



Remember When ...

Lifescapes Writing Group 2014
Brantford Public Library





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

Editor: Robin Harding

Editorial Assistance: Lorie Steiner and Carolyn Harding

Photo editing: Geoffrey Moyer

Corner art: Carolyn Harding

Cover: Robin Harding

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Table of Contents

Introduction	5
<i>California Dreaming</i>	7
Bill Van Gaal	
<i>Could This Really Have Been One Summer?</i>	17
Karan Stemmler	
<i>How I Learned to Type (With a Little Help From My Friends)</i>	23
Wayne King	
<i>Illegal Rodents</i>	31
Ardith Martin	
<i>It Takes the Darkness to See the Stars</i>	36
Jean Henderson	
<i>Life at Georgina House</i>	45
Kay Boyd	
<i>Lives Asunder</i>	54
Bertha Joseph	
<i>My Sister's Wedding</i>	66
Paul Benoit	
<i>Not Quite Grown-Up</i>	70
Sharon Bolger	
<i>Potato Pancakes</i>	74
Gurmeet Panag	
<i>Three Memories</i>	81
Marilyn Bricker	
<i>The Trouble with Secrets</i>	86
Nancy Poole	
<i>Watercolours</i>	92
Vickie Iorio	
<i>When the Lights Go On Again All Over the World</i>	95
Gillian Holden	

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 seventh year running the program at the Brantford Public Library and *Remember When ...* is our seventh 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: Zig Misiak, author and historian; Larry Brown, author and instructor; Penny Mackenzie, library board chairperson and English teacher; and Lorie Lee Steiner, magazine editor and writer. We appreciate the time you spent with us more than you know.

As always, I am in awe of the dedication and talent I've been privileged to witness over the course of this program. What we do in Lifescapes isn't easy and every year presents more challenges to overcome. Beyond the considerable time and energy required to craft these very personal stories, there is also the potential for personal injury, illness, or even a polar vortex to disrupt the creative flow. (The polar vortex was particularly vexing.) This anthology is a reminder of the importance of persevering beyond adversity to find our moments of peace, those times that allow us to stop and reflect and ask each other: *Remember when ...?*

Yes. We remember.

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



California Dreaming

by
Bill Van Gaal

"Daddy, can we go to Disneyland to see the Mickey Mouse show?" asked my young daughter as she watched the Mouseketeers on T.V.

My reply, intended to put the issue on the back burner for a while was, "Honey, that would take about five or six days of driving to get there and I don't think we can do that now. Maybe in a year or two we can go there."

This request came out of the blue, but did get my wife and me thinking and talking about long distance travel and camping. We had both grown up on farms, Sandy in Norfolk County and me in Simcoe County and travel or camping had not been on the agenda for farm families. There was always too much work to be done especially when the weather was compatible with camping.

We did do some camping after our marriage in 1964 with borrowed tents and tent trailers. While it was primitive camping, we did enjoy it, but would have liked more creature comforts. The birth of our daughter in 1967 temporarily stopped those activities but the interest was still there and we discussed future excursions with children to think about.

1968 saw us move from our small apartment in Toronto to our own home in Glen Williams on the outskirts of Georgetown. It was there in 1969 that our son was born. We hadn't lost our interest in camping and in February 1970 purchased a new Volkswagen Westphalia camper bus priced at \$4253.75 including license, taxes and delivery charges. We traded in a 1965 Meteor Montcalm convertible and its value was deducted from the final price. The vehicle included an attachable tent and had a pop-up roof and a place for the children to sleep above the front seats. For a few years this was also our only vehicle for family transportation.

We traveled extensively and camped with it whenever we could. In some of these campgrounds we met people who belonged to a camping club called National Campers and Hikers Association, NCHA for short. Members were friendly, helpful and always spoke of the benefits of belonging. There was no chapter in the Georgetown area and along with a group of five or six interested families we were determined to start a chapter and set about to make it happen.

Hungry Hollow Hoboes



The first Hungry Hollow Hobos Executive.

Source: Georgetown Herald

In the Glen Williams Community Center our Charter was presented to us by the Canadian NCHA Executive on March 21, 1973. Six couples formed the first Chapter Executive with Sandra and I being the secretaries. The name came from local history and signified an area where strange things allegedly happened in the past. The hobo part of the name also spoke to the mobility and travel camping offered, a group of people with wanderlust.

A Larger Camper

Round about '72, with the children growing and all of us enjoying the camping life we decided that a larger camper was required soon. The usual shopping for new and used campers proved that the family budget would be strained and we looked at alternatives. Some of the camping community we had met used old converted school busses made into large and well equipped motor homes at a very reasonable cost. In the fall of '72 we purchased a full size school bus, designated as a 72 passenger, 3 children to a seat, from an operator in Orillia for \$900.00. It was a 1961 International with a modified 327 cubic inch G.M. motor and a 5-speed

standard transmission. Mileage on the odometer was 99,000+ miles or 160,000 kilometres in metric. The tires and body were in excellent condition and I drove it to our home in Glen Williams.

Immediately after getting the bus home I removed all 24 seats and advertised them for sale in the local paper raising \$75.00. Our intention was to get it fully converted and ready for a trip to California in the summer of '73. That timeline would satisfy two desires our family had: Disneyland for the children and the 1973 International NCHA convention in Los Banos, California. We asked my Sister Liz and her husband Terry if they would help with converting the bus into a camper and join us on the California trip. They readily agreed, which meant there would be eight travellers, four adults and four children aged, 4, 5, 6, and 7. It promised to be an adventure of a lifetime and we planned to be on the road for six weeks.



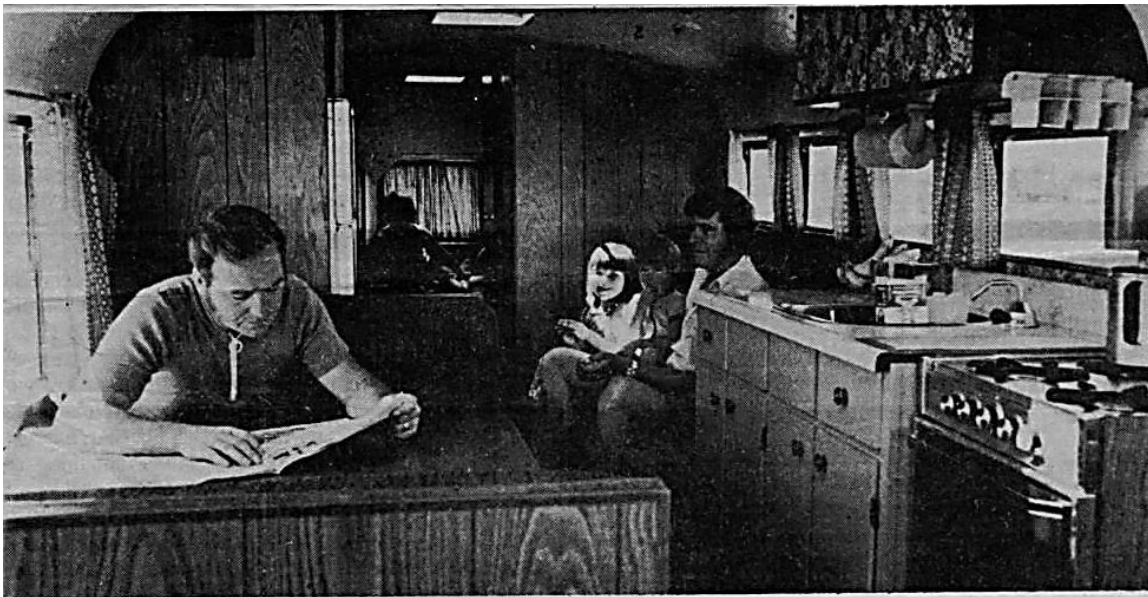
California Bound Travelers. Photo credit: Ken Castle

Laying out the floor plan took us in excess of a month. The floor was marked with chalk and pieces of cardboard until a suitable layout was found that would make the best use of the available space. We had a full 34 feet (10 meters) of space to work with and we wanted to maximize our available room. With the floor plan done we set out to replace some of the windows with metal on the outside and wood paneling on the inside. We painted the outside cream and white and built cupboards and as much storage space as possible. I purchased a new propane four burning stove with a full oven and a refrigerator that ran on propane and 120 volt current when it was available. The kitchen dinette had storage under the bench seats and converted into a bed for two adults. In the middle of the camper on each side there were two sets of bunk beds which slept the children and turned into sofas for the day.

Remember When ...

In the rear was a permanent double size bed with storage under it, accessed from the rear door. Here we stored tools, hoses, the BBQ and other assorted items. In the kitchen area was a sink with water supplied from a storage tank underneath the camper, the propane tank was there also. A clothes closet was built in front of the back bedroom and a bathroom with sink and portable toilet on the opposite wall. The two doors opened in opposite directions closing the bathroom off from the rest of the camper.

Lighting was supplied from two 12-volt batteries recharged when the engine was running and an electric battery charger when hydro was available. The total investment including the bus purchase, some minor mechanical repairs, and the whole interior conversion cost \$2300.00.



Inside View. Photo credit: Ken Castle

'73 turned out to be an extremely busy year for the Van Gaal family. Early in the year while working on the camper, and working a full time job, we made a snap decision to sell our home in The Glen. The Ontario government had announced that the GO Service would be extended to Georgetown before the end of the year. That resulted in an immediate spike in real estate prices and we decided to take advantage of it. After a quick sale of our home we purchased an under-construction home in Brantford with a June 1 closing date. Our California adventure was scheduled to start June 16, 1973 leaving from Brantford. That timing would allow us three weeks of travel time before the campvention was scheduled to start on July 6.

On The Road

We did meet our schedule and departed Brantford early the morning of June 16 crossing into the USA at Sarnia, Ontario. The first area of interest for us was Bemidji, Minnesota. There was a theme park there featuring a large statue of Paul Bunyan and his Baby Blue Ox. The park had lots of rides for the children and entertained them for the best part of two days. The area is also at the headwaters of the Mississippi River.

Next we headed to Winnipeg Manitoba and a visit with two families of Sandy's relatives, aunts, uncles and cousins. From there the prairies seemed to go on forever and the scenery



Kamioverlander Days.

didn't change till we had passed through Calgary, Alberta and the Rocky Mountains came into view. We did the usual tourist things and visited Banff, Jasper, Lake Louise, and some of the other mountain areas of interest. The drive through the mountains put a noticeable strain on the old engine but it got us through without any problems whatsoever. We then went to Kamloops, British Columbia to visit a childhood friend of my Sister who lived there. Our visit coincided with the major summer event of

Kamloops, Kamioverlander Days. The weekend was all about activities celebrating the arrival of the first pioneers on rafts floated down the river and settlement of the area. We all enjoyed the festival and visit and hit the road again on Monday morning.

The U.S.A.

We traveled the rest of the way through the mountains but decided to avoid Vancouver and entered into the United States south of Surrey, British Columbia, getting onto Hwy 5, a multi-lane highway with very little to see or do. Since we had lots of time we decided to leave it and follow Hwy 101 all the way down the coast. It presented many opportunities for the kids to get their feet wet in the ocean and run off some of their pent up energy on the beaches.

At one of our stops there were some intermittent huge swells coming into shore and coming a good distance up the beach. The two youngest were wading in the water up to about their knees and we wanted to have them come in to eat lunch. They were having too much fun to hurry in and were not paying any attention to me. I noticed that there were a couple of the big swells on their way in so I yelled at them, "Darryl and Lisa, you had better come in fast

because the tide is coming in quickly and it might get over your heads!" They saw the first swell coming and ran as fast as their little legs would carry them, not stopping till they got to the picnic table where the rest of us were starting our lunch. Collecting seashells and small smooth stones were enjoyed by the four of them. A couple of the beaches also had hundreds of seals sunning themselves and making a lot of noise that all four of the children enjoyed. It was a good decision we had made to follow the coast highway and see the seaside attractions along the way.

San Francisco was our next destination and we manoeuvred the camper through the traffic and hills of the city without any difficulty at all, visiting point of interest such as the waterfront and Fisherman's wharf. The Monterey Bay area took up a couple of days and included a tour of the areas of interest on a tour bus. Then it was off to the ultimate destination of our California adventure: the NCHA Campvention at Los Banos. The campvention was scheduled to start on July 6 and was located 150 km from the Bay area in a semi desert setting and very dry. The San Luis Reservoir at the edge of the camping area provided swimming and other water activities.

Campvention

We arrived on the Friday, which was also the first day of registration and campsite selection. We chose a spot close to the reservoir and not far from the porta-potties spread throughout the grounds; with four little ones, this was an important necessity. The camping area was a 400 acre field where the organizers were going to cram the 2500+ registered camping units and all those who had not done prior registration. Campers were expected to arrive and spend the week with everything from backpacks and tents to huge motor homes. No electric or water hook ups were available and no sewer lines. Water was provided from large tanker trucks and sewage waste was dumped into an underground tank and pumped out regularly by a honey wagon. It was primitive camping but adequate for our needs. A large area was set aside for activities and the headquarters. The only shade available was around the reservoir and the awnings rigged up by the campers. The camping fee was \$17.00 for the week.



The children attended organized activities most of the time and adults wandered throughout the site visiting and keeping an eye on the kids. Organized recreational activities included fishing, swimming, hiking, bicycling, rock hunting and bird watching, all centered at the reservoir. The major event for the week was a community breakfast and parade put on by the campers, down the main street of Los Banos and was concluded with pot luck dinner, a street dance, campfire singing and continuous entertainment. It was a great conclusion to our week and we prepared ourselves to get on the road again.

Disneyland

Leaving the convention we again headed for the coast highway and took our time following it to Los Angeles and visits to Disneyland and Universal Studios theme parks. Our four children all enjoyed themselves and had had their fill of rides and shows after four days. They did not see a Mouseketeer show but did watch a children's performance on the outdoor theatre used at times for the T.V. show. We also took and organized bus tour of the city including the homes of the movie and music stars that lived in the Beverly Hills and Malibu areas. The adult couples took turns staying home with the children while the other couple went out for the night to enjoy the Los Angeles nightlife.

Las Vegas

Las Vegas was our next destination, following Hwy 15 through Barstow and across the mountains into Nevada and the hot desert where we observed "sand devils", twisters of sand shaped like tornadoes spiralling high into the air. By the time we pulled into a campground on the outskirts of Vegas the thermometer read 105° F (or 40°C). No campground in the area offered sites with shade so we finally booked into one that had lots of swimming and water activities available. They also rented out "air conditioners for campers" which were actually swamp coolers, an apparatus similar to a de-humidifier but instead of taking moisture out of the air it put moisture (humidity) into the camper. The unit had a water reservoir and a pump that ran the water onto a screen, with a fan behind it blowing through the soaked screen. It provided very little relief day or night. The children wore long sleeve shirts whenever outside as well as sun lotion and hats and spent most of their days in the pool.

The adults again took turns going into the city while the other couple stayed with the children. It provided a good opportunity to spend a night taking in the entertainment and sights of the entertainment capital of the world. While in the area and traveling through it we visited the Hoover Dam, the Grand Canyon, the Petrified Forest and the Painted Desert.

Heading for home

On the trip for home we followed the old Route 66 (of "get your kicks" fame). Back in those days the road still had many of the original attractions and buildings that have not survived into the 21st century. Along the road heading toward Albuquerque, New Mexico we saw many signs advertising a campsite with "no highway noise at a reasonable price". As it was getting late in the afternoon we decided this would be an ideal place to rest our weary heads for a good night's sleep. It looked fantastic as we set ourselves up for the night, the kids had a small playground close to our campsite to play in and all seemed well as we started to prepare supper. After cleaning up and getting things ready to put the little ones to bed, we really started to relax and enjoy the tranquility and chirping of the many birds. This was too good to be true. The first sign of things to come was a rumbling off in the distance that lasted over 10 minutes. Then it almost disappeared only to start getting really loud and appeared to be heading our way fast. Imagine our surprise when a huge airplane flew directly over the campground and off into the distance climbing steadily. A short time later it happened again and again. True to the signs coming to this place, we heard no noises from the highway. The folks who ran the campground told us that the planes were coming from a military airport and were carrying troops and supplies to feed the needs of the Vietnam War that was raging in that time period. The only good news they had for us was that it usually slowed down around midnight because there was only a short window of time when these flights could be accommodated for unloading at their destination.

From Oklahoma City we left old Route 66 and headed north east on Hwy 44 and crossed the border into Windsor arriving back in Brantford and home six weeks after leaving. We had travelled over 7,000 miles (12,600 km) and averaged 9 to 10 miles per gallon of gasoline at an average price of 45 cents per gallon throughout the U.S.A. We experienced no mechanical problems with the old bus other than a concern over a noise heard from the motor at times, that when we stopped to have it checked at a G.M. dealership was diagnosed by the mechanic as a noisy valve lifter that he recommended an additive into the oil for. It worked.

Speaking of oil, I am reminded of an incident that should be put into this travel story. It shows what can happen when we don't use our brains. The camper needed an oil change along the route and we decided to do it ourselves. I had brought along a dozen cans of oil in case we needed them along the route. As it turned out the camper did not burn any oil and we used some of them for the oil change. We pulled into a campsite and after settling in, preparing and eating supper, Terry and I decided that the engine was cool enough to change the oil. I had a few heavy plastic bags in the rear storage area and got one of them out to catch the oil in until we could properly dispose of it at our next stop for gas. The bag was put under the drain hole and the plug removed.

I crawled out from under the camper and started to walk away, when Terry said, "Hey Bill, didn't you put the bag under the drain?"

I replied, "I sure did and put a metal pan under the bag as well.

Terry responded, "Well, something is wrong because the oil is running on the cement." Then I heard, "Oh my god the bag has melted and the oil is overflowing the pan."

There was not much to do by that time other than cleanup from my mistake. I had brought along some wood dust and shavings to use as fire starter and used that to absorb the spill. We used some detergent and hot water and scrubbed the cement til you could hardly see the stain. I did notify the camp owner who was not concerned, saying "We constantly have to clean oil from some of the sites because some campers leak oil onto the cement when they are parked. No problem." He also said he would dispose of the oil soaked material for me.

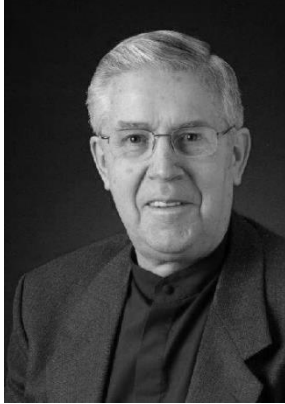
After all the time on the road the children were still getting along with each other, as were the adults. We enjoy reliving our dream vacation watching the Super 8 mm movies both families made along the route, which have since been converted into DVDs. Our dreaming had become reality. Would I do it again? In a minute!



After many more years of using the old camper and it finally becoming unsafe to drive on the highways and byways, we permanently parked it at the end of our driveway at our home beside the swimming pool. We made further use of it as the pool change room, and as a place to store the pool equipment and outside furniture during the winters. The kids made good use of it as a play place, and for sleepovers. When finally it became an eyesore due to rust and deterioration, I stripped it of anything I thought I could sell and advertised all the equipment for sale. It didn't take long to get rid of it all and realizing most of my original cost of the equipment returned. Then I called an automotive wrecking yard and had it towed away.

The end is near.

It had served us well for many, many years but its time had come.

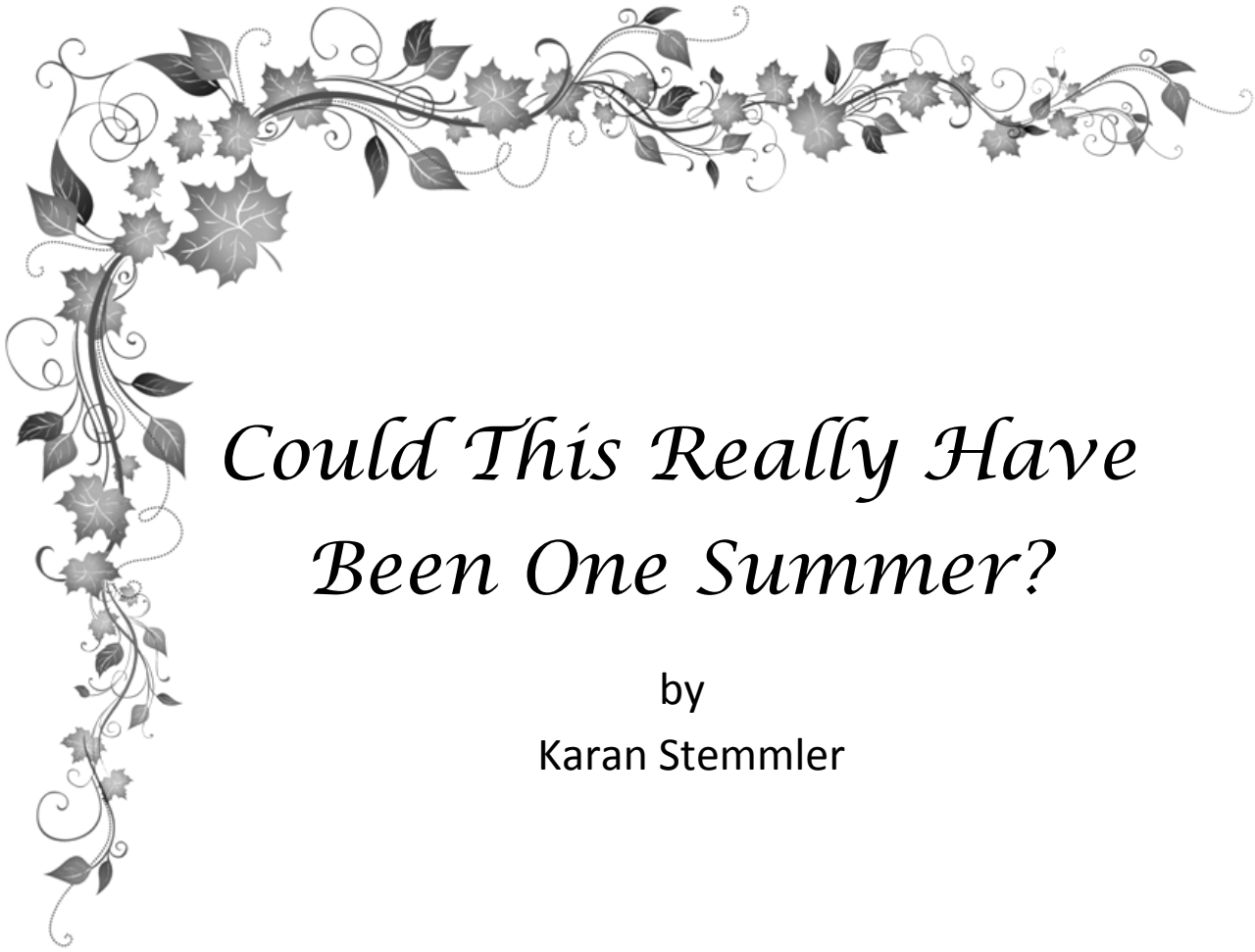


Bill Van Gaal was born in the Netherlands in Feb. 1942 and immigrated to Canada with his family in Feb. 1951, settling first in Quebec. That July they moved to the Barrie, Ontario area where he was raised. Bill dropped out of school in grade 8 the day before his 16th birthday.

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 (50 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 27 years, with the past 14 as President of the board. Genealogy and memoir writing are also on the agenda for the future.



Could This Really Have Been One Summer?

by
Karan Stemmler

"No more pencils, no more books; no more teachers' dirty looks!" our class screamed as we ran from the school and out onto the street.

I was very excited thinking about my two month holiday from the confines of school. I remember really taking my time walking home that day. I dreamed of spending every moment of that summer doing what I wanted to do, not what I was told to do. I had great plans to out-skip (in double dutch) a neighbourhood girl who could jump rope into the high 700s! When we turned the rope for her we had to switch off with each other a few times because our arms felt limp as she skipped along as lightly as a discarded gum wrapper. I don't know how she continued to jump with us chiding her to trip or fall we all envied her and I hoped to be the one that would beat her record that summer. I had a few other things that I wanted to accomplish, but I also wanted spontaneity in each day. I wanted this to be my best summer ever.

I arrived home, said "Hi!" to my Mom then ran outside to find my best friend Janet who attended a different school than I. She was walking with another kid from our block who went to her school. I learned that they had already made plans for the evening and they didn't include me. I was miffed at this because I had hoped that we would play together a lot, and here it was the first day and she had made other plans. I went back into my house and told my mom.

"I don't want to hear it," she said. "It's the same day that school finished and you are already whining. You have plenty of brothers and sisters to play with, so get out there and play."

My parents had nine children and I was smack dab in the middle. Joyce, my sister next to me was sixteen months older and she had no interest in me. She had friends from school that she went to Saturday afternoon dances at the U.A.W. hall with. UCK! She was always off doing things and I wasn't much interested in doing what she was doing anyway. I was quite a "tomboy", as they used to say. Outdoors and adventure were my fun. My brother Joe, next to me in the opposite direction, was four years younger than I, so I didn't want him tagging along with me. The rest of my siblings were of varying ages older and younger than I was.



Karan Thomas, age 9

If my friend didn't want me around than I wouldn't be, I thought as I stomped up the stairs to the room that I shared with my two older sisters. I plopped down on my bed and scowled at the ceiling, willing it to fall on my head. If I wasn't wanted maybe God would take me away and then everyone would miss me so much that they would pray to have me back again, and they would swear to play with me every day from then on. Was it just me or did every kid have these dramatic thoughts?

I picked up my *Calling All Girls* magazine and flipped through it. I suppose that because I was "tom-boyish" my parents bought me the subscription to this magazine for girls. We certainly didn't have the money to waste, and it wasn't in this instance. I enjoyed it immensely and I had it read from cover to cover in a couple of days. It was something that I could actually call my own in our household. My younger sister was a baby then and my brothers certainly wouldn't want to read it, so it was mine and mine alone. Reading it had calmed me down and I realized that tomorrow was another day. I ran back down the stairs to do whatever.

Upon awakening the next morning I stretched my arms high above my head and let my left one fall on my "dancing sister's" head. She did not move so for good measure I stretched out my leg and pushed her over a bit. Having to sleep with your sister had its perks and annoying her was one of them. I jumped out of bed before she could retaliate.

That day I was planning to go with my friends to the river behind Glenhyrst Gardens. (After my sulk I realized that I still had friends, even if I couldn't spend every day with them.) There was a sandy area where kids hung out and played beach ball and I had been there once when I tagged along with my sister and her friends. I can't recall what we did that was so much fun but in my memory it seemed like a good summer vacation destination, especially when I was quite certain I wouldn't be travelling any further than that. Our family, in my recollection, had only ever once been on a holiday and that was to Roseneath, Ontario with our uncle Ned.

I could only get one friend to agree to go on the pretend vacation with me. We walked to Glenhyrst and wandered up the long driveway. She had never been this far from her house without her family and she began to wonder aloud if I knew where I was going. It had taken the better part of an hour to get that far and we had a distance to go. We took a path to the left of the building and then climbed over a broken-down, rusty, wire fence. I knew that we needed to turn right when we reached the train tracks but where were they? My sidekick started to complain again. She thought that we had done enough walking and in her opinion I didn't know where to go next. On we trekked. I was thinking that we had missed a turn or something. Maybe I didn't know where I was going? Oh no, I was getting frightened. I had not asked my Mom if I could go hiking all the way up here. What if we were lost and no one ever found us? In my bravado I told my friend that it wasn't much further. I prayed that it really wasn't. I was relieved when we came to an area where there were burned logs positioned in the middle of a blackened circle.

"Someone had a fire here." I stated the obvious. Maybe this was the place where everyone hung out. I wondered if I had actually found it. Just then I saw my sister Joyce coming down the hill and she was holding a boy's hand! Boy oh boy, I could really get her into trouble if I told on her. Then I re-thought that and remembered that she could get me into trouble too. I decided to keep that information to myself until it could serve me better. Her best friend and her boyfriend were following behind. My sister was very surprised and annoyed to see me there. After she questioned the life out of us, she sat on one of the logs that were placed around the fire pit. Her friend and her guy sat down and began kissing. I know that Joyce wanted to be necking too and I wasn't going to let them. That was another one of the perks of being a younger sister. They all tried telling us scary stories to frighten us off home, but it was daytime so the tales didn't carry the same weight that they would have when told around a campfire at night, as the scorched ground could testify.

My sister and her friends finally gave in and we all made the journey back together. Neither my sister nor I told our parents anything about our day. Maybe with so many children in the family we weren't even missed. In those days, kids played outside for hours at a time. None of us had organized sports or lessons to attend.

Our family shared one bicycle amongst us all, if my memory serves me correctly, and that bike had only one handle grip. My friend Janet and I went riding our bikes around our block from Lawrence Street to Alonzo to McMurray Street. At some point we tired of that, so to make things more fun we decided to come down McMurray quickly and then she would cross

over in front of me. We did, and for some reason I closed my eyes as I barrelled down the hill! I thank my lucky stars that we had not collided and wonder what in the world was wrong with me. As we pushed our bicycles homeward we made a pact that we would not tell anyone about how foolish we had been. To have even thought of doing that was bad enough, but to have done it was plain crazy.

Apparently that scare wasn't enough to deter me from riding the bike. I can recall riding it along the sidewalk in our block. Remember me saying that it only had one handle grip? Well, I was pedalling myself past a grumpy neighbour's house and he came hurrying out his front door and yelled at me to get on the road. He startled me and I twisted the handle bars around as I fell and crashed into his brand new car. The gripless end was stuck into the top of my inner leg, blood spurting from the wound. He cursed at me and I'll admit it now: I was giving him the bad words right back. He did not care that I was injured, concerned only about his vehicle.

I made my way up our block and my brothers Joe, Greg and Scott saw me coming and ran screaming to Mom. She ran out the front door toward me.

"What on earth happened to you?"

She later told me that all she heard was something about a "bike and toilet", which she really couldn't figure out. After cleaning me up and hearing my tale more coherently she understood ... and she wasn't pleased.

The neighbourhood kids secretly called this grumpy man "Toilet" and I can't recall why unless in our innocence it was the nastiest word we could come up with. I was taken down the street to his house by my Mom and she talked with him. Back then you often rode on the sidewalk so I was not in the wrong. Thankfully my parents were not financially responsible for the damage.

One day I heard my mother calling me but I didn't want to answer her. I was up in the tree in our yard where I knew I shouldn't be. My plan for the summer was to enjoy myself and I was. One of my younger brothers told on me and mom came out and said to come down from the tree before I fell out of it. I said that I was going to stay there.

"Okay," Mom said.

I should have known that meant something. Mom pulled a lawn chair up into the shade of that tree and sat there for quite some time. We were having a match of wills. When I decided to come down she would not let me. She told me that if I wanted to act like a monkey and disobey her, I could live in the tree. I had to stay up in the tree until my dad came home from work. He chastised me for being somewhere that I knew I wasn't supposed to be, for keeping Mom from her work (maybe she secretly liked that part) and for the possibility of costing the family money if I had fallen and needed a doctor.

I played it safe for quite some time. I skipped every day and I did improve my numbers. I joined in with the rest of the children and we gave all of the games we knew a fair shake. We played kick-the-can, hide and seek, red rover, mother-may-I?, and tag. I was having a good summer.

On the B.G.H. property across the street from our house, construction of the nurses' residence was of definite interest to me. I went there to see the work progressing. One time I found a wallet that had one piece of foreign paper money in it. I thought about how rich I would be if I turned it in for a reward. After showing it to my family and getting into trouble for going to the construction site, I discovered that my great find was worth about 25 cents. I still have the wallet and money in my trunk.

I have one more incident to relate about that summer. My dad had built an addition with a flat roof onto our home. I had climbed on the roof through the bathroom window. (I don't know why now.) My brother Joe spied me and said that he was going to tell. I saw that he was about to shut the window, meaning I would have no escape unless I was goofy enough to jump to the ground. Actually, I was stupider than that. I balled up my fist and tried to punch Joe through the window ... that he had already closed. The glass shattered, I screamed, and he went tearing off to find help.

Once again Mom came upon me spurting blood from a wound. This time she could figure out what had happened. To this day I have an ugly raised scar on my left wrist since I did not get medical treatment for the injury. I wish that I had listened better when my parents warned me of dangers and that I would think before I acted impulsively.

September arrived and Mom joyfully waved goodbye to most of her children as we reluctantly walked out through the door. I remember her singing as we left her to the relative quiet. I heard the words "Happy days ..."

Nowadays I wish that I could go back to my carefree childhood days. I don't understand life now. Everything changes so rapidly. We have computers, cell phones, tablets (not pills), tweeting (not what the birds do), texting, 800 plus channels on television, and cars that can park physically un-assisted by us. I could go on and on. Everyone, it seems, is hurrying, worrying and then burrowing into their electronic lives.

People are becoming anti-social.

Every day the media reports are loaded with sickening, violent, and confusing stories. We hear people say that they are praying for PEACE. Hopefully, one day I will be able to sing about happy days too, and it will be true.

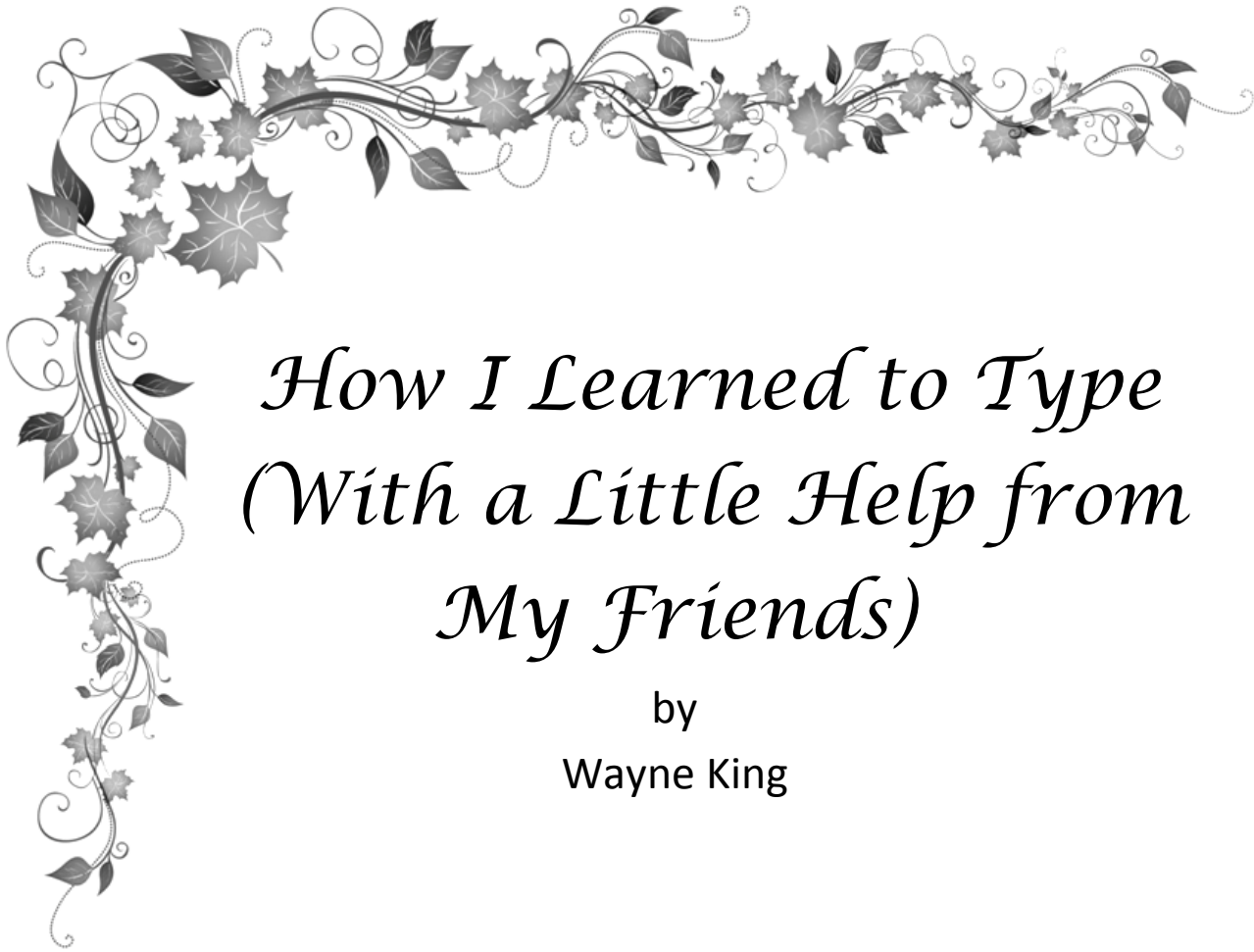


Lawrence Street, 1962

In back: Joe Thomas, Janet Derasp, Joyce Thomas (holding baby Katie Thomas), Karan Thomas

In front: Scott Thomas, Gregory Thomas

Karan M. Stemmler (Thomas) is a 62 year old wife, mother and grandmother whose family has lived in Brantford since 1784. This was her fourth journey through the "Lifescapes" program.



How I Learned to Type (With a Little Help from My Friends)

by
Wayne King

A teenager's life is fraught with challenges. As a sixteen year old two of my chief challenges were learning how to type, and discovering The Beatles.

The Student Typist

In November of 1963 I attended Central Elgin Collegiate Institute (CECI), St. Thomas, Ontario where my most difficult subject was typing. By the time the school year was into its third month there were a number of us, mostly of the male persuasion, who were struggling to learn the basic typing skills. I, for one, knew I was falling behind. My projects were not being completed either on time or accurately. In fact, I was failing. I just couldn't get a handle on typing. It was cold comfort knowing that I wasn't the only one.



Both pictures: Central Elgin Collegiate Institute, St Thomas, ON.

In the left hand photo, the typing room is to the left of the main entrance.

Below is a close up of the typing room. Urban legend claims that it is haunted by the ghosts of typists past.



My inability to grasp typing could not be laid at my teacher, Mrs. Lawton's, door. She was a competent and experienced teacher who had taught typing to many students over a career that spanned twenty years. The only rational conclusion was that I was at fault. I had to find a way to succeed.



A standard keyboard.

Beatlemania Rears Its Shaggy Head

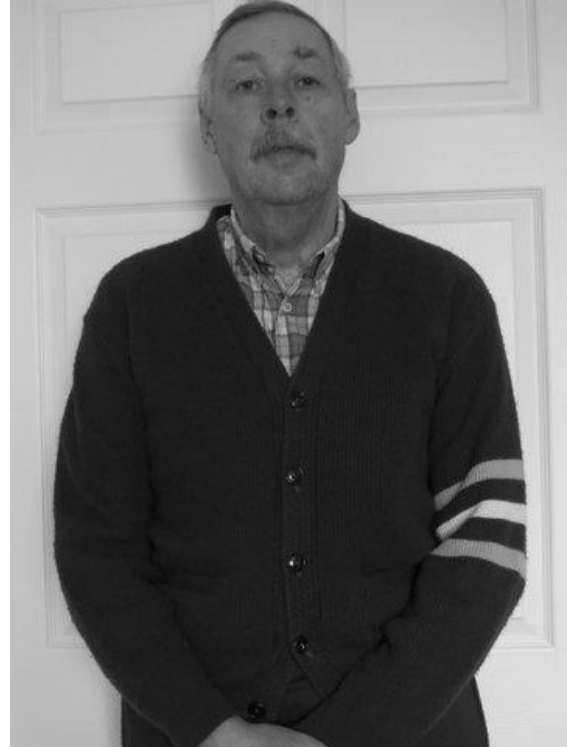
Typing wasn't the only thing on my teenage mind. One frosty November day, seemingly out of the blue, my buddy Pete inquired: "Have you heard The Beatles?"

In 1963 events moved at a much slower pace than we are used to today. In recent weeks excited talk had started to circulate about an incredible English musical quartet called The Beatles. The teenage pipeline and sporadic newspaper coverage confirmed that The Beatles were a sensation in Britain. In fact, the press had coined a special term, Beatlemania, to describe the hysteria that they inspired with their music and their look. They played rock and roll, but wrote many of their own songs, both for themselves and for other bands. They were a self contained, drums/guitar oriented band. Each of them played an instrument and sang, either solo or harmony. One of them actually played the harmonica!

Despite the fact that The Beatles had yet to produce a record for the North American market some of my fellow students had actually heard an imported song or two beamed out by powerful American AM radio stations. I hadn't been that fortunate.

So it was that I admitted to Pete that, while I had heard *of* The Beatles, I had not *heard* them. He was in the same boat. I was determined to experience their music before they faded away as was frequently the fate of rock and roll performers.

Under my breath, I muttered, "When will I get to hear them?"



Wayne (2014) models his high school sweater .It is brown wool with two gold rings on either side of centre white ring, complemented by a purple patterned Madras shirt. Source: Wayne's personal collection of vintage clothes.

The British Are Coming

Then a glimmer of hope shone through the darkness. Was it a coincidence that shortly after my discussion with Pete I heard that a Beatles' Long Play Record, LP, would be released in Canada on Monday, November 25? That meant widespread radio play for sure. I could hear them on the radio and form my own opinion of their prowess.

Interlude: Friday, November 22 to Sunday, November 24 The JFK Assassination

Just days before The Beatles released their LP cruel fate intervened to distract my attention from both typing and The Beatles. At noon Friday, President John F. Kennedy was shot and died. Shortly thereafter a new President was sworn in, while the grieving widow looked on. The depressing weekend finally ended on yet another sombre note, when Kennedy's apparent assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald, was shot dead, right in front of the cameras, while in police custody. The three killings (don't forget Officer Tippett, shot by Oswald) shocked everyone so much that anyone who was old enough to remember, vividly recalls the weekend events as they unfolded, even after fifty years. The dream of a new style of political leadership died for many. The mood of the public was sad and sorrowful. We mourned. Most of all hope for a better future had evaporated for many.



President Kennedy's motorcade, moments before the assassination. Source: Wikipedia

Monday, November 25, 1963 "Beatlemania, With The Beatles" is Released

Finally that dismal weekend was over. It was back to school. Then the rock began to roll. The Beatles Long Play record, "Beatlemania, With The Beatles", was released in Canada. It was their second LP. Their first LP had been issued in England, but not yet in North America. It had taken a second LP before the North American record companies had finally caught up with the phenomenon of Beatlemania. Its impact would strike me and millions of others like a thunderbolt. Time to save up my quarters and purchase the LP for four dollars and twenty-nine cents, not available in stereo.

Tuesday, November 26, The Die Is Cast

Events moved faster than I could. In fact, the very next day, I was sitting at my desk ready to experience another frustrating Typing class. Everyone was still stunned and depressed over the death of President Kennedy and his Camelot vision, the previous Friday. I was ready for something happy.

Mrs. Lawton took her place in front of the class. Seemingly out of the blue, and to everyone's surprise, she softly inquired "Does anyone own a copy of the new Beatles LP?"

Mike Loucks immediately thrust his right hand high in the air.

I was stupefied when Mrs. Lawton made a unique request, "Would you bring it in for our Friday class?"

Mike answered in the affirmative. A wave of excitement and anticipation enveloped me. This was a fabulous opportunity for me to finally experience The Beatles.

My next thought was: *Does Mrs. Lawton, a woman of mature years, really want to hear The Beatles too?*

Then my curiosity really kicked in. *What do The Beatles have to do with typing?*

Friday, November 29, Beatlemania Rocks Introductory Typing.

So it was with amazement and considerable wonder that on Friday afternoon I paid close attention as Mrs. Lawton again stood in front of the class. This time she brandished Mike's copy of the LP, *Beatlemania*. The first thing that I noticed was that the cover was unique. An artistic statement in itself. Its black background contrasted with a head shot of each of the four mop tops. The left side highlighted, the right side blending into the dark background. It was if The Beatles too were emerging from the gloom of the previous weekend.

Mrs. Lawton emphasized that the purpose of the exercise was for us to type to the rhythm of each Beatle song. Once we caught the rhythm our fingers would relax and pick out the correct keys, most of the time. Instead of my jumbled up staccato approach typing would become a smooth and coherent whole. Never mind the errors for now, let them be and just keep to the rhythm. Practice would iron out the errors. I was sceptical,



This is it (The North American Cover)

Source: Wikipedia

but what the heck. This approach was as good as any I had tried so far and was likely going to be a lot more enjoyable.

I watched intently as Mrs. Lawton placed the record on the turntable, set the needle on the first cut and adjusted the volume. I anxiously awaited the sound.

It hit me like a ton of bricks. The guitars, bass and drums on Lennon-McCartney's "It Won't Be Long" burst forth from the speaker loud and fast followed by a call and response style of vocal. I typed with a will to try and keep up. Each of the songs that followed on the first side was a gem, culminating in a fantastic cover of "Please Mr. Postman". A song I was familiar with and liked when originally recorded by the Marvelettes. The Beatles made it their own with their soulful but rocking rendition. It was with bated breath that I watched to see if Mrs. Lawton, as an adult, was offended by the sound. Would she just take the record off forgetting the second side? No, she didn't. Instead she turned over the record and placed the needle down. George's blistering guitar solo on Chuck Berry's "Roll Over Beethoven" sprang into life. I was getting the message of the importance of rhythm to typing and although I made errors and lagged on some bits I could feel my confidence build. The remaining six songs quickly followed climaxing in the powerhouse tune, "Money (That's What I Want)". Then that was it. The record was over. I now understood Mrs. Lawton's idea of typing to the rhythm.



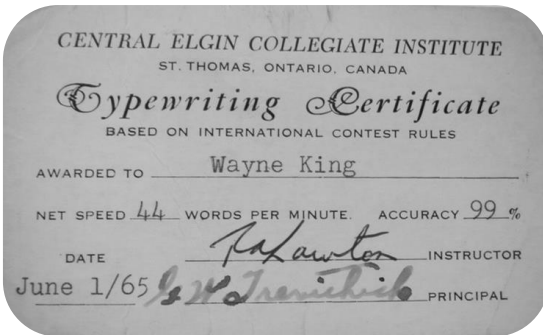
Beatles' singles, clockwise from top left: I Want To Hold Your Hand, Twist and Shout, All My Loving, She Loves You. Source: author's personal collection of Beatles singles.

The Beatles Rock On And I Learn How To Learn To Type

After that initial exposure to the Beatles, my approach to typing changed. Work hard, but relax and find the rhythm in any typing project. Learning to type became much easier when I followed that simple rule. As I made progress step by little step, my attitude changed to "can do". Typing became one of my favourite subjects. My marks went from failure at the beginning of the school year to first class honours by the end of the school year. I had become a very good typist. In fact, by my second year of typing I earned a number of speed cards, one of which verifies that I could type forty-four words per minute. I am still proud of my mastery of typing.

As for the Beatles. Beatlemania finally came to North America. Just weeks later in February, 1964 they appeared on the now legendary Ed Sullivan Show. From there the fab four moved on to great fame and fortune. They lead the British Invasion, set the gold standard for

rock bands and almost single-handedly turned rock and roll into an art form. Much of the music I loved for years to come was heavily influenced by them.



One of Wayne's "speed" cards, awarded in his second year of Typing. Source: author's personal collection of historical documents.

Latter Day Typing

Although, I did not type much for thirty years after high school I remembered how.

At times, I found myself daydreaming about typing certain words or phrases. I would mumble to myself, "Hands positioned over the home row. Move hands sparingly and let my fingers find the letters of the alphabet to spell out the words and punctuation."

The big test came in 1995 when I purchased my first computer. Incredibly the same keyboard set up as on the typewriter. Amazingly I was still a proficient typist. I had not forgotten.

I swear that Mrs. Lawton knew exactly what she was doing, when she played that record for us. She could have assumed an "oh well" attitude toward those of us that were typing challenged and let the chips fall where they may. However, Mrs. Lawton had the imagination to utilize a novel method of helping us laggards find their typing groove. Mrs. Lawton also seized the opportunity to help her students emerge from their post JFK assassination melancholy by using music to brighten us up. Beatlemania helped me to recover from the shock. It lifted my spirits. Lastly, playing The Beatles LP might have satisfied Mrs. Lawton's own curiosity as well. Whatever her motivation, it worked for me.

Thank you Mrs. Lawton, and thank you Beatles. "Roll Over Beethoven, and Tell Tchaikovsky the News." Beatlemania certainly lifted my spirits.

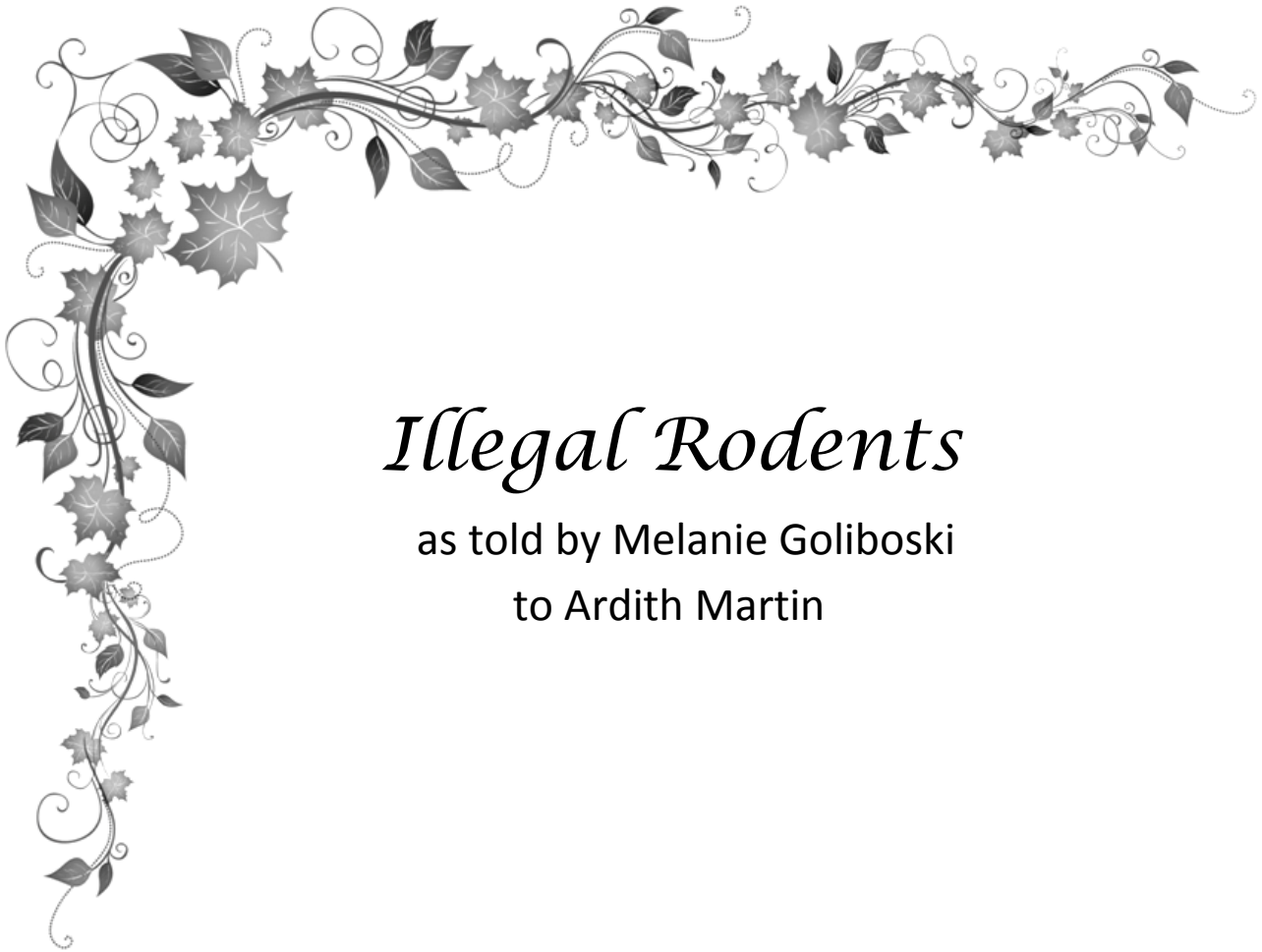


Wayne's hands on the keyboard – fingers on home row, thumbs ready to press space bar, and small fingers poised at home row and side keys.



Wayne, 2014, at the computer. Ready? Aye ready! Note the CECI sweater and Madras shirt.

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.



Illegal Rodents

as told by Melanie Goliboski
to Ardith Martin

It began with a phone call. One of those dreaded phone calls ... from the babysitter. The babysitter that didn't know what to do with a pair of babies. Baby squirrels.

"What do I do?" was the panicked question.

"Bring them over," was the answer, of course. As I can't feed the poor things through the phone.

The babysitter filled me in on what had happened when she had delivered the pair of baby squirrels into my care: It had been a normal, routine day. Everything was going fine. She was over at her boyfriend's house and they were having lunch. While they were eating, suddenly the power went out. Okay. No big deal. It's just a fuse, we'll go down to the basement and take care of it. When they checked the fuse box, however, everything was fine. Not a fuse ... so it must be the main line, up in the attic. So, from the bottom of the house to the top they go. Indeed, there is a problem with the main line, as evidenced by the crispy, fried, squirrel laying dead beside it. Then they heard these squeaking noises.

They followed the squeaking noises until they found the source. A squirrel nest, with two little grey squirrels inside of it. The babies were so young they didn't even have their eyes open yet. That was when the chain of events became apparent. The mother squirrel was foraging around for more insulation for her babies. She thought that the insulating around the main power line would be perfect. She didn't live to regret her mistake. That was when the babysitter decided to call me to find out what to do, because a dead squirrel wasn't going to be able to feed baby squirrels.

I arranged the baby squirrels in an aquarium. I put a heating pad underneath half of the bottom of it. This allowed the babies to move to the cooler side of the aquarium if they got too



A baby squirrel. Photo credit: Lucy Toner.

hot. This way we didn't get cooked baby squirrels. I had many different sizes of cages and aquariums, due to all the current and previous pets we had. I never had to worry about them getting out ... on their own, that is. But we'll get to that part later.

The first order of business, once I had the squirrels in my care, was to feed them. They were fed a mixture of honey and very stale baby formula. Again, they were so young, so small, I was feeding them using an eye-dropper to start with. They were very dehydrated at this point. Whether or not they would survive was questionable.

You don't want to name them during the first twenty-four hours in case they don't make it. This goes for any orphaned animal or bird. There is always that chance that when you go to the cage you will find that they've croaked. They could have had some kind of defect that you didn't know about. All you can say is: "I tried."

Getting them to eat within the first twenty-four hours is critical so I immediately got these two baby squirrels eating and drinking. They opened their eyes after ten days. Before that, they had already started hearing, so whenever they heard my voice they would start clamouring up the side of the aquarium, as if they were going: "Mommy, mommy, mommy, mommy!" So, now not only was I mother to my own two young daughters, I was also a squirrel mommy.

It was like having a brand new baby all over again. They needed to be fed every four hours to start with. As they got bigger, it went down to three times a day. At this point they were using a kitten bottle to drink goat's milk. All my orphaned critters have been raised on goat's milk.

Once the baby squirrels got to the point where they were ready for more solid foods, I had to place them in a special box for feeding. Squirrels are the messiest eaters. This separate feeding box also had a towel. I would take two saucers of baby pablum and place one on each end of the box. By this time it was safe to name them. One was called Chip, the other Dale. Yes, I know they were squirrels and not chipmunks! You try explaining that to two children under the age of five!

I'd put Chip in front of one saucer, Dale in front of the other, and they would start eating. They would work their way down the middle of the saucer of baby pablum like a snow plow after a blizzard. Not only creating banks of pablum on the edges of the saucers, but getting themselves covered from head to paw in the process.



A baby squirrel ready for solid food. Photo credit: Lucy Toner.

Needless to say ... after Chip and Dale were finished eating, I would have to clean them. This process required not only a warm cloth, but a towel for myself. You have to make sure that you have a towel on your lap when you are cleaning baby animals because, being babies, they get stimulated to relieve themselves. If you don't have a towel to protect you, you can end up getting peed or pooped upon. Chip and Dale were like your typical babies ... they screamed to be fed, you feed, them, they poop, then they go to sleep.

As Chip and Dale got bigger, they graduated from the baby pablum to a more typical squirrel diet. This, unfortunately for me (being deathly allergic to peanuts and nuts), included peanuts, peanut butter and other nuts. I would mix up some gerbil food - we did have *legal* rodents in residence, as well - with peanut butter to make peanut butter balls. Many people are under the misconception that squirrels are herbivores, only eating seeds or nuts. This is not true. They are, in fact, omnivores. Other friendly neighbourhood omnivores include the skunk and the raccoon. A squirrel will eat baby birds, raid bird nests to eat the eggs, flowers and fruit, all above and beyond what is normally thought to be the squirrel diet. I would feed Chip and Dale apples, raisins and peanuts. They were still messy, but at least they weren't covered in baby pablum.

As they were getting bigger, Chip and Dale lived in a cage in my bedroom. At that point we had three cats who would normally think of squirrels as "lunch on the run." However, my cats had been taught: If Mommy has it in a cage ... it is NOT to be eaten, and my cats were very observant of this rule. The only cats that eat things willy-nilly are the ones that are hungry. (Contrary to popular opinion, cats CAN be trained.) In their cage in my bedroom, Chip and Dale

would take material and make their own beds up. Instinct was kicking in and they were becoming more squirrel. Despite being in my bedroom, having the squirrels there presents little trouble.

The trouble was I had two small precocious children that could convince the other babysitters that they could play with the squirrels. I had a team of babysitters to cover all of my schedule, and they pretty much all thought that it was cool that we had baby squirrels. One day I came home from work to find the three cats sitting on my bed. They were watching Chip and Dale playing tag around the bed. The squirrels were running around the end of the bed and under it, oblivious to their engrossed audience. When I came in the room the three cats turned their heads to look at me with the expression: "We didn't do it, Mommy."

It took some time, but I caught the squirrels while they continued running around the bed. They were like kids on a playground, not even paying attention to what was going on around them. So I grabbed on and put them in the cage. Then the other squirrel came racing under the bed, so I scooped it up and put it in the cage, too.

When I asked the babysitter how Chip and Dale got out of their cage, she replied,

"Oh, Darla said that they weren't allowed to let them *out* of their cage but it was alright to pet them."

"Yeah," I said. "But Darla *forgot* to lock the cage when you called her for lunch."

"Oh."

We are talking about children who were under the age of five at the time, here. The girls were down for their nap by the time I arrived home to discover the escapees.

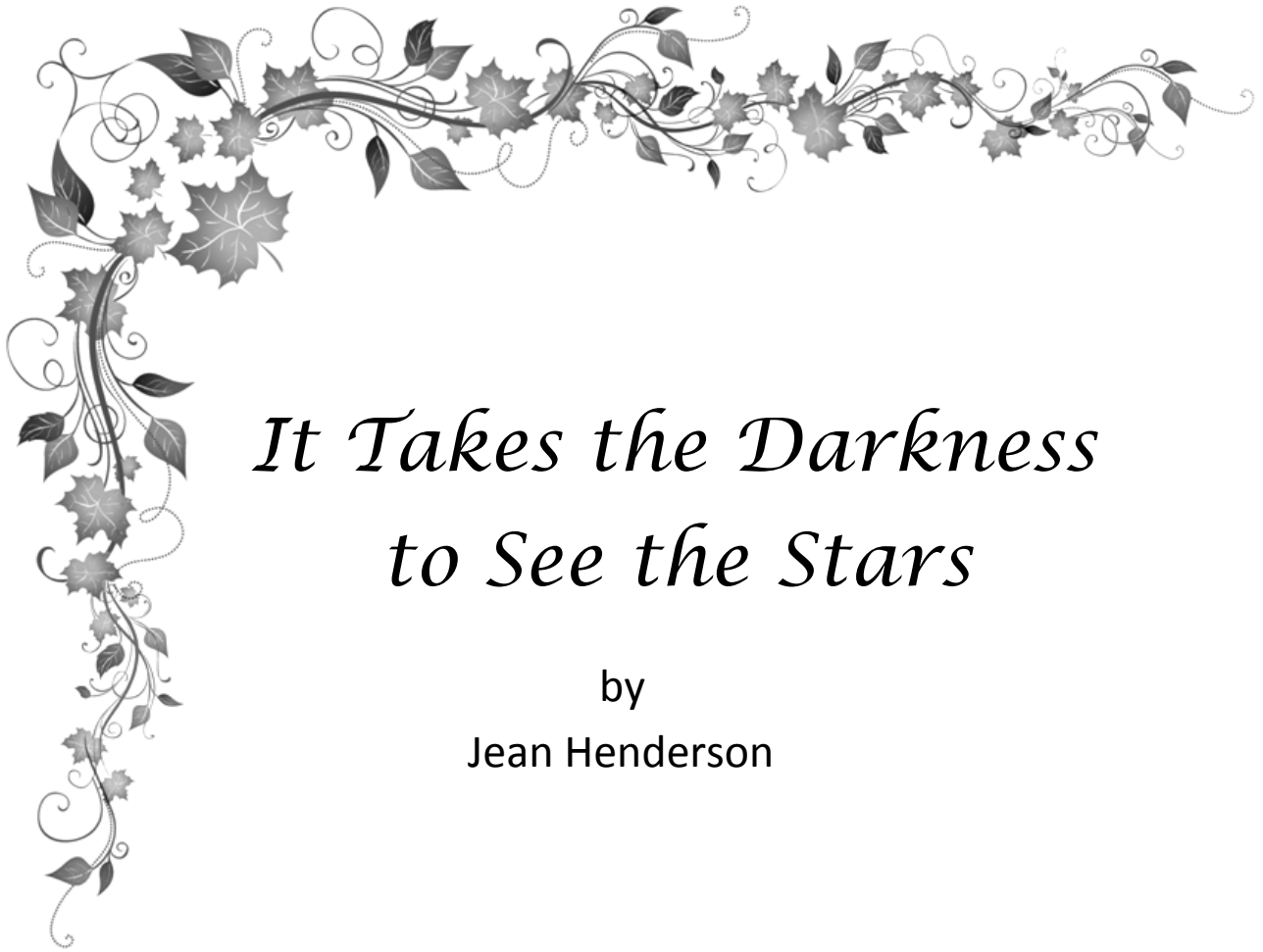
Chip and Dale were born early in the spring. When it became summer I began taking them outside in their cage. They got used to the routine of going outside in the cage during the day. Since it was much nicer outside, I could now move the squirrels from my bedroom to the garden shed at night. During the day, I would let them out of their cage and they would run around my backyard. When I was out working in the garden they would jump onto my shoulder and nibble at my ears, as if going: "Mommy! Mommy!" Which was fine ... when it was me. However it did freak some of the babysitters out to have one of the squirrels jump on their shoulder and nibble on *their* ear! As a result of this behaviour, I had to warn the neighbours that there were two squirrels in the area that might attempt to jump on their shoulder and nibble at their ear. I assured the neighbours that the squirrels were NOT rabid. They were just my orphaned squirrels wanting attention.

The ear nibbling was not the only hitch I encountered while raising Chip and Dale. One of them had somehow ended up with a yeast infection. Yes, apparently, squirrels can get yeast infections. In order to get treatment for my ailing baby squirrel, I had to sneak them into the veterinarian. Unless you have a permit you are not supposed to raise wild animals, hence the

sneaking in of the squirrel. The veterinarians were great. They diagnosed the problem, got me some baby penicillin for Dale to take. Dale loved it! She got to eat the banana-flavoured penicillin. (What a difference between getting a squirrel to take banana-or-grape flavoured penicillin then a cat. A cat won't.) I've been trying, throughout the years, to obtain the aforementioned permit for raising wild animals ever since it became apparent that I would be nursing - or attempting to nurse - these orphaned wildlife to health. I have been unsuccessful because, to date, no one seems to know who you contact in order to get the permit.

Eventually Chip and Dale just wandered off on their own. I trained them to be squirrels. Mind you, I think that the next year one of them came back around with their own babies, looking for hand outs. Not to mention the fact that in the backyard there was a cherry tree with buds and cherries. This was over twenty years ago now ... I still wonder, whenever I see grey squirrels running around the old neighbourhood, if they are descendants of my two orphaned illegal rodents.

Ardith Martin was born and raised in Brantford. As a child she loved to have her parents read books to her until she was old enough to read herself. She has authored and self-published an adaptation of Cat Fairy Tales and a novel based on the child soldiers of Sierra Leone under a pen name.



It Takes the Darkness to See the Stars

by
Jean Henderson

Viktor Frankl wrote that "the unexamined life is not worth living." This is pretty much how I lived the first 45 years of my life. If I had read this during that time I would not have given it any thought. Life was fun and I was carefree. I had everything I wanted -- my husband, children, family and friends.

Yvonne's illness began a journey that changed my life. Though Yvonne lived an hour away nothing could have kept me from visiting regularly. It was like I was being driven by an invisible force.

It's hard to describe this journey because, during this time, I had an awareness that was just foreign for me.

I became aware of how people are so uncomfortable with illness and the thought of death. Some people did not visit as they wanted to remember her the way she was before getting sick. I asked how I could help and very quickly many of my visits simply allowed Dave, Yvonne's husband, a break.

One day Yvonne said to me, "I'm tired of feeling tired."

I knew this was important but it took quite some time before I realized this was an open door for further conversation. Was this my first lesson in communication? Was Yvonne trying to share that she was no longer able to fight? Maybe she wanted to talk about terminating all treatment. I can only speculate but this was the beginning of my awareness that the spoken word is only a small part of how we communicate. I have learned to listen to the unspoken word as well.

Yvonne would talk about her past and some of her life choices. This led to her wanting to talk to a minister which I was able to facilitate. Health care professionals who care for palliative patients call this recalling of our past 'Life Review'.

During our time together I realized Yvonne was thinking ahead to when she would not be here because she started talking to Dave about cooking and tips re: doing laundry.

"I really miss working at the coffee shop," she said one day.

"What do you miss the most?" I asked.

"The staff and the customers were my friends. Life as I know it is over!"

Glimpsing my own mortality was a gift I received by journeying with Yvonne. Having Yvonne trust me as she shared personally about her life was a marvellous gift.

The day Yvonne died she waited for me to get there. Her family told her I was on my way and she died within ten minutes of my arrival.

Sacred gifts challenge us and help us to grow.

Yvonne gave me a little blue flower ornament. I love this gift but I do not need it to remember my best friend and all she meant to me.

By the end of Yvonne's life I knew my presence had helped and that I wanted to become a Hospice volunteer. Odd how six months earlier I had never hear the words Hospice and Palliative Care.

I started wondering if I should look into a course of some kind regarding caring for the terminally ill. It felt strange to think this way because school for me was a place to socialize and have fun. I simply couldn't believe I might attend school to learn something. What was happening to me?

After securing a Mohawk College brochure I found they offered a Palliative Care course with a prerequisite of being a nurse. This did not deter me from lining up on registration day with my heart pounding. When it was my turn I said, "I want to sign up for the Palliative Care course but I do not have the prerequisite."

Out from an adjoining office came a lady who said, "Come with me. If the computer doesn't show the prerequisite I will sign you up."

I took the course and passed!

A Brantford couple, Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Kelly, won a great deal of money in the lottery. Not long after receiving this windfall Mr. Kelly was diagnosed with cancer and died. Mrs. Kelly released money from her Foundation to the Victorian Order of Nurses to set up a program offering nursing support to the terminally ill dying at home. I contacted the co-ordinator of this program to see if I could be of help in someone's home. I was approved as a volunteer and went to visit two elderly sisters with the co-ordinator.

Isabelle, who was caring for her sister Maime, was really open to having a few hours every week to get out with her daughter. Maime however could not understand why she needed to be 'babysat' by a stranger. Isabelle told her it would be a real gift to her if she would approve a volunteer staying with her so she wouldn't worry. I spent 11 months in this home and needless to say it was very different than being with my best friend.

The patient made no bones about the fact that she really didn't want me there but I knew my presence helped the caregiver.

After a few months there was to be a family wedding. Isabelle's grandson was getting married and I was asked to accompany Maime so Isabelle could be free to stay just as long as she wanted. After the reception I took Maime home and stayed with her until Isabelle got home. While at the wedding Maime introduced me to people as her friend. Maime could never know what a beautiful gift that was to me. These 11 months were the perfect classroom for someone who wanted to volunteer with the terminally ill.

I once read a quote that said, "God never came to support suffering nor explain it, only to fill it with His presence".

For 11 months I witnessed Isabelle filling Maime's suffering with God's presence. What a sacred gift I was given.

By the time Maime died I had learnt that Humber College offered a course 'Life Threatening Illness, Dying and Bereavement'. I knew more education would be helpful. I took the course and passed.

I also checked into volunteering at one of our local hospitals. I made an appointment with Jakki Vilez, Volunteer Co-ordinator at St. Joseph's Hospital. I explained to Jakki that I wanted to volunteer with the terminally ill. She had never had anyone make such a request. Jakki asked Kathy McLellan, head Chaplain of the Pastoral Care Department, if she would be responsible for me.

Oh, I had no idea what was ahead.

After Kathy interviewed me she suggested I visit a patient, who had suffered a stroke, before being with the terminally ill.

Kathy explained that to be with the dying a person needs to learn how to be 'still'. How to quiet your mind. I was simply to sit with Joyce and listen.

This assignment was so difficult and I don't feel I got a passing grade. I am however indebted to Kathy for being willing to invest in my journey. 'Being' rather than 'doing' is so important when you are with the dying.

Sister Margaret was also a chaplain with the Pastoral Care team. We hit it off and she invited me to go to the Advent Silent Retreat weekend at the St. Joseph's Motherhouse in Hamilton. The retreat went from Friday evening until Sunday lunch. Meal time was also spent



Jean and Sister Mary Margaret.

in silence. I accepted Margaret's invitation but I must admit my reason was not very honourable. I could hardly wait to tell my friends and family that I was going to be silent for a whole weekend. On Sunday when silence ended Margaret introduced me to several older sisters. I felt she rather enjoyed introducing her Protestant friend to these ladies. It was much later she told me that many of them believed only Catholics would be in heaven.

Even though Margaret and I were motivated by unusual reasons I will ever be grateful to her for introducing me to the benefits of silence.

That first retreat was very difficult but it was the beginning of falling in love with silence. Being comfortable with silence is so beneficial when sitting with the terminally ill.

I was a volunteer with the Victorian Order of Nurses for years. Family members or maybe a patient's nurse would request a volunteer. Some matches lasted only a few visits or a few months before the patient died. Most requests were made so the primary caregiver could have a break.

In all my years of volunteering I had never heard of a volunteer being matched with an AIDS patient. I told my co-ordinator that if a request was made I would like the opportunity to meet the patient.

This opportunity came when Bill called and requested a volunteer. He felt he needed help but the volunteer had to know he was a smoker, had three cats, and also had AIDS. My sense

was that Bill didn't have time to be anyone but who he was and I was very interested in meeting him.

I want to try to introduce you to Bill.

When the day came to meet Bill I went to his address and found he lived in the penthouse. It was spotless.

Bill was sitting in his high backed chair. He was a tall, thin aristocratic looking gentleman. He was quiet spoken.

Can you picture him in your mind? Bill and I were as opposite as you could get!

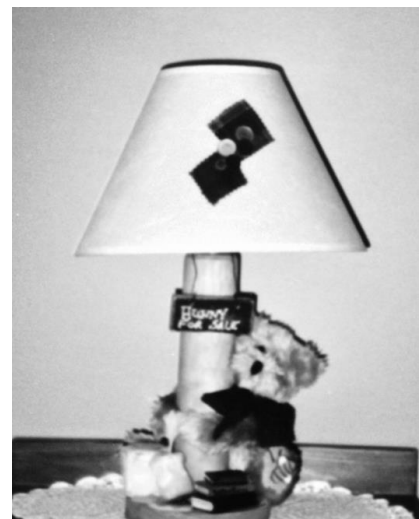
Bill later shared his first impressions of me. He wrote, "My first impression was that of a very pushy aggressive woman suddenly entering my home. However, my instincts told me that a very kind, gentle and caring lady had walked in as well. After you left, I couldn't quite decide how to take you, so I let my heart take over. I packaged both my impressions and instincts, wrapped them, and tied them with a ribbon and here I am today, with one of the most treasured gifts anyone could ask for. Friendship. Thank you Jean."

I don't know why Bill would ever think me pushy or aggressive but first impressions are only a glimpse of who someone is.

Bill and I had 18 months to really get to know one another however first impressions made it easy to see we were opposites. Bill was quiet and reserved. I've never been quiet and seldom reserved. Bill was smart, I'm average. Bill was always well attired and I wear blue jeans and runners, which I rarely do up. Bill was a patient man, although when he tried teaching me how to play crib, I'm sure his patience was sorely tested. Getting to know me had to be a real stretch for Bill. We did prove however that 'opposites definitely attract'!

From the very beginning we agreed that I would be allowed to journey until the very end. As we journeyed together Bill's story unfolded revealing a man with unfulfilled dreams, a man who had grown up with rejection. AIDS taught him more than anyone should have to learn about prejudice. Bill's story challenged me to look at whether I was prejudiced regarding AIDS. Journeying with Bill was exactly where I was meant to be!

I came to care very deeply for Bill. I knew he felt the same for me but as often is the case men and women are very different. I loved to hug people, that's just who I am. Bill being opposite to me hated hugging. Every time I left Bill to go home I would say 'I love you'. Bill never spoke like this. However Bill did things I would never do. He sent cards for



My bear lamp.

special occasions and also 'just because'. At Easter I received a beautiful stuffed rabbit. At Christmas a Bear lamp. One day he took his necklace off and put it around my neck. I have many treasures that remind me of how thoughtful, considerate and caring he was even if he never communicated this with words.

Everyone has things about them that you wished were different. Even our spouse or family members have traits that can drive us nuts. With Bill I never wished him to be any way but the way he was. My friend. Our friendship was confirmed the day Bill asked me if I would take him to the hospital. He knew he was leaving his home for the last time. This was such a precious gift he gave me.

One day I got the brilliant idea to make a collage of our time together. When I told Bill what I was going to do he wanted no part of it. I said I was doing it even if he didn't want to be a part of it. He never told me why, but he did change his mind. I entitled the collage "Life is a Pilgrimage, a Journey to a Sacred Place". This collage got started with pictures of Bill's cats and his beautiful plants. Bill was in the hospital when we started this endeavour and I told Bill if he ever wanted me to take it down from his bulletin board I would. It was still there when Bill died several months later and the last photo to be put on it was put on only four days before he left



Life is a Pilgrimage, a Journey to a Sacred Place: a collage by Jean and Bill.

us.

The collage included pictures of family members, friends and hospital staff. One gal insisted on having a professional photo of herself on it. I believe this collage opened the door to many conversations. Bill's sister asked me to bring it to the funeral service where it was placed on a stand holder. Bill knew his sister was coming from the States and I believe he was waiting for her to arrive. He died only a couple of days after her arrival. I have learnt that people often live for a birthday, an anniversary, the birth of a child. The day Bill died I sat vigil with three of his sisters, his friend Don from Toronto and myself. Our time together was a time of reminiscing about someone we all loved.

After Bill died I was in grief and unable to volunteer for awhile. Some people may say you shouldn't become that close to someone you are volunteering with. I am anything but sorry I allowed myself to care for this man. He enriched my life and has truly become part of my life story. The pain was well worth it. I believe our journeying together was God ordained. I will be forever grateful.

When I felt ready to volunteer again I went to a facility in Hamilton called Emmanuel House. Emmanuel House had 10 beds, 5 of which were filled by AIDS patients. The residents were all terminally ill and cure was no longer a possibility.

I had been volunteering at Emmanuel House for over a year when John moved in. I knew immediately John was someone I wanted to get to know. John however was not the least bit interested. I would describe John as having a dark personality. He looked like life had been difficult. In spite of all outward appearances I sensed there was real depth to John.

After several months I was no closer to knowing John then when he moved in.

That all changed one night at the meal table. The conversation was about meditation and John joined in. John said he practised Christian Meditation and I knew what he was talking about. Fifteen years earlier, at a Palliative Care Conference in Montreal, I had filled out a form asking to receive the Christian Meditation newsletter. The next week when I went to volunteer I brought the most recent issue with me. When I gave it to John I immediately knew this was the key that would unlock a door allowing me to journey with him.

From then on John and I would spend time together. John challenged me by saying one of us would open the visit with prayer and the other would pray before we parted. I felt scared to death and thrilled at the same time. Praying together drew John and I closer together. A life changing journey had begun for me.

John shared how difficult it was to come to grips with having to be at Emmanuel House. He compared it to being on a bus trip when the bus stops and you are told to get off but you haven't arrived at where you wanted to go. He felt his daughter still needed him. He had become a single parent when his marriage failed.

As John shared his life I heard about the hurts that moulded him into a bitter young man. He turned to alcohol and his lifestyle led to a life of crime and time spent in prison was a result of all this.

Eventually John wanted to change but felt powerless to do so. He told me he surrendered himself to God and he slowly began to change. Life was still difficult and eventually his wife left him. As he came to terms with dying a truly beautiful transformation could be seen by all. The staff would share their lives and their concerns with him and he would make those concerns a matter of prayer. John's wife, who divorced him years before, came to support John. It was so beautiful.

One visit John invited me to join him at his regular AA meeting. I felt so honoured to be asked. I knew then that John cared for me as I did him.

Our journey together lasted for about 9 months and although we are only a chapter in each other's lives I know the chapter was a very important one for me. Knowing John changed who I was.

I believe every life has been created for a purpose. I first glimpsed my purpose when Yvonne got sick. It was to volunteer with the terminally ill which I did for over 20 years.

As I sat in silence with the dying person I realized I was saying "You matter to me and I will remember you."

Some of the greatest gifts I received while volunteering I call 'gifts of the heart' and they come when we symbolically take the hand of another and say, "Let's journey together."

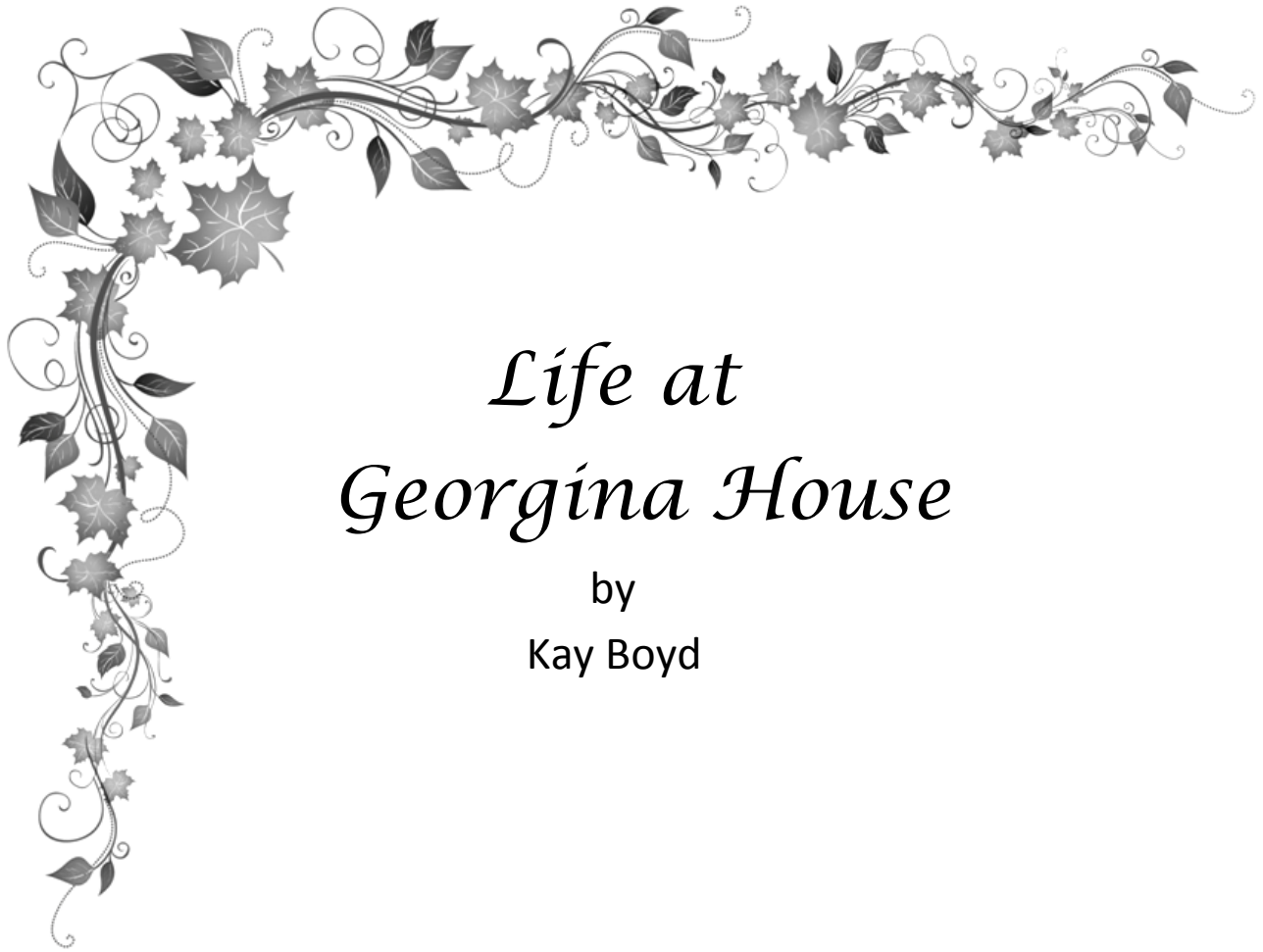
STARS really do shine brightest in the dark!



*Keeping memories alive: my beautiful stuffed Easter bunny
from Bill.*



Jean Henderson was born in Brantford and has lived her whole life in Brantford and area. Hospice Volunteering was her passion for over 20 years. Now however she wants to spend time writing.



Life at Georgina House

by
Kay Boyd

The very handsome young man, in full dress RCMP uniform stood stiff and tall. He looked both embarrassed and terrified as he faced a roomful of over 30 young ladies in the large and attractive dining room of Georgina House, a residence for young women.

Georgina House was named after Mrs. Georgina Broughall, the wife of Canon Broughall, the rector of St. Stephen's Anglican Church in Toronto. Mrs. Broughall taught a large Bible class and in talking to her class, she discovered how difficult it was for young ladies coming to Toronto to find suitable housing and affordable living accommodation. As a result, she conceived the idea of establishing a residence which would provide a comfortable home for young women. With encouragement from some businessmen, one of whom was J.C. Eaton, she forged on, seeking support for the project. After receiving large donations from a few of the businessmen, she took money received through various fundraising activities and a house was purchased at 106 Beverly Street in Toronto. The Beverly Street house was built originally by James Christie Esten in 1855. He was a lawyer and a member of the Law Society of Upper Canada.

Renovations commenced and women of the church joined together to form the Georgina House Association at the end of 1908. The object of the Association was to provide residences for single working women and girls who had left their homes to come to Toronto to earn their own livelihood and who sought a real home with refined surroundings, good food, and all that makes for that end.

Mrs. Broughall saw her dream realized when Georgina House opened on February 22nd, 1909. The opening ceremony was performed by H.R.H. The Duke of Connaught and followed by a service of dedication in the Chapel conducted by the Lord Bishop of Toronto. On May 22nd, 1914, a large addition to the house was opened and known as the Osler wing, made possible by a gift of \$25 000 under the will of the late Mrs. Edmund Osler. The addition was actually another house and was joined to 106 Beverley to provide a large kitchen, dining room, and additional bedrooms.

The house at 106 Beverley was beautifully furnished. The living room boasted a piano, lovely Persian carpets, comfortable chairs, a fireplace and all the gracious living amenities. There was a large wrap-around sunroom at the front of the house, where the girls could put jigsaw puzzles together, play ping pong, and carry on with other leisure time activities.

The house was surrounded by a high, solid board fence. A gate opened to the side veranda steps which led to the main entrance. The main entrance door opened into a small vestibule with entry to the main foyer, where a large, open and very grand staircase led to the upper floors. To the right of the foyer there was a very generous living room area. To the left of the foyer, the rear of the house consisted of a small chapel, a sitting area, and a back stairway. That area featured a tiny electric elevator that could only be used to transport luggage to the upper floors. The kitchen, at the back of the house, was very large and fronted onto the dining room to act in cafeteria fashion for the service of meals.

The bedrooms were on the second and third floors, some singles and some doubles, spartan but private and comfortable. Bathrooms were equipped with rows of basins and toilets, and several private bathtubs were shared by the residents. A mezzanine area above the front staircase served as a library. Also on each of the bedroom floors was a telephone niche where girls could make and receive calls – not so private, but very convenient indeed. All in all, it was a comfortable home away from home.

In the early 1950s, I had finished high school and was ready to enter post secondary education. I wanted to study Chemistry at Ryerson Institute of Technology in Toronto however my parents were hesitant to let me leave home at such a young age. I had completed grade 12 at 15 years old and because there was a provincial rule that students could not move into post secondary until age 16, I stayed on another year at high school. I took a special commercial course, learning to do typing, shorthand and bookkeeping, until I turned 16 and was eligible to apply to Ryerson. That school didn't have student housing at the time and so the issue of where to live if I could go, and along with the cost, was a serious consideration. My parents did some research and learned that a residence for young ladies and operated by a board of Anglican Church women might be the solution. The room and board at that time was \$11.00

per week sharing a room. Meals included breakfast every day, dinner Monday to Friday, Saturday supper, and tea every Sunday at 5:00 pm. They agreed that I could go to Ryerson provided I could live at Georgina House. A telephone call confirmed that a shared room was available. Whew! Mother and Dad went to Toronto to inspect the accommodation and meet the lady in charge and determined that it was indeed a suitable place to live. Payment for the first few weeks secured a shared room and all was confirmed.

In September, my parents drove me to Toronto, deposited me at Georgina House along with my luggage and left me to begin life on my own. That day was a life changing experience. Mrs. Whitely, the 'superintendent' (we called her the House Mother) was very gracious as she showed me to my room, introduced me to another student who had arrived from Sudbury and was also going to attend Ryerson, filled me in on the house rules, and how it all worked. I unpacked and then made my way to Ryerson to register. It was so scary to walk alone along Dundas Street to Yonge, across the busy roadway and finally to the school. I was only 4'11" tall, fairly tiny and with flaming red hair. When I went to the registrar's office, I could hardly see over the counter. When he asked me what program I wanted to register in, I told him Industrial Chemistry. He peered over the counter and said, "Really?" That was something that girls simply did not do so many years ago. As it turned out, there were five girls in the class, including the girl I had met earlier in the day, and 47 boys. Paradise! I still have the student card that I received when the registration process was complete. That task out of the way, I made my way back to the house in late afternoon, hungry and tired and still scared about being all by myself in this huge city. Well, at least I had made one new friend at the house and it was great that we were both going to be in the same class!

Life was terrifying as I faced each day, up early when the bell rang to let us know that the day was beginning. There was a short Chapel service each morning and evening and I learned very quickly that the girls who went to Chapel were the first in line for meals. Incentives do take different forms! After a few days, I began to feel more comfortable with the other girls in residence and began to form some close friendships. Annie, the girl from Sudbury, would be in my class at school (we actually switched room-mates so that we could be together in the same room). Annie seemed to be so much more worldly than I. There was something exotic about her. She had beautiful olive skin and dark hair and I remember she had a space in her front teeth and when she laughed, she would throw back her head. It felt good having her as a friend. We often walked to school together and a solid relationship was formed.

I met Oz at Georgina House too. She was from Sundridge, in northern Ontario. Her last name was Osborne, hence the nickname Oz. She was a floral designer and worked in the flower shop at the Park Plaza Hotel on Bloor Street. She was tall, with black hair cropped very short. She was so beautiful with skin like unglazed porcelain and had dimples in her cheeks when she smiled. Oz was very fashionable, and could wear blue and purple together. Amazing. She was outgoing and loads of fun. June was a tall and leggy blonde with a sweet disposition and who worked as a clerk in the lingerie department at Eatons. She hailed from North Bay. I guess you could say that she was the epitome of a dumb blond, with the manner that was so sweet and kind. June was the only girl I knew who had a steady boyfriend. She was a tad older

than most of the girls in the house. Her boyfriend, Al, was an engineer and worked for the Toronto City Roads Department. Jane Anne was from London, Ontario and her father, who was a doctor, sent her to a cram school in Toronto to improve her high school grades. Cricket was a funny, skinny little thing who was always smiling and laughing. She also hailed from northern Ontario. Ursula, a plumpish older girl, arrived from England to take a position as an interpreter. We laughed at her British slang and accent. There were others whose names I have forgotten, but suffice it to say that we all got along very well and enjoyed each other's company.

Sometimes we would play with a game called 'The Mystic Eye' and ask it various questions. It worked like a Ouija Board, but instead of putting your hands on the moving piece, the Mystic Eye was a lead weight suspended on a cord. The holder of the cord, braced her elbow, held the pendulum over the 'answer sheet' and whichever way the hand-held pendulum swung was out answer. It was not unusual to ask 'the mystic eye' if we should go to the movies. Needless to say, the answer was always yes, and away we'd go to change our clothes and gather in the foyer before taking off for a movie together with whomever had the 25 cents to spend for a ticket. Not a very scientific way to make decisions, but it was always fun.

We had to behave. Mrs. Whitely did not tolerate bad manners, nor did she tolerate any nonsense that might be construed as meanness toward another girl, and I truly don't recall that kind of behaviour from any of the girls. Yes there were pranks, but they were pranks that did not include any hateful behaviour. I liked everyone, except one girl who was always swaning around declaring that once again she was 'in love'. Her exhortations were quite annoying and so one day, the girls ganged up on her. Her latest 'love' was coming to take her out on a date. When young men came to pick up their dates, they had to present themselves to Mrs. Whitely in the little office to the left of the entry door, give her their name, and who they were calling for. She would ask them to wait in the foyer, and then buzz upstairs to tell a girl that her escort had arrived and was waiting in the foyer. While Ann's young man stood waiting, the girls circled around him staring all the while and looking at him as if he were on display for sale to the highest bidder. When his date began her descent down the staircase, Jane-Anne said quite loudly, "You know, he isn't as ugly as you said he was." Although I had taken part in the 'examination' of her young escort, I felt so sorry for him standing there amongst all those girls who were giving him the eye. When he and his date left the house, some of the girls ran into the sun room, threw open one of the windows and shouted to her that they hoped she would stay in love! Needless to say, she never talked about being 'in love' again. As well, her date was a one off. He never returned.

Afternoon tea on Sundays was another tradition at Georgina House. The living room would be set up with the requisite silver tea pot, and as we sat around the collection of comfortable chairs, we'd sing a hymn or two accompanied on the piano by one of the girls who could play. Sandwiches and homemade sweets were passed around, tea poured, and the whole affair was quite civilized. In retrospect it was so 'English'. My parents were from a British background and so I felt quite comfortable in the ritualised atmosphere. Some girls would giggle only to be given a withering glare from Mrs. Whitely. Some would try and sit close to the door so that in an unnoticed moment they could slip away.

No story about Georgina House would be complete without telling about our meals. While my Mother fed us adequately and well, she would never have made the Michelin guide. Our meals at home were simple and plain and mostly cooked to death. At Georgina House, there were always fresh vegetables that I'd never seen on our home table and meats that I had never tasted. I remember in particular the first time I ate baked squash. It was delicious and to this day, I still enjoy that vegetable. There is a lot to be said about eating anything when you are hungry! Breakfasts included cooked cereal, boiled eggs, a splendid variety of dry cereals and as much milk as we wanted, as well as toast, jam, tea and coffee. There were three ladies in the kitchen and they cooked up wonderful meals to say the least. I had a part-time Saturday job at Eaton's College street department store and since the store didn't close until six o'clock, it was often well past six by the time I arrived back at the house. Saturday 'suppers' didn't have the usual choices and you ate whatever was prepared. One evening, I was so hungry by the time I arrived back at the house but alas, the evening meal included lamb stew. My Mother had grown up on a farm which raised sheep and she hated lamb and let us know that it was awful. When I realized Saturday supper was lamb stew or nothing, I screwed up my courage and ate it. Wonder of wonders, it was quite tasty! My introduction to lamb wasn't so bad. I told my Mother that lamb stew was really tasty, and she just squiggled up her nose! Breakfast on Sunday, after prayers, was a do-it-yourself exercise. All of the food was set out and we simply made our own toast and ate whatever you could manage yourself. The cooks had to have at least one day off.

As time wore on, we asked Mrs. Whitely if we could have a party and invite the RCMP recruits whose barracks could be seen from the rooftop of Georgina House. Some of the girls would sunbathe on the roof and would wave at the cadets whose barracks were also on Beverly Street, albeit about two blocks up the street. We begged and pleaded with her to let us have a proper party. Finally, she agreed to speak with the Commanding Officer at the barracks to see what could be arranged. Eventually, we were informed that she and the Commanding Officer had agreed that the young recruits would be invited to come to Georgina House for a party, but there would be strict rules in place. There could be no boys beyond the main floor; they would have to come in uniform; they would have to behave like gentleman; there would be no smoking, no spirits, and no rude behaviour; and most assuredly, no one was to use the tiny elevator! There was no doubting Mrs. Whitely's resolve. She was not a woman to be trifled with and to do so would bring shame upon you! We agreed to those rules. As I look back, those rules weren't any different than the rules in my own home. My parents were strict also and I knew my place.

We decided that refreshments would include lemonade, hot dogs, and cake. Cook agreed, the invitation went out and we waited in anticipation of the party evening. The house was quite full of pretty girls anticipating the arrival of the handsome young men. We had music from a record player, and there was some dancing, lots of to-ing and fro-ing in order to catch a young man's attention. A couple of the girls and young boys found their way down to the basement ... well, the rules only said no men beyond the first floor! No one mentioned the basement! I know a couple squeezed into the tiny elevator, but couldn't go anywhere. I guess

two people made it too heavy! Foiled. There were a few punishments, but nothing serious to speak of ... well almost.

There was a very small triangular framed mirror, about the size of a book, which hung in the vestibule. I guess it was there for that last minute hair and makeup check before leaving. The mirror disappeared the night of the party. Mrs. Whitely made it quite clear that the disappearance of the mirror was a serious breach and she would get to the bottom of it. None of the girls pleaded guilty. So, Mrs. Whitely again visited the Commanding Officer to search for the culprit. The 'thief' came forward to receive his punishment. He was required to come to Georgina House in full dress uniform, return the mirror and apologize for his lack of professional behaviour to Mrs. Whitely and the girls. Mrs. Whitely would agree to no less.

I felt so sorry for his punishment that I almost burst into tears. They were really nice young men and surely he could be forgiven for the prank.

Life at Georgina House was safe, comfortable, and almost like living at home but with more family members. Even Mrs. Whitely exhibited many redeeming qualities and was so much a lady – at least I thought so. I had obtained a summer job at Eaton's College Street store and so I stayed on in Toronto for the summer, just taking a short time off to be with my family at our summer cottage.

As time went on, four of us who had become really good friends decided one day that if we pooled what we paid in room and board, we could probably afford a small flat of our own. A call to my parents for permission to do so and the response that as long as I could get along on the same amount of money it was costing me to live at Georgina House and go to school, well, then yes I could move out on my own with the other girls. We were fortunate to find a third floor attic flat on Oakmount Road, out by High Park, and with a landlady who took on the 'Mother' role, we made the big move into our own apartment and for a rental fee of \$25.00 a week! We four did move a few more times, each time moving 'up', and we stayed together for several years until we began to marry. I worked at the Bank of Canada on Toronto Street, and eventually Fisher Scientific, Oz took another design job at the flower shop in the King Edward Hotel, June stayed on at Eaton's selling lingerie, and Annie found a job in an office. There are lots more memories about the ensuing years, but those will be other stories in my memoirs. Oh yes, I did meet the wayward RCMP recruit again. When I began to work at the Bank of Canada on Toronto Street, that building was guarded every day by two Mounties in full uniform. My first day on the job and I recognized the young man who had had to make his apologies to Mrs. Whitely at Georgina House. I later learned that guarding the Bank of Canada assignment was a particular form of punishment. Whatever he had done to have the assignment at the bank must have been more serious than taking the little mirror. Maybe he didn't learn a lesson from his prank at Georgina House!

Did living at Georgina House change my life? No, it enriched my life and I shall be eternally grateful for having had that wonderful life experience and the memories that go along with it, and for the foresight of Mrs. Broughall who recognized a need and acted on it.

Many years later, in 1977, the house on Beverly Street was sold and the proceeds of the sale were used to form the current Georgina Foundation whose purpose is to fund worthwhile projects involving the health and well being of others and so the legacy of Mrs. Broughall continues. 106 Beverly Street has been torn down. I feel sad, but my wonderful memories live on. Thank you Mrs. Broughall.

As a post script to my story about Georgina House, in late November of 2007, the Art Gallery of Ontario on Dundas Street in Toronto was showcasing an exhibit of Ansel Adams photography. I wanted to see the exhibit and so I asked my oldest son who is a Landscape Architect with his own firm in Toronto if he wanted to accompany me to the gallery. He said yes and offered to pick me up at Union Station. I told him that I had decided to take the bus to Toronto. The bus station is at Bay and Dundas and I would be able to walk to the gallery along the same route that I had taken so very long ago on my way to Ryerson each day. I wanted to enjoy that experience again. As I walked along toward the Gallery, very near Beverly Street, the memories flooded back to my school days, crossing the very bus University Avenue into what was then China Town. Some of the little Chinese shops were still there, a hole-in-the-wall restaurant that we often stopped in, the Ontario College of Art in a large and fairly new building, and the AGO in the midst of a large addition and renovation. After enjoying the gallery exhibit, my son took me to dinner before I would get the bus for the return trip to Brantford. He said he was taking me to a restaurant on Queen Street. I asked him if he would drive down to Beverly Street to Queen so that I could have a look at Georgina House. He drove slowly so that I could have a long look. When I pointed it out, he was quite surprised and said, "Wow, Mom, Did you live there?" The high board fence had been replaced with an iron fence, and the sunroom was all lit up with Christmas lights and with lots of bicycles parked on the front lawn. I could see young people inside the house. They were all Chinese and so I guessed the place was now being used as a residence for Chinese students. My son encouraged me to go up on the veranda and have a look inside but I didn't feel comfortable doing that; however it was a wonderful sight to once again see the happy house where I had spent a few years. The next day I called my friend Oz in Ottawa to tell her about it and we relived those years at Georgina House all over again. We laughed and laughed together. My other two friends, June and Annie, have passed away and I still think of them with fondness.

I learned that the house was torn down sometime in late 2011, however I did find a picture that had been taken on March 2, 2011 and I've had permission to use that picture to accompany this memoir. The photographer, Mr. William Kimber, has asked me to share my memoir with him.



106 Beverley Street, Toronto. Photo credit: William Kimber



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.



Lives Asunder

by

Bertha Joseph

The evening was unbearably warm in the third floor apartment at 4 Church Street in Amherst, Nova Scotia. The air was still except for a sporadic light breeze that blew its way through the opened window. Mama rocked and sang a lullaby, comforting the fussing baby girl in her arms. Mama could hear the hustle and bustle of the Friday evening shoppers, on the street below. She couldn't decide which she preferred, the busy activity of the shoppers or the dark silence that followed their leaving. It all seemed so redundant now.

Mama, feeling smothered in apartment living, reminisced about the days of her youth in the country, the open spaces of land and the smell of fragrant air. Up until two years ago, she was always able to step outside into the fresh air.

She said, "I used to take the babies outside into the cool night air, sit and rock them, softly singing my lullaby to them. The night air cooled their fretfulness, comforted them and made them sleepy. But now, it is what it is."



Third floor apartment above Chapman's Barber Shop. Photo credit: Vintage Amherst..

Mama sat for a long time, with the sleeping child nestled close to her bosom, letting the warmth of the baby's body comfort her. At long last, she gently laid baby in her crib.

Mama took her place once again by the open window. As she rocked, she felt the gentle breeze cool her sweating brow; all the while watching the traffic in the street below, play games of light and shadows across her darkened walls and ceiling.

Standing beside her, I asked, "What are you thinking about, Mama?"

Startled, she looked at me and replied, "I am thinking about your Daddy."

"Me too," I said.

She spoke softly. "How could things go so terribly wrong? Sit quietly by me, I need to remember, think it over and try to understand."

In the darkened room lit only by the light from the neon signs, the traffic lights and the moving vehicles on the street below, Mama remembered trying to put her tortured mind at ease.

As thoughts were racing through her mind, her spoken words of memories trenched their way into and were forever locked in my heart. I felt her pain, her loneliness, her despair; for I also, could not comprehend how things could have gone so terribly wrong.



Lila Jean Carter

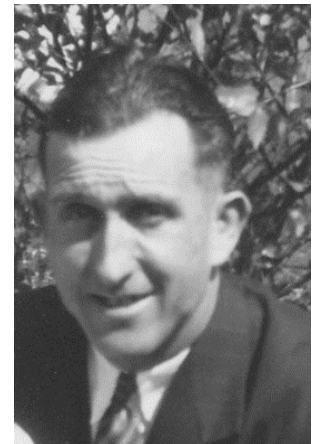
On March 10, 1908, in the small village of Wallace, Nova Scotia, my Father, Norman Edward McFadden, the sixth of fourteen children, was born, to Sarah Fanny Rhindress and Norman Edward McFadden.

On January 30th, 1922, in Oxford, Nova Scotia, my Mother, Lila Jean Carter, the second child of six, was born to Mary Mable Rushton and William Nesbit Carter.

Mama, a country girl, grew up on the farm. I was told that she was as fair as the beautiful wild pink roses that grew in abundance along the country road and around her home. Her hair was blonde and her lily white complexion bore a pink softness on her cheeks and her spirit revealed in her light blue eyes. Mama loved the scent of the wild pink roses and the company of her dearest friend and cousin, Millie Rushton. They were childhood best friends and, in high school still walked to and from school together. It was a number of miles to school and home again, but they loved the walk. They were kindred spirits with many secrets and stories hidden in their hearts.

One day, on their way from school, they saw a young man causing Mama's heart to skip a beat. His image would not escape from her innermost thoughts. Many a day after, they lingered along the country road, hoping to get another glimpse of him. He was visiting his sister, Myrtle, so Mama and Millie decided that on the morrow, they would stop and say hello to her. This is how my Mother and Father met. They fell in love, were married and blessed with seven children. The eldest a boy, Edward, followed by me and then five more girls, Jennie, Sarah, Norma, Maxiene and Ann.

Daddy was a handsome man about five feet ten with dark hair. His sparkling dark eyes drew you close to him. Everyone enjoyed him, for he had an amazing outgoing personality and made many friends. He put everyone at ease and was able to carry on a conversation of interest with people in all walks of life. He loved life and was loved by all who knew him. His skills were many, but he was first and foremost a meticulous carpenter.



Norman

In 1939 World War II was declared. Factories and Foundries were busy supporting the war effort's requirements. Daddy, a Carpenter, worked at the Oxford Factory and was called upon to work at the Oxford Foundry, due to his skills in pattern and mould making. In June 1943 Daddy sold our home in Oxford and went to work at Fawcett's Foundry in Sackville, New Brunswick. In November, he received word from Robb Engineering Works in Amherst, Nova Scotia that he was hired. He reported to work as a Carpenter, on November 11th, 1943.



Oxford Foundry 1940s. Photo credit: Phil Smith.

In the short period of time from June to November of that year, we left Oxford and stayed six weeks at our Grandparents' home in Chignecto Mines, Nova Scotia. We then moved to Sackville, New Brunswick, living there from July to November. In November we again moved, this time to Amherst, Nova Scotia, in order for Daddy to be close to Robb's.

There were now four children in our family. Between December 1944 and June 1948, three more baby girls were born. I was five years old when the family moved to Amherst. During the next seven years, I was fascinated by my Father and his accomplishments.

My father, a devoted family man, never missed a day's work from Monday to Saturday, putting in his 44 hour week at Robb's. He had barbering skills, and in the evenings and weekends, men came to get their hair cut. Daddy had an eye testing kit and folk came to get their eyes tested for generic glasses. He also owned a shoe last and tools for repairing footwear. People brought their shoes and work boots for repair, which he half-soled, replaced heels, or did stitching if required.



*Bertha, age 6, at Robb's
Guard House.*

He also built furniture and did odd jobs. My sisters still have a matching dresser and night stand he built. In his younger years, he made violins. I have a remnant of one showing the date and his signature. Daddy loved to dance and gave dancing lessons to anyone interested and taught my sister Sarah how to tap dance. He held a title as Featherweight Boxer.

In the evenings, we gathered around the radio listening to programs such as "The Shadow Knows", "The Green Hornet" and "Amos and Andy". The room would be filled with laughter and happiness. But, it was a different story when a boxing match was broadcast; no one

breathed a word, only Daddy. He sat on a tiny footstool in front of the radio, hollering at the top of his lungs with instructions to his favourite boxer.



A bookcase built by my father.

On Sunday, May 28, 1950, as was usual, Daddy made certain the family attended Church and Sunday School. After Church and lunch, we went for our usual Sunday walk. On returning home from our Sunday walks, Daddy would go out for a chat with the Old Timers and the Guys from work, who, on Sundays, were always standing at the corner discussing last week's gossip and politics.

Earlier that year, I won a little camera selling greeting cards, pins, thread and needles, from a job I found advertised in a magazine. I must have thought I was a great photographer, like Karsh maybe, for I was always snapping pictures of people. On this day, I followed Daddy down the two flights of stairs and not needing much coaxing, for he really liked getting his picture taken, I took his picture. As I was focusing, I said, "Daddy, I cannot see your eyes".

I went to him and twisted his salt and pepper brim hat to the side, he laughed and I took his picture. Daddy walked away towards his group of friends. I walked back up stairs.

Monday, May 29th, 1950 dawned with clear skies and the sun warming the earth. Spring was being forced out by the resurgence of the coming summer. The alarm clock, ringing out the get up call, danced its four legs on the night stand. Daddy wasted no time getting out of bed and lighting the kitchen range and stoking up the room heater. Mama was not far behind, getting the kettle filled and the porridge pot bubbling and cooking on the stove. She set the breakfast table. Beside Daddy's bowl of porridge, she set a cup of hot milk, the bowl of brown sugar and his cup of tea and a saucer.

Daddy was at the sink, had his morning shave and wash; and made certain that a Windsor Knot, in his work tie, was perfectly centered between the collar of his daily clean work shirt. He then checked all his pockets in his carpenter coveralls. Satisfied all was in order, he sat down to breakfast and his morning tea. I loved to watch Daddy eat his porridge. He smothered the porridge in brown sugar, took a spoonful, dipped it in his cup of hot milk and placed it in his mouth, savouring the porridge to the very last spoonful. Then with great style, he sipped his tea from the saucer. Daddy glanced at the clock, tied his work boots, walked down the hall, opened the doors to the children's bedrooms, looked in upon his children and turned to Mama. He gave her a kiss and said his usual "tootle loo" and was off to work at Robb's. Robb's morning whistle blew at 8 o'clock.

Mama got the children up. They were groomed, ate breakfast and sent off to school. The younger children were tended, given their breakfast and put down to play. Mama went about her usual chores. She washed dishes, re-stoked the fires, made the beds and swept the floors. The aroma of a batch of bread, already rising on the sideboard, filled the apartment. Dinner was cooking on the stove, as Daddy and children would soon be coming home hungry and ready to eat.

The children at school were attending to their studies as usual. Classes would be dismissed at noon and would start again at 1:30 pm. Our family went home for dinner, while most children went home for a lunch. Eddie, Jennie and Sarah went to Acadia Street School, which was about six blocks from home. Every school day at noon, Jennie and Sarah would leave the school, walk north on Havelock Street, towards Robb's, which was situated on Lower LaPlanche Street. They would hurry, see Daddy coming and would walk him home. I went to Spring Street School, as I was now in Grade 6. By the time I got home at noon everyone would be already seated at the table.

On this day, in particular, it was close to lunch dismissal time when suddenly an ambulance siren was heard. Everyone jumped from their seats, rushed to the window as an ambulance sped by my school. Our Teacher, Miss Ripley, in a loud voice, instructed us to sit down. The ambulance caused me to feel uneasy and nauseous. An unexplainable feeling went through my body pressing against my heart. Raising my hand, I asked to be excused home.

Miss Ripley said, "No, class will be out in a few minutes."

Mama was at the stove getting dinner ready, when hurried steps were heard coming up the two flights of stairs to the apartment. She responded to a knock at the door to find Rev. George W. Briggs accompanied by representatives from Robb Engineering Works.

She felt faint. A feeling of fear and terror, never experienced in her short 29 years, swept through her body. Her scream, penetrating the ears of little Norma, still echoes to this day. Mama tried to put it all together. She tried to understand what they were telling her. Her mind raced and reflected to the minutes before, when to the sound of the siren, she had rushed to the window. She looked down at the fleeting ambulance, as it rushed past, on its way to Highland View Hospital. She had flashes of this morning of Norman going back the second time; opening the children's bedroom doors and looking in on them - a second time! She remembered his second kiss and again saying "Tootle loo". Her mind raced with the thought: "not a second time but the final time".

The sun shone brilliantly and cast its rays of warmth upon me, as I walked home for dinner. A school mate, who rode his bike, raced off for home. Within a short few minutes he rode back, stopped and said to me, "You are going to feel awful bad when you get home."

While he drove off, I called after him, "What do you mean?"

He just repeated what he had said.

My mind raced, for I pictured my baby sisters falling out the third floor window to the street below. I was filled with terror and I prayed. My legs turned to lead. The faster I walked the heavier my legs became and the longer it seemed to take. I stood in front of the door leading to the stairs. I gazed at the sidewalk. It was clean, there was no blood anywhere. I opened the door and ascended the stairs. I stopped, the stairwell was different. The smell of my Father coming home with the scent of Robb's shop and of sawdust of newly cut lumber on his coveralls was missing. His presence was missing.

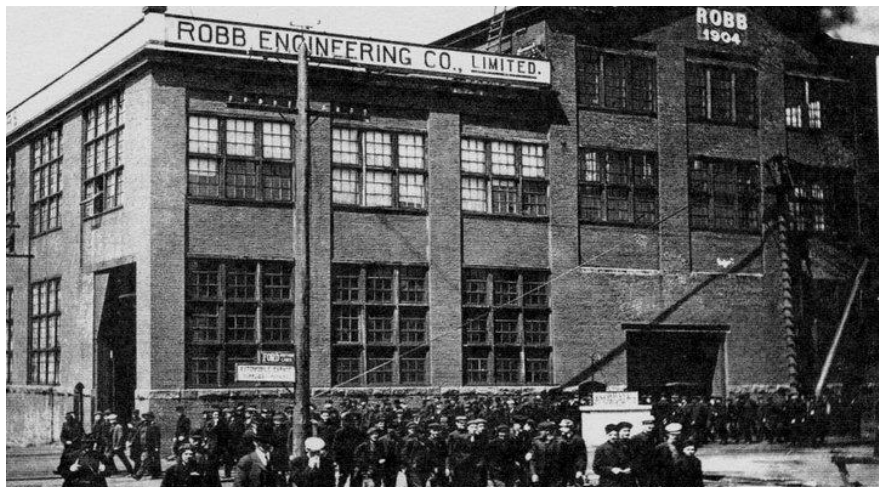
Jennie and Sarah lingered at the corner. They waited. Daddy did not come. They still waited until someone at the corner told them to go home, as their Daddy wasn't coming. Eddie had already been home and after receiving the horrific news, disappeared down the alley. Mama later found him, sitting in back of the apartment building, his body racked in grief and anguish, with tears flowing freely.

My lead-weighted legs climbed the two flights of stairs. I entered the kitchen, the silence broken only by the creaking of the rocking chair, where sat Rev. Briggs rocking to and fro. Mama stood by the sink, braiding little Maxiene's hair. Her eyes red rimmed, her chin quivering, with a heart-broken voice told me the news -- the news that broke so many hearts that beautiful hot sunny day.

One heart that broke that day was my own.

Daddy had arrived at Robb's at his usual time, checked in on the time card and reported to his work place. It was going to be another busy week. They were working on the demolition and rebuilding of a boiler shop.

At 10:40 am something terrible went wrong.



Robb Engineering Co. Limited. Photo credit: Roger Lorette.

The scaffold was to be built free standing. However, a certain decision was made to attach it to the trusses of the old building. Daddy and his boss, Wyle Farrow ascended the scaffold to the roof level. They were pulling on an old truss, when a cross member connecting the old and new building gave way, causing Daddy and Wyle to fall 50 feet to the concrete floor below. Daddy fell on a table breaking it in half and then to the floor. The injured men were lifted and carried to the First Aid Office, where Dr. W. Coates and the ambulance were called. They had to wait for the arrival of the doctor and for the ambulance before the injured could be taken to Amherst Highland View Hospital.

My Father was conscious and spoke to Don Rockwell, the Office Manager, and said: "I guess that's it for me, Don."

Don said, "Norman ... we will get you to the hospital and get you looked after."

My father said, "I'm thirsty".

Margaret Biden, secretary, rushed for the water. They braced Father up and gave him a drink.

He was examined by Dr. Coates, put into an ambulance and rushed to the hospital.

En route to the hospital, my Father died as the ambulance passed my school. He died from critical brain injuries, very serious skull fractures, a broken neck and multiple internal injuries.

Wyle was also rushed to the hospital and then airlifted to Halifax Victoria General Hospital, where he died June 1st, after surgery for intracranial hemorrhage and multiple injuries.

On this beautiful sunny hot Spring day, our hearts were turned into ice, our minds into turmoil and our lives asunder.

May 31st 1950 was another hot day, the day my Father was laid to rest.

Mama dressed the children and we attended the Funeral. All throughout I kept looking at Daddy. The right side of his head, crushed and bruised, face and right hand were masked with makeup to conceal the injuries. Miriam Sanders, from our Church, sang Daddy's favourite hymns. Rev. Briggs gave the Eulogy. Nothing said or done comforted the broken hearts, or silenced the sobbing in that darkened room that sad, sad day.

The Funeral Procession was very lengthy with the men from Robb's, and Fellow Members of the Knights of Pythias and the Orange Lodge, marching to the Cemetary, along with all the cars.

The day ended, but life without a Husband and a Father just had its beginning.

During the days that followed I had nightmares. I would be walking around Daddy's grave and I would hear him knocking and calling me to get someone and get him out, for he was not dead, he was only asleep. In my dream, I would rush and get people to come and dig him up. He would sit up and laugh and talk about the mistake.

But, all my daily trips to his grave met with only silence; and the wind playing hide and seek among the trees, while spreading the aroma from the bouquet of dahlias I always brought to him.

Mama and I sat in silence. Our minds, wanting to continue in thought, endeavoured to shut down the memories frozen in time. Mama broke the silence and her thoughts continued,

but this time, not to the past but to the future. She had to concentrate on keeping and raising her seven children on her own. Mama raised her children, while alone and in silence, her tears flowed.

Mama, exhausted and mentally drained, went to bed.

Dawn was creeping over the horizon. I was still sitting deep in thought. I could not come to terms over my Father's accident and untimely demise. It made no sense that he was forever gone.

Like a sponge, I absorbed all the conflicting stories I heard about the accident. All my childish questions went unanswered or I received relies such as, "You are too young to understand". But I did understand and one day I would find the answers. Over the years, all my enquiries went unanswered or I was told the files were unavailable to me. Through the years, I asked my Mother to acquire Father's file from Robb's and Workmen's Compensation Board. She would become very quiet and resistant to my request. Greyness would erupt upon her face and I realized I was causing her distress; and I let the matter rest.

After my Mother's demise in August 2003, I began my research. I requested and received the Workmen's Compensation File. I have been researching the Archives. There are missing reports, such as the Coroner's Inquest Report and the two Witnesses' Reports. Once I find and read the Witnesses Reports, maybe then I will find peace.

As I put pen to paper writing these lines, I read a book The Journeys of Socrates by Dan Millman (©2005, HarperCollins). Two passages in this book touched my very heart and soul:

*When I was young, I believed that life
might unfold in an orderly way, according to my hopes and expectations.
But now I understand that the Way winds like a river,
always changing, ever onward, following God's gravity
toward the Great Sea of Being.
My journeys revealed that
the Way itself creates the Warrior;
that every path leads to peace,
every choice to wisdom.
And that life has always been,
and always will be,
arising in Mystery.*

From Socrates' Journal, page 310.

*“Memories themselves are faded paintings. Some we cherish, others are painful.
There is no reason to throw them away. Just tuck those you want to keep
In a safe place, to review as you wish. The past is not meant to intrude on the present.”*

Serefin to Socrates, page 230

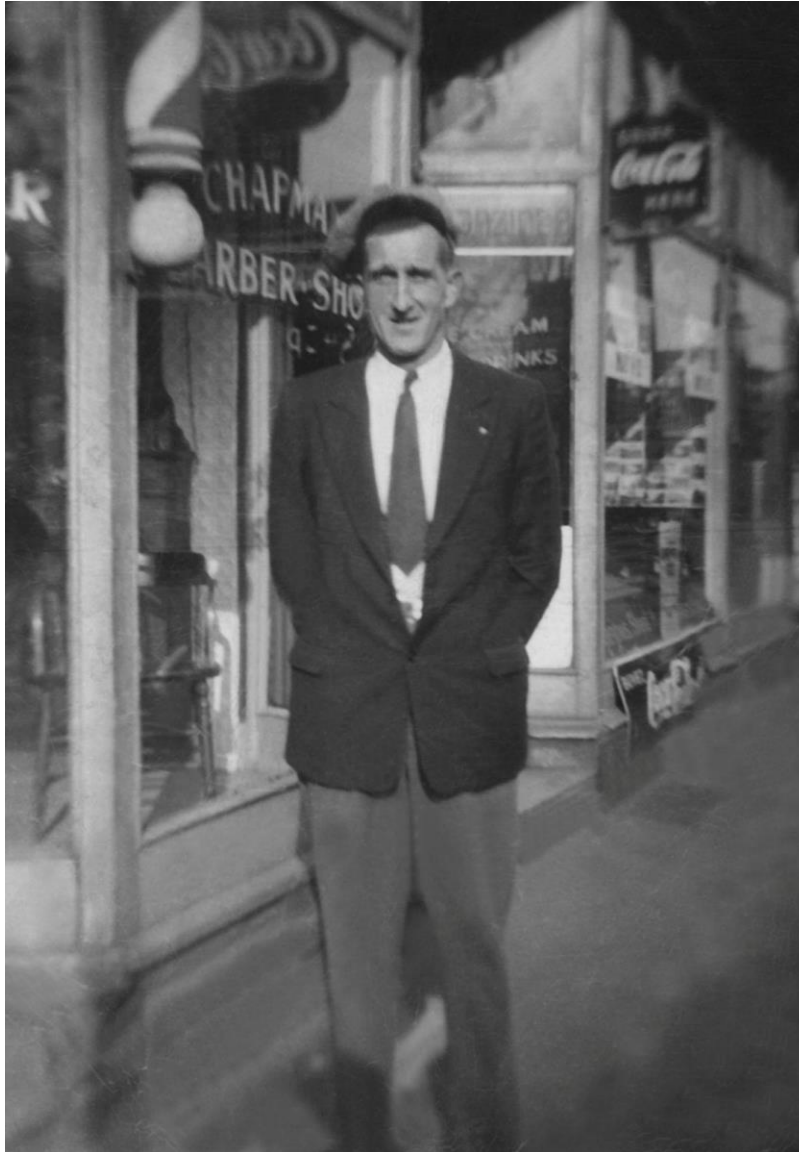
It was with high courage, we pressed on without Daddy.



Daddy's Work Badge

Remember When ...

I have a treasure, his picture, the one I took the day before he was taken from us:



A Cherished Moment In Time

Sunday afternoon: May 28, 1950.

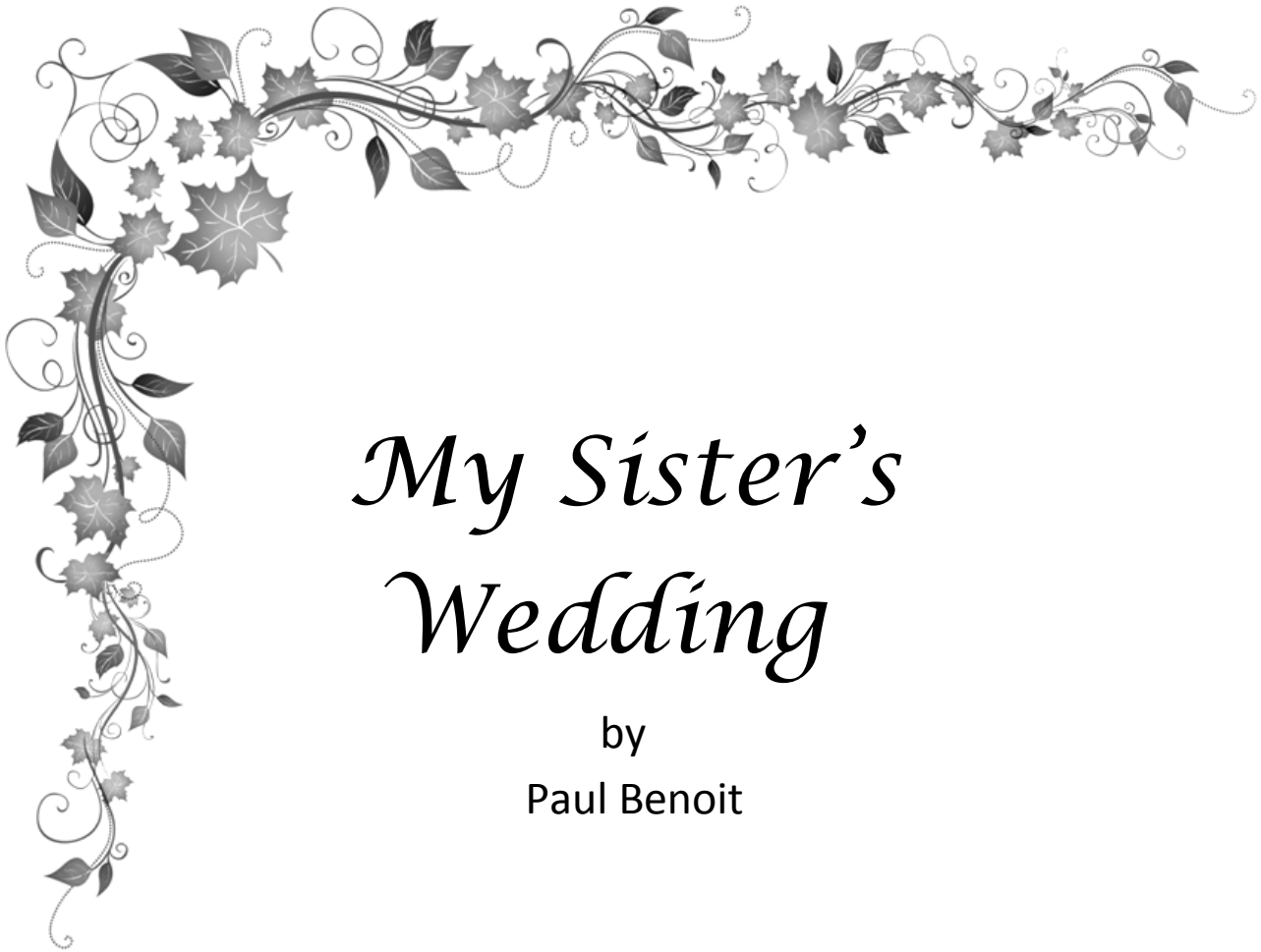
Photo credit: Bertha McFadden



I was born, raised, and educated in Nova Scotia. Brantford, Ontario has been my home for the past 50 years.

*Since childhood I have been fascinated by storybooks and my first remembrance is of reading **Black Beauty**. I was ten years old when I wandered into the Amherst Library, and I was mesmerized. I became an avid reader.*

*My next remembrance is reading **Miracle of the Bells**. I decided I wanted to write. I started by writing letters to Pen Pals all over the world. During the ensuing years I found myself making notes and writing little stories about my life. Now I am writing Memories. My book is called **Strolling Through the Diamonds**. The “diamonds” symbolize the precious years of my life.*



My Sister's Wedding

by
Paul Benoit

On Sunday August 11 2013 my family and I went to see my sisters wedding.

It was in The Westin Prince Hotel in Toronto. The wedding started at 11:00 so we had to leave Brantford at 9:00am. Katherine and David were already in Toronto.

We went in a stretch limousine. The limo was black and very nice inside. We were all pretty close together so there was no need for seat belts.

When we arrived my dad brought me through the revolving door. I enjoyed that but was afraid we were going to get stuck but we made it through. We had time to visit a little before the wedding.

Then it was time for the wedding. It was a Jewish wedding. It was a little reversed from what we're used to. First Katherine and her husband to be David signed the register then

Katherine walked down the aisle. They stood at the front for a while, then they went and stood under a Chuppa (it's a canopy for Jewish weddings. It looks like a tent).



Left: Katherine and David, under the Chuppa. Right: Paul's nieces, Kristen and Katherine.

It was a small wedding, just immediate family. Katherine was wearing a lovely white gown and David wore a tuxedo.



The happy couple.

Remember When ...

After the wedding we went downstairs for a feast. They had so much food we couldn't have one of everything. I'm just going to tell you a few things they had. Lobster tails, different kinds of eggs, bacon and crackers. It was good.



Paul's nephew Lyndon and sister Susan.

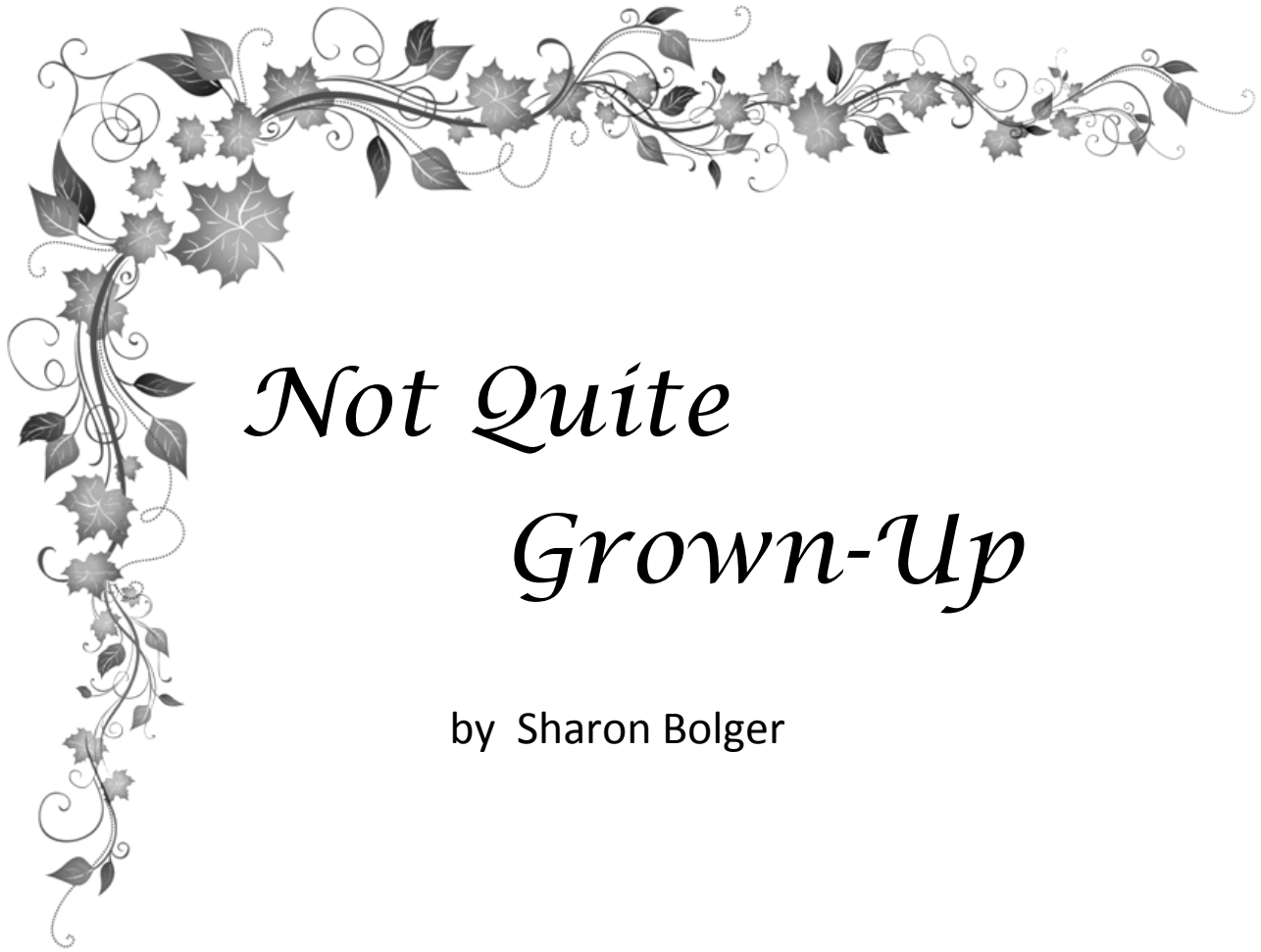
After we ate we sat around and talked a while. We took lots of pictures. It was 2:00 pm when we came home.



Paul and his mother, Marjorie.



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



Not Quite Grown-Up

by Sharon Bolger

I have noticed on my return visits to my home town in Northern Ontario that it is a place almost frozen in time, and when I am there I have the distinct feeling of being instantly transported back to the sixties. At the time I moved away I was eager to leave, unfortunately, I didn't realize what I left behind until I did. It is a place blessed with an abundance of trees and clear lakes. Summer in Espanola didn't leave sweat on your brow, only warmth on your shoulders. Fall came quickly with a burst of colourful leaves floating to the ground to be piled high by little children. Winter was bitter with large mounds of soft white snow for skiing and sledding, but when spring eased in defrosting our toes, well—all was right with the world.

In the summer of 1965 at the age of thirteen I had the opportunity for an adult experience that has stayed in my memory since. It was before my father's early death and after the assassination of President Kennedy. My older sister, her city proper friend and I stayed over night at her uncle's cottage on a little rocky island on lake Apsey. The place was nestled in seclusion thirty minutes away from town and surrounded by a dense region of trees.

As we stepped into the small fiberglass motor boat that weighed heavy under the weight of Susan's suitcase, I peered into the green tinted water to see the smooth round rocks laying on the bottom. Susan wasn't my first choice for a friend, but her red hair did fascinate me. We didn't see much red hair in Espanola. I puzzled over her bringing so many clothes with no one to appreciate her fashion looks except us, and we cared little for it especially in the bush. In truth – I would have been jealous of her if I hadn't been so preoccupied with the whole idea of total freedom.

My sister tugged hard on the motor's pull cord again and again until we heard it's roar, and breathed in the gasoline fumes that circled our heads lending to the excitement. She steered the handle to back us away from the wooden dock. The air was warm, breezy and calming with the scent of fir, maple and spruce mingled with the smell of fish. Lake Apsey, although pristine, was a cold lake and not the best for swimming. The boat sped away and the wood plank shore grew distant. The wind blew our hair straight back from the direction we were going, and my heart pounded with anticipation, and no thought of danger for the afternoon and night before us. Twenty minutes later we approached the island's dock and tied the boat to the slippery wet post sticking up from the water.

The island was covered with moss, grass, weeds and peppered with winter trees. The cottage was up an incline with a distinctly worn path leading right to the door. I thought the place would be covered with rough wood boards, but it was more house-looking than cottage, with white painted siding, and a wooden screen door that led into a large cozy kitchen. The room had a pump in the sink, and wooden weathered table and chairs. You got cold water unless you warmed it, gas lamps for lighting, no bathtub, nor an inside toilet. The three large bedrooms had two double beds each. I was pleasantly surprised how roomy, fresh and comfortable the place felt.



Lake Apsey

Susan and I decided to go fishing from off the boat, and staring into the deep water I could see them swimming all around us toying with our lack of skill. We didn't catch a single one. It was going to be a canned supper, but that didn't bother us. Food didn't hold a high priority. What mattered was this moment in time when we were just like our parents doing our thing as we chose to do it. It was a glimpse through the door toward the future of independence and adulthood.

When night began to fall I was surprised to find myself growing anxious as the sky grew dark. My sister was more quiet than I had wished her to be. I thought she'd take on the role of boss, but she didn't. In fact, she went to bed and left Susan and I to ourselves. Suddenly I was restless and not so brave.

Susan said we needed to get washed and ready for bed as though this was an ordinary night, but I was becoming intensely aware that we were alone, it was dark, and I could hear owls, the wind whistling through the trees and crickets making their constant piercing sound. My imagination went into high gear. I pictured a black bear circling the cabin sniffing and yearning for our tender flesh. Black bears are native to northern Ontario and good swimmers, so it was entirely possible for them to navigate between the many little islands on the lake. I could see the dotted lights of far off cottages, but they may have well not been there at all if an emergency arose.

We lit the oil lamp to scare off the shadows. Neither of us wanted to go into the bedrooms alone, so we each took a soft comfy old sofa and a blanket and settled in the living room for sleep. Sleep that didn't come easily, not for me. I decided I would chatter on just about anything to keep my sleeping partner awake. Sometime after the soft evening light became black I heard some unsettling sounds outside the cottage door and immediately began to question Susan.

"Did you hear that?" I said with some urgency. "Do bears come on the island?" "You've been here before, do your know?"

"Why, are you scared baby?" She responded drowsily.

"No I am not, but I did hear something outside, I'm sure I did."

"Could be the wind, or could be a bear," she answered back, adding some tension to her voice.

"Maybe we better wake-up my sister," I said as I sat up to head toward her room.

"I don't think she can save us from a bear. Be really quiet and if it doesn't hear anything it will go away."

"So you think it might be a bear?" I said, feeling seriously scared.

"Could be," Susan answered.

"Do you think it smells food or maybe it smells us?"

"Yeah, they've got a great sense of smell, but if it tries to gets in we'll barricade ourselves in one of the bedrooms."

"Oh God, now you're saying it could get in!"

Suddenly Susan sat up straight and dropped her jaw. “In fact—one time we had a big problem with a mother bear and her cubs. They were eating blueberries just outside the door and nothing would scare them off. I was sure they’d attack us if we stepped outside.”

“You’re kidding — right?” I was startled at her convincing words and downright terrified at the thought of being mauled by a big black mother bear. But just as I was about to run for my sister she burst into laughter.

“Sorry! I’m teasing. It’s a raccoon, we always have trouble with raccoons, not bears.”

I wasn’t sure whether to trust her anymore so I stayed on sharp alert all night while she slept, and apparently peacefully. It was almost dawn before I nodded off and then hearing my sister stir I realized I was going to greet the day very tired.

I thought one night wouldn’t be enough of a freedom experience, but I learned I wasn’t ready for more than that. Sleeping in my own bed with the familiar sounds of car doors slamming and dogs barking was a welcoming thought.

I miss the north, maybe not the long bitter winters, but I do miss all the green and the smell of northern air. I miss the slow pace of a small town that allows you time to stop and ponder. I miss the simplicity, quaintness and the experience of walking for ten minutes and being in the bush with no one around you, and knowing that you can do that. My memories of my home town, like the overnight stay at that cottage, I hold dear, and I wish I could relive them. But I’m far away from my roots, and all I have are my memories. Whether those times were better than now is undetermined, but they are remembered as better. I continue to look back and sigh a sad sigh wondering where the time has gone and how quickly it has passed. My memories of those early years will not abandon me. They are a trusted companion who comforts me when times are tough and the future is a frightening place.



Sharon Ann Barnes / Bolger was born in the small northern town of Espanola Ontario. She aspired to be a doctor but became nurse. She loved writing from a young age. An entrepreneur at heart she started and operated two small businesses. Writing is her present passion.



Potato Pancakes

by
Gurmeet Panag

"Is it Monique?"

Hearing that voice, a face came to my mind that I had not seen for years together. Yes, she was the only one who used to call me by this name as she didn't know how to pronounce my name correctly.

"Where the hell are you?" I showed my indignation.

"Honey, I'm in Versa Seniors' Home ... health very bad ... Osteoporosis ... can you come sometimes to see me?"

"Oh sure, I'll be too glad to see you." I had all the excitement in my tone.

"And ... bring me potato pancakes please, honey," she entreated.

“No problem.”

“Honey, I can’t sit any more ... well, we’ll talk when you come to see me,” she said hurriedly.

“Oh Gayle, you still remember my phone number?”

“No, I gave your family name to the housekeeper, she helped me find from the phone book ... okay, bye.”

I could sense from her heavy breathing how uncomfortable she was. She was obese and also suffering from Osteoporosis. She called potato stuffed and lightly fried *rotis* ‘potato pancakes’. She had tasted some at Maan’s place and it became her favourite food.

Since she called, Gayle has been on my mind. I met her for the first time at the Maan’s clothing store fifteen years ago. Many a times we enjoyed coffee together and talked about so many things. She had hazel eyes, sharp features and was always decked up. When she was just eighteen, she was crowned ‘Miss Vanessa’, Vanessa being the town where she was born and grew up.

And now, she is in a nursing home. I had been to that building before – those damp rooms with a distinct smell of the degenerating bodies in there. Who knows how many people spent their lives there, waiting for their last moment? Who knows how many of them had spent their weekends with their sons or daughters, while others had no visitors ever ... no one ever visited them ...

But, Gayle had one brother, elder to her. What was the name of that noble man? Oh yes, it was Dev.

Two days after Gayle’s call I packed some eatables and reached there. She was so pleased to see me that in excitement she kept kissing my forehead again and again. Then, she held my hands in hers and started looking at me as if to ensure that someone had really come to see her.

I looked around, the room was tidy, and everything was in place. I could see a picture of Gayle’s younger years hanging on the wall. The table with just one drawer was covered with a tablecloth. Pictures of her parents and siblings in beautiful frames were adorning the table. And she had arranged the pictures of the Maan family in one corner.

By now she had come to terms with her fate and accepted the nursing home as her own abode the same way she once considered the Maan’s place, where she had worked round the clock diligently for thirty five long years. The same way she had once set up her home with her first love, Scott, but then life had other plans for her.

At present she was in pitiable condition. With her hunched back she could hardly walk up to the washroom even with her walker. She was served food in her room. She had all the conveniences here as her old age pension was directly deposited in the nursing home’s account. Her brother Dev, in spite of his own health problems, visited her once a week. He would cook and bring her favourite food in small lunchboxes. At times he would stay at her place for the night, the same way Gayle used to visit her younger sister who had suffered terribly from osteoporosis. She had been confined to the hospital since the age of thirty and spent her entire life in there.

"After my mother's death, my sister was everything for me, my reason to live, and my purpose for life," she told me, crying and sobbing, when I consoled her on the loss of her sister. Then she composed herself and said, "Well, God has given me one more sister now ... Davendra Maan." And I could see her face lit up with a smile. I felt like laughing the way she pronounced Devinder's name.

Coming back to present, I asked, "Does Devinder come here to visit you?"

"Eight years ago, when I came here, she used to come once or twice a month. You know she has children ... all doing business. She is a busy lady." She was covering for them as all aged parents do when they are ignored by their own flesh and blood.

I still remember the day when she told me during a chat over a cup of coffee how she had met the Maans. She was around forty at that time when for shopping she had gone to the Maan's store. And from that day onward she spent all her life working for them. Mrs. Maan was so impressed by the cool-headed, smiling, and professionally dressed Gayle that she offered her a job then and there. I know the Maans weren't so simple as to trust somebody so quickly but Gayle was a simple small town girl. For the first two years, Gayle worked in their store under their supervision for four hours a day and at their home for the rest of the day. She was so honest that she would never touch the cash lying about in their house.

"Ju, my big sister Gayle ... I go India, gift gold earrings far ju ... back," Mrs. Maan would say in her broken English, making gestures with her hands to show a flying airplane and touching her ears to show that she would bring gold earrings for her from India.

Gayle was lured by fake promises of a gift almost two three times a week and she would ardently run around the store and home to finish all the chores.

When the Maans came to Canada way back, they set up their flea market business. On weekdays they would do the purchasing and on the weekends would go to different locations, to spread their wares and sell the stuff. That's how they learnt the intricacies of business. Now, all the members of the family were involved in business and owned several stores and many apartment buildings. Gajjan Singh Maan owned a huge bungalow in India and had established contacts with political leaders there. Every year when he visited India, he would host a lavish party at his place where he entertained his guests with dance, music and a variety of liquor. After a shot or two, his friend Amrik Singh would ask, "Gajjan Singh, you must be having close associations with the *goras*, right?"

"Oh no, we don't need to follow them ... the white women work in our houses to clean our washrooms and babysit our children. They enjoy working in our homes."

"Really? Do they make a big money?" Amrik would ask wide-eyed.

"Oh no, to tell you frankly, we give them just the food to eat ... they fall for our potato stuffed *paronthas* which they call pancakes." Both laughed and he said, "The one who lives in our house shares our children's bedroom."

Gajjan was known for his bluffing trait. The people around them listening to this talk used to whisper “What sort of *goras* are he talking about who are so simple and sober? On the contrary, we keep hearing about the *goras* that they harass our people.”

“We tolerated a lot in the beginning but not anymore ... now, they better behave with us.” Gajjan Singh could not hide the hurt.

Mrs. Maan had arranged the *langar* (community kitchen) in the *Gurdwara* (Sikh temple) where women had gathered around the huge skillet to make rotis.

“Friends, I heard that the Maans made the white girl agree to a fake marriage with Devinder’s brother to get him permanent resident status,” Harjit said while preparing *roti* with her hands.

“I really can’t understand what type of magic wand these Maans have? That *gori* does whatever they tell her to do ... takes care of their children and does all the cleaning in their house,” said Karamjit Brar while making the balls with the dough.

“I heard, her *gora* was not a nice person, would flirt with other women and many a times wouldn’t even come back home. That’s why they got separated. Marriage has no meaning for these *goras*,” she said laughing. “In the morning they marry and get divorced by the evening ... I don’t allow my daughter to mingle with these white girls or else she’ll learn all these things. I keep reminding her: look, if you get involved in some bad stuff, your father will take you to India and kill you.” Kulwinder shared her viewpoint while making the *roti* with a rolling pin.

“You know, what type of life these whites are living? After their children turn eighteen, can’t stay with parents. And they don’t allow their elders to stay with them ... fie on them,” Gill’s aunty would share her point of view.

I was waiting in the langar hall to be served food when Mrs. Maan came to sit with me.

“So, ju are ... have coffee with Gayle and teach her all rubbish?” She started asking while sitting beside me.

“Listen, I don’t want to discuss anything with you. Gayle is not a child who can be led astray. We casually talk about our jobs.” I wanted to keep it short.

“So, ju think ju can get her hi-fi job? She is our employee and will continue with us. I don’t know why people feel jealous if she’s so attached to us.” She was certainly in a mood to pick a fight.

I thought it better to stay away from her so went upstairs and headed to the main hall. But, Gayle was still on my mind. She had really worked very hard for them though they had managed to keep her at

a pittance. Once a while, they handed out a twenty dollar bill in her hands. It was a joint family and by now the family had grown in numbers and so had Gayle's workload. After everybody had left for their jobs, Gayle would do cleaning, laundry, fold and put all the clothes at the right place. And on top of that, she took care of the four kids in the family. All this had become quite overwhelming for her.

Gayle was only sixteen when a bunch of white young men came to work in her father's farm. She fell in love with one named Scott. They got married the following year. Very soon she learnt that Scott was a flirt. She tried her best to get him back on track with all her love and patience but he started avoiding her and would not come home for days together. At first, it was for two days, then for a week and then came a time when she didn't see him for more than a month altogether. Gayle got frustrated with this relationship. To keep herself busy she took up two jobs. Whenever she lost a job she would feel suffocated as if the time was going at snail's pace and she was dying a slow death. While at work she would meet other people, talk to them and try to be normal forgetting her sorrows for the time being. Sometimes as if just for consolation sake she would say, "I'm so lucky that I don't have kids ... otherwise life would have been hell with a person like Scott."

I can still visualize Mrs. Maan lying on a mattress taking a break in her back room while Gayle was actively doing her job at the counter.

That first time we met, I had gone to the store. I started looking for a scarf. Gayle started showing me scarves in different colours and putting around my neck in front of the mirror.

"This looks so awesome, honey, trust me." After that we kept talking for fifteen minutes and exchanged our phone numbers before I left. From that day onwards, we started meeting at Tim Horton's once a week.

"You know, honey, Mr. Maan says he's a very big name in India."

"Maybe." I didn't know what to say.

"He dines with the prime minister and his wife when he goes there," Gayle would tell me very confidently.

I felt like laughing aloud. I knew Mr. Maan must have bluffed after drinking two three shots of liquor, as was his habit.

Then came the day when Gayle told me that the Maans had started avoiding her because she could not do a lot of work. Devinder also stayed home most of the time. Their grandchildren had started managing their business. But, at the end of the day, everybody would pass over their earnings to grandma. Gayle was paid merely forty dollars a week.

"How much do you pay an hour to the white woman who works for you?" Kulwant asked Devinder at a kitty party.

"Oh no, she worthless ... now we want her leave ... to go away but she doesn't," she said wiping her glasses.

"Now, in her old age, you want to get rid of her! She spent all her life working for you people. Who knows how many of your people became permanent residents because of her? She has been tending your kids since they were in diapers, she cleaned them all ... everybody knows that. She could have remarried to settle in life. She is such a pious soul. Now, you are getting rid of her, you'll have to pay for that." Kulwant could not control herself.

"Ju should have found a match for her if ju cared so much about her." Mrs. Maan was furious.

"Listen, generally it's said that white people don't consider us human. But, do we ever think when we get a chance how do we treat them?" Jaswinder also joined the conversation.

I cannot say for how long their argument lasted. Pammi told me this much only.

Gayle ... she was being treated like any recyclable item that stays in one corner of the garage to be discarded on the garbage day. I was truly concerned when Gayle called after a long silence.

Listening to Gayle's story reminded me of an old lady Attar Kaur, our neighbour in India. Her sons had left her on her own, in their old, dilapidated home. Children from her neighbours were the ones who used to bring food for her.

She had been discarded by her own flesh and blood too.



About Gurmeet:

BORN: India, 1962

RESIDENCE: Brantford, Ont.

HOBBIES: Reading, Social Work, Dance, Travelling, Acting.

PROFESSION: Builder and Property Management along with husband Jang Panag.

Gurmeet writes contemporary fiction in Punjabi. Her stories have been chosen for Punjabi Literature Academy, Chandigarh (India)'s newly published book.



Three Memories

by
Marilyn Bricker

I. As I Remember

We lived on Locks Road in the '40s. This is the first home I recall (although that is not where we lived when I was born in 1938, we lived on East Avenue, I think). It was a white frame 1½ story on a large piece of land. Dad liked gardening and there were also chickens, pigs, and bee hives. I can still see Mom and Dad on their haunches picking fresh veggies for dinner. Mom and Gran also did much canning to last throughout the winter months.

The hives were way in the back corner but the bees still managed to find us. Dad looked like a man from outer space in his netted hat, big gloves, pant legs and shirt sleeves tucked inside, he would be carrying the smoker, lifting the lids on the boxes and removing the slides with the cones of honey. This was educational for us kids, even though we knew enough to stay well back. This little hobby farm was a great place to grow up.

We lived next to the Canada Glue Works where dad worked. Our home actually belonged to the factory which we rented from them. Dad's pay was \$12.00 a week and the rent was \$5.00 a month. (Try living on that today.) There were train tracks across the road along the canal, and just past our house, they crossed into the Glue Works yards. My sister, two brothers, and I would stand on the iron gate waving to the engineer, then the caboose man as they went by. Another memory I have of that garden gate was watching the Soldiers march by while on manoeuvres. They came from the barracks on Ontario Street. These barracks later became the residence for nurses in training. Now they are apartments for people who need low income housing.

Our farmhouse kitchen was typical. It was large with a porcelain sink and hand pump, a large old cook stove that was used to heat water for laundry and bathing as well as cooking. I remember standing at this sink and Gran cleaning me up for the arrival of my new baby brother. I'm not sure if it was Bob or Alan. Bob was born in August of 1941, Alan in February of 1943. What I do remember is the awe of standing on tippy toes peering into the bassinet holding a beautiful baby. There was a definite atmosphere of excitement.

Near a window in the living room was Grandad Wooffinden's chair where he read his newspaper. Being near blind he used a magnifying glass. It was great fun to sit on his lap "reading" through that glass. Granddad was a constant in our lives as he had been a widower since mom was around 12 years old (her mom having died of stomach cancer). He was of small stature with a big heart, a good sense of humour, always interested in what we were doing. He would say "Come show me," whether it was schoolwork, new shoes etc. For me, he was a great influence. He also taught us how to play dominoes. He had special ones with raised pips so that he could feel them to know what they were. He belonged to the Institute for the Blind where they taught visually impaired ones to manage.

Another "feature" of our house is that there was no bathroom, just an outhouse. (Mom would say we were well off as it was a "two holer". That was Mom's sense of humour, apparently inherited from Granddad). This meant our baths took place in the kitchen in a galvanized tub, with the doors to the other rooms closed and the oven turned on to keep it warm.

In the summer of 1945 we moved to 87 Brighton Avenue. It was a big brick home on the corner (still no bathroom). Tutela Park was across the road. King Edward Public School was south, Trinity Anglican Church north, and to the east was the bus stop and the variety and grocery store. Mom said it was the perfect place to raise four children. I agree; we had a wonderful place to grow up and parents who were hardworking, honest, and loyal. What more could we ask for?

Dad worked delivering Wonder Bread and soon he became a Market Gardener.

I'm thinking this was around 1947 as that is the year of his truck. Now instead of travelling with him in the bread truck, we got to go to many different places to buy fruits and vegetables

to sell at market. We travelled to the Holland marshes in Grimsby and other places. I enjoyed going, sampling peaches, plums, tomatoes, etc. Mom always said I ate the profits.

Dad's stand was across from the building where the butchers sold all types of meats and cheeses. We all had our times when we accompanied Mom and Dad to help out. It was very exciting to be downtown Brantford in those days. Everyone was bustling about on a Saturday morning getting their meats, veggies, and fruit for the traditional big Sunday dinner.

There were chip wagons and the Vernors Stand to visit. On the south corner of the square was the bus station with its black and white tiled floors and walls. All the buses lined up to take and bring passengers to their destinations. On Market Street there was White's Bakery, the Standard Drugstore, a jewellery store, a Ladies Dress Shop, and Agnew's Shoe Store.

In the winter time, Dad would go up north to buy Christmas trees to bring home and sell from our yard. Many years later a couple of boys I went to school with told me they had bought a tree from another lot. As they passed our house they saw one they liked better so they traded it. I think they were suffering from a guilty conscience and felt better after telling me.

II. Tutela Park

Many memories in this park.

I spent hours and hours tobogganing on the hill and skating on the rink in the winter. I went skating the first time on a pair of boys black skates that I found in our basement. They probably belonged to Uncle Reg, who was just five years older than me. I didn't care. I just wanted to be with my friends having a good time.

Dad spent hours and hours flooding and cleaning that rink so that us kids and all the Eagle Place kids could enjoy it. I can recall waking at night, looking out my bedroom window which overlooked the park, seeing him down at the rink, working away grooming it for us. It would be freezing cold and he probably had not been home from work long or had to go shortly, but being on the committee meant doing your part. I wonder how many kids realized the work that went into keeping the rink in shape? Mom and Dad also were on the committee for the summer activities. There were Friday night movies. We would sit on the hill on blankets to watch the big screen at the bottom. It was always a full house, free to boot. We had baseball games, hockey games, Halloween parades and contests, one year I won best costume. I haven't a clue of what I was dressed as, though. We all received a bag of candy and it was a great time for all. The park had a wading pool, swings, slides, and a teeter-totter.

The first time us kids visited the Park after moving to Brighton Avenue, we met Leone and Harvey Pettigrew who lived at the south end of the park. Harvey was picking on Bob and Fran smacked him. Leone says, "And we've been friends ever since". They were, too. Fran and Leone still are in touch.

III. Gran and Granddad Durrant

Gran and Granddad were very much involved in our lives. They always lived close by. Mom and Gran were close, and they cooked many Christmas meals together. I remember being in the kitchen when we were going off to bed on the eve, and when we got up in the morning Mom would still be there. They would cook Sunday dinners, baking pies, cakes, etc., and often they would do canning together.

My grandparents were the ones to take me to my first circus. They also took my sister and me on our first train trip to Detroit, Michigan where they had friends John and Till, and sometimes we would catch the trolley at the station near the Lorne Bridge to travel to Port Dover Beach.

It was always a treat to go to their house on a Sunday after church to have ice cream floats. We didn't have pop and ice cream every day like everyone does today. Many Sundays my Aunt Ada, Uncle Geo, and cousins Ron and Cec would be there. While the adults talked we kids would play games. For a long time we had a running Monopoly game on the go.

I'm reminded of the trips we took in Dad's stake truck. He had put benches along the back and sides with pads for us to sit on. We travelled to many beaches and points of interest. Once we went to Crystal Beach, a large amusement park. There was a huge roller coaster that we went on. We loved it so much we were able to talk Dad into taking us on a second time.

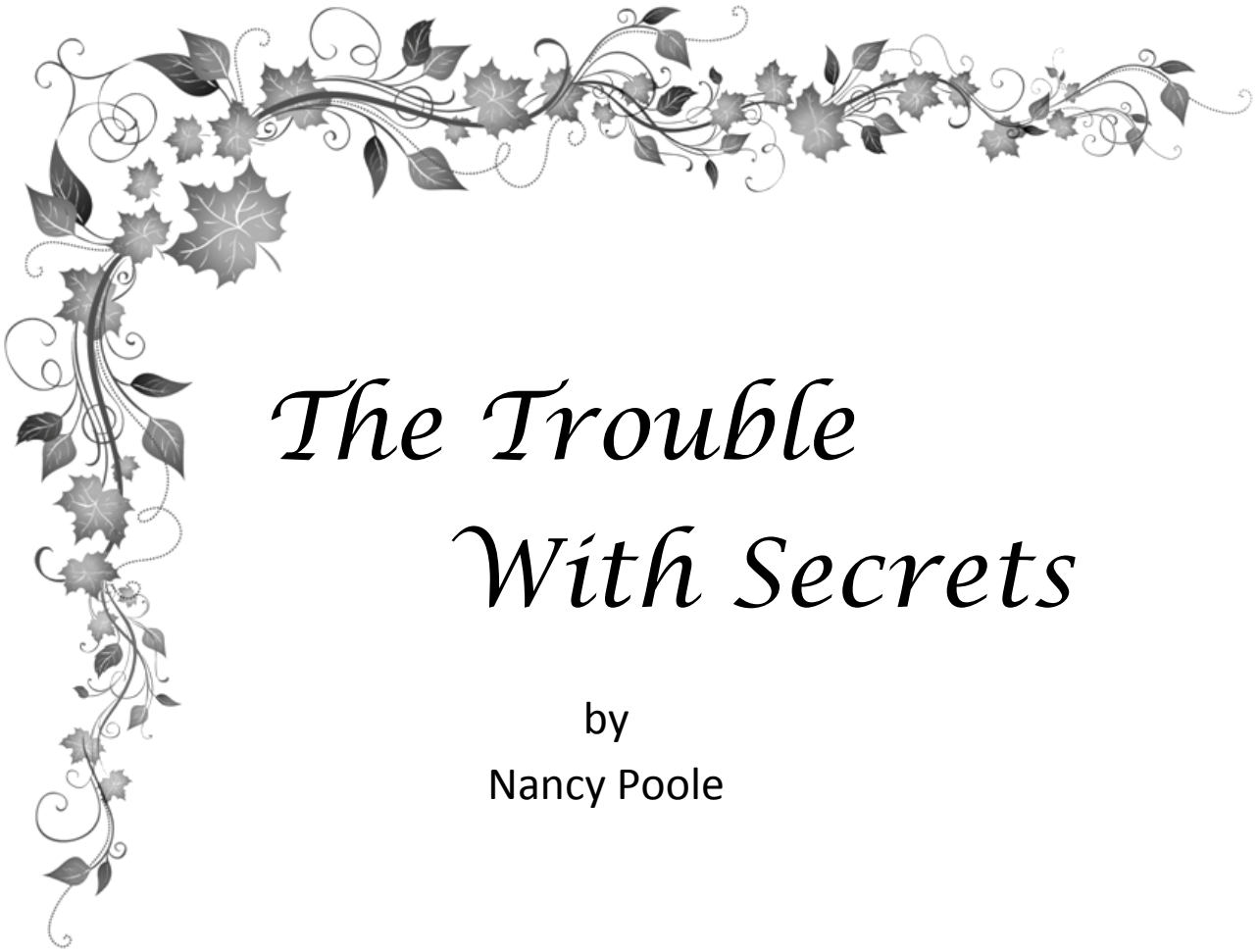
Another time we went to the Elora Gorge. When we arrived all of us jumped out and scattered. We found an old barn to explore and had an absolute ball. Not so much when we returned to where our parents anxiously awaited us. They had been worried sick thinking we might have fallen down the gorge. We were then banned to the truck for the rest of the day.

Then there was our great camping trip. We went with Mom and Dad's friends Bus and Jean Bowmen, and their three children, Carol, Bob, and Joanie. Bus was also a market gardener; his daughter Joan still has a stand at Brantford and Simcoe Market. The plan was to sleep in the trucks but the mosquitoes had other ideas. In the wee hours of the morning we headed for home. We kids still slept in the truck outside our house rather than Turkey Point.

A little more about Gran ... she was a very loving kind person. I remember being hugged to her ample bosom, which smelled of lavender.

She and Mom were very much alike. They always had a smile for everyone.

This is Marilyn's first contribution to a Lifescapes Anthology.



The Trouble With Secrets

by
Nancy Poole

"Eeeuww, you didn't!" my sister shrieked when I told her what I had done.

I had snuck into Grandma's room and had a look around. "I did, why?"

"Was there anything in it?" Patsy had this look on her face as if she had eaten something foul. I had taken the lid off a huge, lovely, big china bowl that sat beside Grandma's bed.

"No," I answered.

"That's Grandma's po pot," Pasty giggled, hardly able to contain herself.

"What's that?"

"You don't know? That's where Grandma goes pee and poop."

"Why doesn't she use the bathroom?" I always felt stupid asking my older sisters questions. They acted as if I should know all of these things, but I needed to know, so I asked.

"I don't know. She just doesn't. She doesn't even take a bath in the bathroom."

That was true. When Grandma Matthews, Daddy's mother, took a bath, it was quite the ordeal. Daddy had to haul in the huge, shiny metal tub from the shed and put it in the middle of the kitchen. Mum had to heat up water in big pots on the wood stove in the kitchen and fill the tub with hot and cold water until it was filled to the right level and the temperature was just hunky-dory. We kids were shooed from the kitchen while Grandma got naked and got into the tub.



In front: Nancy. In back: Grandma, Nancy's eldest sister, and Aunt Iris.

My curiosity always got the best of me. I was able to catch a glimpse of Mum washing Grandma's back and hair before I was warned for the last time to scat.

After her bath, Grandma would brush her long, silky white hair, and when it dried she would braid it and wrap it around the back of her head and fasten it with hairpins.

Baths were not a high priority at our house. Patsy was three years older than I and we bathed together every other Saturday night while Mum was off to the Laundromat to launder the whole family's dirty washing. Just like Grandma tried to avoid progress, Mum did not want to get stuck in what she called "the dark ages".

Grandma had an old wringer washer, but Daddy had to do a lot of talking to persuade her to get an electric machine. The wringer was also electric and we kids were not allowed to help with that because Daddy was afraid our little fingers and hands would get tangled in with the clothes and into the wringer.

All of the clothes Grandma washed had to go onto the clothesline in the back yard.

At some point, Grandma stopped washing in the wringer washer and the clothesline disappeared.

Mum went to work when I was three. The money she made had to support Grandma, Daddy, me and my two sisters. Grandpa Matthews who had been a school principal had died years before of something (a guess being prostate cancer), leaving Grandma the house and the twenty-seven acres around it. There was food to be put on the table and clothing to be bought for three girls who were growing like weeds.

I was the youngest of three girls and the older two were in school. Grandma would look after me.

Eventually, it got too much for Grandma to look after me because she was getting old, in her eighties and couldn't manage the stairs so well. We lived in a two-story farmhouse with plenty of stairs going upstairs and down.

I know there were so many stairs because I fell down all of them one time breaking my nose. It is still a bit crooked.

We lived next door to the psychiatric hospital. Our house wasn't right next to the hospital itself. Their orchard and our huge backyard separated the buildings, but they might as well have been right next to each other when the hospital had a fire drill. As a youngster it seemed as if the drill was every week.

To sound the drill, they had a loud and shrill whistle, always in the afternoon during my afternoon nap. I remember waking up to this awful sound and being terrified. Grandma made the trip upstairs a couple of times to explain the horn and to try and reassure me and help me settle down so I could go back to sleep, but she was getting to the point that she couldn't get up and down the stairs so well, so she would shout for me to go back to bed.

In time, it was decided that Grandma could not look after me and I should go to nursery school.



A fuzzy picture of Grandma and Grandpa.



Grandma (in her 90s) and Aunt

One day, we came home and Grandma wasn't there. Daddy told us that Grandma fell and broke her hip and was in the hospital. He also said she probably wouldn't be coming home. She would be going from the hospital to a nursing home.

I cried.

Grandma was the person who looked after me when I was sick. She'd rock me on her lap and read my favourite book, *Ferdinand the Bull*. She also sang to me the song, *Home on the Range*.

Word was that Grandma sang in the opera when she was young. She had a beautiful voice. When Grandma and my Aunt Iris would take me to church, they were both on tune and sang like angels.

Grandma was not all sugar and spice and all things nice. For one thing, she did not like Mum. She thought Mum was not good enough for her son whereas the truth was that Daddy probably wasn't good enough for Mum.

Even though Mum did so much for Grandma, Grandma would barely talk to her daughter-in-law.

The plain truth of it all was so shameful, nobody talked about it.

Daddy was a family doctor before I was born. He had gotten into a bad motor vehicle accident at one point and became addicted to pain pills. Rumour was that he was given the choice to go into a psychiatric hospital for treatment or relinquish his medical licence. There was no addiction awareness or treatment back then. He probably would have been hospitalized for most of the rest of his life because even psychiatric treatments were barbaric in those days.

The decision was made that Daddy would surrender his medical licence. As Daddy was no longer making money, that forced the family to have to move in with Grandma.

Even though he took art in England for a spell, became a stellar artist and learned how to restore art and make picture frames, Daddy's meagre home-based business hardly paid the bills.

Instead of blaming her precious son, Grandma blamed Mum for everything.

When Grandma was upset with Mum, she withdrew from the family and gave everyone the cold shoulder.

I remember one Sunday when Grandma was angry with Mum. We usually had supper of sandwiches and pickles in front of our black and white television to watch a Walt Disney show.

That Sunday, Grandma sat in the kitchen refusing to sit with the family and refusing to eat the sandwiches Mum prepared.

Grandma could be quite wicked, and it was also possible that Mum was better than Grandma.

My oldest sister Norma reported that as a young woman with three children already, Grandma had twins who were premature and delivered by Aunt Iris when she was just a girl. The twins lived for a short while but Grandma refused to look after them leaving Aunt Iris to care for them.

The twins died and were supposedly buried somewhere in the backyard.

As with all dirty laundry, it was not aired, but one would have thought that this situation with her own twins would have brought her down a notch or two to be a little more humble.

Grandma died when I was ten years old.

After Grandma died, Mum and Daddy decided it was time to get rid of the old furniture of Grandma's that the family was not using.

Away when the giant, solid cherry-wood four-poster bed my parents slept in during the summer months.

Grandma's house was so big it had seven bedrooms. Four were on the north side of the house and were used only in the winter months. The other three bedrooms were on the south side and got the summer sun and heat.

So much furniture went to the auction where it probably fetched very little because it was not considered to be antiques back then.

There was a spinning wheel in the attic, fancy dressing tables with three-sided mirrors, chamber pots, old dresser-drawers, huge umbrella stands, wringer washing machines, the old stove in the kitchen that heated as much as that side of the house as possible and many other precious articles I would have loved to sell today.

I wish I knew more information about Grandma Matthews. I never saw any pictures of her as a young girl, of her and my grandfather at their wedding or of her and my grandfather and their young family.

The only things I have to remember Grandma are my sparse memories, a few pictures, and a delicate eighteen carat ring with rubies and diamonds with one diamond missing given to me by my grandma.

That is the trouble with secrets. They not only hush the bad memories. They silence the good ones.



Nancy Poole has had a long and interesting career as a University-educated Registered Nurse. She has many fascinating stories about her childhood and her experiences as a nurse.

Nancy has always loved to write letters to her families and friends who begged for more. She started writing non-fiction in the 1990s and was amazed at how easy it was for her. She often felt the ideas were God-given and she only put the ideas on paper.

*Nancy has published three self-help books: **Ignite the Do Within You**, a general self-help book; **The Bitter Journey of Alzheimer's: One Wife's Daily Log**, a helpful guide to dealing with those with the terrible disease of Alzheimer's; and **Forgive Me, Forgive Me Not**, a useful tool employing simple, concrete steps toward forgiveness.*

Nancy lives in Brantford, Ontario with her co-authors, Rocky, the smartest of all Border Collies and her psychic tortoiseshell cat, Lacey.



Watercolours

by
Vickie Iorio

In 2005 I started taking lessons in watercolour once a week at the Beckett Building in Brantford.

I have been painting for about eight years and I enjoy it so much. It helps me to relax, makes me feel free and makes me forget about things for a while. I get so involved I wish that there were more than two hours in a lesson. I paint till the very last second.

Sometimes I don't have the right colour so I mix colours and water to get the colour I want. I create different colours which makes an interesting effect. For example, if I mix blue and red I get purple and if I add water it goes a lighter shade of purple.

Sometimes it is a surprise. Some of my favourite colours are blue, green, purple and pink.

I like the way the brush feels in my hand. There are all kinds of techniques you can use with the brush. Different brushes give different effects. I have learned that a wide brush can be used for sky and water. A smaller brush can be used for details such as bird feathers, flowers, or faces. I use two or three different sizes of brushes.

Some of my favourite things to paint are scenery, flowers, birds and animals.

I like the effect I get when I work with the paint and the water. I like the way the water makes the colours flow. It reminds me of the colours of a rainbow or the colours I see when I blow bubbles and the sun shines on them. It is a warm summertime feeling.

The sponge is used for different effects, like making trees. You dab the paint to make different textures. And when you use Kleenex you can blend the colours together and make different shapes. This makes the picture more interesting. It also gives a person who is looking at it a different perspective to see it.

It is the same with different kinds of paints. For example, oil paints are different from watercolours or acrylics. Oil paints take longer to dry. Watercolours you can make more mistakes but it is easier to fix if you do it right away, as opposed to oil paint which is difficult to fix. Some people prefer to work with watercolours then work with oil paints. You have to have special paper for water colours it helps the colours flow and run together.

When I actually finish a painting it makes me feel proud. Sometimes I feel like I'm tied up in knots and after doing a couple of hours of watercolours it calms me down I feel more relaxed and peaceful.

I have completed about twenty-five paintings. Some of my friends have purchased some. Some I have given as gifts. I have also kept a few for myself. My favourite is a bluebird sitting on an apple blossom branch which hangs on my wall.

One day I hope to have an art show of my own.

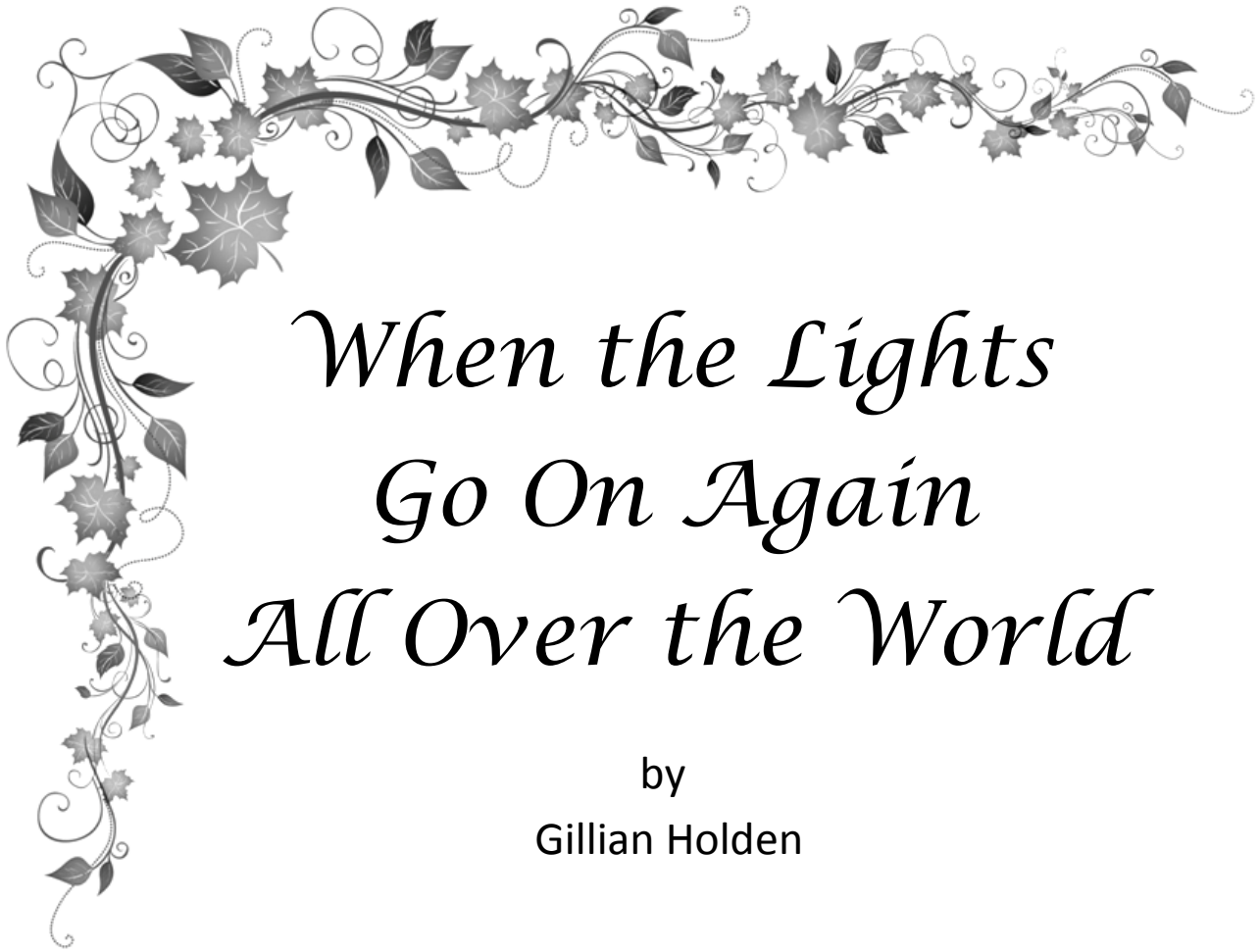


Bluebird Sitting on an Apple Blossom Branch.

Remember When ...



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.



When the Lights Go On Again All Over the World

by
Gillian Holden

Introduction

It is estimated that under the heading Operation Pied Piper, 3.5 million people were evacuated from cities in England to rural areas for safety during WWII. 1.9 million were children

Three of my mother's oldest friends were children during the war. Two were evacuated and one remained in London for the duration of the war.

I found it so interesting, talking to them and asking questions. They in turn told me the best stories. We must keep in mind that they were children.

It was a great history lesson and should be added to the school curriculum.

... and Jimmy will go to sleep in his own little room again.

✿ LEST WE FORGET

Interview 1: Jean Jones

Jean Jones was born in 1933. She had one brother, Harry and one sister, Margaret. Jean and her family lived at 193 Fernhill Road, Bootle, Liverpool, England.

War was declared on September 3rd, 1939.

Jean remembers vividly her father being picked up by an army truck and going off to war. She said the whole street was out waving and cheering him on, giving him a good send-off. He was in the 8th army under General Montgomery.

Jean recalls that before she and her family were evacuated, the city built Anderson Shelters in every other backyard. Public shelters were built in the town. The Anderson Shelters were made of corrugated iron, dome shaped then covered with sod or grass, "so the Gerries couldn't see us."

The public ones were box shaped with benches running along the walls. Jean said, "They were so smelly and stuffy. When the air raid siren went, Me Mam would shout, 'Get your siren suits on and into the shelter!'"

Siren suits were all-in-one zip up the front with a hood and padded ears to protect ears from the loudness of the bombs. Each child had his or her own gas mask in a little box with a



D-Day in Bootle, Liverpool

- ✚ The first air raid was August 29th and 30th 1940.
- ✚ In the May blitz of 1941, 140 houses were destroyed and 1886 people died.

strap to carry it.

"So we would all run into the shelter and shut the door behind us, then wait for the all-clear. I never thought too much about it -- it's what we had to do. We were kids."

It wasn't long before they could distinguish the sounds of the planes before the siren sounded. They knew if it was a British plane or a Gerrie. "I can still hear the sound today. We could hear the bombs dropping. Whenever we went out at night, me mam would tape cardboard around our little flashlights so we could find our way. We had to aim them down, never up as it was blackout. We had large dark curtains that covered our doors and windows."

They all had ration books, a white one and a green one. One was for food and clothes, and children also got sweeties.

Before being evacuated, after an all-clear, they would all come running out of the shelter. There was always another house and or family gone.

They would play in the rubble and rummage for shrapnel or trinkets.

When war proved to be too dangerous, Jean and her sister were evacuated. Her mother and baby brother were sent to barracks to live. The first place they went to was with a Mr. and Mrs. Marsh, 3 Kingsbury Terrace, Kenilworth, Marlboro, Wiltshire. There wasn't room for all of them, so Jean and her sister were sent to the Green Dragon Pub in White Horse Vale. Her mom and the baby stayed in the barracks.

Jean described a truck that came and picked all the kids up. They sat on empty bomb shells in the back. Every time the truck stopped or started, the shells would roll back and forth and everyone would all slide off. They fell about laughing, and passed other trucks full of kids all doing the same.

"I can remember like it was yesterday when the war was over. There were street parties everywhere. Someone painted 'FESTIVAL' on the street and 'WELCOME HOME WILLIE'. That was me dad.



Jean (Mullacrane) Jones

"There was lots of bunting and tables set up with food and we had a 'reet good do'.

"Me dad stayed in the barracks for his first night home, then home to our house the next day. He came in a truck with a lot of other soldiers. Everyone was waving and cheering. He hugged my brother, sister and Mom, then said, 'Where's our Jean?' I had grown so much he didn't recognize me.

"You know, I never felt scared or unhappy. We were fed well and very well taken care of. What we did every day was just part of our life at the time.

"We were kids."

Interview 2: Maggie O'Donnell

Maggie O'Donnell was born Margaret Hood in Birmingham, England. She was the 6th child of 10. Together with her brother and two of her sisters, five-year-old Maggie was evacuated to the Village of Marden, near Hereford.



Bottom left: Maggie Hood, age 5

They went by train. Maggie's mother and the baby went along with them until they were settled. Two teachers went along also, Mrs. Dost and Miss Hyde. They were to be the teachers at the local school. The people Maggie and her siblings stayed with were called Mr. and Mrs. Mountford. There were two schools, the regular Marden school and a corrugated iron school. There were 40 evacuees altogether.

Maggie's dad was an air raid warden. Her oldest sisters were both ambulance drivers. One sister worked in a Prisoner of

War camp. Another sister was evacuated to a farm. Her mom remained in Birmingham with dad and the baby.

There was a huge public shelter built under the Charles Wynn Factory. Mag's mom had the piano moved into it. Her dad built a shelter under the family home. He made beds from bricks and plywood. They also had an Anderson shelter at the end of the yard.

As Maggie put it,

"This is where the fun began! Us kids were well looked after, well fed and we had a fun time. There was a farm behind us and we built a nest up in the tree, which we called The Monkey Tree. We scrumpted fruit from the farm and hid it up in the tree. When the milkman

made his rounds, he would be busy gossiping to the neighbours, so we would nick a bottle of milk and take it up the tree.

"Every so often we would go home in a charaban for a visit. Sure as fate there would be a bombing so down the shelter we'd go till all-clear. The next day we would rummage through all the mess for shrapnel."

Maggie showed me a piggy bank that her dad made from shrapnel. He made ten, one for each of his children.

Once when Mag's dad was on duty as air raid warden a bomb went off very close by and he had a terrible feeling. Sure enough, he lost his sister, her husband and his sister-in-law. They were 31, 29 and 25 years of age, respectively. The next morning there was scratching at the door and his sister's little dog was there.

There was a prisoner of war in Marden. Maggie said they had to walk by it on the way to school.

"Even though we were told to go right to school we still stopped and talked to the Gerries. They gave us chocolates and sweets through the barbed wire fence."

If a parachute came down, the older girls would run like mad to get the parachute because they were made of silk. They made blouses and dresses for themselves.



Centre: Maggie (Hood) O'Donnell

Interview 3: Ann Scott

Ann Scott was born Ann Mears on March 1st, 1934 in Romford, Essex, London England. She had a sister Barbara, born December 1939 – just three months after war was declared.

The day war was declared Ann was out with her aunt Grace. Her dad came running to find them, grabbed Ann off her bike, and ran home with her.

Before Ann's dad joined the Air Force in the 8th Army in 1940 under General Montgomery he built an Anderson air raid shelter in the yard. He dug down into the earth and poured a cement base. The corrugated iron dome shaped roof was placed over the base and then covered with sand bags. During the Battle of Britain, they lived in the shelter for six weeks.

They had three ration books. The green one was for baby Barbara. Ann said from age 6 she did all the shopping until she married.

"My mother gave me the three ration books and a one pound note and sent me to the butcher, baker, and green grocer. They stamped the ration books. Mom stayed home with the baby. Can you imagine doing that today? Once I lined up for a banana and when I got to the top of the line, they had all gone. Pregnant women got first pickings, so others soon caught on and stuffed a pillow up their jumper. Everything was rationed. When dad sent letters home he put loose tea in the envelope. I remember once when I was combing my hair, I dropped the comb into the fireplace. We only had one comb and they were impossible to get, so I put my hand right into the fire and grabbed the comb.

"Oh I carried on something awful when we had to be fitted for our gas masks. They were horrible. They came in a little box with a strap. We had to keep a little treat in the box. I had Maltesers. On the way to school we used to swing them around and try to hit each other."

Her baby sister was an infant, and kept in a little carrier. "My mom had to pump it up."

Due to the massive air attacks, the school had to be closed so they were sent to the lady down the street and had lessons around her dining room table.

"The top of our house was missing the windows due to all the bombings. A neighbour helped my mother bring the mattresses down to the main floor. If the bombing was too intense, my mother would shove my sister and I into the chimney if we didn't have time to make it to the shelter."

During 'blackout' the ARP would come around at night and tell families: "You have a chink of light!" Curtains would have to be adjusted so that no light escaped.

"Once I was running to the shelter. It was my job to carry the diaper bag and the gas masks. Mom had the baby. An incendiary bomb knocked me off my feet. The bag and the masks went flying.

"We put two hours on the clock so it stayed lighter longer. That was ok as I got to stay up later."

"Across the road from us was a field, then a row of guns, the biggest one in the middle. If that gun went off, it meant all hell was going to break loose. If a plane crashed and a house was bombed, all us kids went out the next day to rummage through the remains. We collected shrapnel."

Ann's mother and a neighbour both got jobs at the factory to help out with the war effort. They worked different shifts so they could watch each other's children.

"Once during a family gathering there wasn't time to get to the shelter. You could hear the planes coming close. My uncle yelled 'Duck!' We all dove under the dining room table. After the all-clear my uncle said, 'Fine lot you are. Your arses are sticking out!'"

The Doodlebugs were the worst bombs. They were pilotless and no one knew where or when they were coming.

"I was 11 years old when my dad was demobbed. He took me shopping for new shoes. I had not had good shoes for a very long time and oh how I wanted those shoes. They didn't have my size, but I told the clerk and my dad they were just fine. We went on a school trip and I ended up walking in stocking feet as the shoes hurt so bad. But oh I wanted those shoes."



Ann (Mears) Scott

Gillian's Suggested Reading List:

Daish, Jean. *Operation Pied Piper*. London : Orion, 2013.

Lee, Maureen. *Lights Out Liverpool*. London : Orion, 1998.

Lee, Maureen. *Put Out the Fires*. London : Orion, 1999.

Lee, Maureen. *The Leaving of Liverpool*. London : Orion, 2007.

Lewis, C.S.. *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe: a Story for Children*. 1950. Reprint. London : Harper Collins Canada, 2005.

Murray, Annie. *Chocolate Girls*. London : Pan Macmillan, 2012.

Song Credit:

"... and Jimmy will go to sleep in his own little room again" is a lyric from (There'll Be Bluebirds Over) The White Cliffs of Dover, written by Walter Kent and Nat Burton and sung by Vera Lynn in 1942.

About Gillian:

I was born in Bolton, Lancashire, England. My mother, father, and I came to Canada in 1949.

There were always stories about the war years in our house. It has always been of interest to me.

I am very glad to put some of it on paper.