More recently, my husband and I dropped by on our way to the West Coast and were greeted with such warmth and obvious affection even after all this time. Letters and cards continue to pass

one of nine representatives of all Ontario to meet in Toronto as guests of the Royal Bank of Canada. We would then travel one to each province of Canada to spend four days with a youth group of representatives from each of the other provinces. There we would explore our particular capital city destination and in return, share with them our experiences of life in our own home provinces. Finally we were to live for two weeks with a host family. What an amazing opportunity! I did not apply for it, nor did I know of it ... life just sent this gift as it had the trip to Pennsylvania. All I had to do was to be open to the possibilities! Consequently, with newfound confidence and trust, I recklessly suggested during my employment interview, that I could not pass up this life enhancing opportunity to connect with other Canadian

between us to this day. Once again I felt valued and my social skills, communication skills and public speaking skills began to develop to better prepare me for my future.

That kindergarten job in Greenville? It began a fulfilling 25-year teaching career with the Wentworth and later the Grand Erie District School Boards from which I have recently retired. Armed with more confidence, more life experience, and a special 'joie de vivre', I poured my heart and soul into making a difference in hundreds of young lives. That shy, quiet, insecure young girl had found hidden skills and became known by her students as the "dancing teacher", the "funny one" and my most prized student comment, "You made my heart smile!" These hundreds of children under my care through the years have certainly impacted my life, enriching it in more ways than they can possibly know.

There is no doubt in my mind that there are powerful forces in my life. I need only to open my heart and soul to them. There have been many times in my life when I have felt these energies at work. But when I reflect back on my life, I know for sure that this particular two-year time period was very pivotal to the direction that my life took.

While I held onto feelings of insecurity and unworthiness, I was not able to flourish. Then one day, a door opened for me and I found the courage to walk through it to explore what my future had to offer. I opened my soul to its possibilities and so many messengers appeared in my life in a timely manner to guide me forward, to keep me safe, to love me and teach me, to empower me while the blooming of my spirit began anew. All I had to do was to TRUST and ALLOW it all to happen, to listen, to learn and most importantly, to be grateful to all for all that had been given to me.

At that moment in time in the summer of 1967, when my Dad offered his gift of adventure, I doubt that he knew what impact it would have on me. But I firmly believe that he instinctively knew on that soul level of parental love, that it was what I needed to move forward in life. Thank you Dad for listening to those inner voices and acting on them ... and thank you Mom for agreeing to all the added work and reward that would come with it. I am forever deeply grateful!

Thus I have reached yet another crossroads in life as I enter the third act of my life, as I explore its new possibilities, discover more, as yet hidden, talents and gifts and most of all trust and allow those possibilities to show up in my life. And when life comes knocking once again, it will be up to me to boldly walk through those doors in search of new adventures.



*The Olson Family
Clearwater, Manitoba, 1968
In back: Brenda, Adrey,
Norval, and Lorna.
In front: Dale, Marlene*



Marlene Dayman was born into the Thompson clan of Orkney, Ontario where she lived 20 years on the century family farm. After teaching 7 years at Greensville School, she and her husband, Richard Dayman bought “the old Mitchell house” on 2 acres of land on a treed ravine in Paris, Ontario. For 30 years, they lived and raised their three sons Jamie, Nathan & Stephen in this greenspace overlooking the picturesque town and taught in many schools in the Brantford area, ending her career at Lansdowne School. She lives today with her husband of 42 years, in the house they had built on a piece of this same Paris land. In her retirement, she enjoys the role of grandmother to two beautiful and talented granddaughters, Kyla & Mackenzie. Besides family, friends and home, her passion is travel and exploring new passions. Although her mother, Lorene, has passed, her 87-year old father, Don Thompson, still enjoys playing cards and dancing with his companion, Pat. He has moved off the family farm, where his sons both live, and now lives in Waterdown.



Transplanted in Canada

By Mary Huurman

We three Albers kids were well aware that Christmas, 1952 would be different from Christmases past. Since the day we left the small Dutch village of Abcoude for a new life four thousand miles away from family and friends, everything had changed. As a nine-year old, I was okay with most of the changes; what mattered most was that we were together: Mom and Dad, my 11-year old brother, William, and 7-year-old sister, Gezina, and I.

Preparations for The Big Change began in 1951: applications, months of weekly English lessons, vaccinations, and physicals. Gezina and William underwent tonsillectomies in early February, 1952. We children knew that we would be moving to Canada but not when, because keeping the date secret was my parents' way of protecting their privacy in a village where everyone minded everyone else's business. Our questions received vague answers. Then, unexpectedly, on Thursday, February 21st, Dad came to our school at 11:00 a.m. to take us home. Nothing was the same after that because it turned out that this was the day. Decades later, my school chum described the



*Mary, Gezina, and
William.*

sudden loss of her friend this way, “You were at school in the morning and then you just disappeared!”

I remember the tearful parting from our beloved maternal grandparents and other family members at Schiphol Airport that afternoon. Changes that have made the world so small could not be foreseen. In 1952, emigration meant kissing family and homeland away for good. Was it a harbinger of things to come? Mechanical problems delayed the departure of the Super Constellation that was to fly us to the New World. While repairs were made, KLM treated us passengers to a final meal on Dutch soil. The national anthem was sung, and then we were led outside to begin the 14-hour flight across the Atlantic.

Most of the tears had dried when families posed at The Flying Dutchman’s stairs for a formal picture, capturing forever the moment at the fork in life’s road. Fresh tears rolled as we waved a last goodbye before we boarded to any loved ones who might still be waiting for the take-off. At 6:00 p.m. the propeller aircraft carrying some excited, some nervous first-time fliers soared up and away into the darkening sky. Apprehensive but hopeful emigrants were finally on their way to Canada, where the future was sure to be brighter than in post-war Holland.



February 21, 1952

Bert & Gerry Albers and Family



At 7:15 p.m. after a stopover in Shannon, Ireland, the flight continued west through the endless night to Dorval Airport, landing in the wee hours of the morning in cold, snowy Montreal. We were fortunate to be able to forego a fuel stop in Gander, shortening the flight to ten hours. Unfortunately, this meant a long wait for the 0900 train to Ontario. I recall the forlorn feeling of looking around the huge hall of the train station, estranged by public announcements and the French and English signs I could not understand. Hope and confidence surged in my heart at the sight of a familiar red-and-white sign, one that I could read and understand. It read, “Drink Coca Cola!”

So this is Canada! The morning train steamed westward to our destination, Windsor, Ontario. Before long, the vista of the vast deserted snowy landscape and shoddy houses blackened by soot along the track began to dampen the high expectations of the Promised Land. In spite of an almost sleepless night, sleep continued to elude us on the rolling train. To pass the time, Gezina and I amused ourselves with cone-shaped paper cups at the fountain near the back of the railroad car. The cool water soothed

her healing throat.

The train stopped frequently to discharge emigrants and take on passengers en route to Toronto. Our travel did not end there. Around nine that night, in Stratford, officials boarded the train, called out our surname and instructed us to disembark. Apparently the job awaiting Dad in Windsor had evaporated but a farmhand was needed in St. Paul's, just outside Stratford. A Dutch-speaking immigration "field man," Mr. Boertien, was at the station to take us to his farm home outside of town. By the time our family arrived there, we'd been on the road, in the air, and on the rails for more than thirty hours. After meeting Mrs. Boertien and her children, Mom, Dad and Gezina and our two large trunks were driven to our new abode in St. Paul's. My big brother and I slept soundly sharing bedrooms with two Boertinen children. Saturday morning our family was reunited in St. Paul's. Dad started his job on a dairy farm just down the road the same day, and adjustment to our new country began in earnest.

It was indeed a new world. Gone was our home in the heart of our medieval village, our school that our father had also attended, the safe refuge at my dear Grandma's house. Gone were familiar streets, the bridges, the river, the lake where Grandpa fished and we swam, Dad's family's farm. Except for one doll, gone were the few toys we girls owned. Gone were friends and favourite cousins. Most of our parents' twenty-two siblings were married with children. Contact with them would be by surface mail from now on. We were without our furniture, household goods and our summer wardrobes. All these were to arrive later by ship.

Just outside the hamlet of St. Paul's, our first Canadian home was a stucco house with double-hung storm windows, something unknown in the temperate climate of Holland. The small farm was owned by a 29-year-old bachelor who looked more like forty. Our Dad was 33 and Mom 31. Mr. Watson was our boarder and we his tenants. In the kitchen, wooden chairs with wobbly legs surrounded an old table beside a huge wood stove, the only source of heat for the two-storey house. The drawer front in the old walnut buffet came off in your hand when you opened the drawer, which, among other things, contained a box with a diamond engagement ring. Mr. Watson had recently been jilted but proudly showed it off to Mom, who wore a plain gold band on her right ring finger.



*Dad, in his coveralls,
ready to ride to his first
Canadian job on a
borrowed bike.*

Compared to the tap with cold running water we had back home, the small pump at the kitchen sink was a real relic! What seemed even more backward to us "urbanites," was having "the facilities" outdoors! What a shock! Beside the house, amid a snowdrift, stood a little wooden shack. A plank door with no lock on either side concealed the primitive two-seater "toilet." Such "bathrooms" were not uncommon in rural Canada then. If the door was shut, it meant a seat was occupied. One day, urgently needing to go, I waited and waited for the landlord to emerge from behind the closed door. When I couldn't possibly wait another second, I cautiously ventured forward and slowly pried

the door open. To my great relief, the W.C. was vacant! The wind had blown the door shut and my agonizing wait had been for nothing!

Living 500 feet from the nearest neighbour was a huge contrast to living in a row of village homes. On Day 2, Mom was already feeling isolated. Talking very little, we youngsters enjoyed playing in the snow with two neighbour children that Saturday afternoon. The three of us were excited to be allowed in the Watson barn where there were cats, bantam chickens, two horses, a few cows and pigs. It was wonderful fun to be around animals! Dad, a farmer's son and a farmer at heart, judged the animals to be undernourished. He loved working with cows and was an avid horseman. He aimed to have a dairy farm of his own in a few years.

Mr. Watson had a day job and he often arrived home late for dinner. Despite the language barrier, my parents discerned quickly that he was "a difficult individual". He indicated he wanted pies and cakes with supper, but to his dismay, Mom did not bake. In Holland, ovens were found only in bakeries, not in kitchens.

With no experience of such things in our family, we kids did not clue in to the fact that the landlord sometimes came home under the influence. Back in Abcoude behind living room curtains, villagers smirked in amusement at the sight of a middle-aged drunk weaving down the unpaved path along the river as his wife herded him home for supper. We'd never seen a mean drunk. One day, as we waited for Dad to come home from the evening milking, my siblings and I were playing in the barn when Mr. Watson lumbered through the door, presumably to do his chores. Instead, to our horror, he grabbed a set of reins and began to whip his two stabled horses into a frenzy. We innocents did not associate this Canadian's behaviour with alcohol. Clearly, what we saw was the exact opposite of our Dad's kind and caring way with livestock. We knew what to do. We ducked low, ran past the stalls and out of the barn to tell Mom. Witnessing his abuse of the animals made us wary of Mr. Watson.

At 8:15 each morning, to our delight, we travelled to school by school bus. A not-so-fun change was the three-mile walk home – no bus ride after school --in the bitter cold of southwestern Ontario. Our new black rubber boots had taken a big chunk out of the \$75 Dad brought into the country, but they did nothing to warm our feet. Each day, William carried milk in a St. Williams jam tin for us three to drink with our sandwiches. We thought it strange that Canadian kids had brownies or cookies in their lunch; where we came from, treats were served only with tea or coffee.

School also was very different. Young Miss Mary Brown taught all grades at the one-room school on the highway between Stratford and St. Paul's. The older boys helped her start the woodstove each morning. We were amazed to see teeter-totters and swings in the school yard! Miss Brown challenged us to memorize a vocabulary list to supplement what we had learned back in Holland. William was in Grade 5, Gezina in Grade 1. We had never been taught to print and used only cursive writing, but in arithmetic we were ahead of our classmates. Back home, as a Grade 3 pupil, I had already mastered multiplication tables up to 10x19.

On Sundays, instead of us kids walking to the village church with a young aunt, our

whole family now rode to services in Stratford with the field man's family, glad for the opportunity to speak our native language with other immigrants. We learned new words every day, but it was a huge challenge to understand and be understood by Canadians. Mom sent us to the local general store to buy chewing tobacco for father. She carefully modelled the pronunciation for us: "ta-buck-oh." Thankfully, we had memorized expressions we learned from our previous lessons, such as, "Ecks fromm de henns," and "How late is it?"

One cold March evening, in the barn that was steamy with the warmth of the animals, Gezina and I mischievously chased screeching banty chickens around the stalls. The commotion was compounded by the cries of hungry horses and cows, and it muted the sounds of the landlord bursting through the barn door. Feeling a little guilty and already wary of this scruffy man, we sensed it was time to make tracks. As he set about feeding the animals and scooped a pail into a barrel of grain for the horses, I hurried by him ahead of my little sister. When she darted by him, he tried to block her path and began shouting at us. Feeling threatened, we had enough sense to get away from him as quickly as possible.

We ran straight to the house and told our mother what happened. Not betraying her feelings, Mom merely instructed us, "From now on, don't go to the barn anymore."

I did not give the incident any further thought but, two nights later, Mom roused Gezina and me from our beds. "Wake up! I want you to come downstairs for a few minutes." In our pyjamas, we followed her sleepily down the stairs to the kitchen, totally unaware of what was transpiring there. We were surprised to see the immigration field man, another man we did not know, Dad's employer, and Mr. Watson.

"Tell them what happened in the barn," Dad said to me. He was always a patient, congenial man but the dark eyes and wrinkled brow indicated he was very upset. Dad's darting angry glances at Mr. Watson made it clear that he was the object of Dad's wrath. The adults listened attentively as first I, then Gezina, timidly related in Dutch what Mr. Watson had said and done.

"You can go back to bed now." Mom removed us from the scene without further ado and calmly escorted us back upstairs.

New immigrants were required to stay one year at their first job, but Dad apparently had sufficient grounds to break that agreement. Again we were surprised the next weekend to see Mom's aunt from Waterdown come for us in a small car driven by a friend. Mr. Watson hurriedly checked the drawer for the engagement ring. Spurning this unsavoury character's boorish suspicions, Dad wasted no time loading the suitcases into the car trunk, and off we were to our new temporary home 80 miles away. I believe our move avoided legal consequences for Mr. Watson, and he was lucky that our Dad, our loving, protective father, did not give him a dose of fatherly justice.

Throughout April, our family of five lived with Mom's aunt and uncle and four children in a small frame bunkhouse "suited" for immigrant farm workers. Disillusionment with

emigration was building. After a week without income, Mom and Dad both found work pruning roses at a nursery a few miles away, which meant a long walk there and back, or hitchhiking a ride.

For us children, Flamboro Centre School was a whole new experience! We walked to and from school with two teenage second cousins who would really rather play hooky. Sometimes the boys stopped to climb into hydro towers, making us late and candidates for a detention. They scared us with stories of dead snakes on the roads in summer, conjuring up images of dangerous cobras and pythons. Even scarier for me was Mrs. Dykman, my Grade 3 teacher, who strapped children that made more than three mistakes on the weekly spelling test. Imagine the fear she invoked in a child learning English as a second language! I got by with two mistakes but I was greatly relieved when, after three dreaded spelling tests, we moved again. As of May 1st Dad was hired to run a one-hundred-acre family farm near Freelon for the grand sum of \$100 per month and free rent.

Settling into a rural life, learning a new language, and adjusting to a new culture was challenging. Grocery shopping in Freelon involved either a 30-minute walk or a bumpy ride on a horse-drawn farm wagon. Fifteen miles from "town" without an "auto", we appreciated rides to church in Hamilton with new Dutch friends. Our parents had not been regular churchgoers in Holland but now the Sunday afternoon service offered a welcome break from the loneliness of country life. "Church" was a newly established Reformed Church in America congregation of immigrants. The kind minister sometimes came from the City to pick us up in his station wagon. Other times, we five crowded into the back seat of a 1939 Ford owned by a local young couple. Starting the motor took a few turns of the crank. One Sunday afternoon, with us all aboard, the car stopped dead in the bend at Dundurn Castle when the driver's knee accidentally pushed in the choke! After a few turns of the crank, we were on our way home again.

We finished 1951-52 and the rest of our elementary school years at Strabane School, a two-room, later a three-room rural school. We walked, sometimes rode, the 2.5 miles with other kids from our neighbourhood. Often we enjoyed taking shortcuts through the beautiful woods to reach our homes. At school, we learned to play baseball and Anty-Anty Over.

At school as well as in the community, detractors mocked us and our broken English. One man openly labelled us "D.P.ers." ("Displaced person" was a term applied to Europeans left homeless after World War II.) The worst name-caller was a Grade 5 boy who had already failed several grades. Our parents urged us to just ignore him. At the end of June the three "Dutch kids" handily passed into the next grade.

Life on the farm was fun! Cats and kittens, a collie dog, cows and calves, horses, pigs and piglets, flower and vegetable gardens, a large yard to play in, frames of old horse-drawn buggies to ride, a haymow to jump in, and woods to explore, friends and neighbours ... what more could a child want? Over the summer our language skills improved greatly through play with our new friends, three boys who lived on the farm west of "ours." We almost wore a path through the fields to their place. Their middle-aged parents were potato farmers from New Brunswick. The twins were nine and the third boy was six. They had a frisky bay pony named

Ginger. Donnie was my special buddy; Harry and my brother William, a horse lover, became



William on and our friends, the twins Harry and Donnie, in front of Ginger. Village boy, Larry, holding bridle of my favourite horse, Pat.

fast friends. After household chores, we were permitted to play at the neighbours', free to explore the woods with them or to swim in the spring-fed quarry pond that abutted our two farms. We shared the water with turtles, catfish and water snakes. (The polio scare of the mid-50's ended our favourite summer pastime.) The neighbour boys had regular barn and house chores. They were allowed to raise some animals of their own, sell them, and bank the profits. Donnie had a coop of chickens and a rooster and sold eggs; his twin owned a calf.

To supplement the family income, Mom cleaned house weekly for a lady in Freelon for \$3.00. That summer, we kids picked potatoes at the farm next door for 10 cents a barrel and earned enough to buy a pretty cookie tin for 75 cents for our parents' special wedding anniversary. On August 31, 1952 they were half-way to their silver anniversary, an occasion for celebration in Holland. Cards of congratulations arrived in the mail, and we decorated the living room with brightly coloured party streamers in honour of our parents. Thankfully, the wooden crate containing our furniture and the streamers had finally arrived from Montreal, where it had stayed on the docks for five months pending payment of duty. Our parents could not afford to bail out their belongings so we managed until August without our summer clothes and household goods when a kind brother-in-law in Holland advanced a loan. By then we kids had outgrown most of the summer clothing.

Many immigrants remained people with an address in the New World and roots in the Old that still tugged at them. Loneliness and homesickness were epidemic among those who, like my parents, struggled to get on their feet under the Canadian sun. Daily mail was a lifeline that anchored us to relatives back home. The importance of weekly contact at church with others who had come to Canada from Holland cannot be underestimated. The class and geographical distinctions that separated people in Holland fell away in the mutual need for fellowship. New arrivals like our parents benefited from the advice and experience of emigrants who were now settled and prospering. Gone was their faith in the myth they heard back home, that Canada was a land where farms lay ready for the taking because Canadian sons were leaving the family farm in droves. It was crystal clear that nothing was going to be handed to the immigrants ... no financial aid, no settlement service, no health care, no welfare.

For our parents, the first year was not going exactly as expected. The debt from the shipping costs of their household goods weighed on them, as well as something that we kids didn't discover until February 4, 1953. A baby was expected in February. Medical bills loomed large. The delivery would cost \$60—more than two weeks' pay. This was an unplanned pregnancy but baby would be a welcome addition to the family.

As well, our father, a man known for his physical strength, was in pain from hernias. He farmed with horse-drawn farm implements because, to save money, the boss forbade regular use of the Cockshutt tractor. Dad's surgery had to be postponed for six months until the waiting period on their private health insurance was over.

Our parents' philosophy was that children should not be troubled by the worries of adults so they never let on how dire their plight really was. Clothing was in short supply but there was always enough to eat. Dad was an expert gardener. Mom provided very basic meals. They could not afford to buy larger shoes for me, so, to my utter embarrassment, I returned to school in September wearing the brown oxfords William had outgrown. Our European clothing and Dutch accent already set us apart at school. Having to wear boys' shoes was humiliating. Out of sight of my parents, I did all I could to wear out the soles and scuff the toes.



William, Gezina, Mom and Mary on Freelton-area farm in their Sunday best. William is wearing the oxford shoes that would become Mary's, and his fashionable "Plus4" pants.

Dad scolded me for being so hard on my shoes. "Pick up your feet! Undo those laces!" Being a jack of all trades, he meticulously replaced worn soles. "Be grateful you have shoes! Never mind what others think!" I had no choice but to endure the ridicule and looks of kids who were better off.

Nine months passed and we were adapting. We'd all made new friends, our English improved, and we were fitting into our new life. The school principal told our parents that their girls would be promoted again at Christmas since they could do more challenging work.

December arrived. In Holland, that meant St. Nicholas celebrations with family and gifts. Christmas there was a religious holiday without gifts. Mom and Dad told us we would no longer celebrate St. Nicholas, and for this year, there'd be no Christmas gifts because they needed all their money for coal to heat the house – \$1.00 a day out of the \$100 monthly wage. My siblings and I matter-of-factly accepted that our "rich" friends would find gifts under their tree, not us. In later years, Mom told us of their agony of soul as parents thinking about our disappointment.

Daily rehearsals prepared the students for The Christmas Concert that would be staged in the basement of Strabane United Church located beside the school. Grades 1 to 8 would perform carols, scripture readings, solos, duets, and a school play. Each student was to provide a wrapped item marked "boy" or "girl" valued at up to \$1.00 for a gift exchange. We hesitated to ask Mother for money to go to the Red & White Store in Freelton, but somehow it all worked out. Everyone dressed in their Sunday best the night of The Concert, and it was an exciting, novel experience to be part of this warm community Christmas celebration.

Canadian traditions of Christmas revolve around Santa's gifts and turkey dinner. For us, Christmases past had meant church, a nice dinner with meat (not a daily expectation), treats

of cookies and chocolates, hot cocoa, and a magic time around the decorated candle-lit tree, with Mom reading us a children's Christmas story. The idea of a turkey dinner was intriguing, but what Mom might serve us was not a concern for us.

The day before Christmas, our three boy friends dropped in with a Christmas gift for each of us. Donnie brought a most unusual present for me. My ten-year-old friend had sacrificed his rooster for our Christmas dinner. He gave it gladly, without fanfare, plucked and ready for the oven. This kind boy's generous gift has never been forgotten by the Albers family!

On Christmas Eve, William, Gezina and I stood wide-eyed and speechless when our parents surprised us with an unexpected blessing. They had bought us a gift after all! Mother had secretly taken the Canada Coach bus to Zellers in downtown Hamilton while we were at school. To say we were thrilled to receive a zippered wallet of our very own, just like the kids at school and at church, would be an understatement. My sister's and mine were the same, red with tiny white polka dots, and Bill's was a brown leather western type. We could not have been happier, or prouder!

To our delight, Dad's boss also surprised us with a gift Christmas morning: home-canned strawberries and a crokinole board! Mom and Dad quickly tired of our arguments about whether a stone was on or off the line, and Dad even threatened to chop the game board into firewood!

On New Year's Eve 1952, our pastor preached on Colossians 3:15, Be ye thankful. Years later, Mom recounted that, at the time, she and Dad felt they could not go on. 1952 had been a very difficult year. They struggled financially, physically and emotionally. Mom was determined to persevere and was doing her best to prevent her homesick, discouraged husband from accepting a brother's offer to pay for our return to Holland. That night, the minister's message burned in their hearts as they reflected on the year ending. Once they had tucked the children into bed, they talked and cried together, and came to the conclusion that all their needs had been supplied, that they indeed had reason to be grateful. They agreed to trust God for the future. A baby layette and bed arrived from Holland before our baby Peter entered the world on February 4, 1953.

The first year in our new country was over. Financial struggles eased somewhat when Mom was able to take on more cleaning jobs. William and I took turns staying home from school to babysit in the house while Dad worked the farm. A day at a time, hurdles were overcome. Though things got worse before they got better, his little son seemed to renew Dad's determination to get on with making a better life in Canada a reality. "We shall overcome" became our parents' motto. In 1955, Dad resorted to the security of factory work. He never did buy a dairy farm of his own.

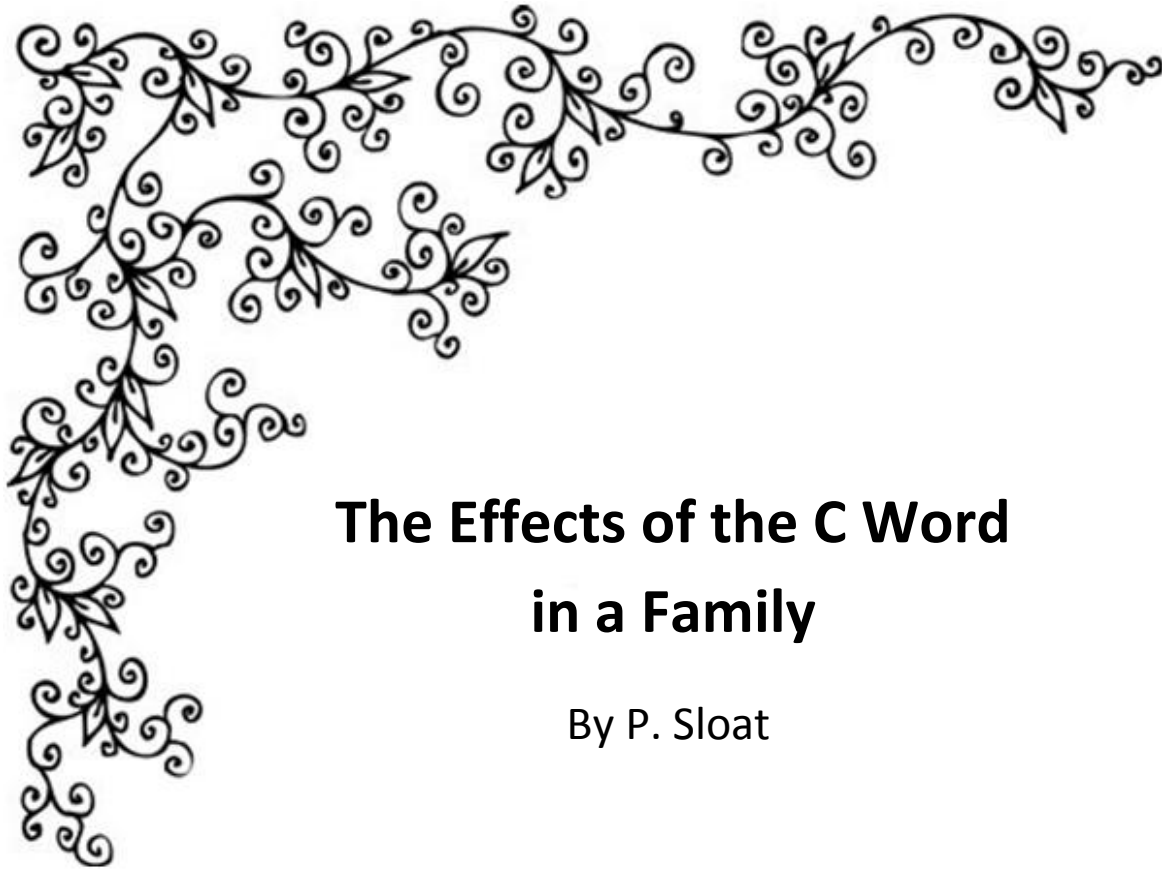
The War did not displace and immigration did not misplace our family. Children had no say about emigration and we missed our grandparents, our family and friends. For awhile we struggled with the language and a different culture. When seedlings are transplanted, the soil that clings to their roots helps them acclimate to new growing conditions. The Dutch clay on

our roots helped us young transplants thrive in Canada, though for years it felt like we were part of two different worlds.

Oh Canada! You did not exactly turn out to be The Promised Land! Like thousands of postwar immigrants, our parents overcame many obstacles and challenges. They won the battle with homesickness and discouragement. It took time, hard work and true grit, the support of new friends, and a new-found faith in God to put down roots deep in Canadian soil but the Albers Family became happy, proud citizens of their chosen country.



The middle of three children of immigrant parents, Mary Huurman-Albers lives in Brantford with her husband, Harry. Two children, their spouses, and four granddaughters complete their family. Sixty-one years after leaving Holland, Mary vividly recalls details of her family's move across the Atlantic to pursue economic opportunities that were lacking in postwar Holland. Faced with poverty, sickness and homesickness, the hoped-for opportunities eluded Bert and Gerry Albers for a few years, but eventually their hard work, faith and perseverance was rewarded. Their young neighbour's sacrificial act of kindness at Christmas 1952 has been recounted time and again to the children and grandchildren of the Albers family.



By P. Sloat

It was like yesterday that it happened. But it wasn't yesterday. It was ten long years ago, in May 2003.

On a busy work day, I dropped by the house to pick Keith (my husband), up for work. We worked together in a nursing foot care business which I had worked hard to build so that he would be able to join me in the business after his retirement from the hospital position he held as the Associate Director of Nursing.

My husband and I had been estranged after 40 years of marriage but remained very close friends, and we had raised children together. He had just turned 63 in April of that year. That particular day, I found him sitting in the almost worn out reddish brown lazyboy chair which he loved. It was in the family room of the split level house we co-owned, but we did live apart. My house was a very nice place overlooking the river. There was no answer at the door, so I opened the front door to



Keith, circa 1960

find him in that comfy chair. Looking at him, I suddenly realized how pale he was, and suddenly saw that his jeans no longer fit him. Way too big. "What's wrong?" I asked, concerned.

He was the kind of man who took care of himself. Ate well, etcetera. A tall man, with greying hair and a grey beard he took much pride in manicuring and custom cutting. I had heard other women refer to him as sexy. But today he had laid his long thin body back in the chair and said, "I think I've had it."

"What do you mean?" I replied, shock in my voice. My hands and body quivered as I drew quick imagined scenarios in my mind. I knew what that meant. I looked deeply into his blue/grey eyes. OH NO!!! The signs of death right there before my own eyes. I had seen these signs before, as a Registered Nurse. "Have you had anything to eat?" I asked.

"No, can't seem to eat."

"Would you eat something if I made it for you?" I asked.

In a quick reply he said, "Yes."

"What do you fancy?"

"Eggs and toast."

Good choice, I thought, as my mind reviewed the things I thought would be good for him. I leapt up the three steps to the kitchen and began pulling out pans from the drawers and eggs from the fridge, and soon everything was sizzling on the stove.

"Smells really good," he said.

I presented the meal to him on a nice tray with a napkin, cup of really good coffee and he began to chaw down all that food.

"Funny," he remarked, "how good something tastes when someone else makes it." Half way through the meal he stopped eating – quite suddenly.

"What's wrong?" I said, concerned for he had not eaten enough to keep a bug alive.

"Can't eat any more. It's stuck right here in my throat" he said, pointing to the area just above his unshaven Adam's apple area.

Frowning and contemplating, I said "Probably it's because you haven't eaten and your tummy is full faster than usual."

"Probably," he said.

Next thing I see him in the bathroom heaving and puking all the food. "I am taking you to the walk in clinic," I said. He did not object – unusual for him.

Off we went.

In the clinic it was as usual – all kinds of illnesses in there – a place where if you enter well, you come out sick. “Number ten!” the receptionist yelled out. We got up and went into the usual examining room – cold steel table, small medical desk and I think there might have been a sink in there. Not sure about that. Anyway, up onto the table (on top of that paper white sheet), my exhausted husband climbed and was seen by a doctor who reminded me of Einstein (you know the type, grey beard, funny wired glasses, messy lab coat) but very kind, I hoped.

“I’m Dr. Eagleson,” he said, shaking my husband’s hand. “How can I help?”

My husband said, “I’ve lost thirty pounds in the last three weeks.”

I was shocked! Nearly fell off my chair. Why hadn’t I noticed? Up goes my husband’s t-shirt to reveal skinny bones that I recognized as ribs, but surely not his ribs. I had never seen ribs on him like that. Just racks with a skin covering. Next shock: Doc pulled around the waist of his jeans. He pulled them six inches open without undoing the zipper. Oh my god! How could I not have noticed that?

“Have you seen your family doctor?”

“Yes and he has been treating me for constipation.”

“How long?” inquired this obviously concerned doctor.

“For about six months. I think I have the ‘flu,” said my husband.

“Well,” said the Doc, “we’ll get some blood work done and see. Come and see me tomorrow.”

We left and my husband struggled slowly to the car leaning heavily on me.

24 hours later, I arrived at the house to check on him. Worse. This was no ‘flu, I reasoned. I said, “I am taking you to the hospital and by ambulance!”

“Oh no, not the ambulance! I won’t go. I will let you drive me, but no ambulance.”

Knowing what the E.R. would be like, I insisted on the ambulance. The vehicle arrived with lights blazing and medics came into the room. They began to question him re his issues then on we went to the hospital.

I can still hear what seemed like a roar of an engine. “Please don’t use the siren,” my husband begged – he hated ambulance siren sounds. They didn’t use it. We took off from the house, him in the back of the nicely warmed vehicle on a gurney, and I sat in the front seat crying hysterically.

“He’s going to die,” I cried. “Please don’t let him die! He’s a good man – not perfect, no, but good.”

“Madam,” replied a very reassuring paramedic, “we don’t know that he will die. They will take good care of him at the hospital and everything will be done to help him.”

After what seemed like forever we got to the hospital. And because he was in an ambulance he was taken into a treatment room. I heard the sweep of those long beige divider curtains pull around him. Suddenly an I.V. was put into a vein. Eight torturous hours went by – no doctor to see him. Me, I’m trying to keep myself from going to the nurses’ station and screaming for some action and he was calmly talking periodically with nurses he knew personally. After all he had been in the nursing supervision division of the hospital for 30 years. Yup, he was an administrative nurse – one of the first to graduate from BGH. We were all so proud that day.

Then entered the E.R. doc. Tall good looking man, very business-like. “I have the ‘flu,” my husband stated.

“We’ll see about that,” the doctor said.

Tests, X-rays, you name it, were performed and he was scheduled for an endoscopy and colonoscopy to be done at the same time. Stomach first, then the bowel. He was admitted to the hospital.

In the morning of the next day he was taken to the appropriate area for the tests. He had been assigned a surgeon, who was not my favourite surgeon, however, since he had been in the E.R. one took the doc on call.

In the recovery room post tests, the doc came and asked to speak to me alone. He led me down a hallway and suddenly it seemed we were in a cubicle with those beige curtains pulled around us. “I have never seen a tumor as big as the one your husband has, especially without symptoms.”

I said, “He had symptoms, but was being treated for constipation.”

He blurted out that there is nothing that could be done to save my husband’s life. The tumour was too far advanced and had even spread to his liver.

“Oh, please no,” I pleaded. “Please don’t let him suffer will you? Will you promise to do all in your power to keep the suffering to a minimum?”

“I will see what I can do” he replied – very unsympathetically, I thought. Then he left me to ‘get myself together’, as he put it.

Oh Lord, I thought, I can’t tell him. The doctor didn’t say who was going to tell him. What should I do?

Back to his recovery bedside I went, shaking inside, scared, unsure. He looked at me from a foggy haze and said, "Is it finished?"

"Yes," I replied.

Off he slipped into his drug induced state of mind. Out of nowhere he said, "I won't have any operation. Do I need an operation?"

"No," I replied.

"Oh good," he replied and drifted off. A few moments later he looked at me and asked, "Do you know what they found?"

Totally confused and not knowing what to say, I blurted out, "Yes."

"What is it?"

"God give me strength," I said under my breath, and finally, slowly and with great care and tenderness, I said "You have cancer."

"Is there anything they can do?" he wanted to know.

"Doesn't seem so."

A couple of hours later the surgeon arrived. "Did you tell him?" he questioned me. I nodded yes. "It doesn't look good," he said, looking directly into my husband's eyes. "I am making arrangements for you to have chemotherapy and radiation at Hamilton General Hospital as soon as possible."

Keith moved from our jointly owned big house into my smaller place across from the Grand River, where we could sit on the deck and see the deer crossing the river. Mother deer



The view from my deck.

teaching the young ones how to cross the river, too. Amazing!!! His attitude remained stoic. The kids had been told while he was in Brantford General Hospital and the shock was settling into all of us in different ways. Keith Jr. (who lives in Livonia, Michigan) handled it with dignity in front of us. Carolyn, our only daughter, was distraught at his illness, while handling a very difficult and painful condition of her own, and was inconsolable. Brian (our youngest) managed things in his usual way – with humour, especially in front of his father. "Everything will be okay," he told me, trying to comfort me. "He doesn't have – that look – you know what I mean," he said.

"Maybe not," I replied encouragingly, tho' I knew better. I did not want to crush any hope he harboured for a recovery. (In the years following the end Brian confided to me that he

had gone to the bathroom and brought up his boots)! No one there to help him, I thought to myself.

About five days after his initial diagnosis of metastatic cancer – primarily esophageal, stomach and liver, possibly in the bones too, we were called to bring him to Hamilton General Hospital to have a work up in preparation for chemotherapy and radiation. Brian and I made a bed for him in the van (lucky we have the van, I thought). Extra seats in the comfortable tan van were removed and a sponge mattress complete with covers and pillow were installed.

Then we had to see him endure the painful entry into the van. We watched him become increasingly pale as he negotiated the entry. Finally he made it! Bri and I jumped into the front seats and we set off for the trip to Hamilton General Hospital.

About 15 minutes into the trip suddenly we heard this noise coming from the back of the van! We thought he'd been sleeping quietly but NO, he was up and trying to get into the one seat we had left in place in the van. "I can't stay in that bed," he stated quite bluntly.

"What do you need?"

"I have to sit in the seat," he said.

Bri pulled over and he quite easily and amazingly sat in the seat. Soon we were there, and Bri entered the quite nicely decorated front entrance of Hamilton General Hospital and quickly located a wheel chair. We went to admitting and Keith was registered and all the red tape taken care of. We were ushered into a waiting area (a holding tank similar to the ones animals are put into) and waited ... and waited ... while Keith became very weak, tired and impatient. I went to the desk and pleaded that they put him on a stretcher which quickly occurred. The nurses were pleasant – quite a relief because we had experienced nasty one previously.

Finally we were surrounded by seven or eight men all dressed in white lab coats. Very official looking. One of the white coats (an older looking man with a greying scruffy beard) approached the gurney while the others looked on. "You have cancer which cannot be healed," he bluntly stated! The harshness of the reality shook all of us to the core. "You will be marked for radiation, following which tomorrow you will start chemotherapy. You will not live, but this treatment may help avoid an otherwise very difficult death."

Anger filled my being. Imagine! So brutal the words! So severe the outcome! No hope even? I began to suggest that Keith be admitted to the hospital as I did not think there was any way he could tolerate the daily trips to Hamilton and then back to Brantford. Keith agreed, to my surprise. The M.D.'s response was "There are absolutely no beds."

I begged and finally, after hours of waiting, he was taken to his room.

The time was now 5:00 p.m. and we had been there since 10:00 a.m. We were all exhausted. So we said "So long," and made the trip back home. I had a horribly bad feeling

about the whole hospital ordeal, so I had said to Keith, "You do not have to stay here. You do not have to do this. Just call if you change your mind and I will be here in a minute to take you home and care for you."

"I'll be alright," he said with a slight grin. We left.

Following a restless, poor night without him, suddenly the phone rang beside me. Oh no, I thought - bad news, but no. It was Keith.

"I can't do this. They tried to get me up to take me to X-ray for bone scans, but I could not get up, so I told them I am going home. Will you come and get me?"

"Right away," I replied. After calling Brian we went to Hamilton again. I was horrified, confused, scared. This decision meant he would not have any treatment and I tried to foresee the horrible death the doc had described.

At home he was tired, but so happy to be there, I knew the right decision had been made. Later he was visited by his G.P. whom he called Les.

Les said, "So you didn't take the treatment, huh?"

"No," Keith replied. "Considering everything I thought that I couldn't handle it. What would you do if you were in my situation?" he earnestly inquired of the doc.

"Well, I think I would do just exactly what you did," he said, his eyes tearing up. His wife had just passed away with breast cancer and she had taken the usual prescribed chemo and radiation. "It was a horrible experience," the doc said, although many of his patients HAD taken the treatment and done well.

Keith said "Okay, let's just forget all that. I will stay home."

A couple of days later, failing even more, the doctor paid a home visit. Next thing you know, Keith had an intravenous set up, nursing services coming, morphine injections and he bounced back. With Morphine medication for pain and the I.V. he was able to start to enjoy (with some interruptions) the last part of his life.

Restless, confusing nights ensued. We placed two beds in the usually one bed room so I could be there all night. Every night I would hear him fumbling around for the urinal or whatever, and in the end he'd say "Gotta go to the john." We devised a solution for his unsteadiness – he would get behind me, hold onto my shoulders and we would proceed at a slow military style. "Hup two, three, four ... Hup two, three, four ... Hup two, three, four ..." we chanted as we walked and we'd be there. We followed this procedure for any reason he would need to get up.

Daily routine was to get up (at whatever time – usually early), have cream of wheat for breakfast, let the nurses come in to check every tube, medication, etcetera. In between, visits

from family (especially my sister) were frequent. Some were very pleasant and some weren't.

Father's day came along and Keith wanted to swim in the pool in the worst way. Our whole family went to the house where the pool was. Lo and behold there he was walking along the inside of the pool while I walked along the outside of the pool, holding up his I.V. solution. Following that we had a huge dinner and he was able to eat almost everything. The next day the doctor visited him and Keith was jubilant in announcing what he had eaten.



Keith Jr., Kelley, Matt, Brian, Kelly

"I can't believe it," the doctor exclaimed. He checked Keith's abdomen and said, "I don't feel that tumour." We were elated, to say the least!!

As June and July came along, he deteriorated, but still was always able to laugh. One of the many things he accomplished was to go to Port Dover to visit our very good friends Bill and Karen. He loved the environment there. They had a beautiful cottage overlooking the lake. He enjoyed the visit immensely and ate a small amount. Later on the way home he became sick and brought up all he had eaten.

One day when I came home from a difficult day at work there he was waiting for me in the living room sitting on the seat of his walker. "Well, what's for supper?" he asked abruptly.

I was so tired, so I said "what do you feel like?"

"McDonald's," he suggested. He told me he'd been waiting for me to come home all day to go there.

"Would you like to go, or should I bring it here?"

"Let's go there," he said. So we went. He ordered a Big Mac, fries and a coke.

"Do you think that will stay down?" I questioned.

"We'll see," was his reply.

We decided the best thing might be to take it home, so off we went. We got inside and he gobbled that dinner like he had not eaten for weeks (which of course he really hadn't). Two minutes after I heard him yell "Bring the bucket!!" I came rushing in with the bucket and the whole McDonald's dinner came up.

"Well," I said, "was that worth it?"

"Definitely," he said, and we both burst into belly shaking laughing.

Another day, I lay on the bed beside him while he was resting. Suddenly out of what seemed like a deep sleep he said: "Chop, Chop," (my occasional nick name with him), "we had better get out there and paint that shed."

Surprised, I said: "What shed?"

"You know, that shed out by the house."

"Yes," I replied.

Quite suddenly he said, "Is that real?"

"No" I said. "Your meds are mixing up your thoughts."

"Okay," he said. "Would you tell me when I say things that are not real?"

"Yes." As I lay beside him each passing day I tried to stroke the hair on his arms in a special way, so I could remember each strand of hair. It felt soft, furry, and had an unusual smell. *I have to remember this*, I said to myself, for I knew soon I would not feel it any more. I remember it to this day. I had to remember his beautiful hands – the one with little freckles on them. His perfect feet – everything! I had to remember everything! I still do to this day.

Another day he said "I want to go back to the house," referring to the house he had occupied following our separation. He was fairly ill and weak, so I asked if I could get something for him. "No" he replied, "I want to go myself." As I helped him into the house he asked me to stay where I was and he proceeded to the downstairs. After a few minutes, I heard him struggle up the stairs. In his hand he had a money bag. "Here," he said. "I want you to have this."

I looked inside and couldn't believe my eyes! Bundles and bundles of 50 and 100 dollar bills neatly placed in elastic. "Wow," I said. "What were you saving this money for?"

"I wanted to buy a MINI MINOR car," he said quite seriously. I was totally gobsmacked!!! I talked to my younger son Brian about this and he suggested that we rent one for him even if he could only go for a ride in it. Brian set about trying to find this vehicle to rent for a day or a week. Finally he located a place that would comply with this wish, but it was in Kitchener. Off he went with his sister. Keith of course was to be completely surprised, so my job was to keep him away from the front window when the car arrived.

Soon a sharp light blue and white MINI was parked on the street. Bri came running into the house and said to his father "Dad, come quick!!"

“Why?”

“I want you to see the car parked in front of our place!”

“All right,” replied his father. We took him to the street to the car. It was a long walk for him, but with the help of his walker he made it. He looked at it and said, “Wonder who parked that there?” rather casually.



Dad, Brian, and The Mini

Brian was having a hard time containing his excitement and he exclaimed, “Dad, it’s for you!”

“For me?” he questioned. “Why?”

Bri explained that we wanted to fulfill one of his wishes and this car was for him. Tears poured down his cheeks as he looked from one of us to the other. “Get in,” Bri said.

“Are you sure this car doesn’t belong to someone else?” Keith said.

“No. Get in,” Bri said. So he crawled to into the driver’s side. I was in the back with Carolyn, Bri was in front with his dad. We took off down the street ... well, the car was a stick shift!! Normally not a problem for Keith, as he had always preferred standard shift cars. So off we went. Bump! Bump!! Jiggle Jiggle! He had not remembered how to drive a stick shift. Bri said, “Dad – let the clutch out slowly while you press on the gas with your other foot.” Soon he had it and we took off wildly down the street – wheeling from one side to the other rather dangerously.

Finally I said, “Bri – do you think you should take over?”

“Yeah,” he replied. “Is that enough, Dad?”

“I think so. This car is only a bucket of bolts held together with tin. Highly overrated!!” he exclaimed in disgust.

We kept the car for the week, but he never got to get inside that car again. He was, sadly, too weak. Thinking back, it was a rather poor decision to allow him to drive while he was highly medicated – however our whole family was so happy to see this wish come true for him.

Another day, as his health deteriorated, he was helping to make the bed in the morning, but his strength was not good. I went over to him and hugged him tight, saying “I am so scared, I don’t know what to do.”

"So am I," he replied. "I don't mind dying, but I hate to leave you all behind," and we held each other and cried.

"Can I go with you?" I said through a sea of tears.

He replied "No, you cannot go where I am going."

"Why?" I said.

"Because the kids will need you here" he said. I let that idea go, even tho' it was hard.

Our older son, his wife and their two sons came to visit from Michigan when they could. The grandsons kept Grandpa in tears of laughter with their antics. They got into a discussion with him and all of us, about "Canadian sayings" such as serviette as opposed to their napkin, washrooms as opposed to rest rooms, and so on. Brian had decided to play a practical joke on Matthew (our eldest grandson). He was about 20 years old, 6' 3" in height, good looking, and of course was enjoying girls. Bri had prepared this package for Matt. It was small and he had told Matthew to open it. Matt opened it to find tiny little "condoms" made from the fingers of a plastic glove and rolled to resemble a condom. Matt turned red and Keith and all of us there had the best laugh! Belly type laughs!! Matt took it all in good fun too.



Brian and Isabela cheering Dad

Another day, we had gone to the bathroom in the usual military fashion (hup, two three, four ...) and as we were coming out he casually glanced in the mirror and exclaimed "Skinny ass!"

I was hoping he was talking about me, but no it was his description of his own small butt, with an ever enlarging belly due to the progression of the disease. I laughed - he didn't.

Time passed and August 23rd was his last day. The last few days were terrible for us, but he was unconscious so we hope he was not aware. Many events occurred during this long, painful period for us four days. My daughter Carolyn, daughter-in-law Kelly, and myself lay side by side in the unoccupied bed in the same room as Keith. Usually I was at the head of Keith's

bed, talking calmly, reassuring him as he made loud breathing sounds. I said directly into his ear, “Do you think I should shut up?”

He made this huge Yaaaaaaaah sound. We all laughed and I kept quiet for a while.

The funeral was beautiful, I must say. Our very good friend Bill Anticknap conducted the service. It was filled with the music Keith loved: Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, and many others sang their tributes. Following the funeral we all went to the river house. The snowbirds were flying in the sky right over the house. One in particular flew low and over the top of the house.

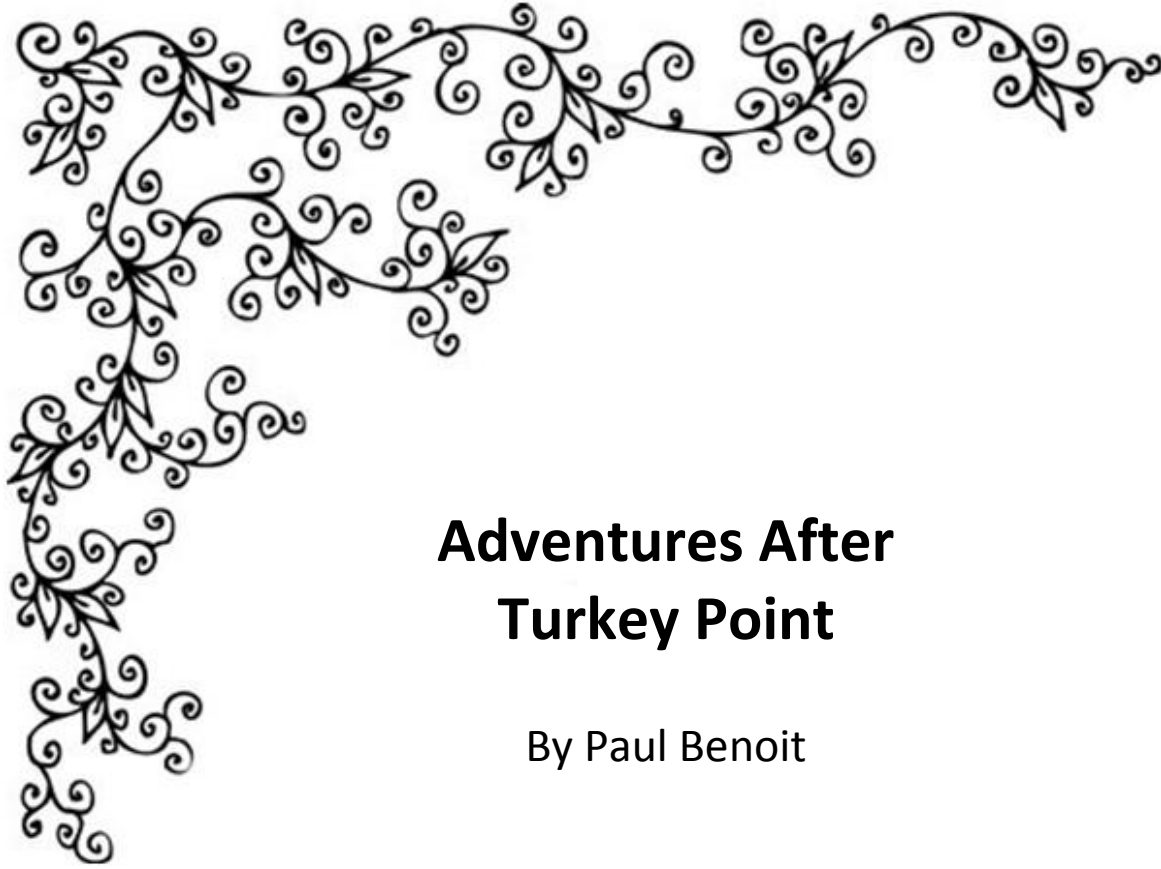
“Bye Dad, and bon voyage wherever you are.”

Soon everyone was gone – the house empty and all were back to their routines.

Life since his death has been a difficult journey. Loneliness, guilt, and regrets have been constant for the past nine years. However, with years of therapy, the last three years in particular there is peace and happiness filled with friends, family, and of course Georgia the dog. The family decided that we should remain close, but that didn’t happen. No glue there to do the job. I did my best, but it didn’t work. We remain estranged except for Brian, the attentive one and my sister, who is always there whenever I cannot cope.



Pat Sloat was born in Toronto, spent most of her time living in Simcoe where she met Keith while in high school. They married in 1963. She is a retired Registered Nurse and has had many varied and interesting positions since graduating from The Brantford General Hospital School of Nursing – 1969. She was one of the first entrepreneurial nurses in Canada, and started the P.S. Foot Care Clinic which grew to 9 employees. The entire family was employed in this business. This included husband Keith, daughter Carolyn and son Brian. She now lives a quiet comfortable life in Brantford, with her beautiful and loved dog Georgia.



Adventures After Turkey Point

By Paul Benoit

During the last couple of weeks in September, Vicki and I and a few of the other tenants from our residence went to Turkey Point. I'm going to relate a bit of what happened when we were there.

On the first day we were there, we had lunch and then went down by the water for a bit. There was an accessible dock so we didn't have to go in the sand in our wheelchairs. There were not many people on the beach and we spent a lot of time by the water when we could. It was a little cold by the water, though, so we never stayed long.

When we got cold we went back up to the cabin. We sat around the tables and talked for a while until suppertime. After supper we played some games and decided to sit around the campfire. We ate s'mores (s'mores are chocolate and marshmallow squeezed between two graham crackers. They're very messy because the marshmallow is roasted over the fire) and sang songs. We also played a game where you had to bring something to the party that started with the letter of your name. Vicki and I had a drink of Cherry Brandy and Pepsi ... it tasted pretty good. We stayed up later than we usually do and had fun.

The next day, as we were playing games, one of the volunteers tapped Vicki on the shoulder. When she turned around there were three horses behind her. She and another tenant got to feed them! After that we went for a walk around the grounds and then it was time to home.

We packed up our stuff.

Just as I was on my way to the bus to load for the ride home, my chair started beeping at me. At first I thought my brakes were off, but people told me they were on and I knew it was something more serious. Doreen, our recreational therapist, had to push me to the bus. When I got home I called Shoppers Home Health Care. It's a company that fixes chairs, but they told me it would be better if I waited for the next day – or they'd have to charge me \$50.00 for an afterhours call. When they came they told me I needed two new motors. On that day I was downstairs with Brenda, a friend of mine. We were working on a puzzle when staff told us the elevator was broken.

There are 16 steps on each floor. Another friend, Gail, became stuck in the stairwell, and she called the fire department. They brought Gail up and then came back for the rest of us.

Life can be very exciting in a wheelchair.



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.



The Gift Horse

By Richard Dayman

The rusty hinges squeaked as the weathered, cracked, and creaking barn boards of the big door at the top of the gangway closed behind me. I tied a sloppy knot in the frayed, ragged rope that was used to hold the double doors closed. I had tears in my eyes. My mind was on other things. I needed a quiet place to be alone, a place where I could think and talk and cry if I had to. By age eight or nine the barn had become my refuge. I could be a cowboy, an astronaut, or anything my mind could think of. It was also a good place to avoid my mother who could always think of some meaningless chore for me to do if she saw me hanging around the house.

But this day was not about hiding from my mother. It was about hiding from everybody. I didn't want anyone to see my disappointment, my anger, my self-pity and all the other feelings a 10-year-old has when trying to figure out why his life is turning out the way it is.

My 'poor me' feeling had started the night before at supper when my dad made the comment, "I was talking to Don today. He and Eunice are thinking about getting a horse for John." The words, "John" and "getting a horse" hit my brain and bounced around inside my head like a lightning bolt looking for ground inside a rubber soccer ball. A few comments were made by someone at the table. I didn't hear them.

Finally I felt I could speak. "Horse! Do you think he'll get one?" I said.

"Sounds like Don was pretty serious," Dad said.

Uncle Don and Aunt Eunice were such good parents, I thought. John had so much good stuff ... and now a horse!

How could I ever go to visit my cousin John and admire his horse and have to say how wonderful it was and at the same time hide my jealousy while feeling guilty for being jealous! *Why couldn't that be me?* I thought. But this wasn't the time to feel sorry for myself. This was the time to find out how this came about.

"Who was Uncle Don buying it from?" I asked.

"Bert Gowland," said Dad. "He has a few riding horses. It's a two and a half year old he wants to sell."

"How much did it cost?" I wanted to know.

"One hundred and fifty," said dad.

\$150 didn't sound like that much but it was \$150 more than I had. Supper continued in silence. All I could think of was how lucky John was.

For dessert that night we had rice pudding. Mom made good rice pudding with cinnamon and raisins. Then dad said something that was like putting a cherry on top of the rice pudding (when you eat it, it tastes like an olive).

Uncle Don had told dad, "There's another two year old for sale. It hasn't had as much training; it's shorter and stockier. Bert wants one twenty-five for it."

What did that mean? I thought. Was dad thinking of buying it? Mom and Dad had never done anything like that before. I didn't like to beg and pester my parents for things so I kept quiet. Supper was soon over.

Mom and my sister cleared the table while dad and my brother and I went to the barn. We milked about twenty-five cows. My job at milking time was to help feed the cows. Each cow got a medium sized bowl of rolled oats, a hand full of concentrate and a manger full of hay.

I had just finished my chores and was ready to go back to the house to do my homework. I decided to bring up the subject of the horse again. "If we had a horse, where could we put it?" I asked, wondering what kind of answer I would get.

Without too much thought he said, "We could move the two heifers out of the box stall at the end of the horse stable. That is a good spot."

"OH!!" I said, surprised by such a positive answer. Not wanting to push my luck I headed for the house and what seemed like my never-ending homework.

Mom wasn't quite so positive when I just happened to mention that there was room in the barn for a horse. "Dad said there was!" I said as if a direct quote was something she would pay more attention to.

"But where does the money come from?" she said. "Your dad and I don't have a hundred and twenty-five dollars." I had no answer and felt it might be better to keep quiet right then. "Do you have money to put towards the one twenty-five?" she asked. No answer was necessary. She and I both knew I didn't.

Well, that's it, I thought. *There's nothing more to say.* So I did some homework and went to bed.

The next day school went by very fast. Usually that would be a good thing but on this day I wasn't sure I even wanted to go home and face more uncertainty. So when I got home my books went to the house and I went to the barn, tying the knot in the frayed, ragged rope that was used to hold the double barn doors closed. All was quiet. It was just me upstairs and the cows downstairs calmly waiting for their evening milking and meal.

A cow was only as good as the amount of milk it produced and when that dropped off it was sent to the Toronto stock yards ... a painless way to say 'to the slaughterhouse'. Dad always listened to the noon report on CBC radio to hear the beef prices, not the prices for prime Angus or Herefords, but a special category for old washed up cows. The radio reporter would announce the prices for all the different grades of beef. When he got to the last one, he would say, "And the price today for Cannors and Cutters is ... !" Those were the prices Dad wanted to hear.

There were no real pets on a farm. The dog was expected to at least help herd the cattle and bark when someone comes in the driveway. Even the half wild cats kept the mouse and rat population down. *So why should I expect to have a horse? It would not serve any purpose,* I thought. But it sounded like Dad was willing to have a horse around, maybe even mom was too. But it was the money ... "Do you have money?" she had said.

"I don't have money. I have no way of making money. I am a kid!" I said out loud only for me to hear. No one said I couldn't have a horse. We had a place to keep one but I had no money to put towards it. There seemed to be nothing more to do but to hope for the best.

I sat on a bale of hay while I tried to calm down. The tears had dried on my cheeks. I looked up and saw multiple dust filled slits of light shining through the cracks between the boards on the west side of the barn.

It was close to supertime as I made my way to the house with a hungry stomach and a plan, not a plan that I liked, but it was a plan. The unlit woodshed was almost dark but it didn't

matter. I could have made it up the five worn wooden steps in two bounds with my eyes closed. The backroom was even darker. My lightweight jacket was almost off as I kicked my shoes one by one into a pile of footwear to the left of the door. My jacket was tossed on top of an assortment of coats, hats, sweaters and mitts, all waiting for the right season to be worn.

I opened the door and stepped into the warmth of a newly started fire in the small wood burning cook stove. Bright light emanated from the old cast-iron light fixture hanging above the kitchen table. "This must be a special night," I thought. All five lights were lit at the same time. Often one or two were burned out.

Mom said, "You got here just in time. Supper's ready. Wash your hands." I did as I was told, then sat at my spot at the kitchen table.

After Dad said the blessing I looked around to see what was for supper. I was right. This was a special night! Mom had made one of my favourites. It didn't have a name but was a cross between beef stew and soup. The liquid part was like soup but the ingredients were cut into big pieces like stew ... large beef chunks, sliced potato, carrots and sometimes celery and peas, simmered together with pepper, salt and sundry other seasonings in a big pot until everything was tender but not falling apart. On a cool night it made the perfect supper. Mom had made a lot so I knew I could have seconds or thirds!

My big brother Robert sat next to me at the table. My little sister Anne sat across from him. But the chair on which my older sister, Mary, should have been sitting was empty. Then I remembered that this was Friday night. Mary worked after school on Fridays at Kresge's lunch counter in Dundas. Already my plan was falling apart.

Mom's stew-soup really 'hit the spot', as dad would say whenever he ate something he really liked or when something just felt right, like a glass of cold water on a hot day during haying or harvesting. I had a second bowl and so did Robert. "That's good stuff!" I said to Mom. "I'd like to have more but I'm full."

"Well, I hope you have room for ice cream," she responded. Again I was brought back to reality. It was Friday night and it had become tradition since mom went back to teaching, to have ice cream on Friday nights in celebration of the end of the work week. My plan would have to wait until after ice cream.

"I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream!" said Dad as Mom passed each of us a small bowl filled with butterscotch ripple. As mom was scooping mine, I hoped the spoon would hit the mother-lode of butterscotch. I did okay; there was a good sized blob of honey-coloured sweetness awaiting me in my bowl.

I knew that at the speed Dad and my brother ate ice cream I had only seconds to make my case. Dad finished his first. "That really hits the spot!" Dad said, knowing that we had heard that before.

While I spooned the last bit of white and brown out of my bowl and into my mouth, my mind was on the next few minutes. I placed my spoon into the empty bowl, not looking at anyone or talking to anyone in particular. I took a deep breath, hoping it would give me the courage to say what I wanted to say.

"I've been thinking about the money for that horse. I know it's a lot and I don't have any but if everyone in the family paid a little, it wouldn't cost Mom or Dad so much." I paused.

The room was quiet but out of the corner of my right eye I could see my brother was looking at me. "You have a job. Maybe you could put in fifty dollars," I said as I turned to look at my brother. "And maybe Mary could put in twenty dollars."

Mom had a quick response to that: "Mary is only working part time after school on Fridays. You can't expect her to give you money."

"I know. But I could pay it back if I get a job or get some money." Coming up with a job or money was pretty unlikely but I thought I should mention it anyway.

"I don't want a horse. I shouldn't have to pay for it!" Robert mumbled almost to himself.

"We've got twenty-five cows to milk and feed; we better get moving," said Dad as he pushed his chair back and headed for the back room door.

As I waited for Dad and Robert to leave the backroom I couldn't help but feel a bit ashamed for asking my brother and sister for money. I didn't really expect them to help out but it was all I could think of.

By the time I got to the barn, the milking was well underway. I fed the cows and calves. Nothing more was said about the suppertime talk. Dad said he and Robert could finish up so I could go to the house.

Jim's car was parked behind Robert's; I knew Mary was home. *Mom, please don't tell Mary what I said at suppertime*, I thought to myself as I came through the back door, said "Hi!" to Jim, washed my hands and went to the dining room to watch TV.

The Flintstones was just starting when Mary came downstairs. Nothing was said to me but she didn't look upset; so I felt that Mom had not told her. She and Jim were on their way to see a movie; so they let quickly.

Dad and Robert came in when the Flintstones was almost over. Robert was in a hurry to have a quick shower and go to hang out with some of his friends. Dad washed his hands, arms and face in the sink in the kitchen, then changed his clothes and only missed the first couple minutes of 77 Sunset Strip.

The one hour show was over way too soon and as the credits were rolling Mom yelled from the kitchen that it was time for me to go to bed. I started up the long curved staircase, wondering what Mom and Dad were thinking and why nothing had been said. Stopping at the top of the stairs, I listened for conversation that might give me a clue but the muffled sound of TV voices was all I could hear. The bedroom was shared with my brother but he would not be home til much later. So I laid on my bed in the dark and waited for the transport trucks to come along #5 Highway from the east. I could hear the far off noise of their engines and the faint light from their headlights hit the wall above my bed. As the noise got louder and louder, the light moved toward the south wall, then like lightning it was gone as the motor noise started to fade.

The morning brought a good feeling. The tension of last night was gone. Robert had come home, slept, got up and gone to work at Stelco without me waking up.

By the time I got to the barn, the milking was almost finished. I started my Saturday chores but when Dad was done milking, we went to the house for breakfast.

I had finished my cornflakes and was working on toast and peanut butter when Dad said, "We'll go up to Don's when the chores are done. I want to talk to him."

I hesitated but then jumped at the chance to see John's horse. "Yeah. When can we go?"

"We have to feed the cows and clean out the stables first."

After washing down the peanut butter and toast with a glass of milk, I headed for the barn. It was a calm bright sunny early spring day, the kinds of day that forces you to take off your coat to feel the freedom and warmth of fresh air. The sun shone in through the south-facing windows and open doors of the barn that looked out to the barn yard. The cows could feel the spring air. It made them restless. They swung their heads to look out the open doors making a bellowing kind of mooing as if demanding to be set free from their winter prison. I ignored their pleas for freedom and went straight to work. 45 minutes later the stables were done.

Meanwhile Dad had cleaned and disinfected the milking machines and milk house equipment and had started feeding the cows. I grabbed a pitchfork and helped. In fifteen minutes we were done. I was ready to get in the car and go. Dad said he wanted to clean up and change his clothes. Mom kneaded the pie crust dough as if she was punishing it for some indiscretion it had committed. She pulled the dough into two pieces throwing one half down on a piece of floured waxed paper. She started torturing it with the rolling pin til it was flat and ready to put into the pie plate and baked at 350 degrees Fahrenheit until it had lost all its will to fight back.

"Wash your face and hands, change your clothes, don't wear your barn coat and find something to put on your feet besides your boots," Mom said without taking her attention away from the pie dough. This was not a good time to argue; I did what I was told. When I got

back to the kitchen, Dad was waiting for me. He was also looking for the car keys. While he was in the hallway looking for them, Mom stopped her work, looked at me and said, "Don't you fall off John's horse. Don't make it run. Just be careful."

I nodded and said: "Okay."

The keys were jangling from the end of dad's fingers as he came back through the door. He slowed down to say goodbye to Mom. Her reply was lost in the noise of the door slamming behind us. Dad and I didn't talk in the car. I was excited and nervous. Dad was listening to Wally Crouter talk about the Leaf's chances against Detroit that night. The next song seemed like the right song at the right time. "Mary Robbins and El Paso", Wally announced.

What a great song! I thought. Cowboys, murder, Mexican maidens, horses ... sometimes I felt I was born 100 years too late.

As we drove into Uncle Don's driveway I could see John's horse standing beside the barn as if he was waiting for visitors. Uncle Don and John came out of the barn door. "We named him Scout," John said. We all admired Scout. He was a beautiful chestnut colour, fine boned and sleek-looking. John rode first; then it was my turn. I was nervous but I did okay and didn't fall off.

Dad and Uncle Don talked while John and I petted Scout's nose and neck. John went for another ride while I watched. Just as John got back, Dad said we should go. It would be dinner time soon. We said our goodbyes and headed east along Highway 99.

Just before Lynden, Dad said, "Let's go in and see that other young horse Bert Gowland has." He stepped on the brakes and made a quick right turn into Gowland's driveway. I stayed in the car while Dad went to the house to see if anyone was home. A minute later, out came Dad and Mr. Gowland.



Smokey

"Which one is it?" asked Dad. Bert pointed towards two horses about 30 yards away. "That black one over there. I'll go bring him over."

I could not believe what I was hearing or seeing. Mr. Gowland led the smallish black horse back to us. "He is not fully trained yet but he's quiet and has a nice disposition." he commented.

Dad looked him over while Mr. Gowland put a saddle and bridle on the young horse. Mr. Gowland rode him around the small field. After he dismounted, he asked me if I'd like to ride the horse.

“Yes!” was my response, without hesitation. I eagerly mounted him. He walked along nicely beside the fence.

“Pull his head around slowly and gently with the left rein and let him walk back,” yelled Mr. Gowland. Problem solved: he walked right back to where we started. I had a big grin on my face as I dismounted with a little instruction. Dad and Bert talked. I looked into the horse’s eyes and petted his velvety soft nose. He was beautiful!

“Well, should we get him?” Dad said, loud enough to bring me back to reality.

“Yeah!!!” I said, not sure what to say or how to say it. *If I said too much, I thought, the deal might fall through.* So I just left it at “Yeah”. But inside, I could hardly believe what had happened! I wanted to laugh and cry with joy at the same time.

My thoughts were whirling around in my head but I heard Dad say, “Bring him over Monday afternoon.” Mr. Gowland nodded in agreement. *This is really happening!* I thought. I stroked Smokey’s neck from his jaw to his chest. He turned his head a little to look at me as if he was trying to communicate with me.



A used saddle made a great Christmas present

Not wanting to spoil the feeling, I didn’t think it wise to ask Dad how much he had paid to make this happen for me, nor where the money had come from. In fact, I never did ask that question. Dad’s oft- used expression came to mind: Never look a gift horse in the mouth.

It was time to leave. I could hardly wait til I got home from school on Monday. As we drove through the village towards home, I noticed Dad that looked happy as well.



Richard (Dick) Dayman lived on a dairy farm east of Troy with his family for 14 years. After his father’s death, the family moved to Lynden. He graduated from Mohawk College, then worked at Bell Canada for 35 years. He is now retired and lives with his wife, Marlene, in Paris, Ontario.



The Haunted House

by Sharon Bolger

I can't say what possessed us to go to that desolate, ghostly house. I guess it started out as a dare that no one was going to back down from.

As typical young teens searching for excitement, we were no different; all of our lives we were fed stories about my grandfather's stepbrother. Time and again we heard how he had been charged with the murders of a couple of woman in Espanola. One was a woman of the night walking under the old horse bridge. It was the trial of the decade that had made big news. And allegedly he had strangled an old maid living alone in a house at the edge of town. Rumors spread that her spirit was still there – searching for her killer.

We were of an age when we were either very foolish or brave enough to find out the truth. These crimes, supposedly committed by Kennel, had all happened in the late '30s when the horse and buggies still frequented the roads of our town, the streets were lit by gas lamps, and all good ladies knew not to be out alone after dark. Of course, that all happened before myself, my siblings, cousin and friends were born.



Sharon, age 13



*Sharon's older sister,
age 15*

It was my older sister's willingness to go along that confounded me; she was always the sensible intellectual one. My older brother, Gary, was caught up with his girlfriend's thrill of it all, and my spoiled cousin simply demanded to join us. And of course we told no one. I was thirteen and ready to experience my knees knocking and my teeth chattering ... as long as I wasn't alone.

At dusk we started out walking the abandoned road that was so overgrown it was more of a foot path. The five of us were chattering and laughing nervously. Susan got Gary to bend over and she hopped up on his shoulders. By the sound of her girly giggles no one would ever think we were getting closer to a proclaimed haunted house. Her vivacious mood rubbed off on the rest of us, and we were still feeling pretty brave.

Suddenly I yelled out, "We're getting close! I can see it over there."

Susan's laughter stopped and we all turned quiet. I could feel the mood change, faces went blank and eyes grew wide. Ok, I thought, here comes the showdown – we'll see who's going to stay and who's going to turn around. For a minute I doubted my own decision to come. By then the sun had all but set and our own shadows were lurking behind us.

It stood looking so very lonely with warped weathered grey boards and busted-out windows like pitch black abysses. Gone was every speck of paint that had long ago peeled under the bright sun and bitter cold of the northern weather. The door was shut tight as though someone just walked in and locked it. It screamed sadness, seeming to say "Give me peace or let me die." Tall parched weeds grew everywhere with no clear path to the door. We stood in front of that house in the darkest evening I could remember.

If a house can have human qualities, I think this one did, and it asked me to come in – yes, me in particular.

"Go ahead Sharon," I heard Susan say. Now why did she pick on me, I wondered? Had she felt the house calling me as I did, or was she tempting me to run just so they'd have an excuse to run after me? I wasn't going to give it to them. My courage sprung from deep inside. I moved my feet, one in front of the other, cautiously. I felt my heart beating in my chest and heard the air go in and out of my lungs. Small twigs snapped under my feet while the weeds brushed my bare legs. No one followed, but I wasn't deterred.

They faded away behind me, but I did hear my brother's shaky voice. "Maybe this is not such a good idea, come on back."



*Sharon's older brother,
age 14*

But I had made it to the door and instead I turned the rusty knob. It was stuck so I put my shoulder into it and gave a push. It flew back and hit the wall with a loud bang that shook the whole place. I looked back. Susan was urging everyone to follow. Reluctantly, they did.

“Flashlight!” I said. Why didn’t we bring a flashlight?

Directly in front of me were the stairs to second floor, or the bedrooms – where maybe she was murdered. It was so quiet, except for the breeze whistling in and out of spaces where once there had been real glass windows. I realized I felt no fear, but a sense of need. I needed to help her. A part of me was safe and somewhere else and another was there ... with her. I didn’t know her name but I wanted to call out and ask what I could do to help.

My eyes followed the stairs and even in the very dark I saw her... standing at the top looking down at me. Well, that’s what I saw! An old woman in a long black taffeta dress with a circle of lace around her neck and her grey hair pulled back in a bun. My automatic reaction took over and I fled out the door down the road with everyone behind me.

Did I see someone or not? None of us ever spoke of it. But, I hope that if I did see the murdered lady I gave her a moment’s comfort, or a good laugh. Now that I am older, I still don’t know what to believe about this Kennel. And, at an age filled with passion for the thrill of challenging our beliefs of reality, we did a heroic thing, even if it only mattered to ourselves.



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.



Wheel On My Wheels

By Vicki Iorio

People live in houses, apartments, condos, trailers, and some less fortunate people may live on the streets. I lived at home for years with my mom, dad, and brother. But when I was ten I moved away from home to live in Chedoke Hospital in Hamilton, Ontario.

I did not know what to expect because I had always lived at home.

It was a whole new experience for me, and to be honest I was nervous and a little scared. I had to get used to living with five other people in the same room when I was used to having my own room and a little bit of privacy. They were all older than me; I was the youngest one there. When I first moved there I felt lost, as the hospital was huge. I had to meet all kinds of new people and get used to a new place without my parents there with me. Even after a few months of living there I still did not like it. But I had no choice at the time.

There were some good things about living there, though. I had physiotherapy every day. I was able to walk in the parallel bars at that time. I was also taught how to dress myself completely. This really helped me to feel more independent. We had a teacher who came in and taught school right at the hospital. Different things we were taught included Current Events

of the World, Math, basic English, and Geography. She always used to ask me: “What are you doing here? You are so smart and independent.” She thought that I should be at home or somewhere else.

I used to drive the nurses crazy at bedtime. They would put everyone else to bed at 8:30pm and I would tell them I would like to be put to bed at 9:30pm, or quarter to ten. So I kept them very busy. The nurses used to nickname me Son as my hair was cut so short like a boy. My mom used to say, “All they have to do is look at the front, and they can tell you are a girl.”

At the hospital I learned how to be independent at a young age, and grew up very quickly. There were a lot of things that a ten-year-old should not have seen or encountered. The hardest thing was watching people around me pass away. Also, back then the rules weren’t as strict about the laws health providers had to obey. I witnessed people being treated badly and abused. I don’t speak of it much, but I myself was abused while I lived at the hospital, by an older man. I was very scared and when I did speak up and tell someone, no one believed me – only my parents. My abuser ended up passing away and I felt relieved that he wouldn’t be able to do it again.



Vicki

Like I said, there were good things I experienced there too. We would go on day trips shopping and sometimes for dinner. Once a month the recreation staff would take us to Hamilton Place to see a concert or out to fun events. This was always a lot of fun.

I lived at the hospital for eight years and then I moved back to Brantford when they built Participation House on Bell Lane. I was one of the first residents to move in when they opened up in 1978. I was lucky because if Participation House was not built I would still be living in Hamilton, in a hospital and away from my family. It was nice to be back in Brantford and closer to my mom.

It was after I came back to Brantford that I went back to school and got my grade 12. After high school, I volunteered at the Woodman Community Centre. There I read stories and did crafts and puzzles with the preschool kids. I enjoyed doing this for several years. I felt very proud of myself for giving back to the community.

It was good because the little kids got used to not being afraid of someone in a wheel chair. They would always ask all kinds of questions. Some questions were: “Do you sleep in your

chair?” and “How do you get in and out of bed?” Some of the children thought the Operation Lift driver was my dad because they saw him dropping me off and picking me up. I used to like that as I thought it was good for them to be exposed to someone in a wheelchair and not to be afraid. It also taught me how to be patient with kids.

After living at Bell Lane, I moved to the West Street Apartments. I got to live in my own one-bedroom apartment and not with 27 other people. I didn't have to share a room! I had to learn how to budget, to pay bills, to get groceries, and just be more independent. I did find it hard to go from living with so many people to just myself. One of the staff members gave me a cat and she was good company for me. Her name was Patches and she was white and orange with green eyes. I had her for years and when she died I got Sunny, who I still have now. He is not only my cat but also my best friend.

In 2004 my mom passed away and I wanted to go back to Bell Lane after she was gone. My mom helped me a lot and we did a lot of things together. She was always there for me; I thought I would be lost without her. But they told me I had to make it work and that I could do it with the help of staff, friends, and other family. I was told I had to settle down in one spot. I lived here for almost 19 years and then everyone that lived in West Street Apartments moved to a brand new building that was built for us on Colborne Street. I love my new apartment as everything is brand new and it feels so homey.

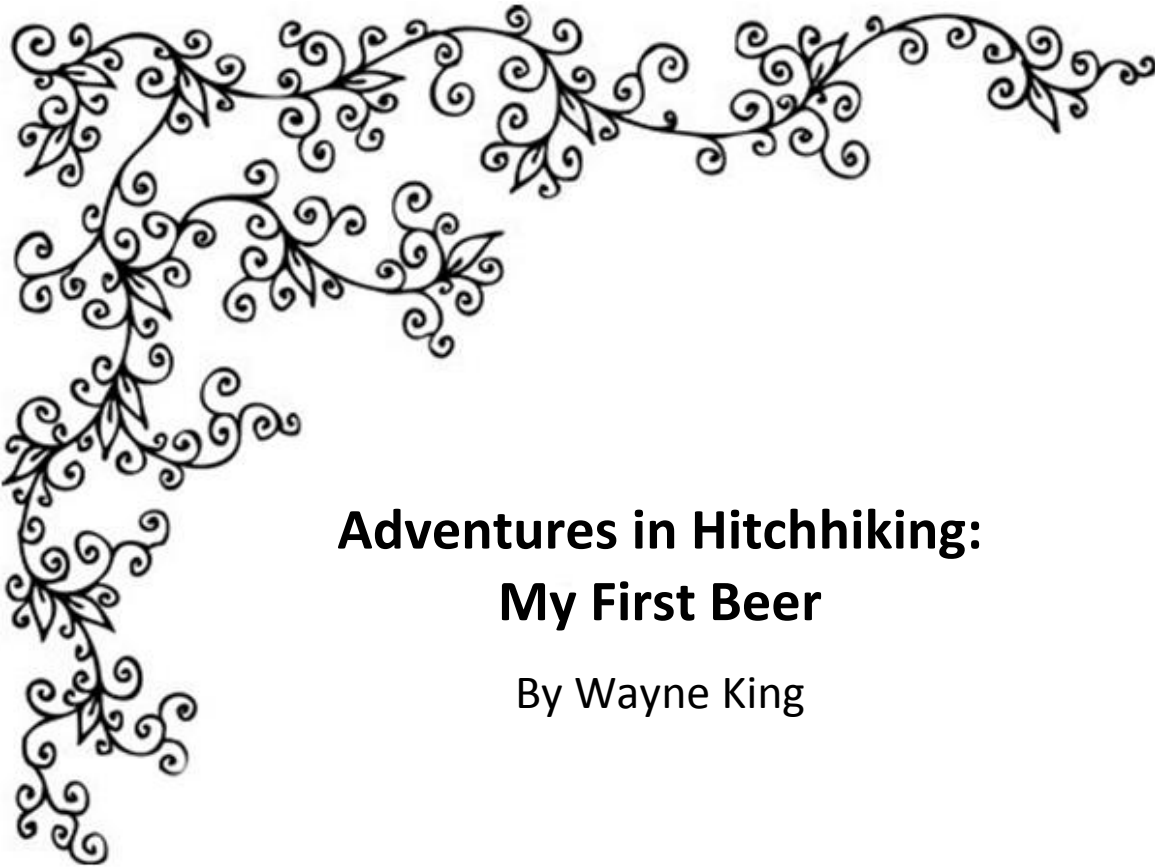
I am looking forward to my brother and his wife moving here from Peterborough. He comes down to visit once in a while but I would really like it if I could spend more time with my family. For now, my cat Sunny keeps me great company when I am home and I am always on the go, to ARTC, church, and different activities and events. I love shopping too.

Some people don't know how lucky they are until they see the world through someone else's eyes or walk in their shoes. Everyone has their own life experience, some of it good and some of it bad.”

All I can say is, “Wheel on my wheels for a day!”



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.



Adventures in Hitchhiking: My First Beer

By Wayne King

No sooner had Pete and I walked through the doorway of our high school hangout, the Alpine Dairy Bar, when our friend Wally strode over and joined us. Foregoing formal greetings he came right to the point. "Let's thumb to Buff and drink beer."

Shocked into momentary silence, my mind raced as I absorbed Wally's proposal. Quick thinking Pete recovered first and exclaimed, "It's a hundred and thirty miles from St. Thomas to Buffalo!"

"Exactly," Wally replied. Without skipping a beat he excitedly carried on, "We've thumbed to Toronto and Windsor, same deal. But this time no four oh one to worry about. No cops. We just thumb a ride, walk across the border, go to the first bar, drink a beer, then return. It's a piece of cake."



Wayne, age 18.

Taking into account that, in the sixties, the drinking age was eighteen in Buffalo, as opposed to twenty-one in Ontario and none of us had ever drank alcohol before, Pete pointed out, "Wayne and I are seventeen, you're only sixteen. Will they serve us? ... How about the border?"

Wally countered, "American bars serve anyone. The border is a piece of cake."

Both Pete and I had experienced Wally's adventurous streak on a number of occasions and had survived, but we also knew that simple things can get complicated. That's when I put in my two cents.

"How much cash do we have?" I'm always thinking about the financial angle.

We solemnly emptied our various wallets and pockets, revealing that our combined resources totaled three dollars and seventy-five cents.

"Enough for beer," noted Wally, obviously cheered.

"Smokes?" I inquired.

Of course, this being 1965 we were all hardened teenage smokers and our vice had to be accounted for. Adding it up we each possessed a partially filled pack of the then popular Rothmans, plus matches and at least one lighter.

"Should last us," Wally quickly replied. Then he reinforced what he had said earlier. "That's the beauty of this trip. It's simple. We thumb to Buff, go to the first bar we see, drink beer, then thumb back. We'll be home by supper."

A lull set in as Pete and I mulled over our options. Skip school and thumb to Buffalo, or go to school. If we decided to attend school we had to leave right away to make it to class on time. I knew Pete well enough to know that he would likely follow Wally. Silently, I weighed my options. There didn't seem to be any great risks.

I could hear old Admiral Farragut whispering his famous words of encouragement in my ear: *Damn the torpedoes. Full speed ahead.*

We were agreed. "Let's go!"

With that, Wally, Pete and I confidently exited the Alpine and strolled purposely down First Avenue to Talbot Street, also known as Number Three, The King's Highway. At the corner we put out our thumbs and started hitch-hiking. We were heading east. Number Three terminated in Fort Erie, right at the border.

I don't remember much about the rides to Fort Erie, except we made great time of just over three hours. At noon hour we stood on the Peace Bridge in Fort Erie looking across at the impressive skyline of Buffalo, New York, an American metropolis at the time, especially to kids from a small Canadian city. We were close to our goal and excited as we stepped onto the bridge. The Peace Bridge was a huge multi-arched bridge, over a mile in length that linked Canadians to our closest neighbour. We



Highway 3, all the way.

simply strolled across and in about fifteen minutes we arrived on the American side. United States Customs was kind to us. Without requiring identification they let us through, on our say so that we were who we said we were and were only visiting for a couple of hours.

The next step was the easiest of the whole trip: find a bar. We walked from Customs and crossed the border access roads into a block of mixed commercial and residential buildings. Lo and behold, set back from the corner on a seedy side street, stood a bar. I don't remember the name. For the first time in the trip I felt nervous. I had never been in a bar. The windows were festooned with neon beer signs obscuring the interior. What would we find behind that big front door? Wally as always was gung-ho and acted decisively to counteract our fear. He manfully grasped the big brass door handle, pulled open the wooden door, and politely stood aside so that Pete and I could proceed him into the gloom.

The bar room was of the style that I would later describe as a hamster cage because it was long and narrow with room for only a bar furnished with high, revolving stools for the patrons. A full length mirror was secured behind the bar and was fronted by a large selection of liquor bottles that added depth to the room. The only other patrons were four mature men who lazily watched our reflections in the mirror, from behind their beer and smokes. We sat close by the door, ready to abandon ship in case of emergency. The bartender wore a world weary look as he shuffled toward us.

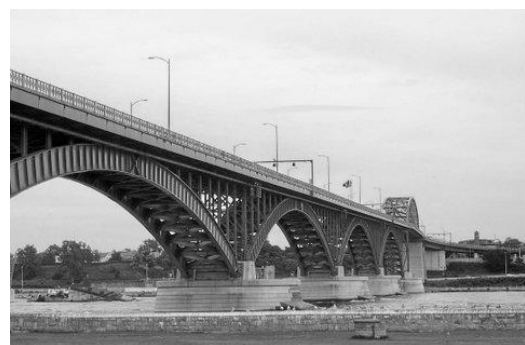
Gazing blandly at each of us in turn he asked no one in particular, "What'll ya have?"

Before Pete or I could utter a word, worldly Wally swiftly took control. "Three Genny's, please."

I was impressed. Wally must have known enough to look at the taps or remembered Genesee from Buffalo Television commercials.

Our first beer was quickly served, paid for and downed. The cold, crisp, clean taste of hops complemented the generous flavouring of light malt. Genny Cream Ale tasted great. It fulfilled all my expectations. In fact all three of us liked it so much that we ordered a second round. We drank the second beer much slower than the first to savour the flavour. When that round was done so was most of our money. Time to get back on the road.

Retracing our steps, we returned to the bridge, but in a much merrier mood than our previous crossing only an hour before.



Peace Bridge, from the Canadian side.

American Customs ignored us, but at the Canadian border a Customs Officer queried us. "Citizenship?" followed by "Where do you live?" and concluding with "What did you purchase?"

Canada didn't require any paperwork or identification either and for a second time our word was good enough. We had done it. We had consumed our first beer and in a foreign country. All that was left was to get back home. It was now about two o'clock.

"With a bit of luck we should make it home no later than six," was my optimistic pronouncement as we hit the road once again.

"Piece of cake," Wally confirmed.

Cruel fate intervened. Oh yes, we did snag rides, but they were short and we had to wait a considerable time between each one. The small towns on the highway, Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Dunnville and Cayuga slowly came and went. The moment of truth raised its ugly head as we paused on the steps of an empty general store in the tiny hamlet of Decewsville to regroup. We were in trouble. We were only about half way to St. Thomas and it was now eight o'clock. Twilight foretold the coming darkness. We had nothing to eat. There were no open stores in evidence, but even if there were we had only a pitiful handful of change and some cigarettes between us.



Our Route – A to C and back – B is Decewsville (Google Maps)

And then there it was. A last life line. A public pay phone outside of the general store. I can't remember whether it was Wally or Pete who suggested calling our parents. One last chance to get home. After all they would be concerned about our whereabouts, wouldn't they? Wally was in bad trouble with his parents, Pete's dad was working afternoons, so that left me to make the call. I didn't want to do it because I knew my Dad. He wasn't about to spend money on gas to drive all the way to Decewsville and back. Cajoled by my friends, I swallowed my pride. Scraping together a dime I made the call.

The cheerful voice at the other end was my Dad. "No, I can't pick you up."

My Dad had survived the Great Depression and World War Two so he knew a thing or two about hiking and hunger. He wasn't worried a bit. Humiliated, I hung up. Well that was that.

Then the inky black of night took hold. Lamps came on in a few nearby houses, but not enough to illuminate three lads thumbing. Our only recourse was to walk and try to hitch.

Wearily we walked out of Decewsville and disappeared into the still, dark night of Southern Ontario farm country, knowing that no one would see us on this long, lonely stretch of highway.

Black night passed slowly as we waited impatiently for the dawn. We walked and we walked and we walked some more. For a time we actually skipped figuring that we could make better time, while using a different set of muscles. The occasional automobile swished by us in the darkness, but not one stopped. Tired, hungry and discouraged we summoned up our final reserves of strength to carry on.

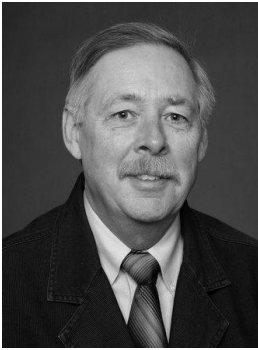
Morning finally came and with it the optimism engendered by daylight. Another fine May day. At least the weather continued to co-operate. When we finally stumbled into Jarvis we noted the time was nine o'clock. It was now official. We had missed a second day of school. Slowly, rides interspersed with the inevitable walks got us through Simcoe, Delhi, Courtland and Tillsonburg. Hungry, tired. Morning went and the noon weather brightened our spirits as we motored into Aylmer. We were now less than fifteen miles from our goal, St. Thomas and home.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon when we finally arrived at the corner of Talbot and Flora Streets in the heart of St. Thomas. We didn't say much as we each went our separate way. Wally went south, Pete just walked around the corner, and I headed north along Flora and home.

My parents and I briefly exchanged greetings when I entered the house. But that was it as I headed straight for my room, eagerly anticipating sleep, glorious sleep. I wearily stripped off my road grimed clothing and fell into the waiting arms of Morpheus.

The next morning Pete, Wally and I met once again at the Alpine. Numerous school mates approached us, noted our two day absence and inevitably inquired, "How was the thumbing?"

To which one of us would reply, in as optimistic a voice as could be mustered, "Piece of cake."



Wayne was born and raised in St. Thomas, but has lived in Brantford for over 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 and genealogy. Now that he is retired he is able to devote time to creative writing and reading.