



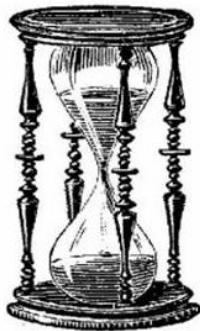
Like Sands Through the Hourglass

Lifescapes Writing Group 2015
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.

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Cover design by Joan Faehrmann, adapted by Robin Harding

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ISBN 978-0-9810538-7-5

Brantford Public Library Press
173 Colborne Street
Brantford, ON N3T 2G8

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Introduction

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

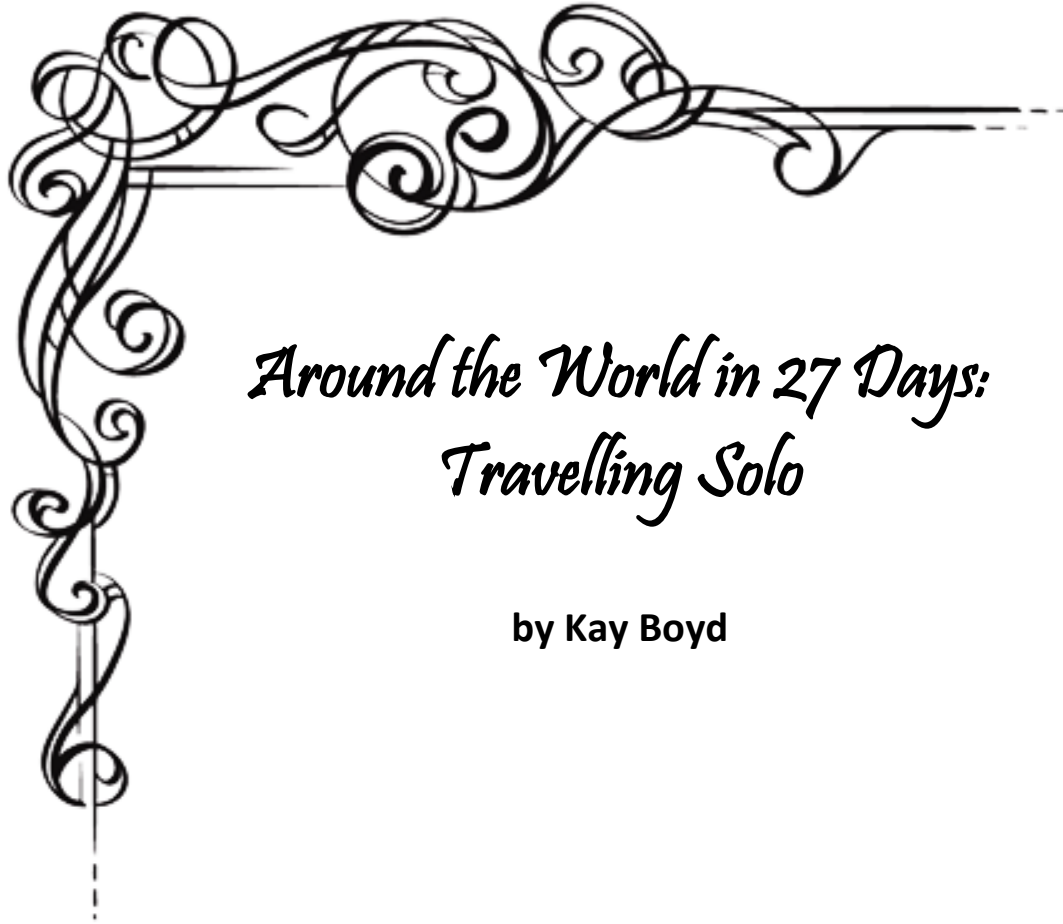
A limited number of print copies are made available at the time of publishing. The library archives print copies for borrowing but also provides PDF versions that can be viewed online. Please see our website at <http://brantford.library.on.ca/adults/lifescapes/>.

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: Melissa Yuan-Innes, author and physician; Larry Brown, author and instructor; and Lorie Lee Steiner, author and magazine editor. We very much appreciate your willingness to share your time and your insights.

What can I say about this year's participants? This was an amazing group to work with. Without exception, everyone who contributed to this anthology proved to be thoughtful, dedicated, and willing to invest their writing with personality and energy. These are stories about family and friends and community, about courage in the face of adversity, and about the hopes and dreams that shape and define us but never limit us.

It is my genuine pleasure to introduce this year's Lifescapes anthology, *Like Sands Through the Hourglass*. May you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed making it happen.

Robin Harding
Coordinator of Programs and Outreach (Adult and Senior)
Brantford Public Library
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Around the World in 27 Days: Travelling Solo

by Kay Boyd

"You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough."

Mae West

Crawling out from under a rock to meet the world after a long darkness can be an enlightening experience. It takes a certain amount of courage. That's how it was for me when I was to fly all the way around the world all by myself!

Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.

Landing at the Los Angeles, California International Airport is scary indeed. With two parallel runways, two large jet aircraft can land and take off simultaneously. Looking out over the wing, watching a huge jet come so close to the one you're in, just about takes your breath away. The air traffic controllers must have nerves of steel to direct all that traffic in an out of such a busy airport.

Although I had flown often, this was my first trip outside North America. I was going to circumvent the world, and all by myself! First stop was in L.A. to change planes for the flight to Tahiti.

I had always dreamed of Tahiti and now I was going there. As a young girl I had read Somerset Maugham's story titled *Rain* and the description of the seedy Quinn's bar in Papeete, and now I would be able to experience it for real.

Tahiti

We landed in Papeete, Tahiti and as I disembarked, I knew I had never smelled anything quite like the scent that seemed to hang in the air. It reminded me just a bit of the perfume that my Father had given me when I left home to go to College, Mary Chess White Lilac, not quite the same but similar. As each passenger came down the steps of the plane, everyone was greeted by beautifully saronged Tahitian women and welcomed with a real flower lei draped around the neck. It was magical.

I had been working very hard for the past several months and this stop in Tahiti was planned so that I could have a little down time to rest. I was whisked off to my reservation at the Maeva Beach Hotel and after checking in to a lovely beach view room, I lay down on the bed to savour everything. Sunlight and a feeling of peace surrounded me. When I woke up, and went to the front desk, I learned that I had slept through the night and well into the next day - almost 20 hours!

Travelling alone is very different than travelling with a companion. There's no one to talk to and no one to share the sights and sounds, and you usually dine alone. In 1972, women seldom traveled alone and a young tiny redhead travelling solo attracted lots of stares. No matter, I would survive and gain courage and learn to strike up a conversation with anyone who looked as if they were also travelling alone. That's exactly how I became acquainted with an older lady I met nearby the hotel desk and who was also enquiring about a tour of the island. We decided to share a private car on a driving tour by taxi. It turned out that the lady was Jerry Lewis's aunt! The driver was a personable fellow who had moved to Tahiti from Algeria. He had chosen Tahiti because French was his first language. His English was pretty good as well and he kept up a quick conversation as he drove us around and provided interesting and historical stories of the Island.

Tahiti is made up of two islands joined by a small connecting isthmus. The larger island is Tahiti-Iti and the smaller less populated island is Tahiti-Nui. He took us to the area where Robert Lewis Stevenson lived when he wrote the novel *The Master of Balantree*. We visited the tomb of Pomare V, the last chieftain king of Tahiti. He died over 100 years ago and apparently from drinking too much! Our taxi guide told us that the king was always drunk. We moved on to Point Venus, the spot where Captain Cook went to view an eclipse that was called the Transit of Venus. The story of the Transit of Venus was featured in one of Thomas Hardy's books, *Two on a Tower*.

Next stop was to see the Paul Gauguin Museum. It's set in a bamboo forest and walking through it was an awesome and magical experience. As the wind blew through the bamboo

trees they squeaked and tinkled and it sounded like those bamboo wind chimes that people have on their verandahs. It was an experience that has stayed with me forever. Every time I hear bamboo wind chimes, I think about being in that forest.

The taxi driver took us to visit his own family home where we were served delicious cold drinks.

My new friend and I went out for dinner after our tour and following a delicious dinner of Chinese food, we visited the famous Quinn's Bar. It was loud and noisy and many of the patrons were quite drunk. Actually, it kind of frightened me.

The Island of Moorea was visible from the hotel beach. What a beautiful sight! There were sightseeing boat trips to the island but unfortunately I was unable to take advantage of that.

While sitting around the pool at the hotel I became acquainted with a group of ladies who were travelling together on a group tour out of Washington D.C. The tour was affiliated with the Smithsonian Institute and were visiting many of the South Sea Islands. I made friends with one lady in particular and later on we would visit whenever I was in Washington. We wrote often for several years until she died.

While in Tahiti I managed to get the worst sunburn of my life. It was such a bad sunburn that I actually had to seek medical help on the next leg of my trip.

New Zealand

I left Papeete at 7:30 am., under dark and ominous clouds. New Zealand had made enquiries about the single parent group and as International President of a worldwide organization of single parents, I was scheduled to speak to a large group of single parents to help them form a Chapter of the organization in that country.

New Zealand was not at all what I had envisioned. My first stop was in Auckland and I'm not sure what I expected but it reminded me of home. The houses were mostly white frame with white picket fences, surrounded by lots of green rolling hills and lots of cattle and sheep. I arrived not long after a visit to New Zealand by Germaine Greer, the well-known feminist, and I think everyone was still almost reeling from her visit. I'm not sure they were ready for two feisty women one right after the other! I do remember raising a few eyebrows when I spoke about female independence using some colourful language. At that time I didn't really think of myself as a feminist but in retrospect I guess I was leaning in that direction. I'm sure the sunburn and my flaming red hair played a role in perceptions. Nevertheless, everyone was very cordial and made sure that I was well looked after and taken to see the entire island. To me, at that time, it seemed somewhat insular in attitude. We did manage to organize a small group of single parents but it did not flourish as it had in other places.

Australia

I landed in Melbourne and was met by a wonderful lady, Jeannie Schoof, who took me to her home and where I would be staying during my stop in that city.

I had been invited to come as the guest speaker for the first ever Australian National Conference for single parents. On the first evening of the conference there was a huge formal ball. It was a long dress affair with a wonderful orchestra and lots of dancing. I think I danced with almost everyone, between sips of sherry and a long and delicious dinner. Following the next day's conference program, an evening concert was held at the town hall in Melbourne.



Everyone and anyone who could do anything - dance, sing, play, or act, was in the concert – including me! I played an impromptu part as a judge in a make believe TV show. It was so funny that I laughed all the time.

The next day I met with the newly elected National Board of Directors. It was very frustrating to sit in on that meeting because they were not very well organized and they really didn't know what they were doing, however they learned a lot and I knew that the organization would grow and thrive. There was a family picnic as the closing event and it was wonderful. Afterwards we all went to the train station to wave goodbye to the folks from Sydney who were heading home.

Kay at the National Convention in Australia

While in Melbourne, Jeannie drove through the park surrounding the Prime Minister's mansion and we inadvertently found ourselves driving on a wide foot path. It was okay until we came to a set of stairs! One of the ladies in the car joked: "Watch the steps, luv." We laughed so hard I nearly wet my pants.

I left Melbourne and stopped in Perth where I was able to meet an old high school friend who was now living there. As we reminisced about our high school days, we laughed our way through an entire day. I was already feeling that maybe I wasn't so alone in the dark after all.

India

Next stop India and New Delhi on Qantas flight 751, leaving Perth at 8:30 am. My hotel reservations were for the Ashoka Hotel, Diplomatic Enclave in New Delhi. I didn't have any planned speaking engagements in India and so I had two days to sight see on my own. Of course I wanted to see the Taj Mahal in Agra and that was an experience not to be forgotten.

In fact, my entire two days in India was a culture shock. At the time it seemed everything was so dirty and people seemed to be so poor. It was the first time I had ever seen old men begging on the streets. In 1972, things were very different than they are now in 2014. I have not

returned to India since my first visit 42 years ago but another trip is on my bucket list. I'd like to experience the beautiful and colourful country in this new era. I know that it would be quite different and I'm sure that I would be able to dispel the culture shock of my first visit.

Israel

My next official stop would be in Tel Aviv, Israel. There would be stops in Singapore, Turkey, and Thailand as well.

It was not only my first flight on a BOAC jumbo jet but also the maiden flight of the plane and there were only 16 people on board. I was able to lift all the seat arms in the centre aisle and stretch out and sleep for much of the journey. While stopping in Ankara, Turkey for a change of crew and refueling, one gentleman on the plane told me that he thought I was the all-time sleeper of the world. He said that at one stop, I didn't even wake up while they vacuumed the plane. I asked him if they had dusted me off while cleaning!

I arrived in Tel Aviv at Easter time. I think I was the only person who was not Jewish and I'm sure my red hair and my travelling alone were indeed viewed as unusual. I was booked into The Tower Hotel, Shalom Meir Tower, and upon arrival at the hotel was told that my room was not available and there was no room at the inn! I parked myself in the lobby and made it clear that I was not leaving until they found me a room. Eventually I was called to the desk and was told that they had found me a single room.



*Postcard of the Knesseth in Jerusalem, Israel's
Parliament Building*

disappointed.

After settling in, I found a city tour by bus and went sightseeing. My first impression was that everything was in poor state of repair. I visited Jerusalem and went to see the Garden of Gethsemane.

It was a huge disappointment. We tend to conjure up ideas of what something is like based on the stories we hear and somehow I had some vision of a lovely place with green grass and flowers. It certainly wasn't like that. It was a dusty and dirty place and I was so

I did have an official meeting with single parents in the area and talked to them at length about being a single parent in Israel. That fledging group did manage to organize themselves and the Chapter in Israel did thrive although I'm not sure it still exists. After three days in Israel, it was time to leave for Rome.

Leaving Israel was an experience I'll not likely forget. When I arrived at the airport by bus, a porter grabbed my bags and I almost had to run after him to keep up. I had only a few Israeli coins for a tip and when I gave them to him, he began to yell at me in Hebrew. A gentleman that seemed to be dressed as some kind of clergyman came to my rescue and paid the porter. He left me in front of the terminal with my bags and I was very grateful for the assistance of the clergyman.

My experience at the Tel Aviv airport was even more of a nightmare.

Upon arrival at the desk for check-in, I was stripped of my camera, my passport, and a small package containing a chocolate Easter Egg that I had been given in Australia. I was told that I would have my possessions returned once I had boarded the plane. I was directed into a small cubicle with curtains on two sides and had to undergo a strip search by a female armed guard who left no part of my body unexamined. It was the most demeaning experience I'd ever had. When I was ordered to dress, I left through the opposite curtain and told that I could not leave the area until it was time to board the plane. No one spoke English and I could not understand the messages over the loud speakers. Eventually I learned that the flight was overbooked and I would not be able to leave as planned.

After some wrangling with the check-in clerk, I let it be known that I knew about the Geneva Convention and that if I could not arrive at my destination within 24 hours of the confirmed scheduled time of arrival that they would have to refund the entire cost of my air ticket. Since this was a ticket taking me all around the world, that would be a substantial sum. I was soon informed that I would be on the next plane!

Once boarded I expected the return of my camera, my passport and my precious chocolate Easter egg. My camera and my passport were returned to me but I learned that they had broken my Easter egg to examine its contents.

I almost cried, but I was so glad to leave Israel that I didn't say a word.

Rome

I would be two days in Rome and was confirmed to stay at the Quirinale Hotel, Via Nazionale, 7.

By this time I was completely exhausted. I simply wandered aimlessly about Rome, on my own and feeling very alone and wondering what the hell I was doing, and wanting to climb back under my rock. I hardly remember anything except the amazing architecture and the many churches. I slept most of the time I was there.

Having just returned from Italy recently, I found it amazing how many memories I had retained from my first visit so many years ago.

France

Next stop, Paris. I was booked into the Hotel Saint-Lazare, also known as the Grand Hotel Terminus. I knew that two of my friends from Washington would also be in Paris and so I decided that I would try and find them. How naïve can one be! When I arrived in the airport terminal building, I went to a phone booth, looked in the hotel pages and began phoning each hotel and asking for my friends. My French wasn't all that good, although I did know enough that I knew I wouldn't starve to death. After about ten phone calls, I was successful and learned that my friends were at a different hotel and yes, they did have a single room which I booked immediately.



Getting a taxi was another hurdle. People just kept pushing me aside at the taxi queue. Finally, when I began to cry, a gentleman took pity on me and helped me to secure a taxi. I gave the hotel address and when the cab finally arrived, the taxi driver wanted more money than was showing on the meter. I simply handed him some bills and he took it all and drove off!

When I lugged my bags to the reservation check-in desk, lo and behold I saw my friends in the lobby and fell into their arms with great relief. George and Myra, my friends from Washington, took over and looked after me really well. I had only one official meeting in Paris with the Paris Chamber of Commerce who had inquired about the single parent organization through our head office in New York. I think that once they learned that I was a single woman, they didn't seem too interested in working with me. While the gentleman I spoke with was cordial, I felt somewhat patronized. So much for Frenchmen!

Fortunately I was able to spend the next four days experiencing the most wonderful city in the world. We crammed in absolutely everything including the Venus De Milo and the Mona Lisa at the Louvre, the dinner show at the Folies Bergère, the Eiffel Tower, the Palace at Versailles, the street markets, delicious restaurants, and elegant shopping at the expensive department stores. I fell in love with Paris and have returned many, many times since that first experience. In fact, Paris is one of my favourite cities in the world and I've come to know Paris so well that when I visit now I almost feel at home.

I had to leave before my friends as I was scheduled for several official meetings and a radio interview in London, England. As I made my way to the airport in Paris, I knew in my heart that I would be returning to Paris and I have, over and over again.

Things have changed dramatically in Europe in general and Paris in particular and it's not the place it once was. Forty years ago, it was almost impossible to have a bad meal. That is no more. Paris is dirty, the people are rude, the food is horrible (even the expensive restaurants), there are all kinds of petty thieves with all kinds of scams, but still it still remains one of my favourite places. I love the art galleries, the museums, the little places that I've discovered over

these past many years and I try and get to Paris at least every 18 months if possible. I will use any excuse to go to Paris!

I even took my daughter to Paris for her 50th birthday. We were fortunate to discover a Chopin piano recital which was held in a little very old church. It was quite wonderful and I was able to purchase a CD of the recital. Recently, while my daughter and her husband were having dinner with me, I played the CD as background music. My daughter suddenly stopped eating and said, "Mom, that's the recital we were at in Paris!" What a wonderful memory for both of us. When we came home she sent me a bouquet of roses with a card that read: *Mom, being in Paris was wonderful, but the best part was being there with you.*

England

I travelled by Air France to London, England, and was booked into a fine little hotel, The Charles Dickens at Lancaster Gate. I spent the next four days talking with single parents from all over London and other smaller cities and towns, and doing a radio interview with a well-known journalist. It was a rewarding visit and once again, London has become another of my best loved big cities. I've travelled to London well over 40 times and have learned to live like a Londoner. Although it is another very expensive place, I've learned about all the ways to make a trip to England less expensive than the average traveller.

Fortunately, one of my dearest and best friends lived in London. Her husband was the Chief Engineer for the Greater London Council (which no longer exists) and before her death I stayed with her much of the time and indeed almost became a member of the local neighbourhood in Pimlico. My oldest son went to University in London, and he too feels like a Londoner. My entire family has travelled with me from time to time and some of those trips will no doubt figure into other memoirs and other stories.

Canada

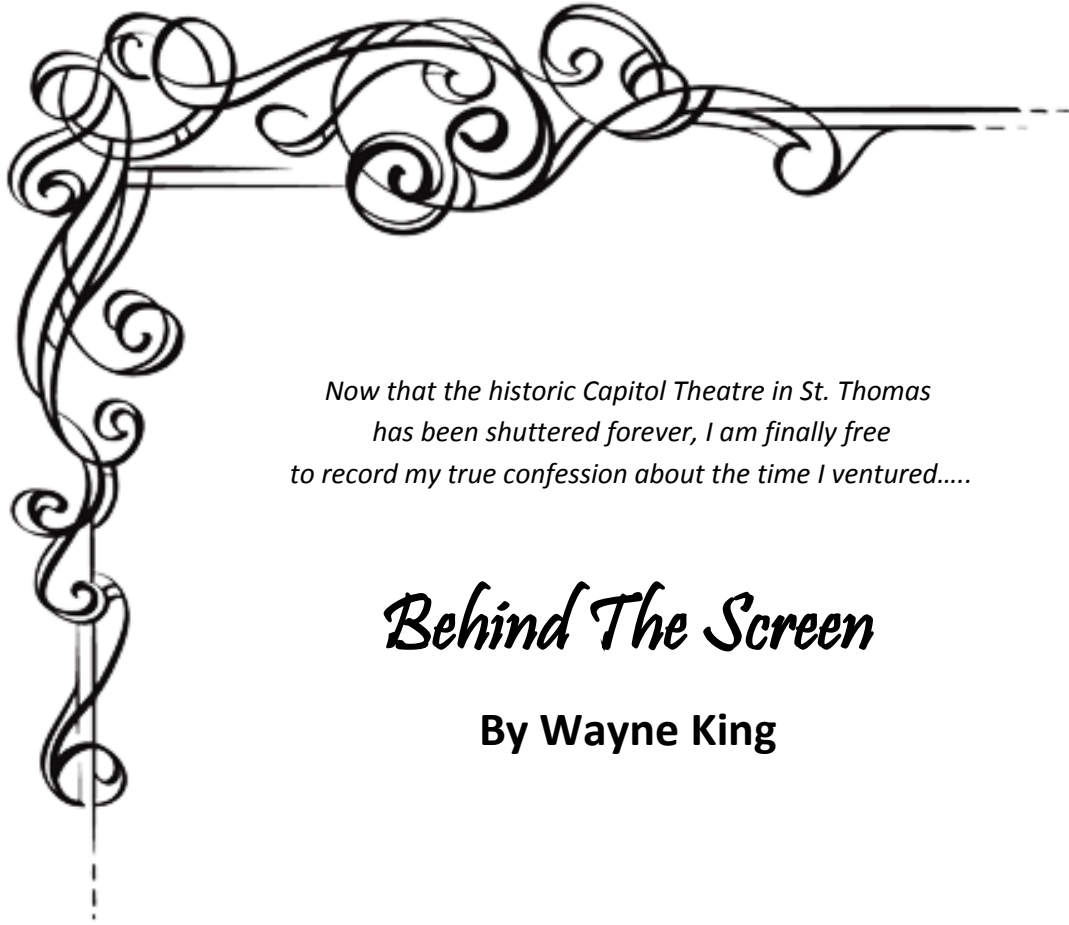
After 27 days travelling solo around the world with no 'crash landings', I was so very glad to get home and to see my children and my parents again. I think I hugged them all so hard that I almost squeezed their breath away!

There's no place quite like home, but I wouldn't change a thing about that first around the world trip, travelling solo and learning to live in the sunshine. I had another opportunity to do it again a few years later ... but that's another story.





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, 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.



*Now that the historic Capitol Theatre in St. Thomas
has been shuttered forever, I am finally free
to record my true confession about the time I ventured.....*

Behind The Screen

By Wayne King

It was nineteen sixty-two. The Capitol Theatre in downtown St. Thomas, Ontario was the lone movie theatre in our fair city. The Capitol offered only one screen, typical for theatres of that era. As young teenagers, Long John, Caustic Campbell, Professor Pete and yours truly regularly attended the movies together.

One memorable evening we learned much more about the movies than we had intended. Not coincidentally, this particular occasion also marked the first time that Long John's friend Zooski attended with us. Truthfully, I never really appreciated hanging out with Zooski. He was a smooth talker; a chronic exaggerator who could snare the unwary into embarrassing situations. All in all, I felt I had to be very careful around him.

Finding Our Seats

The five of us purchased our tickets and shuffled into the auditorium. The movie had not yet started: the lights shone brightly and the usual banjo arrangements of pop songs from the early days of the twentieth century blared from the speakers. We moved slowly, each of us pointing out the reasons why their particular favourite seating spot was the best place to view the movie.

Of course, Professor Pete took a scientific view, "I like to sit in an aisle seat with a side light. It counterbalances the projector light. Less eye strain."



"The light makes you too visible," Caustic Campbell replied. "You wannabeseen you might as well be on the stage. There's one leaving shortly."

Then, out of the blue, Zooski's voice intruded with its usual rapid fire delivery: "Let's sit in the front row. I've got something amazing to show you."

Campbell opined, "I can't ever recall sitting in the front before, or even wanting to."

I felt the same, but Pete, always curious said, "Let's check it out."

Long John, who only spoke when he had something meaningful to say, pointed out a plus for growing teens, "You can stretch your legs out."

*1961. Wayne, age 14.
The Famous Flytrap Foto,
(So-called by my friends. I
spoke to the photographer
as he pressed the shutter,
resulting in an open mouth,
or "fly trap".)*

I was naturally suspicious of any suggestion of Zooski's, but I decided to go along with him to see what he was getting at. The five of us strolled down to the front of the theatre and planted ourselves smack dab in the middle of the front row. Zooski, with his boast to prove, sat dead centre, flanked by two of us on either side.

I had rarely been at the front of the auditorium. I looked around to get my bearings. The vertical front of the stage rose four feet above the auditorium floor to the stage floor. The screen was set back another twenty feet from the edge of the stage.

Pete immediately stated a practical objection to sitting up front, "You have to hold your head at an uncomfortable angle to see the movie."

"We'll get neck cramps," John pointed out.

"Yeah the first row is a pain in the neck," added Campbell, rolling his eyes.

“What’s so great about the first row anyhow?” I inquired. “Let’s get outta here.”

I rose from my seat to demonstrate my determination.

Zooski’s Pronouncement

“Wait, you’ll love what I’m gonna show you,” Zooski contended. “We’re going behind the screen and ...”

“... What? Woodayamean behind the screen?” The four of us burst out, almost in unison.

I sat down.

To say we were surprised, and after it sunk in, sceptical, was an understatement, but in true Zooski fashion he assured us, “There’s nothin’ easier.”

The four of us pooh-poohed the idea as preposterous. We quickly raised a number of objections.

“Your shadow will show on the screen. Everyone will see you.”

“The usher will catch you”

“The screen is mounted on the back wall. You can’t get behind it.”

“How do you even get to the screen?”

And perhaps most telling of all, “**Why** go behind the screen?”

Zooski resumed, “Waydaminute. Behind the screen you can look out into the audience without being seen.”

He quickly added, “Straight ahead. See the door?”

Sure enough, right in front of us loomed the outline of a small door set into the vertical front of the stage. I had attended the Capitol many times, but I had never paid any attention to the door.

Campbell cut in. “Yeah, so, big deal.”

Zooski continued in his fast talking style, “That innocent-looking door is actually only the top half of a full height door. The bottom half drops down another three feet where there’s a large room under the stage ...”

He had our attention now. We listened intently.

“ ... At the back of the room there’s a stairway that will take you up to the right side of the stage. You’ll be concealed behind those curtains, right beside the screen. Wave from the curtains to show you have arrived, then cross over and stand behind the screen.”

Zooski upped the ante by claiming, “It’s a real sight, behind the screen. You can look out at us and the rest of the audience while the movie plays. The projector light is so bright that no one will see your silhouette.”

Listening intently to Zooski’s story, I was conflicted. Going behind the screen sounded like an adventure alright, but, on the other hand, it sounded kind of iffy and fishy if not downright dangerous. Considering Zooski’s record, I wanted proof.

Campbell and I taunted Zooski, “Prove it. Let’s see **you** do it.”

Zooski Ventures Forth

At that very moment the lights dimmed: the banjos stopped strumming, the curtains drew back from the screen as the projector rolled the film and thrust its beam onto the screen.

Zooski could not be suppressed. He was gung-ho, raring to go, “OK Chickens, I’ll prove it. Watch me.”

He instructed us, “Sit low in your seats so that the people behind won’t notice if the top of one head disappears. Be sure to look for my hand waving.”

Luckily in many of these weeknight movies there was hardly anyone in the audience. There was only one usher to patrol the theatre. As usual he had stationed himself in one of the lobby doorways, satisfied with an occasional stroll through the auditorium. We were unlikely to be observed, if we were careful; if our timing was right.

The next thing we knew Zooski was on all fours, crawling to the hidden door. He pushed it open. Luckily there was no light in the room to spill out into the theatre and attract attention. He lowered himself down. After a few anxious minutes our eagle eyes spotted Zooski’s hand, gently moving between the curtains on the right wing. I was nervous just watching him violate the theatre. Suddenly he was gone. *Was he behind the screen as he bragged or somewhere else?* Wherever we looked – no Zooski. It seemed like an eternity. Then, there he was, slowly opening the door. Only his upper body was visible.

“Coast clear?” He quietly queried.

We affirmed that, indeed, the coast was clear. Zooski lifted himself up and sprawled onto the floor in front of us. He carefully pulled the door shut and quick as you can say Zooski he had crawled back to his seat.

Our doubts lingered.

Pete confronted Zooski, "We didn't see you behind the screen."

"Yeah, big deal," Campbell interjected.

I Am Challenged

Zooski swore on his mother's honour, "I was behind the screen, but like I said you can't be seen. You know I was onstage so there's your proof."

He cajoled us, "Try it yourself if you're not scared."

For good measure he added for my benefit, "Come on Kinger, you're not chicken ... are you?"

Zooski had shone the spotlight on me. One of my rules is if you are scared, which I was, don't show it. Put on the blinkers and just do what has to be done. One of us had to go first to meet the challenge. I knew it wouldn't be John. He was too sensible. Campbell and Pete were sitting silent, non-committal, avoiding my glance, awaiting my reaction. I had been directly dared. I was the chosen one.

It was with some trepidation that I made up my mind and announced, "I'm going,"

The gang looked relieved. They were off the hook.

I exuded confidence, but doubts lingered in my brain. *Is this one of Zooski's tricks? Would the unfortunate one that ventured forth be lit up for all to see? Caught like a deer in the head lights!*

I roughed out a simple plan in my head. *Get to the right wing. It should be a piece of cake if Zooski's description is accurate. From there check out the situation from the relative safety of the curtains and then decide whether to go behind the screen.*

Yours Truly Ventures Forth

I repeated Zooski's process of crawling to the door and lowering myself into the darkened room below the stage. My way was delayed somewhat as I fumbled through the darkness in search of the stairway that ascended to the stage. Finally, I found a door and opened it to reveal the stairway. *Thank goodness.* The going was now a lot easier because the projector light playing on the nearby screen spilled over to light my way. Reaching the wing I was safely hidden by the curtains, which allowed me to leisurely check out my surroundings. Sure enough there was space to stand behind the screen. I carefully

exposed my right hand and waved to the gang. There they sat, barely forty feet away, hardly moving, innocently watching the movie. Not one of them waved or acknowledged me.

So far everything was as Zooski had described it, but the moment of truth had now arrived. *Should I go behind the screen?* My brain was running on adrenalin. Everything had slowed down. I remained calm and weighed my choices. The first was to cross over, lurk behind the screen and damn the consequences. I figured if it was a trick and if everyone saw me I could escape by running off the stage and making a fast retreat out of the theatre through one of the side exits that connected to the stage. Hopefully it wouldn't come to that. Another choice was to return to the front row with my task incomplete and subject myself to the scorn of the gang...especially Zooski. Yet another choice, but one I quickly dismissed was to pretend that I had gone behind the screen. One lie only begets another.

Under the circumstances only the first choice made sense. I made the big decision. No matter what, I just had to do it. I crossed my own Rubicon and strode from the safety of the curtains to the unknown behind the screen.

Standing behind the centre of the screen, I was totally unprepared for the sight that passed in front of my eyes. It was a surreal scene. Zooski had not explained that the screen was wire mesh, not solid white. The projector light blasted right through the screen to the back wall. It was overpowering. I was too scared to touch the mesh screen in case I caused some damage. From this vantage point the movie images were reversed. I peered through the lighted mesh into the contrasting grey twilight. The theatre auditorium spread out before me. I picked out much detail including individual audience members, the usher lounging at the back and my gang. I waved at the guys, but, again, they appeared not to notice me. It was with relief that I knew that was a good thing. If they couldn't see me neither could anyone else ... or with a hint of paranoia were they pretending not to, so as to draw me deeper into an insidious Zooski plot?

The moments ticked slowly by. There was no commotion from the audience. No one pointed me out. No one called for the usher. It became obvious that I was invisible behind the screen.

The Return

I had done it. I felt a sense of relief and satisfaction, even euphoria. My goal achieved, it was time to get back to the safety of my front row seat before the usher or manager made an unexpected appearance. I was nervous as I backtracked and felt my way in the unfamiliar darkness. When I reached the door, I gingerly opened it to get the guys' attention. They quickly spotted me and signalled with the OK sign that the coast was clear. I lifted myself up to the auditorium floor, closed the door and crawled to my seat to re-join my chums.

Zooski for once said nothing, a look of *I told you so* etched on his smiling face, as the gang questioned me. "Were you really behind the screen? What was it like? We couldn't see you."

I confirmed Zookski's account, "It's amazing to look out into the audience without being seen. The screen is mesh."

So it was that Pete and Campbell took turns behind the screen without incident. John chose not to.

Afterward

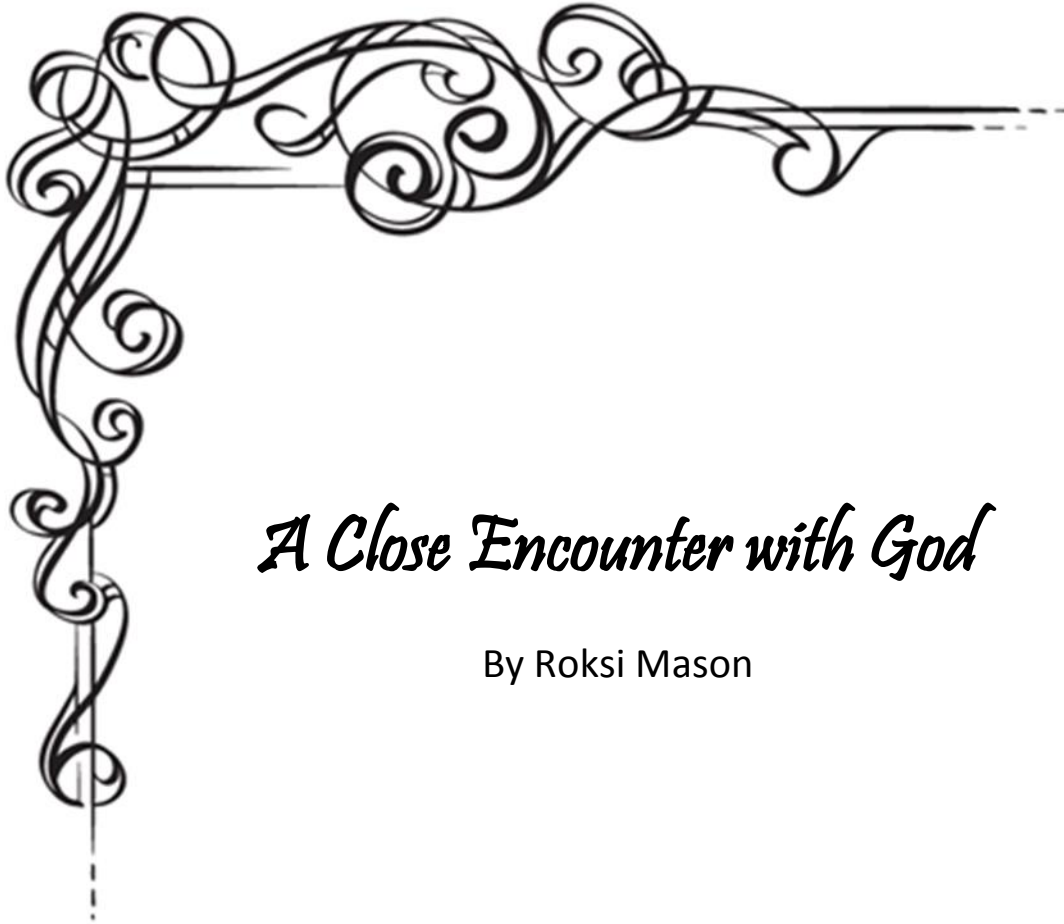
In the years that followed I continued to patronize the Capitol Theatre, but never again went behind the screen. Why not? Well, my philosophy was I had done it once successfully and there was never a compelling reason for me to repeat what I had already achieved. Besides I considered that there was a very high risk of being caught for very little gain. Always quit while ahead.

As for Zooski, I have to admit that for once he did tell the real, unblemished truth. He continued to hang out with the gang sporadically through our high school years, but I never warmed to him. He continued to be the same old Zooski and never did earn my trust.

THE END



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.



A Close Encounter with God

By Roksi Mason

I was two years old the first time I died. I'm forty-four years old now, but I can recall it like it was yesterday. I've remembered it the same way for as long as I can, well, remember.

It was back in South America where I was born. I'm the ninth of ten children. Back then I was the ninth of nine, so I was the baby of the family. My eldest brother was sixteen years older than I was, so when I was two he would have been eighteen.

Ahhh, to be eighteen years old again. Of course, I had no idea what that meant when I was two. I had no way of knowing that an eighteen year old male, still living at home with his parents and eight younger siblings in 1973, was consumed with raging hormones. His main interest, according to him, was girls. Girls, girls, and more girls. He really couldn't get enough of girls.

So when my parents left me in his care to go out for the afternoon, they must not have considered just how reckless that decision might prove. As it turns out, it would be twenty-three years before they'd ever find out.

But that's another story. In this one, I was two years old and a baby, while my brother was eighteen years old and a man.

Naturally, in order to pursue his interest in girls, my brother would leave me on the dock. Not out of sight but definitely out of mind.

I remember it as a boardwalk – wooden, faded brown, sturdy and well-built, as most things were in those days. It surrounded the house, which stood on a beach looking out over a lake on the northeast coast of South America. I could smell the fresh salt-water air of the nearby ocean, mingling with the smell of freshwater from the lake. My memory tells me that the water was a clean and clear brown. How interesting it seemed, with its quiet serenity, the breeze blowing gently, yet the surface remaining very still. Very calm.

I didn't know then that there was such a thing as the "calm before the storm". I don't suppose that it would have concerned me if I did. It wasn't my storm.

I could see my brother talking to a girl out of the corners of my eyes. They were at the other end of the dock, which in my memory bank was a distance of about twenty feet from where I was.

"You're pretty," he told her.

"I know you say that to all the girls."

"But I'm saying it to you now and that makes it special."

"I'm not special to you ... but I like to hear it, nonetheless. Say it again."

"You're pretty."

Even now I can hear her giggling. I didn't know what any of it meant. I just knew that the water looked pretty and that I must be pretty, too, because that's my face in the water, or at least that's a pretty little baby girl in the water. I'm fairly sure that my big sister told me, when I last saw that baby girl in the water, that she was me.

I don't care, really. I just care that it's another baby, like me, and I want to play with her.

"Hi, Baby Girl!"

SPLASH! Wet. Cold. Or was it warm?

In that moment, everything around me seems murky brown, sort of distorted, like I'm looking through glass. I can feel the wet around me and I can hear sounds, but everything seems muffled, somehow. This feels very different from the bathtub and as I look up, everything seems to be moving further and further away from me. The dock is fading and the house in the background seems warbled. Even the colours are blurred.

Brown is the most dominant colour ... except for that beam of white light coming from the sky. The sun seems as bright as always as I look up, but it doesn't hurt my eyes.

The beam of light is aimed right at me. Very gently, like a hand, the beam envelopes me.

I'm inside of a bubble made of light. I can see how it holds me, separately from the water that surrounds me, as if I'm on the outside looking in and, at the same time, on the inside looking out. More importantly, I can breathe. I don't know if I had an understanding of the significance of this fact at the time, but my memory says I had an awareness.

I followed the white light with my eyes, as it held me in the bubble. It led straight up to the sky, toward the sun, and was surrounded by many other white lights, all emanating from the same sun. There was a man sitting at the centre of the light. His name was Jesus. I remembered hearing about him in church. "Hi, Jesus!"

He smiled at me. That's when I saw that the bubble was, in fact, a hand! His hand! He was holding me in it, under the water, still smiling at me. I smiled back and enjoyed floating in the bubble surrounded by the water. I could see the air, the lake, the boardwalk, the house. (Many years later I went skydiving and the feeling was very similar.)

In my memory, it all seems matter-of-fact. As if I expected this to happen and it was okay. *Fun*, even.

Out of the corner of my eyes, I could still make out my brother on the dock, but the girl wasn't giggling now. She was screaming.

"Oh, mother of God! Oh, mother of God!!! The girl is gonna drown. She's gonna drown! She's gonna die!"

SPLASH.

I saw that splash, and the body of my brother as he swam towards me. I was giggling. I was dry. I remember being dry. Looking back now, the terrified and confused look on my brother's face must have had something to do with the fact that I was dry. That and the fact that I hadn't swallowed any water.

I had, however, met God.

Once you've met Him, everything changes. Life changes. Knowledge changes. Experience changes. He follows you for your whole life. You can't get away from Him, even if you want to. He holds onto you with His will. He owns you. You belong to Him, whether you like it or not.

You know that your Soul is real. You know that Jesus is real. You know that Death is real. That He is imminent, just like God and just like Jesus. That, like them, He has a job to do and one that He prides Himself in doing well.

You know that Death has to answer to God, too, just like you do. That He has a protocol to follow and that, no matter what else might happen, He only gets to take you when God says it's time, and not before.

I know this, because, as I've said, this was only the first time that I was to meet Death as Roksi. There would be two other times as I grew up (both during my twenties). The experience of Death would change, as would my relationship with Him and with Jesus and, most importantly, with God.

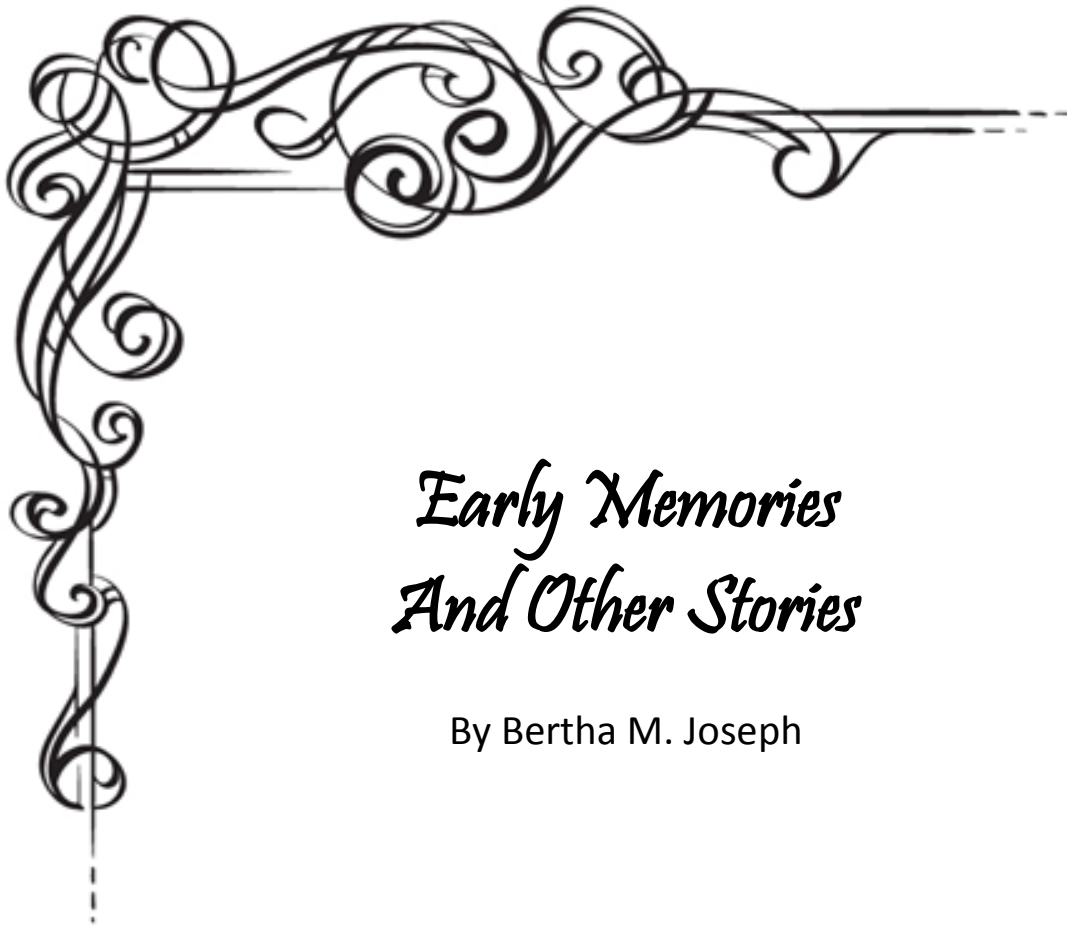
After the third time, though, I guess Death got pretty sick and tired of seeing me. He hasn't come back yet. I've had times when I thought for sure we'd meet again – driving too fast around a corner on the highway, avoiding a fall down stairs by milliseconds, falling off an extension ladder and only just catching myself before my head hit the ground.

Or was someone else there catching me?

I think that Death is in management and He has a team of subordinates. I think a few of them are tasked with making sure that He doesn't have to see me again until it's actually "time". In that way, He kind of reminds me of a few ex-boyfriends, except that His relationship with me seems very clearly defined.

Either way, now I know what to expect. The next time will be the fourth time I've died, and maybe it'll be the final time, too. But after three times and three close encounters with God, I've sort of gotten used to the idea.

Roksi Mason is 44 years old and a single mother of a beautiful, feisty little angel. She believes that mind and body must be balanced by wholeness of spirit.



Early Memories And Other Stories

By Bertha M. Joseph

Early Memories

As I put pen to paper to write my early memories, my thoughts go back to the late 1940s. I remember that once our evening radio programs, such as *The News*, *The Shadow*, *Amos and Andy*, *The Green Hornet* and any other favourites were finished, the radio was shut down for the night. Then it was up to us to create our own entertainment and fun until it was time for bed.

The weather outside had a lot to do with what took place on the inside. If there was a light snowfall, our Mother would make molasses taffy. We would all go outside, get our allotment on the snow, and pull and stretch the taffy until it was ready. Other times our Mama would allow us to go outside in the dark and make angels in the snow. The cold night air and the snow would make us tired and we would usually crawl in bed early to get warm.

If there was a Nor'easter blowing havoc, we would all huddle around the pot-bellied stove. Some of the children would play house, making cut outs from the old Eatons and Simpsons catalogues. Others would sometimes get creative and draw and colour pictures while the rest of us would wrap up in a blanket with a good book.

But if it was one of those summer nights when the rain brought along with it howling winds, then it would be story telling time. The darker the night and the more fierce the wind blew, the spookier the stories got. It was amazing how many different ghost stories were told. Then the older folk in the house would join in with their tales of mysteries, ghost stories, war stories and best of all the Wild West stories. It was such fun being a child in the '40s.



Mama, Daddy, Eddie, Bertha, and Jennie

One summer evening, my friend, Rose and I were sitting on my front step telling stories to pass the time. We had a discussion about remembering and we decided to tell each other stories of our very first memories.

Now all these years later, these are my stories written for my children, their children and all their little children, who one day, like me, will wonder about those who lived before and from whom they descended.

Stories From My Early Years



Mama and Bertha

Autumn was slowly disappearing and winter was making ready for its debut. The temperatures were dropping and snow was gently falling. On December 8, 1938, I was born, in the quaint little Town of Oxford, which is centrally located in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia. My birth took place at my Mother's Parent's home. My Mother told me I was born in Grandpa's bed, in the small bedroom located off the kitchen, behind the big

kitchen range. The fire in that stove never went out winter or summer. What a nice warm cozy place to be born

Memories of my first four and one-half years are scanty, however I do have a few which I will relate to you.

My brother Edward was two years older than I, born on December 18, 1936. I have the memory of him always shielding and caring for me.

My Sister, Jennie, was two years younger, born January 3, 1941. I do not remember anything about Jennie during the time we lived in Oxford.



*Mama, Daddy, and
Eddie*

The Brown-Eyed Baby



Our Sister, Sarah, was four years younger, born on February 5, 1943. I remember this and the events leading up to it; and I will tell it to you, in the story of The Brown-Eyed Baby.

We lived in a small house on Lot 12, in South Oxford. Mrs. Elliott Roberts lived next door with her husband, in a large two storey home, with a large veranda, with colourful painted designs.

Eddie and I always went over to visit Mrs. Roberts. She would open the door and welcome us in and chat with us for a while. One day, she gave us a treat. We thought it was an empty bag, but at the bottom of the bag was hardened brown sugar, like candy. It was such a delightful treat.

Mrs. Roberts was very particular about her home, always dusting, cleaning and sewing. One day she sent us to get our

Sarah

Mother to come to her house. Mrs. Roberts left her sewing on the chair. When she returned and sat down, she sat on her sewing needle and it broke off in her buttock. What our Mother did to help her, I do not know. The Doctor was called but he could not remove it. He assured Mrs. Roberts the needle would push its way out itself. Mother told us that in later years, the needle re-appeared in another spot and was removed.

One winter day late in 1942, we made our usual visit to see Mrs. Roberts. Another surprise awaited us.

Mrs. Roberts was always cleaning an immaculate home, so she could get back to her sewing. That day we heard her say, "Elliott will be home at supper time – oh – dear – I did want to get some sewing done, but someone is at the door."

Mrs. Roberts opened the door wide. The sight of the children from next door always made her forget her chores. There were no little children in her home so she treasured her moments spent with us.

Today she was very excited. She told us to stand by the door and not to track in the snow. She had something to show us. She went to her washing machine – a beautiful enamelled electric machine, far more beautiful than my Mother's tub and scrub board. She removed the lid and, reaching in and down, she lifted with such care a bundle. Our little eyes grew wide with excitement as she walked toward us.

She knelt down, drew the baby blanket back and we looked into little brown eyes. She quickly covered the baby and stood up. Ever so gently and lovingly, she laid the baby back into the washing machine. Many a day after, Eddie and I would visit Mrs. Roberts and ask to see her baby. Sometimes she would say the baby was sleeping and we couldn't see the baby today.

Other times, she would go to the washing machine and gently and lovingly lift baby out, and once again, we would get a quick glimpse of those big brown eyes.

One night in early February, Eddie, Jennie and I were awakened from our beds and hastily taken next door to Mrs. Roberts. Mrs. Roberts tucked us in under blankets. She told us our Mother was sick and she was going to see her, and she would take her baby over to make her feel better. We heard her bustling around her kitchen and then we heard the top of the washer replaced with a good strong sound.

In the morning, Mrs. Roberts dressed and fed us breakfast. She then took us home to see our Mama, who was feeling much better.

We rushed to her bedside. Lying beside her, cuddled to her breast, was the brown-eyed baby from the washing machine. This time she moved her little hands for us to see and suddenly started to cry. Mama, gently and lovingly, nursed Sarah to sleep.

The Nails

One Saturday, my Father was building some sort of structure beside the house. There was new lumber and used lumber in the yard in front of our door. I was to stay inside, but decided to go out to see what was going on. I only had on a pair of panties and just outside the door, I tripped and fell on a board with two nails sticking up. I cried and said the nails went into my teaties. Even though I knew it happened, my Mother told me no, it didn't.

To this day, I can still feel those nails.

The Rescue

Spring was peeping around the corner waiting for winter to pass. The sun was shining bright, ice was melting and water was running everywhere. My brother tried to send me home to no avail. He and Wilfred were heading towards the River Philip to see the melting ice flow down the River.

The River was a wild thing, moving with great speed and energy, as if hungry to swallow all in its path. The snow and ice were melting from the river banks and the brown earth popped its wet, slimy banks towards the drying sun.

Suddenly I lost my footing and was sliding down the bank towards the looming deadly water. All of a sudden I felt huge hands under my arms lifting me to safety. Newton "Newt" Wood of Oxford saved my life and took me home to my Mother, who was always eternally grateful to him. Newton Wood was about 23 years old when he saved my life. He died November 24, 2001 at the age of 82.

Box of Matches

Excitement never ceased to be absent from our home. Always someone was calling on us, or the unusual happening.

One hot summer day, my father's sisters, Greta and Jennie, paid a visit to our home in Oxford. My Father was not home at the time, having gone to town to purchase a box of wooden matches.



Aunt Greta and Jennie made their entrance and immediately started refreshing themselves, by sponge bathing and getting all “dolled up”, as they would say. Long legs were propped up on a chair and they lathered their legs with makeup as a substitute for nylons. Nylons were very scarce during the war days.

The sisters were very beautiful ladies, however they believed in their heart that their beauty could be enhanced by the magic of facial makeup. So out would come the face makeup. After painting their faces with makeup and rouge, their lovely lips would be painted red, eyebrows deepened with a coloured pencil, and hair was combed to perfection.

My mother and I watched in fascination at this lengthy unusual grooming of oneself. Then the sisters got an idea ...

Now, one must first understand that my mother was a beauty in herself. Her beauty was one of nature's works of art. She had natural blond hair, fair skin, soft pink rose cheeks and lips of light cherry accentuated by her sky blue eyes. Father was a very jealous man when it came to my mother. He believed that only women of the world wore makeup and flaunted themselves to the eyes of men.

The sisters painted my mother's already lovely face with makeup, rouge, and lipstick, and darkened her brows. They were just giving my mother a fancy hairdo when my father walked in the backdoor.

Father stepped inside the door and cheerily greeted his two sisters. His box of matches were in hand and he lifted the hatch door to go to the cellar. Suddenly and shockingly, he caught a glimpse of Mother 'all dolled up'. Well, hell's fury was no match for Father's re-action! His voice roared like a lion as he demanded that Mother get that stuff off her face and told his sisters to never again make his wife out to be a “woman of the world”.

This all took place in the flash of an eye, and in his dismay and anger he threw the box of matches into the cellar. The matches burst into a flame of fire, which further enraged Father and sent him into another outpouring of passion.

Fire extinguished, Mother was cleansed of her artificial beauty and the sisters comforted Mother while arguing with Father. Life proceeded on as it normally did in this little green house,

where Mother loved and doted on her four little children and Father took his anger outdoors to the woodpile.

The Chase

My Father was very strict. He expected his children to be respectful at all times to all people. We were given strict rules of behaviour on how to conduct ourselves in the presence of company, as well as in our home and at play. The following is a story of the time we forgot.

It was an awkward group of children – a little boy, his little sister, their aunt and their uncle. Here we were, Uncle Wilf, age 8, Aunt Ella, age 10, my brother Eddie, age 6 and myself, age 4. We were playmates, running and playing in the vast fields around our home in Oxford.

Times were different then. Children were free to roam, to explore and to have a good time, as long as we were obeying the rules of behaviour. Yes, we knew and understood the rules: remember our manners, be respectful to our elders, be courteous and remember to say “please” and “thank you”. We also had to always stay close enough to our home to hear our Mother call us when it was time to come in.



*Eddie (my protector)
and I*

We lived in a small green cottage on a short street, with comfortable homes on both sides that were few and spaced well apart. Ben and Lucy Shoemaker lived up the road, on the opposite side of the street, in a large house with a veranda. Ben was a quiet, kind, soft spoken gentleman. He was a hardworking man who, after a long day at work, would arrive home and do all the housework, including cooking the meals. His wife Lucy had health issues, probably a form of mental instability. Lucy did strange things. In early mornings, after Ben went to work, she wandered around the neighbourhood. She collected the neighbour's brooms from their stoop and anything else that drew her attention or hit her fancy. When the neighbours saw her coming they would draw the shades, lock the doors, and hide from her. When Ben would arrive home from work, he would return all the brooms and other collected items to their rightful owners.

Ben loved his wife very much. He was deeply devoted to her and suffered greatly over her sickness. Another incident told by our elders went like this:

One day, Ben returned from work and, as he neared home, he could smell chicken cooking. His heart leaped in his chest, joy overtook him; and he believed his beloved Lucy had returned to her previous self and that she was preparing his supper. He entered the house and realized she was the same as he left her earlier in the day. She excitedly told him she cooked his supper. When he checked the oven, he realized Lucy had gone out in the yard, grabbed a chicken, and without any preparations, put it in the oven to cook. The adults in their story telling did not realize they had an audience of young listeners nearby.

Well, this is what took place while the four children were playing in the field:

One sunny afternoon, the four of us were playing in the fields. Wilf and Eddie spotted Lucy in her yard. They had previously heard all the various tales spoken of among the adults and drew their own mental picture of this dear lady. They started taunting her, calling her “Crazy Old Lucy, Crazy Old Lucy”.

Poor Lucy, crying and yelling, began running after us. To worsen our fears, we saw she carried a large butcher knife in her hand. Wilf and Eddie ran at full speed for home. Ella was close on their heels but remembered me running far behind. She turned around, put me on her back, and ran to safety.

The fear I felt at that moment is one of my earliest memories. I saw Lucy coming closer, screaming, and all the while waving the butcher knife. I can still see Wilf and Eddie running, Ella coming back, lifting me to her shoulders and my heart pounding, as she ran with me through the tall grass to safety.

Needless to say, punishment was in order for the delinquent little smart alecks. As punishment was administered, we tried to understand Lucy’s sickness. Then we remembered we forgot one of the rules: to respect our elders.

The Fire

Winter had put the small Town of Oxford into a deep freeze. Our “little green house”, as everyone referred to it, was deep in snow. The North Wind brought freezing temperatures and our single-paned glass windows were thickened with frost. So thick was the frost, we could not see out of them. Mama would take us to the windows and show us the wonderful intricate designs painted by Jack Frost. She would tell us that he had a magical paint brush, invisible to the human eye. He would blow his breath onto the window and paint leaves and trees and other wonderful and beautiful designs.

On this particular day, supper was over, chores done, the children into their flannels were readied for bed. Suddenly a loud and anxious knock came at the door. Daddy responded to the knock and quickly dressed and disappeared out into the darkness of the night.

A strong and viciously cold wind was blowing under heavy dark skies. Along with the howling of the wind, there came a loud commotion and nervous talking from outside. It was at this moment that Mama noticed our pretty frosted windows were turning red. She rushed to the window. She blew her warm breath upon the frosted window pane, rubbing the frost away to peer out the window, in order to see what was happening. We too, mimicked her by blowing our breath on the frosted pane and rubbing the frost away. Then we saw plainly the horror that our Mama saw through the tiny cleared spot on the frosted window pane. The house

across the street was engulfed in flames. In every window, flames were savagely devouring the house.

Men were fighting the fire, the wind, and the cold. It all seemed so useless amid the wild wind and freezing temperatures.

We were frightened. We were tiny children watching the fire through a breath hole on a frosted window pane and unaware of the devastation as seen through our Mama's eyes.

This ends my earliest memories from birth until I was four and one-half years old, when we moved from Oxford in June 1943.



I was born and raised in Nova Scotia and since 1964, Brantford, Ontario has been my home. I am a proud Mother, Nana and Great Nana.

I love to write stories. I am writing Memories. My book is called "Strolling Through the Diamonds." The "diamonds" symbolize the precious years of my life. These are my stories written for my children, their children and all their little children, who one day, like me, will wonder about those who lived before and from whom they descended. In reading my stories, they will come to know me and may grasp a little of what life was like so long ago.



Heroes

By Nancy Poole

“Please, Mum. Just let me go with you?” I was beside myself with fear.

“No, and that is final.”

“What if the guy is still back there?”

“I’ll be okay. I won’t be alone. I’ll take the dog.”

“But King only listens to me.”

“Well, tell him to go with me. Now where did your father put the spade?” Mom headed to the oil room to find it.

Some minutes earlier, I had answered the phone and someone had asked for my mother or my father. As we were told never to say our father wasn’t home, I said, “My mother is upstairs. I’ll get her.”

Mom hustled down the stairs and went to the only phone in the house. She listened for a moment, then hung up and said, "There is a fire in the back forty." That was Mom's way of saying there was a fire in the far field behind our house.

Mom never hesitated. She ran out of the back door and had to run to the end of the backyard to see the fire, which was quite a ways. I scampered after her and saw smoke rising from beside the trees surrounding the gravel pit closer to the property of the psychiatric hospital.



Mom flew back to the house and called the volunteer fire department that serviced our area.

"You'll have to come at the fire from the hospital property. There is no way you'll get to the fire coming in our driveway."

Armed with the spade to smack out the fire or deal with the perpetrator, Mom rushed over the backyard and into the fields. She called King, but he would only go to the end of the field that separated our property from the hospital.

Despite Mom telling me to stay in the house with the doors locked, I ran to the end of the backyard to make sure I could watch her and King and make sure they were okay.

*Mom and Dad on their wedding day.
My parents hated having their
pictures taken so this is the only one
I could find with the two of them
together.*

"Tell the dog to go with me," she yelled.

"Go with Mum, King," I ordered as I waved with my arms in the direction he should go.

The amazing dog that he was, King followed Mom to the crime scene.

Soon, I couldn't see the two of them, but the smoke seemed to diminish.

It took a long time for the volunteer firemen to show up in the orchard on the hospital property. I watched as they unwound their long hose and sprayed water on the fire. When the fire was out, Mom spoke briefly with the firemen who, by that time were packing up to leave.

Mom sauntered back to the house while King ran full-speed in my direction.

"You are one amazing dog, King. I love you so much." I rapidly stroked whatever part of his back or head I could reach as he was dancing and jumping around me as if he was really proud of himself, too.

"I mostly had the fire out when the fire truck finally arrived," Mom said.

That was probably true. By the time the firemen were called and rounded up and raced to the fire, it seemed like forever to me. I must have been ten at the time and this was way before cell phones were invented. Everyone had a standard, black, dial-tone phone. Perhaps the fire hall had a red phone, but who knows?

This had happened on a Saturday, the only day of the week Dad was not home. He was with his gallery painting group. They went out every Saturday afternoon to paint scenes and barns and pastures and all kinds of things. When Dad got home and heard about the fire, he said, "Probably a pyromaniac from the hospital."

The next Saturday afternoon, it was the same thing. A neighbour called to tell us that the back field by the gravel pit was on fire.

This time, Mom didn't bother to go out to look at the fire before she called the fire department.

She grabbed the spade from where she had stored it the week before and she and King headed off for adventure. King knew the drill and followed Mom.

Again, Mom mostly had the fire put out by the time the fire truck arrived.

Dad was livid at the repeat performance of this fire-starter. He called the hospital and spoke to the administrator and insisted that it had to be one of their patients who they only let out on Saturdays beginning the Saturday before. Dad was even angrier when he was told it could not possibly be one of their patients.

The problem was resolved when the next Saturday, the fire-starter burned down one of the barns on the hospital property. They must have caught the person because there were no further fires on our land.

King was a regular-sized Scotch Collie. He was so astonishing. He could be gentle and playful, but he was a good watch-dog.

He used to make me laugh because he had his own personality. He also had different-sounding barks. He barked at the kids passing by as they made their way home from school, barked at the paperboy, barked at people he knew who drove up the driveway and barked at strangers, and all of those barks were distinct.

He had an internal clock that told him it was nearing three o'clock in the afternoon and that he had to go out and watch for all of the kids and especially us three girls coming home from school. If he was inside near three o'clock, he paced and barked as if to say, "Let me out."

King only went on the large yards surrounding the house and never ventured onto the front and side fields. He was rarely, if ever on a leash.

But the dynamic duo of Mom and King were always ready to go into fearless mode.

One night the neighbour from across the street appeared at our door carrying large hedge clippers. He related to Mom that a dangerous and violent patient had escaped from the hospital and had held a knife to his next-door neighbour's throat and demanded money and the keys to his car. For some reason the patient ditched that idea and hightailed it over to our property and was probably hiding in the woods behind our house and might come knocking on our door demanding entrance. He said if the guy showed up, Mom was to call the police right away.

It was summertime and we'd opened the storm door to allow the night air in through the screen door. King was outside, but Mom brought him in and closed and locked the storm door.

This was another time when Dad was away. He was picking his brother, my Uncle Marsh up from the airport forty miles away.

A few minutes after the neighbour left, there was a loud pounding on the door. "Let me in. I know you're in there."

King went absolutely wild. He growled and barked like crazy and jumped at the door, but the guy kept knocking and yelling.

Mom told me to go to bed. I was scared silly because I had to walk past the door to get to the kitchen and the back stairs. I sat on the stairs. I don't know what was louder: my heart, the guy beating on the door and yelling, or King barking.

Mom was on the phone with the police, but where she had to stand because the cord on the phone was not that long, she was partially in view of the door.



King the Wonderdog

Mom was frantic. "Please hurry. I'm afraid he will break down the door."

I wasn't too worried. If the guy broke in, he'd be faced with a dog that wasn't afraid to give the guy what he deserved.

When the police arrived, they radioed the station. The person on the phone told Mom the police were there and that after they apprehended the guy, they would knock on the door and yell, "Police!"

That happened, and Mom let a policeman in. She was still quite upset.

"We just came up behind him, put the cuffs on him and he's in the back of the police car," he said.

"Thank you so much," Mom managed. Her voice was very shaky.

Then one day Mom looked out the window and saw a patient from the psychiatric hospital approaching. He was near the fence shared by our property and the orchard owned by the psychiatric hospital.

She told me to watch the dog. For some reason, Mom always referred to King as "the dog".

King was lying on the back porch acting nonchalant. As the man got closer to the fence, King stood up but would not look at the guy. He got over the fence and King went onto the lawn still not looking at him.

Finally the guy got too close to the house for King's liking. King took off like a rocket, barking up a storm. King would always rise to the occasion!

The fellow flew across the field and over the fence lickety-split.

When it came to protecting our family, Mom and King deserved medals of bravery.

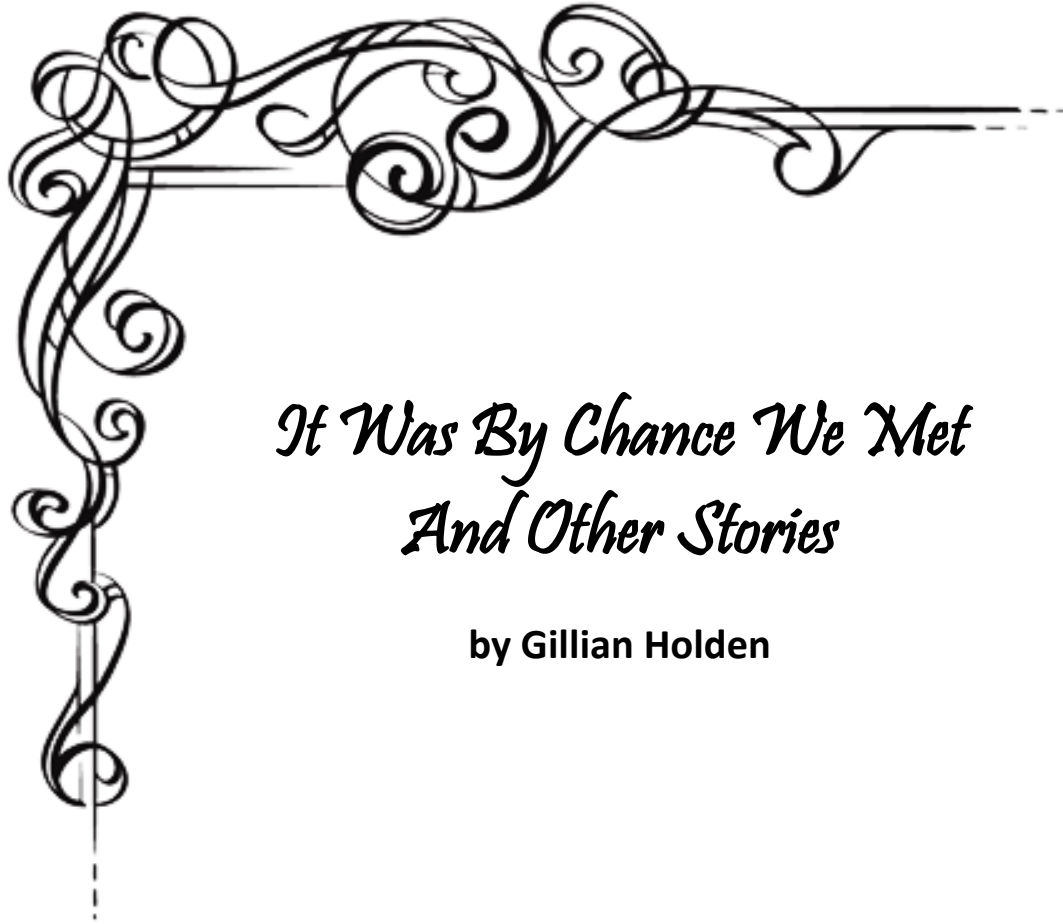


Nancy Poole has had a long and interesting career as a University-educated Registered Nurse. She has many fascinating stories about her childhood and her experiences as a nurse.

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.



It Was By Chance We Met And Other Stories

by Gillian Holden

It Was By Chance We Met; It Is By Choice We Became Friends

Two little girls are swinging on the bars that surrounded the house at the corner of Albion Street and St. James Street. Their dresses billow over their heads with each somersault. They give no thought to their knickers showing. They have each found a new friend.

Two young mothers in their pretty frocks are waiting for the bus to take them into town. They converse, introduce themselves to each other.

It is 1953. One of the little girls is me, Gillian Holden. The other girl is Jeanette Murray. My mother is Dorothy Holden. Jeanette's mother is Joan Murray.

This is where we met. This is where we became friends. Waiting for the bus at the corner of Albion and St. James.

It seems like a hundred years ago.



Jeanette and me in '53

It seems like only yesterday.

Over the years there have been a few spats. Hair-pulling, arguments over whose turn it is to do the dishes, name-calling, and the odd tussle. But things have a way of smoothing out, just like pastry dough when rolled.

We have remained friends for 61 years.

We did drift apart occasionally, busy with our own lives and families, and then we would catch up again.

I think what cemented our friendship was the fact that our parents got along so well from the start. We were new to Canada. People had to work harder at making new friends. As two small families we had very good times together.



Aunt Joan, Dad, Mom, Uncle Bob

It is obvious we made a connection and had many things in common.

The Gypsies

Jeanette and I never had too much trouble thinking of things to do to keep ourselves occupied. It wasn't wise to say "I'm bored" because one of our mothers would find something for us to do, like dishes or dusting. So we kept busy. We were very good at creating games to play: "I know, let's make a gypsy tent and tell fortunes. We can use the fishbowl for our crystal ball."

No lemonade stand for us!



The house at the corner of Albion and St. James

My mom gave us the clothes horse and blankets to make our gypsy tent. She let us root through her costume jewellery for bangles and rings, and she loaned us her tambourine with a warning. "Don't lose it!" We were adorned with long skirts and scarves. We looked the part.

Finally we were open for business. "Cross my palm with silver and I will tell you of pots of gold at the end of the rainbow." "Come hither and I will tell you of your heart's desire."

Back then people walked to the corner shop for groceries. Because there was more foot traffic, we had customers. We earned a few nickels from the few neighbours who took the time to stop for a palm reading. But like all good things, they had to come to an end.

"It's my turn to be the fortune teller."

"No, it's my turn."

"Well, I won't help you clean up."

"I'm going home."

And then a voice. My mother. "You can both clean up and come in for lunch. Later you can go to the corner shop and buy some sweeties with your money."

We probably spent more time fixing up the tent than telling fortunes. I think the novelty was more dressing up in old clothes and jewellery and pretending we were gypsies.

My point is that we had the same sense of imagination and, except for the odd spat, we got along really well. We have always been compatible. Our time together as children was creative and well-spent. I don't think any of my other friends played the same games Jeanette and I did. We escaped into other realms – shared worlds where we made the rules.



My 7th birthday party

Bottoms Up

Every summer Jeanette, her mom, me, and my mother would spend some time at the Arbor Cabins in Port Dover. Our dads would come down on the weekends.



*At the beach: Joan (in back),
Jeanette, me, and Dad*

When Jeanette and I became familiar with the word bosoms we had to work fast and do something so no one would see our bosoms. NO ONE.

Bosoms. We didn't have bosoms. We were as flat as pancakes but God forbid anyone should see our chest areas.

In order to solve our problem, we would hitch our bathing suits up so high at the front that our bottoms peeked out at the back. This would drive our mothers crazy. They were always trying to adjust our bathing suits.

"People are looking at you because your bottoms are bare and showing," my mother would cluck. "Not your chests."

We must have looked a sight on the beach!

A New Adventure

A few times each summer, Jeanette and her family and me and my parents would load up the car and set off for Paris Park for our Sunday picnic.

Jeanette and I always wore matching short sets, bathing suits, and sandals. We always dressed alike. Jeanette had very long black hair. I had very long blond hair but our eyes and eyebrows were the same colour.

"Let's tell everyone we are sisters."

In order to fool an unsuspecting world we wore caps to match our bathing suits. That way they could only see our eyes. Our only problem: who would we call Mom, Aunt Joan or Aunt Dorothy? And would they play along?

I think they just laughed with each other over our antics.

"What are you two up to?" asked my mother.



*Who to call Mom? Joan and
Dorothy, strutting their stuff*

"We are telling everyone that we are sisters," we replied.

"You're daft, you two," laughed my mother.

"Oh, aye!" chimed in Aunt Joan.

Why did we do this? Who knows?

Riding the Rails

When Jeanette and her family moved to Windsor we still got to see each other quite often. My mother would pack my little case and a lunch box and send me off to Windsor on the train. I loved it. Jeanette's dad, Uncle Bob, would meet me at the Walkerville Station. I can still smell the Hiram Walker's Distillery. The smell is how I knew I was getting close to Windsor.

Jeanette and I would be so excited to see each other. We played and argued and played and fought and shared her room.

After my little holiday in Windsor, Jeanette's mom would pack our cases and lunch boxes and send us back on the train to Brantford. Uncle Bob would see us off and my dad would meet us at this end. Once again we were so happy to be riding on the train.

We pretended we could speak French, played with our cut-out dolls, and even made up a code we could use when we didn't want anyone to know what we were talking about.

The conductors had a four-seat table area and they had a magnetic checkers game. A few times they had a game with us.

After a couple of weeks at my house playing, arguing, and cooking up new ideas, it was time for Jeanette to head back home. My mom would pack her up and put her on the train to head back to Windsor. We would be crying our eyes out because it would be a while before we could get together again.

"You will just have to write letters," my mom said.

"We can use our code," I snivelled.

"Okay," sobbed Jeanette.

Imagine sending kids alone for a four hour train ride nowadays! We were perfectly content and safe. I think we were street-smart very young. We knew exactly how many train stops before Windsor, when to eat our lunch, and even back then we knew to go to the washroom together so the other wouldn't be alone.

I still ride the train to see Jeanette today.

Childhood Memories

I have fond memories of the times I spent in Windsor in Jeanette's tiny little apartment on Felix Street. It is where I first saw the Howdy Doody Show and the Mouseketeers. Jeanette's brother was born there, on my birthday. Aunt Jean would send me to John's Market by myself, with a note and money.

On one of my recent visits to Jeanette's she played some home movies of us that Uncle Bob had taken when we all went to Greenfield Village in 1959. It was so nice to see pictures of my mom and dad and Aunt Joan walking along, laughing and talking and making faces at the camera. Jeanette and I skipping along, ponytails swinging, just have a good time.

It was in Windsor a few years later that I met my first true love, Larry LaJoie. I am sure that means "joy" in French. At the end of the summer when I had to come home, Larry bought me a silver cross on a necklace. He came to the train station to see me off and I can still see him running and waving alongside the train as it pulled out of the station.



*Christmas with Bob,
Jeanette, and Joan*

My fondest memories are of our Christmas Days and birthday parties. Uncle Bob had many magic tricks up his sleeve. We were in awe of the banana that was already sliced when peeled.

Also such good memories of all of us in my mom's kitchen. My dad and Uncle Bob would be playing darts. Aunt Joan and my mom would be having a cup of tea and a wee chat at the kitchen table. The washer would be going and the clothes horse set up. And of course Jeanette and I would be under the table in our homemade

fort. It was all so safe and warm.

Waking up on a Sunday morning to Uncle Bob playing his bagpipes. Picking hollyhocks in Mr. Hillier's garden to make dancing dolls and being told by Mrs. Hillier not to do that anymore.

Skating on the rink that my dad made.

Getting dressed up to go to town. We each had money for a treat at Kresge's and lunch at Woolworth's.

Sharing a pair of roller skates. One had the left. One had the right.

All these reflections add up to a mountain of memories. Jeanette and I still see each other on a regular basis. We talk on the phone, e-mail and visit back and forth. I still ride the rails. I love the train. It brings back good memories. And there is Jeanette waiting at the other end.

Really, who could ask for better memories?

1158 Dot Ave.,
Windsor, Ontario N9C 3J1

27th Oct. 2010

Dear Jill,

First, thank you for the photograph and need I say, though we have one somewhere, it does bring back wonderful memories of our association with your mum, dad, and yourself which was a blessing to us that our daughter found an immediate and indeed an everlasting friend in our newly adopted country. Second, it was so good to see you settled in your lovely home in which it pleased me to see so many attractive aspects of your artistic talents. I'm sure that your Mum and Dad are very proud of you. Third, I was deeply sorry that I could not recognize the Brantford which I knew in 1954, but then, Windsor has changed dramatically over the past fifty-six years. Fourth, it would be lovely to have you come here for a visit but with the winter weather fast approaching you would not enjoy the many natural aspects which Windsor has to offer, none-the-less, you are always welcomed at any time. Fifth, forgive me for printing this letter, because firstly, my handwriting has become a wee bit shakey, and secondly, any errors I may detect can be erased and re-done!! Please take care and remember, work and take advantage of those artistic talents.

Love, Aunt Joan and Uncle Bob xx



Aunt Joan and Uncle Bob, 2013

Aah! Childhood Childhood

I want to tell you about a memory of Christmas.

I want to tell you how soothing it is to look back through a tiny peephole and see what a great childhood I had.

I want to tell you about a Christmas in 1956 when everything was warm and magical. My mom and dad and I were happy. Good memories keep us on an even keel. They give us a place to wander through when things are a little rough on the outside.

Christmas celebrations in my home held many British traditions when I was growing up. Except for my mom and dad and I, all my relatives were in England. What I knew of relatives was through pictures, letters, and parcels.

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Weeks before Christmas my mother baked the traditional Christmas cake. Every so many days she would dribble some brandy into it. It was kept in an airtight, paper-lined tin in the cold, closed-in back porch area. Closer to Christmas, Mom would roll out the marzipan to layer over the cake. It was served warm, with hot sherry-laced custard poured over it.

Inside the cake she had baked sixpence and threepenny bits, so when the cake was cut you got a surprise. I used to think this was just magical. Money in a cake!

Mom had the dining room table set with her best china and there was a home-made cracker at each place setting. I loved pulling crackers to get the silly prize, the fortune, or the funny hat. I still do.

The glow from the candles and the lights on the tree were all we needed to set the scene. It was like a picture from my fairyland books.

There is nothing so irresistible than the smell of whiskey sauce erupting from the sticky-toffee pudding as Mom walks from the kitchen to the dining room. As Mom would cut into the pudding, the decadent sauce poured out onto the plate.

So there we sat, with our silly hats on our heads, ready to sup pudding.

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Prior to Christmas, my daily routine was to run home from school as fast as my legs would carry me. Waiting for the post was the most exciting part of Christmas. I just loved opening the cards and letters from relatives who lived across the ocean, and would wait especially for my parcel from my Grandma. Mom and I would string the cards from corner to corner across the living room along with the paper lanterns, a little worse for wear, that Mom had brought from England.

Then it was my lucky day. I was over the moon. My parcel from Grandma had arrived.

The parcel was wrapped in more than slightly battered brown mailing paper. In Grandma's shaky handwriting was written:

*To: Miss Gillian Holden
105 Chestnut Avenue
Brantford, Ontario
Canada*

There were at least ten postage stamps stuck to the brown wrapping with lots of wiggly lines running across them. Below the stamps, in bold black, were the words: "On Her Majesty's Service". I knew we were royalty!

There was also a 4"x 4" declaration sticker pasted to the parcel and on it was written "cotton knickers". Grandma wasn't one to reveal the contents of the package.

Very carefully I tore the brown paper off. I liked to keep the stamps and stickers for my scrapbook. Inside was my present, wrapped in very wrinkly Christmas paper. Well, it had travelled a long way. Grandma always sent the best presents: wrapped up in a knitted cardigan was a pair of 100% woollen schoolgirl knee socks, grey with a blue stripe around the top; a stick of my favourite Blackpool Rock, already broken into pieces from its long journey; and a School Girl Annual book.

Tucked into the socks there was a little cardboard egg that pulled apart. Inside was an embroidered handkerchief, courtesy of Grandma. There were little marzipan pigs and apricots, gold covered chocolate coins, and of course, my card from my Grandma.

*Merry Christmas, to my ikkle princess.
Love and kisses from Grandma.*

What more could a girl want? I hoped that one day I would meet her and we would spend Christmas together.

I finally met my Grandma in 1959.

Today's Stories, Tomorrow's Memories

As we are all going along our merry way we meet many people. Right from the crib someone is peeking in at us. "Who is that?" we say.

For the Lifescapes program this year I chose to write about women who keep the wheels turning in Brantford. When these women retire from the positions they have, they will have become part of Brantford's history. It is certain that people will say "Oh, I remember her," or some child, now grown, "I remember Miss Karen from story time." And like all of our memories, we must keep the good ones.

At school we meet our first friends and acquaintances. We meet happy people, sad people, coworkers, lazy people, grumpy and miserable people, and the list goes on. This is when we learn to tiptoe past the sleeping bears. It is like a Choose Your Own Adventure book. Page 2 will take you ... but page 4, maybe follow that one ...

Some of the people we meet are left by the wayside, a few become lifelong friends. Some you see on a regular basis because of their work. The years go by and then – CLICK! You wonder what life would be like without them in it.

They make a difference. They are leaving a mark on the world. They probably don't even know it as they are just going about their daily business, doing their job.

These are the people making life better in Brantford for all of us. It isn't necessarily about the figureheads we see and hear about every day. It is about the ones who are making a difference, making memories, and making life better. They are the mentors for the young. Follow their lead.

People do leave footprints.

Janet Louise Beachey

When you enter the John Noble Home, Janet is one of the first people you see – or hear. She is friendly, outgoing, and cheerful.

Janet was born and raised in Brantford. After public and high school she attended Conestoga College and took the Recreational Leadership Program. She graduated in 1980.

Her first job was at the Hilltop Nursing Home in Cambridge. She was there for four years. When she started to raise a family she needed a position closer to home, so she applied at the John Noble Home. She had an interview in 1984 and was hired as a programmer three evenings a week.

When the Ministry changed their mandate, the JNH had to reconstruct their programs. Janet was offered the position of Recreation Manager.

So many things have been added to the manager's job description. Janet is in charge of the volunteers, physiotherapists, social workers, pastoral care, customer service, and is the editor of The Happenings newsletter. She also does the posting to the JNH website. In a pinch she might even drive the bus.

Janet tells me she has a lot of help and support to keep things running smoothly, both staff and volunteers.

To deal with any conflicts Janet says she first listens to both sides, gets the facts, and has an open-door policy. It usually all balances. She asks herself, "What is fair, what is right?" She also has a one-on-one with staff during the third week of the month.

When I asked Janet if she was happy with the career she chose, she answered: "Yes, I love my job."

I asked what advice she would pass on to the person who would take on a position like hers.

"Be able to multitask," she said. "Wear one hundred hats. Have good customer skills. Be fair."

Janet has a positive attitude, a winning smile, and she carries herself with confidence. It is these traits that create a better place for our senior citizens and their families. Janet has been good for the John Noble Home.

I have known Janet for 10 years. She is a pleasure to be around. She makes a difference.

Karen Eileen Leonard

Karen Leonard is another person who I think keeps the wheels well-oiled and turning in Brantford. Karen was born and raised in Brantford. She attended the University of Western Ontario where she earned an Arts Degree. Karen is currently a Library Technician at the Brantford Public Library.

Karen's first job at age 16 was at the concession booth at the Civic Centre. She also did some office work and ushering. She then decided she needed to find a position where she could put her degree to use. After sending out many résumés, she received her first response from the Brantford Public Library.

Phyllis Taylor, who set up the Brant County Library system, interviewed Karen for the position of library technical. Karen had on-the-job training. Phyllis believed that you should always greet all patrons, especially seniors. You may be the only person they have the opportunity to converse with on any given day.

Karen's daily duties includes book ordering for the children's department. She purchases paperbacks, picture books, series, and e-books. She works on the reference desk, which she enjoys mostly because of the interaction with the public, Karen is also known as Miss Karen at story time. She makes classroom visits and is responsible for some of the outreach programs the library offers, for instance, going to daycares. She sets up books displays in the children's section. As she told me in our interview, "You just have to have fun." I asked Karen if it is difficult to keep children interested in reading. She said that she is thrilled that parents still introduce their children to the library and books.

The library offers many outreach programs. They partner with the Brant County Health Unit, Family Counselling Services, and Kids Can Fly. They also work closely with Laurier and City Council. Karen likes to set up a display table of challenged or banned books on Freedom to Read week, because libraries don't support censorship.

When she isn't working Karen has a 10 acre hobby farm that keeps her busy. She has an apple orchard, plum trees, and chickens. She makes jam, wine, loves gardening, and loves to travel. She has been to France, Greece, and Japan. WWI and WWII remain an interest of hers. She has a very full life!

I find Karen very compassionate, genuine, eager to learn, and a very well-rounded person. She has an amusing sense of humour, often smiling like she has a funny little secret inside. When I asked Karen if she thought she made a difference in her time at the library, she answered: "Yes. I love my job and feel very lucky and fortunate to have it."

Karen keeps the pages turning. She makes a difference.

Michelle MacInnis

Michelle MacInnis was born and raised in Brantford. She is a Recreational Programmer at the John Noble Home. In her teens she volunteered to feed residents. Through her teens she was also a playground leader for Parks and Recreation.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services started a recreational program and John Gillies, administrator of the John Noble Home, asked Michelle if she would like to work there. Michelle started the Adopt a Grandparent program and added other activities. She was called an Adjuvant. She was trained by the Ministry to do physiotherapy with the residents. Michelle was the first Activities Director at the John Noble Home and took her courses from the Ministry.

Her husband's career has taken Michelle to many cities and each time she has been able to find a job pertaining to her abilities. She worked in Loch Lomond Villa in New Brunswick as a program director, leading exercises, bus trips, crafts, and games. From there she went to Kitchener and took a position as program director at Sunnyside Home. It was a 400 bed home and Michelle had two adjuvants under her. She planned events and activities, trained volunteers, and worked with families. Michelle tells me she was a one man show for a while.

In 2004 Michelle's husband's job brought him back to Brantford. Michelle, who was then on unemployment, took courses through Colleen Miller at Manpower. One opportunity she had was to job shadow. It was then that she met Janet Beachey and she shadowed Carly Cass in Bellcourt at the JNH. She started back to work part-time in the Day and Stay program and helped in Physio.

Carly persuaded Michelle to take the Recreational Program at Conestoga College. She graduated with honours in 2009. The night of graduation the usher told her more than once that she was going in the wrong direction. Grads to the right, family to the left. Michelle said, "I had to correct him. I might be older, but I am a grad."

Michelle tells me that the best part of her job is treating the residents just as if they were family, doing meaningful things for them and creating good relationships with them. The hardest part is when they pass away.

Michelle tells me that she always felt honoured to be working at the John Noble Home. There is so much compassion there.

I asked Michelle if she was happy with her career choice. "Yes, I have no regrets. I brought a lot of life experience and skills to my job."

Michelle is a loving, caring person with a wonderful motherly touch. She makes a difference.

Growing Up in Brantford: a Poem

This is a poem from my childhood. I wrote it when I was just so tired of being called a limey and picked on about my accent and teased.

*Growing up in Brantford was very lonely for me.
Everyone who was related, lived away across the sea.
Would I ever get to know the people I'd heard so much about?
Would I ever meet my Grandma? I was very much in doubt.*

*She called me "ikkle princess". I guess she was a queen.
Wait until I show my friends. With envy they'll be green.
I'll show them pictures in the hall of the palace and the horses.
Uncle Arthur in his uniform. He was in the Royal Forces.*

*Grandma mailed a pretty dress. "This is just like Princess Anne's."
And when I put it on, I'll be envied by all my friends.
My friends always disbelieve me and say "You are a fool."
But when they see this royal dress, they'll drool.*

*Grandma sends me toffees and lots of Blackpool Rock.
My friends all get their share, then behind my back they talk.
But crying and carrying on is beneath my dignity.
They are jealous and don't understand. What a flippin' pity.*

*Tomorrow I'll lay the red carpet, and have my friends to tea.
And once and for all I'll prove to them, I come from Royalty.
All the proof I needed was on the lid of Callard and Bowser Licorice.
'Cause stamped right across the tin was "On Her Majesty's Service."*

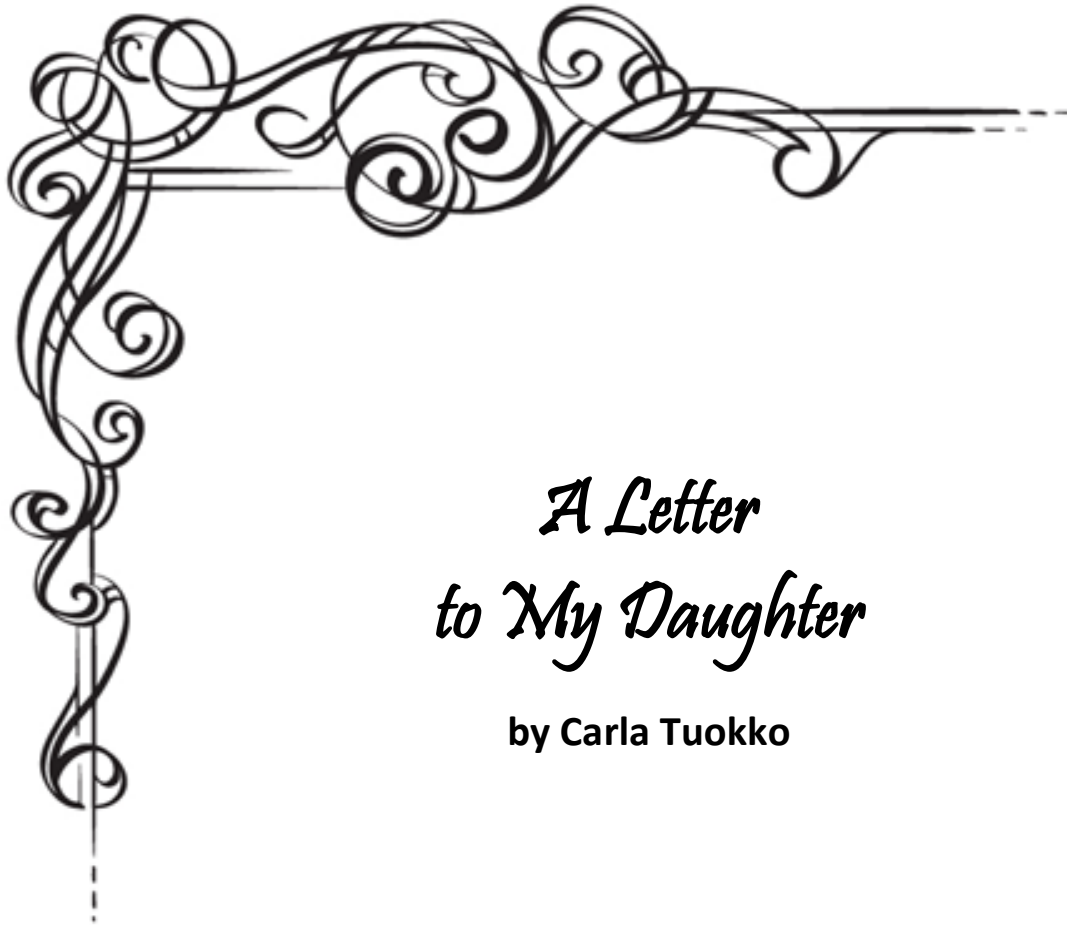
~ Gillian Holden

Hi. My name is Gillian Holden.

I have been writing poetry and journals for about 60 years. It is time to put pen to paper and write a story.

My hobbies are scrapbooking, genealogy, cardmaking, sewing children's jackets, and writing class.

There are not enough hours in a day.



A Letter to My Daughter

by Carla Tuokko

The following is a letter that I wrote to my eldest daughter about two years after she and her sister took themselves out of my life. In January of 2000 they told me that they didn't want anything to do with me. I wanted my daughter to know how much I loved her and how proud I was to be her mother. Since she and her sister made the decision to side with their dad after our divorce, I wanted to remind her of his abuse and his absence as a father and husband.

I never sent this letter to her although I sent many cards, letters, and gifts in the first years of the estrangement. None of them were answered and gifts were returned unopened. I was totally abandoned by them and I still am.

It has been fifteen heart wrenching, gut twisting, emotional years without my two beautiful daughters. The last time that I saw my granddaughters they were six and one year old. Today they are twenty-one and sixteen years old and I do not know them. My younger daughter has had a son on whom I have never laid eyes.

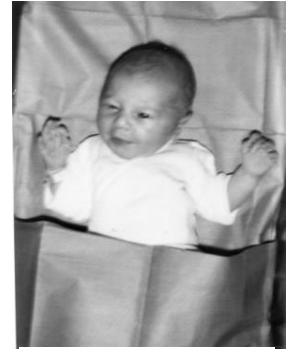
I suppose I am a survivor or I wouldn't be here to tell my story. The love and support of my husband and my family has got me through some very tough times. I believe that there will never be a reconciliation with my daughters. Too much time has gone by and too much pain has been inflicted. I remind myself daily that I was not the one who created this estrangement. My punishment does not fit the crime.

This is all on them.

My Dearest Lisa,

I am writing because I want you to know how much I love and miss you and Tracy. I also want you to remember and realize some things from the past.

What a beautiful baby you were! What a wonderful child you were! What a lovely woman you were! I'm sure you are still a beautiful, wonderful and lovely woman but there is a corner of your heart where there is darkness. I guess that is where you have put me to reside.



Lisa, one day old

You were not conceived or brought into this world under the best of circumstances, but I never regretted having you, not then and not now. I'm smiling right now, remembering the first time that I laid eyes on your that little round face with chipmunk cheeks, pug nose, big blue eyes, and sweet little bow shaped lips. You were perfect and you were mine. At eighteen years old I thought I knew it all, especially about babies. After all, I was the oldest of seven and knew about changing diapers, giving baths, feeding, and burping, but nothing prepared me for the unconditional love that I felt for you. It was overpowering and I was getting my first taste of what it meant to be a mom. Now my life had purpose. This was what I was meant to do. Your happiness was more important than mine.

We spent a lot of time by ourselves back then. Because I had no-one else to talk to, I talked to you. I didn't drive or have a phone and most all of my time was spent caring for you and playing with you. You were my world and I was crazy about you. The first time that you laughed out loud, I laughed and cried at the same time. You were the light in my otherwise dark world.

Your smile kept me going when life was not kind to me. In the little time that your Dad would be at home, he ignored us. When he did pay attention, it was with me and it was usually an ugly scene. It was difficult to shelter you from our fighting. From early on you witnessed so much of the anger and abuse that he dished out toward me. He was angry that I had put him in a situation where he had to support the two of us. I had robbed him of his freedom.

Once a week he would drop us off at my parent's house so that we could visit and I could get our laundry done. He would never get out of the car to help me in any way or to come in and say hello to my family. On Saturday mornings he would take me to the grocery store, hand me fifteen dollars, then wait in the car while you and I shopped. I had to tally up the groceries while I shopped and knew that I had better not go over that fifteen dollars. If I went over the amount, I had to put something back because I dared not go out to the car to ask for more money. He never lifted a finger to load or unload groceries. I was so young and so naive and even scared to ask him for any kind of help.

There was a time I took you outside to play while he was working on his car. When I came out to check on you, you were gone. I panicked and took off running to find you while he stood there and screamed at me that it was my fault and not his. Thank goodness you hadn't gone far. I had learned a valuable lesson and would never trust him to keep an eye out for you again.

When you were about two years old, your Dad and I separated for a couple of months. Your Dad had begged me to come back and convinced me that he loved me and this was all that I had ever wanted. I became pregnant right after we reconciled. I didn't want to be pregnant at that time and I was afraid to tell your Dad. I had been taking birth control pills but I hadn't taken them the way they each day. Because your Dad would say that we couldn't afford them, I had to wait a week or two before he would let me get them from the pharmacy. I couldn't convince him that the pills had to be taken regularly and, not surprisingly, he blamed me for getting pregnant.



Snuggled up, Christmas 1979

Your sister was born four weeks early. Because she had breathing problems, they transferred her to Cardinal Glennon Hospital for Children in St. Louis. Luckily she was there only eight days. You were with us when your Dad and I went to pick her up to bring her home and for a few years you thought everyone went to the hospital to pick up their babies.

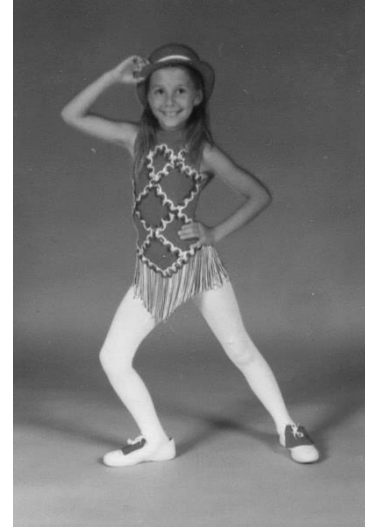
After Tracy came home you seemed to change. You became more independent and started feeding and dressing yourself. You wanted to do everything for yourself. That is when you "found"

your imaginary friend. She went everywhere with us. We had to make room for her in your bed and in the car. The day arrived when it was time for your "friend" leave. As you stood at the window to wave goodbye, you told me that she was going back to her own home because her mommy had a baby.

When you were four, we moved to the yellow house where there was a big yard and so much more room for you and Tracy to play. A month after moving there, your Dad was fired from his job for stealing. Of course, he denied that he had stolen anything. His firing put us in a financial bind but because he did not want me to work, we had to do without.

I developed panic attacks but at the time I didn't know that was what the problem was. I became jittery, afraid and I would usually start crying. One night, during an attack I decided to put the two of you to bed early but first I put you and Tracey in the bathtub together. The phone rang but when I answered it, I couldn't hear who was on the other end because you and Tracy were fighting and screaming. I slammed the bathroom door shut so that I could hear the person who had called but when I slammed the door some plaques had fallen off the wall and broken into a thousand pieces. I hung up the phone, stomped into the bathroom and slapped you across the face. Immediately your nose began to bleed and the tub water turned red. To this day I have never felt such horror and remorse for what I had done. I put the two of you to bed, went outside, stood in the dark under a tree and cried like I had never cried before. How could I do that to my precious angel? I will never forget that day which truly was one of the worst of my life.

In the summer of 1977 I started working at the glass factory to help pay the bills. You were ready to start kindergarten and I hated leaving my children with sitter. I did not want to miss those crucial times in your lives. I missed a lot of work days going to school functions, PTA meetings, or because one of you might be sick. I look back at those years and I do not know how I managed to work forty hours a week, take care of two children, a home and a husband. I don't remember sitting down and putting my feet up much in those days. I prepared meals, helped with homework, cleaned the house, washed clothes and took you to dance classes, volleyball practices, and games. I did it without any help from your dad whatsoever.



I did these things for you and your sister. I did them to give you a better life than what I had. I wanted you both to have everything I had wanted that when I was young. I was giving you the life that I never had. My family was poor and we didn't have many toys or new clothes to wear. My parents couldn't afford dance classes or sports. My Mom was always attending to the care and needs of my six younger siblings and didn't have time to help with homework or to sit and talk with me. I made sure that you had all of that and quality time together.

Lisa Dance, 1978

We had some really good times together. We took trips to the zoo, Six Flags, museums and



Lisa Pom Pom Squad, 1990

parks and trips to visit Gramma and Grampa two or three times a year. We always made those trips fun. The trip to California was wonderful. I had asked your Dad to go but he wasn't interested. The three of us hopped on a train in St. Louis and headed for San Diego. It took two days to get there but we didn't care because the journey was so much fun. We spent two weeks at Aunt Lexa's

house where she and her family were wonderful hosts. They took us to Disneyland, San Diego Wild Animal Park, Universal Studios, Sea World and to the beach. I will never forget that trip and hope that you and Tracy won't, either.



*California Trip
Disneyland 1984*

Unfortunately we had to go back to reality. Your Dad and I had fought before we left because he didn't want us to go. When we returned, he was still angry with me for quitting my job to stay home with the two of you. He was making good money by that time and I felt we could afford for me to stay home. After we returned my relationship with your Dad went from bad to worse and I had decided to leave him. I gave you the option to go with me or to stay with him. You were thirteen and involved in so much at your school, and

if you went with me you would have to transfer to a new school. You chose to stay with your Dad and Tracy went with me. I know now that I wasn't thinking clearly and that I was making bad decisions. I didn't realize that I was in a state of clinical depression. The scatterbrained decisions that I was making were hurting me and hurting my children. I felt especially lost after Tracy went to live with you and your Dad and then you both quit talking to me. You refused to see me or talk to me on the phone. I was confused and in so much emotional pain. I wanted the pain to go away but couldn't see any way of that happening. I picked up a bottle of pills and took every last one. Somewhere in my mind I hoped someone would find me and thank goodness they did.

My recovery was long and painful. I had started seeing a therapist and finally understood what had been happening to me. I didn't like me. I didn't like my life and I didn't like the example that I was setting for my children. I found out that I couldn't change your Dad but I could change the direction of my life and I could definitely change me. All of my life I had been living with someone who controlled me and had called me stupid. Your Dad seized every chance he could to point out my faults and to make fun of me. He had abused me in so many ways. I needed to find out who I was. I went to my therapist once a week for three years. It was difficult and sometimes painful but I forged ahead until I could see a light at the end of the tunnel.

There were two people standing in that light and that was you and your sister. I was fighting for my life and I was fighting for yours. I went to cosmetology school, started a new career and established a business. I was determined to get my girls back in my life and to get them to trust me again and want to spend time with me. During this time, your Dad invited me to go on vacation with the three of you. I was hesitant but knowing that I would be with my girls for two weeks was all I needed to convince me. When the three of you arrived to pick me up for the trip it was the first time I had seen my two beautiful daughters in almost six months. We cried happy tears. You sat in the back seat and talked non-stop while catching me up with your life.

Your voice was music to my ears. Tracy sat in the front seat between your Dad and me with her arm wound through mine. She seemed not to want to let go of me and I was in heaven.

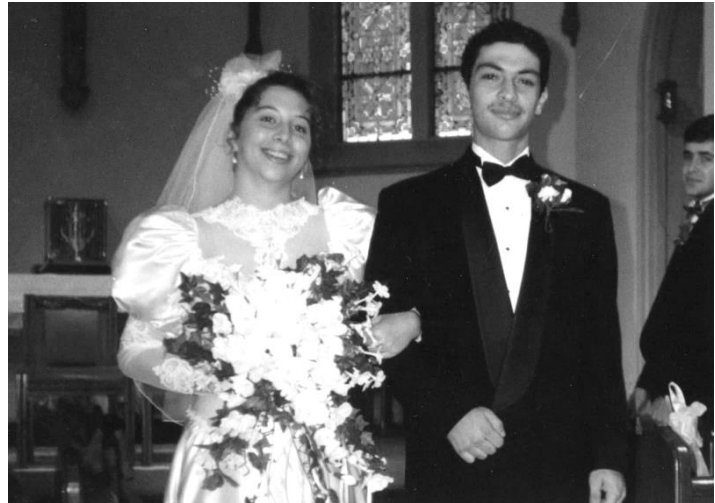
it was a great trip! We went to Washington D.C., New York City and Philadelphia. It was sort of a history lesson, but a fun lesson. I knew that I had made the right decision to go along. On the last day of the journey everyone was quiet not because we were tired but because your Dad had asked me to come back to live with all of you and I hadn't given an answer. When I said that I would move back home, you squealed with joy and Tracy jumped into my arms and hugged me tight. My decision to go back to live with you girls and with your Dad was for one reason only. I knew that you needed me and I certainly knew that I needed you. I thought that this was the only way I could keep you in my life. It was a sacrifice that I felt I had to make.

Your Dad and I had several long talks about what we both expected from each other and what we both wanted as a family. Many compromises and promises made. I felt like I could live happily under the same roof with him if we both tried to respect each other. I tried very hard to make a good life for all of us. Everything was going well but then slowly and surely our lives started drifting right back where they had been before. Like before, I drifted back into being

what your Dad wanted me to be instead of being the person that I was meant to be. I didn't realize this for a few years. I had managed to delude myself into believing that we were a happy family. I was taking care of my girls and making sure that they were living their lives to their full potential ... happy and well-adjusted. I was refusing to believe that my personal life was becoming a train wreck.

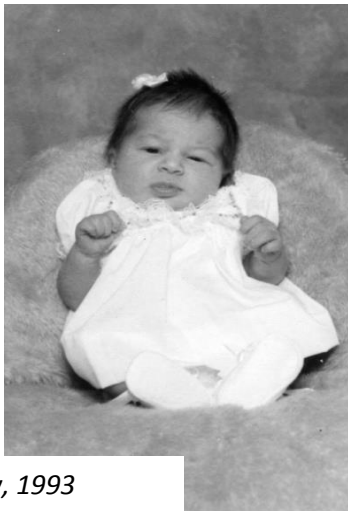
I loved watching you and Tracy blossom into sweet, smart and beautiful young ladies. Your high school years were filled with sports, boyfriends, homecomings, proms and lots of friends coming and going at our house. There were trying times but when all was said and done, I knew we had made it through with flying colors.

I commend you on choosing such a fine young man as Jacques to be your boyfriend then husband. He turned out to be the best thing that has ever happened to you. When he joined the navy I knew you would eventually be leaving home to be with him and you did. You had such a beautiful wedding. I cried that whole day but it wasn't just because you were getting married, but because you were moving away. I knew you were exactly where you wanted and needed to be.



Lisa and Jacques' Wedding Day, 1992

Four months after you were married you called to tell us that you were pregnant. Your Dad, Tracy, and I were outside shovelling snow after a huge storm when I went in to answer the



Kelsey, 1993

phone. You were so happy and excited and so was I. I yelled out to Tracy and your Dad that you were going to have a baby. Your dad threw his snow shovel as hard as he could and expletives came flying out of his mouth. He was not happy at all. Tracy and I were ecstatic. Your Dad eventually accepted that you were having a baby but I could never figure out why your pregnancy angered him like it did.

Early in the morning of October 21, 1993 you called me, very excited to tell me that you were in labor. I was supposed to fly to Virginia in a couple of days to be with you when you gave birth but the baby decided to show up a week early. Tracy and I waited close to the phone all day pacing like expectant fathers. When Jacques finally called early that evening, we could hear that baby girl's cries

in the background. It was one of the sweetest sounds that I have ever heard. Finding out she was a girl made the news even sweeter.

I took my first plane ride to greet my new granddaughter, Kelsey Marie. She was the first and only thing that I saw when I walked off the plane. I didn't see you or Jacques. All I could see was this tiny little mirror image of you. At that moment, which will forever be etched in my heart, I was suddenly gazing at an extension of myself. She was a part of me.

I bonded with Kelsey right away. It sounds cliché but we had a wonderful connection. When she was six months old I asked you to put the phone up to her ear after we had finished talking. Of course she didn't know what the sound was or who it was but I was determined for her to learn my voice. We lived so far away and I didn't want her to forget me or act strange when we did see each other. Each time you and I phoned each other, we would finish the conversation by your putting the phone to her ear. A few months later she started "talking" back to me. There were times this was the only reason that I called you and eventually Kelsey and I could carry on our own little conversations. My plan worked. She always knew who I was and never acted strange with me.

Being a mother came naturally to you. Kelsey was a happy contented little girl and I knew you were in your element as a mom. You handled it well when Jacques went on his six month tours of duty and left you and Kelsey alone. I remember on one of his tours you decided to come home to visit. You had decided to drive from Virginia to Missouri all in one shot. I tried to talk you into flying or at least taking two days to drive but you insisted you would be alright. I waited nervously and was so excited to see you and the baby. When you drove into the driveway I ran out and flung the car door open only to find Kelsey with your bra wrapped around her head. I laughed and tried to untangle her while you explained that Kelsey had become crabby during the last couple of hours of the trip. You gave her all kinds of things to occupy her time then finally took off your bra while driving and handed it to her. You said it oddly kept her quiet for the rest of the trip.

This was also the trip you came to be with us for Christmas. I knew this holiday would be difficult for you and Kelsey without Jacques. It was decided that we would do everything that we could to make it a great Christmas for Kelsey and to try to ease your lonesomeness for as best we could. You had a few sad moments while watching Kelsey open her gifts and I am sure a few private ones too, where you had to fight the tears but I was very proud of you for being so strong.

After Jacques' transfer to Florida, you found out you were pregnant again. It was exciting news for me but sadly I was the only one who found it to be happy news. Your Dad and his mother were upset because they had the strange opinion that you should only have one child. Tracy wasn't unhappy for you but she was envious because she had been told she may never get pregnant. As with your pregnancy with Kelsey, everyone eventually warmed up to the idea.

A few months into the pregnancy you called me in hysterics. You had been to the doctor after a routine hCG blood test that is done in the first trimester. The doctor told you it had come back abnormal and that there was a strong possibility that the baby you were carrying could have Down's Syndrome, spina bifida, or other chromosomal abnormalities. My heart sank and I cried right along with you. Your doctor recommended an amniocentesis to find out what was going

on with our little one. It was a risky procedure and even if your baby had a problem, you would love it anyway. You needed to know so that you could prepare yourselves. The amniocentesis showed that the screening had given a false positive and also indicated the sex of the baby. You were going to have another girl. I do like boys but another little girl made me very happy. A few months later sweet little Madelynn was born.

Around the time that Madelynn was born, I began to realize how unhappy I still was in my marriage. I was terribly lonely. I knew the drawbacks of being married to a truck driver but even when he was home, I was still alone. His obsession with car racing and drinking beer seemed more important to him than spending time with me. Your Dad didn't have a clue what kind of person I was, what my interests were or that I felt abandoned. For many years I had tried to convey my thoughts and feelings to him but he didn't seem to listen. I was not a priority.



Madelynn 1998

My entire life had been about raising my children and I didn't have that any more. You and my beautiful grandchildren lived so far away and Tracy didn't seem to have any time for me. She was wrapped up in her husband and his family. Loneliness can be all consuming and overwhelming. Even though I had always felt that you and I could talk about anything, I didn't want to burden you with my sadness and I didn't think that there was anything you could do to help. I'm so sorry. I wish I had talked to you.

I had confided to you and Tracy that I was planning to leave your Dad. You both said you understood why but that you didn't understand why I hadn't left him sooner. I didn't want to tell you that my decision to come back to him before was for you and your sister. After I told your Dad that I was leaving him, he tried everything that he could think of to keep me there. He made promises that I knew he wouldn't keep. When he saw that he could not persuade me to stay, he tried to manipulation again. He told you that I had lost my mind and that I needed professional help. I cringe when I think of the lies that he told you to get you to believe that he was the victim.

The last night that I spent in that house with him was a nightmare. I was sleeping in the guest room when he came in late. He flung the door to the bedroom open, stood there and stared at me. I could tell that he had been drinking. He stood there for at least 10 minutes and never uttered a word. When he finally closed the door, I thought he had gone to bed. I was wrong.

The next think I knew, he came back in to the room, jumped up on the bed, sat on me and pinned my arms above my head. I was crying, begging him to get off of me and let me be but he wasn't listening. The pressure of his sitting on my chest was causing me to gasp for air and I was so afraid that he was going to kill me. One hour, then two hours passed and he was still sitting on me. Every once in a while he would put his hands in my hair, grab on to it and jerk my head up and down. I could feel clumps of hair being pulled out of my head. After another hour had passed, I could tell he was getting sleepy until he finally rolled off of me and went into the other

room. I heard him climb into bed and it wasn't long I could hear him snoring. That's when I quietly got up, grabbed a suitcase from the closet, threw in some clothes, and I left. it was four-o'clock in the morning but I knew that I needed to get out of there quickly.

The next morning when I called to tell you that I was no longer at the house, you were very cool to me. I told you what had happened overnight and you told me that you didn't believe me. You had been a witness to his physical abuse of me before but he had already called you and manipulated you into believing I had a mental breakdown. I had no recourse but he had won.

A few months after that horrible night, you and Tracy decided that you didn't want me in your lives anymore. I was devastated. I'm still devastated. Please tell me what I can do to make this nightmare go away. I'm desperate and I am begging you to talk to me. Do you not know how much love I have for you, your sister and your daughters? Why can't you see that I am the victim here, not your dad?

Love you and miss you so much,

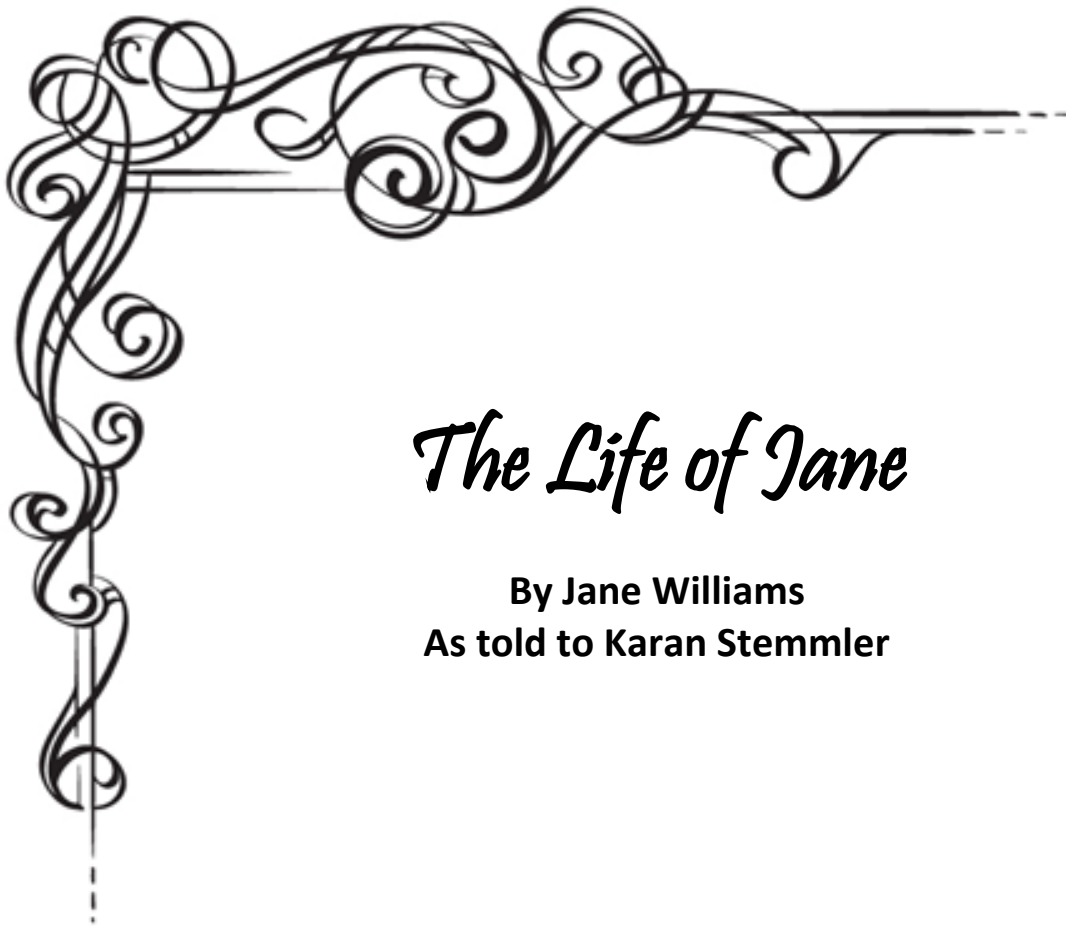
Mom



Happier days



Carla was born and raised the St. Louis Missouri area where she owned and operated a beauty salon. She tried many careers, including property tax assessor, before moving to Canada and Brantford in 1999. In 2001, she married her husband, Ed and for the next five years, worked at the most rewarding job of her life, assisting special needs students who were transported to and from school. She feels very fortunate to have three step children and five grandchildren who give her much love and joy. Carla enjoys reading and cross stitching and travels whenever possible.



The Life of Jane

**By Jane Williams
As told to Karan Stemmler**

I wonder if a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis feels like I did when I opened my eyes and scanned the room? Unfortunately, I never got to spread my wings and fly.

My name is Jane. When I attended Resurrection School I had a great teacher named Miss N. Laukys who encouraged me to be interested in English. I studied journalism at Humber College and I had hoped to write a memoir. Since I spend a big part of each day reminiscing I've decided to share my memories. Here goes.

While thinking about my friends from my childhood I yearn for the freedom that being a child gave me. We too quickly grow up and lose that feeling. Paula, Melinda, Jennifer, Anne and Kristin were all a part of that time. We had fun and we had our times of bickering, but they were my friends. We did the usual things most girls did back then, but nothing very athletic. I was never into sports stuff.

I fondly recall my mother holding Tupperware parties in our rec room on Coachwood Road, which is where I lived most of my life. Dad and my brother Jimmy still do. At these parties we would play inane games and act silly. Remembering this now makes me giggle.

One winter our family tried cross country skiing at Apps Mill and to my recollection we enjoyed the day. We also spent time that season playing outside in our yard building snowmen and making forts out of big round balls. On one particular day when we came into our house to warm up, we savoured the aroma of shortbread cookies which Mom was baking. Obviously Christmas was on the way. Mom wouldn't let us eat those fancy cookies but she did give us Rice Krispy's squares and we devoured them. Kids do love them don't they?

We celebrated Christmas in the Williams' home with an artificial tree that we adorned with pretty lights and mostly store bought ornaments. The result was nice and every year we'd have a similar version for our tree.



Jane with her dad, Jim

Beneath it our gifts to each other were an interesting mix of shapes and colours. Our Family drew among the kids and on Christmas morning we would be excited to see if your choice of a present was well received. Of course we all wanted to open what Santa had delivered, and Mom and Dad's gifts too. We knew that Santa had been there because the pile was larger than it had been when we admired it before going to bed the night before.

After opening our gifts we would get a board game started. If one of us had been given a new one that day we would play it, but I enjoyed Trivial Pursuit, Mind Fresh and Cranium. Monopoly lived up to its name by monopolizing the day if it was selected.

Our meal was a fantastic mix of turkey with traditional bread stuffing; even though Mom was French Canadian, we never had the pork-based *tourtiere*; parsnips, mashed potatoes with gravy and some sort of fancy salad. The aroma of all of these foods wafted through the house, teasing us with the anticipation of actually eating them. There were a few desserts to choose from as well. When I did get to the table I relished the feast.



Jane's mother, Collette

On Boxing Day we would enjoy a ham and scalloped potato meal then load into our vehicle for the drive over to Simcoe to see the Panorama of Lights. As we walked through the park admiring the light displays we'd sing carols and sip our hot chocolate drinks. Sometimes we would be so cold we'd start whining, but usually it was a tradition we absolutely enjoyed, and I recall longingly.

Another good memory I have is of going to Roller Town with my brother Vince. We would skate to popular music of that time. I have an eclectic taste in music. I enjoy listening to Michael Bublé, Keith Urban (who is SEXALICIOUS, and yes I made up that word to describe him), Johnny Cash, The Eagles, The Stones, and Olivia Newton John. I used to dance myself silly while singing

along with Olivia and John Travolta as they sang *Greased Lightning*. I think Gwen Stefani is good now that she is on her own.



Mr. G. DeFrancisco was another memorable teacher I'd had at Resurrection School and he inspired me to do well. I was always a good student, even valedictorian in grade eight. My autograph books from that year have comments from classmates and teachers saying that they are going to miss my laughter in the hallways at the school, but some write that they can't wait to hear my laughter at St. Johns in September. I cannot remember doing a lot of laughing in high school but I completed my secondary education and was accepted at Humber College

I found an apartment on Roncesval Avenue in Toronto and although my Dad was sad to see me leaving, he accepted my choice. I have always been "My Daddy's Girl" and he worried about me. My Mom had died some time before this. I have never driven so public transportation was my mode of travel. I would take the subway then a bus to my classes. During that

Jane, Grade 8 Valedictorian

time I had a piercing done in my left nostril and Dad had a a music store and I had own money. I have music, so that was an graduated from college Mexico. I found myself an operator. I did not knew that it would be journalism and there I informing people that they must pay their balance owing or it would go to collections. It made me feel bossy and tough, and that certainly was not me.



Jane shows off her new piercing.

had a piercing done in my left fit! I was working party-time at paid for the piercing out of my already stated that I really like interesting time. When I I moved to Sante Fe, New work at a collection agency as like the duties involved but I temporary. I had a degree in was working on the telephone

Sante Fe was a very hot, dry place. I did not like the heat and I yearned for Canada. I made it back to Ontario to other employment that was still not what I wanted. I had hoped to work as a journalist, but that was not to be.

I had an episode that put me in a coma and my recovery had been long and partial. I have a large amount of time every day to think about things now. I revive event with a certain amount of humour. The other day I told my friend Karan about an incident I'd had in grade school. For some unknown reason I tried to cartwheel over a railing on an icy day, and I was not successful! Can you imagine that? My ankle turned from colour to colour as it healed and I had to hobble along on crutches. Now as I sit here I think I'd give up my leg just to be able to hobble at all: and I laugh at the macabre thought.

I find myself impatient and easily distracted by noise. I used to love to read mysteries and dramas. Now I am entertained with the T.V. *Criminal Minds* is my vice, but as with too much of anything, that wears thin. I have a lot of music videos playing and when I hear the SEXALICIOUS Keith Urban singing, believe me I cannot be distracted – not even when I overhear something interesting, and normally I find eavesdropping very interesting indeed.

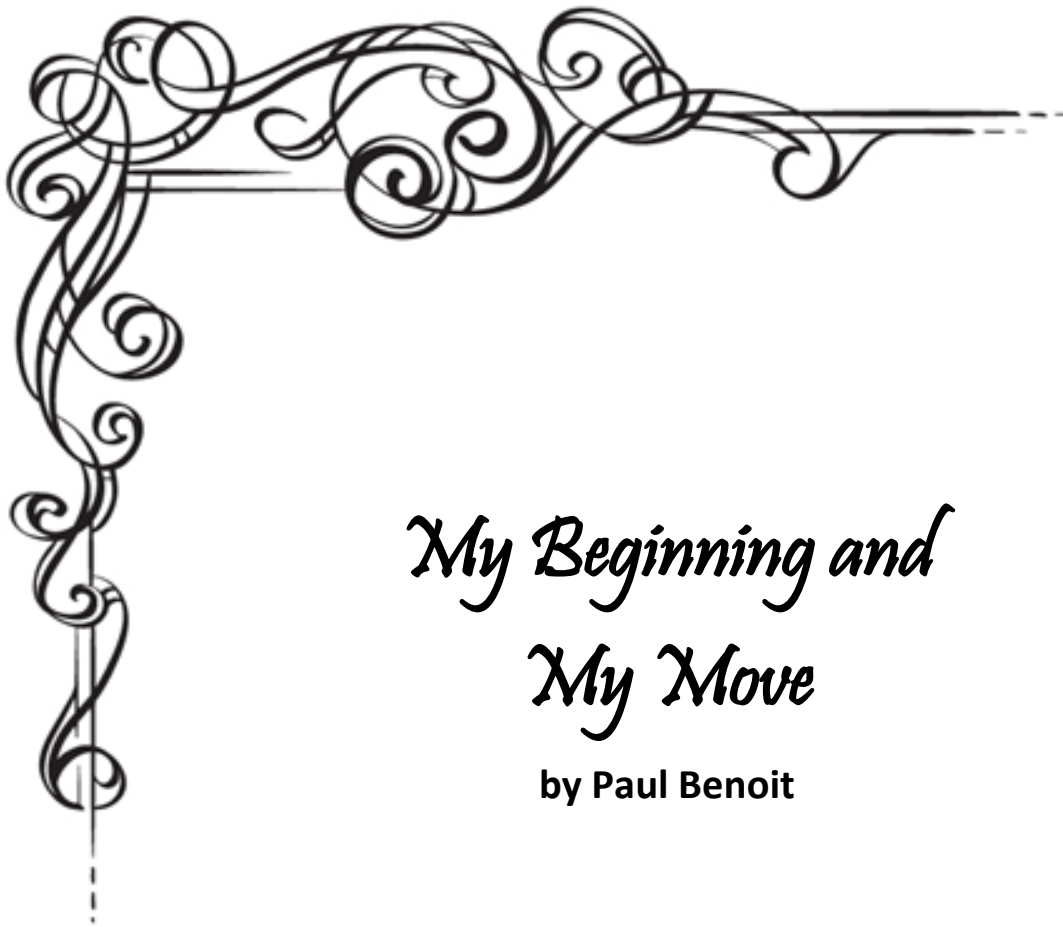
Life isn't what it was, but it is what it is. I may not be able to walk now but I can certainly laugh and I frequently do. Laughter makes me feel good inside and I like to share it. Maybe I'll sing *Hopelessly Devoted* and imagine that I sounds as good as Olivia did.

Now that makes me laugh!



Jane Amber Williams is 41 years old. She is the daughter of Jim and the late Collette Williams. Jane has three brothers and four sisters with whom she shared her childhood. She is still her “Daddy’s Girl” and she know that her Dad is “the best Dad in the world”.

Karan M. Stemmler has written four memoirs for Lifescapes anthologies, and when Jane mentioned that she had always hoped to write her story, immediately told her: “I think I can help you with that!”



My Beginning and My Move

by Paul Benoit

My Beginning

I have cerebral palsy, also known as C.P.

It affects the brain. There are all kinds of C.P. Not everyone that has C.P. is affected the same.

Most are born with C.P.; I was not. Mine developed in a hospital when I was two years old. I had gone to the hospital to have my ears straightened, and while I was in the hospital something happened. I stopped breathing for a few moments and when I was resuscitated I had C.P.



Baby Paul

I went to a special school from grades 1-6 and then to a regular high school from grades 7-10. Some of the students there made fun of me because they didn't know what to think of the wheelchair. I eventually got used to it and ignored them.

I lived in a residence while in school, staying there during the week and coming home on the weekend.



Paul and classmates.

On snow days we went to the Gym to play hockey. I was on a wheelchair hockey team in school called the Wheelers. We won a few, we lost a few. I remember we lost one game 17-2.

Sometimes in the evening we went swimming in the pool on the first floor. There were four floors in the building. On the first floor was the pool and maintenance, on the second floor was the residence and a small kitchen, some classes and the Snake Pit (a gymnasium). On the third floor were classes and the main dining room and a gym where we played hockey and different games. On the fourth floor there was a nurse's station, a Physiotherapy place, and more residential space. At first the boys lived on the second floor and the girls were on the fourth. Eventually we were moved together on the same floor.

After I graduated I worked at a workshop for a few years. I was also on a bowling team. It was 10-pin bowling – once I got a 7-10 split.

In 2004 I tried out a group home for a bit but I didn't like it there, because they put me to bed at 6:30 p.m. and got me up at 9:00 a.m. So I told them I didn't like it and I went to my parents for a bit a little while.

Once I had to go to the hospital because I was throwing up blood and we didn't know what was wrong. The doctor told my parents I was bleeding internally. I needed three units of blood. The doctor said I was lucky I got there when I did. I was there for a few days. One night while I was sleeping I had a vision of gates opening and angels surrounding my bed and telling me to get better.

Soon after that someone called me to tell me there was a spot open at Participation House. It wasn't a simple move, like from one home to another, but rather from one province to the other. I packed everything I had! For 31 years I lived in Quebec until I was given this opportunity

to move to Ontario.

My Move

My brother-in-law drove my stuff to Ontario the day before I left Quebec with my parents. When we got to Ontario we spent that night with my sister and her family because it was such a long drive.

The next day my parents and I left with us in one car and my sister in another car to go to Participation House ... although when my sister put her flasher on to turn, my parents turned on to the wrong road going to John Noble Home instead.



Welcome to Brantford

When I finally got to Participation House the staff said someone told them I only spoke French. I told them they were wrong – in English. We did lots of stuff there.

After a couple of years there I said I want to move out. I'd heard there were apartments.

First myself and a couple of other people went to visit the apartments to see what they were like. The three of us went to different apartments on the

different floors. I met Vickie who showed me her place and explained a bit about how everything worked. She told me that some people had their groceries delivered. I said I'd like to live there.

On December 1st 2004 I moved to the apartments. At first I felt lonely because I didn't know anyone and I wanted to go back but eventually I got to know people and have been there for ten years.

In 2006 I started to have deep feelings for Vickie. Since 2011 we have been living side by side in our individual apartments on Colborne Street.

You all remember I talked a bit about the camp I went to? I'm ending my story talking about the camp a little more.

I went to camp from age 8 to age 32. One thing I remember is having signed up for a lake swim. We would get on a boat and they would bring us to one end of the lake, and we were supposed to swim back to camp. I made it halfway then I had to stop and get back on the boat because I was too cold. Plus I had scraped my foot on the way off the boat before and it was too sore to

continue. I was fine, though.

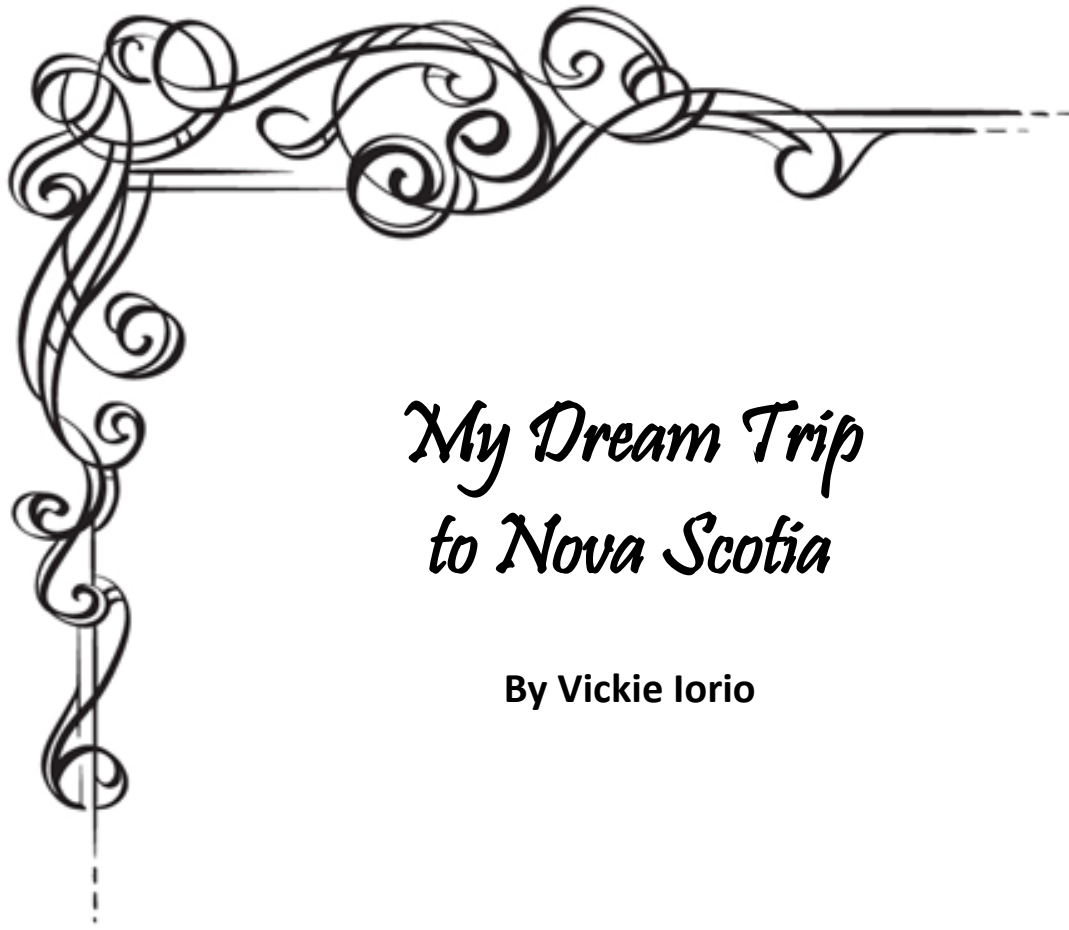
Once we went to see wrestlers, not big names but it was fun. We had a superhero named Super Zuzu who couldn't fly but he tried anyway. It was so funny! His arch nemesis was Dr. Slime; he was so gross.

One time I went for a swim at 6:30 a.m. even though the water was very cold.

On my last day of camp two councillors took me out of bed brought me down to the lake and threw me in. I was laughing and fighting with them all the way down and I know it was so funny to see. I got even with them, though, by making them dance around and sing "The Lion Sleeps Tonight" – but only because it was the last day and they didn't have time to get thrown in the lake too.



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



My Dream Trip to Nova Scotia

By Vickie Iorio

I have always heard that Nova Scotia's scenery is beautiful and the people are friendly, and in 2014, after saving for four or five years, I finally had enough money for my dream vacation. I was so excited that I spent the two to three months before the trip making plans. My friend Doreen and I would be in Nova Scotia from July 14th to July 21st.



*Vickie, ready to fly at the Hamilton
International Airport.*

I couldn't sleep the night before leaving.

I took the small Participation House van to the Hamilton Airport, arriving at 10:30 a.m., although our flight was at 1:00 p.m. I was able to board the plane first and had a seat by the window. With the help of Doreen and a flight attendant, I was transferred to the airplane seat.

After all the time planning, I couldn't believe I was actually going!

We felt a few bumps here and there as we climbed above the clouds. I was given earplugs so that I could watch TV. When we got to the airport in Halifax, I was the last passenger off the plane. We had a van take us to the Radisson Hotel in downtown Halifax. The van was like the ones used to take the war veterans home. The Hoyer lift and shower chair were already at the hotel. I had a big bed to myself and could see all kinds of flags blowing outside of my window. We ate dinner in the Radisson Hotel dining room.



"Lest We Forget" van and driver.

The first morning, we had breakfast in our room and then went to the tourist place to get more information about things to do and places to see. We walked along the harbour where there were many little gift shops and restaurants. I ate a hamburger and fries at Murphy's on the boardwalk. I remember that I could not stop smiling. The seagulls screeching and the fishy smell told me that I was really there in Nova Scotia! That afternoon we visited the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic and had a wonderful dinner at the Wooden Monkey. On Wednesday, July 16th, we rented a van for the afternoon to see Peggy's Cove. Even though it was really foggy and cold, the Cove was so beautiful. There was an art shop where you could purchase watercolour paintings. I bought a painting from a man who now lives in Peggy's Cove. That night we had a late supper before returning to the hotel.





Getting some sun at the Halifax Public Gardens.

Above: Cold, foggy, and beautiful. Vickie strikes a pose in front of the famous lighthouse at Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia.

Right: Vickie and Doreen at Peggy's Cove, dressed for adventure in the brisk sea air.



watch. We took the bus back. When we got back to the Radisson Hotel, we went to the bar for dinner.



Ontario, I was really tired and ready to get home.

On the fourth day of our trip, I celebrated my birthday. First, Doreen and I strolled along the boardwalk. In the afternoon we took the ferry to Dartmouth where we toured the art gallery. That night we had a wonderful lobster dinner at the Blue Nose. For dessert I had a special birthday cupcake with a candle in it.

The next day we went to the Public Gardens which were lovely and close to the water. Doreen did my nails as we sat amongst all of the beautiful flowers. Later, we spent some time at the National Museum of History. The Museum had an interactive display about wildlife where you could hear the different sounds. That evening we went to an outdoor theatre to watch Sandra Bullock's *Gravity*.

On Saturday I took the city bus for my first time. The driver took the time to make sure that I was buckled in correctly before leaving. We travelled to the Halifax City Centre where we did some shopping. We got our hair done and printed our pictures. I also bought a new

On our last day we went to

church in the morning. Being the warmest day of our trip, we relaxed for a while on the boardwalk. That evening we went to see the movie *Tammy*.

Vickie at the National Museum of History.

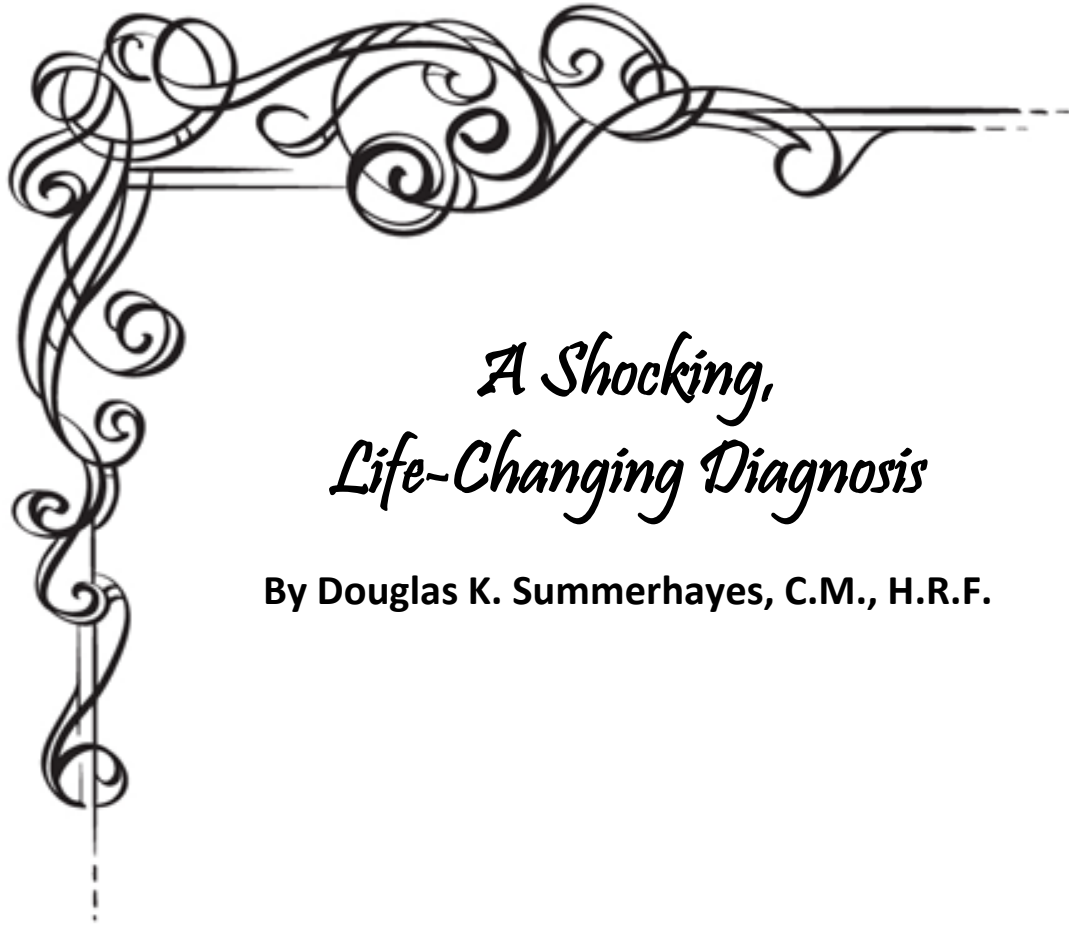
It was sad to think that our trip had come to end but I will never forget the wonderful experiences we had. Monday morning we took the same van back to the airport and said our good-byes to Nova Scotia. While we waited for our flight, we ate at another restaurant. Again I was the first passenger on the plane. We had an hour in the sky to reflect on our journey to Nova Scotia. Back in Hamilton,

Vickie on the city bus. My lifelong dream had finally come true!



Vickie on the boardwalk.

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.



A Shocking, Life-Changing Diagnosis

By Douglas K. Summerhayes, C.M., H.R.F.

"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Foreword

It was March 1958. A mere four years after the birth of our second daughter, Pamela.

We sat in a small cubicle/room at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, imagining all sorts of terrible possibilities while waiting for the doctor to come tell us what was wrong with our dear baby girl. None of our imaginings prepared us for what we were about to hear.

Dr. Collins-Williams entered the room, sat down and solemnly greeted us by saying, "Your daughter Pamela has a disease called Cystic Fibrosis. It is a rare, fatal disease that we know very little about and for which little can be done to treat her."

After we got over the shock of this news, we asked the obvious question: "How long will she live?"

He replied, "A few months, maybe a few years, but not very likely long enough to go to school. You are fortunate she has lived to the age of four. Just take her home and keep her comfortable for as long as she may live."

This diagnosis stunned us, and we left the hospital with our little daughter and cried all the way home. Once the shock had subsided, we decided to take our daughters, Pamela and Heather, age six, for a wish trip to a dude ranch in Arizona. We left just after Christmas Day 1958 and spent New Year's Eve and 5 days in January 1959 enjoying precious family time at the ranch.

Diagnosis

Pamela was a sickly child and did not thrive well. Our family doctor had been unable to diagnose the underlying problem and finally referred us to a paediatrician, Dr. T. Emmett Cleary, who had recently come to practice in Brantford. An appointment was made for Pam to see him; he immediately suspected what the problem was and straight away arranged for us to take her to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto to have her illness diagnosed. That was March 1958, the same month as her birth – four years earlier. Pamela was diagnosed as having Cystic Fibrosis, a rare genetic disease that was fatal and left little hope of her living beyond six years of age.

Shortly after Pam's initial diagnosis, her paediatrician, Dr. Emmett Cleary, asked if we would participate in a genetic study with Dr. Irene Uchida, a geneticist at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto. Dr. Douglas Crozier, a paediatric clinic specialist who was treating children diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis, had persuaded her to study the sweat from these children and their extended families. To the best of our knowledge it was the first study of its kind being undertaken anywhere in Canada. We agreed to participate, and met them both in Dr. Crozier's office the following week to start the process.

Subsequent to the testing of our children, Dr. Uchida asked us if we could arrange to have each of our living parents, siblings and their children undergo sweat testing, to determine if there were others in the family with a high sodium content (which may indicate the possibility that they carry the gene). The testing was carried out at Dr. Cleary's office in Brantford, with both Donna's and my extended families participating.

After the tests were completed, we had coffee with Dr. Uchida. We asked, "Do you know of any organization in Canada that can provide information and help to families of those afflicted with Cystic Fibrosis?"

"I know of none," she responded.

When we persisted by asking why there wasn't one, her response was simply, "Because no one has started one." She then asked, "Why don't you start one?"

Driving home that evening, we discussed the challenge she gave us and each said to the other, "Why don't we at least try?"

Donna and I had decided to treat Pam and her sister Heather to a special vacation at a dude ranch in Wickenburg, Arizona for the first two weeks in January 1959. We arrived at the Phoenix Airport about midnight and checked into the Camel Back Inn for an overnight stay. The next morning was Sunday, so we looked for a list of nearby churches we could attend. Among the listings of community organizations, we discovered a chapter of a group called the *National Cystic Fibrosis Research Foundation* in the area.

We forgot about going to church, deciding instead to telephone the contact number and speak with the chapter President. We explained, "We are from Canada and our daughter has just been diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis. Do you know where we can obtain information about Cystic Fibrosis and starting a foundation in Canada?"

He suggested, "Call the National Office in Philadelphia and speak to the President, Dr. Wynne Sharples. She will give you the information you are looking for." We thanked him for the information, then prepared to be picked up that afternoon for our fun vacation at the Rancho de Los Caballeros.

Challenged Action

I telephoned Dr. Uchida as soon as we returned home to tell her about our discovery.

"Irene, do you remember what you said to Donna and me when you were doing the sweat tests? I asked if there is an organization to help children and their families when they are diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis and you said you didn't know of one and suggested, why don't you start one?"

Without waiting for a reply, I continued, "Well, on our trip to Arizona we discovered that there is one in the United States called the National Cystic Fibrosis Research Foundation and Donna and I have decided that we are going to start one in Canada!"

"First of all, you are nuts!" said Dr. Uchida. "And secondly, stop yelling."

"Sorry if you think I'm yelling at you," I said, "but I always talk loudly when I'm excited!"

Next, I called Dr. Cleary. "Emmett, Donna and I are going to start a foundation for CF children and their families in Canada and have already spoken to Irene about it!"

"What did she say?" he asked.

"She thinks we are nuts."

He laughed and said, "I think you are too, but I like that kind of nuts!"

"What do you think about the probability of succeeding with such a big undertaking?"

"I don't know," he said, "but I would sure like to see us try."

I knew then that we had some champions on our side. Next step was persuading the medical profession to encourage parents of CF patients to attend a meeting to form an organization providing assistance for understanding and treating their children.

Dr. Cleary and Dr. Uchida joined with Dr. Douglas Crozier to persuade Dr. Laurie Chute, Professor of Paediatrics and Chief Medical Officer at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, to meet with Donna and me. In mid-March 1959, one year after Pam was diagnosed, Donna and I met with Dr. Cleary, Dr. Uchida, Dr. Crozier and Dr. Chute.

After the introductions were complete, Dr. Chute asked, "How do you plan to undertake such a grand task of organizing a National Charitable Children's Medical Health Foundation?" He wanted us to define the purpose and give assurance that the organization would not put undue pressure on the medical profession.

We explained our plan. "We see the purpose of the organization to be: finding information about Cystic Fibrosis and providing it to parents to assist them to better help their children who have been diagnosed. We assure you that we understand this should be done only with the cooperation and assistance of the medical profession, and that we have no intention for it to be more than a volunteer/parent organization working with the medical profession in developing methodology for treatment and research of this terrible affliction.

"The foundation will develop local chapter parent groups to help them understand that they are not alone and provide them with information as it becomes available. Where possible, we will provide assistance to the parents of children diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis, even though at that juncture we have no idea what will be required or appropriate.

"The foundation will undertake to provide the wider public and the medical profession with information about what kind of disease Cystic Fibrosis is, how it impacts children diagnosed with it and their families, spearhead a movement to educate and recruit doctors to establish treatment and research centres, and raise funds to support these programs and undertakings." He gave us very little encouragement and was quite adamant that there was no known cure. His view was that little could be done to treat children afflicted with CF. Therefore, there was no positive future.

He asked, "Why break your hearts and that of other parents by holding out hope that an improvement in treatment may be possible?"

Donna began to weep. "Our hearts could not be more broken than they already are without a future with hope," she said.

Dr. Chute softened. "What do you want to do and how will you do it?"

"We would like to hold a meeting at the Hospital for Sick Children for the parents of patients who have been diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis, and we need your advice and help."

"We will need to contact all the parents of the CF patients and their attending physicians, inviting them to the meeting," he told us. "There are privacy concerns that will prohibit you from obtaining those names. If letters are to be sent, a doctor on staff at the hospital will have to send them on his own letterhead."

"Could our letter be sent with it?"

"I will be prepared to do this," stated Dr. Crozier.

That was when Dr. Chute said, "If you agree to do it in this way, then I will approve a meeting to be held in the hospital auditorium."

The meeting, which I chaired, was set for Saturday May 23rd, 1959. (This happened to be our first-born daughter Heather's 7th birthday and she was a long time forgiving us for not giving her a birthday party with her friends on that day.) More than 120 parents of children diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis showed up, demonstrating the need for such an organization. One couple from Pembroke carried their CF children in their arms.

In April, Donna and I were invited to attend a meeting of the Quebec Cystic Fibrosis Association in Montreal, for the presentation of their Provincial Charter by their President, Mr. Lesley Memess and his wife, Mary. We drove to Montreal to show our support for this significant event. I was asked to speak at the meeting and told the attendees, "We have learned that some parents have formed a group in Halifax and suggested that we should plan to form a national organization. Would your newly chartered organization join in support to forming a Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation?"

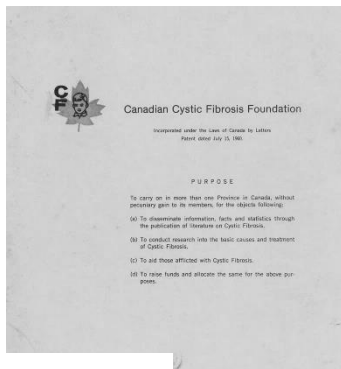
Following my speech, their lawyer presented them with their Provincial Charter of Incorporation as the Cystic Fibrosis Association of Quebec. He spoke about obtaining the charter and what it would mean to them moving forward. However, in his closing remarks he indicated that if they joined with us to incorporate a Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, their charter might become redundant. This proved to be 'not my finest hour' and caused a rift in our relations that took many years to overcome. In spite of the lawyer's remark, Lesley Memess and his brother-in-law attended our May meeting in Toronto to show support for our undertaking.

Moving Forward

In attendance at the May 23rd, 1959 meeting were 125 parents of children diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis. Dr. Crozier, Dr. Uchida, and Dr. Cleary spoke about the need to inform the public and other doctors about Cystic Fibrosis, and about how it was being misdiagnosed and, therefore, not properly treated. Bob Ivey and I spoke about the lack of available information and how distressing it was for families unable to get help understanding the disease and finding treatment for our children.

I suggested that we incorporate a national not-for-profit, charitable children's organization, called the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, for this very purpose. It could also fund treatment centres for those afflicted, as well as establish research centers to pursue the cause and try to find a cure. A motion was made by Mr. Tom McChesney and received overwhelming consent by all present. An interim Board of Directors was elected, consisting of Bob Ivey, treasurer, Dorothy Pernfuss, secretary, Tom McChesney, Dr. Emmett Cleary and me. I was named the first president. Bob Ivey asked those present to give what they could, to defray some of the early expenses.

The first Board of Directors meeting was held at my office in Brantford in early June 1959, where a framework for the Constitution and By-Laws were discussed. It was decided that no more than 15% of any funds donated or collected could be used for administrative management purposes.



Bob Ivey and I were tasked with drafting the By-Laws to be presented at the next meeting later that month. Following their approval, Mr. H. Louis Hagey was engaged to review the By-Laws to make sure they were legally correct. He was told not to change any wording that would alter the meaning or intent of any part of the content. After reviewing, he was instructed to submit them to the Federal Government, along with an application for Letters Patent of Incorporation to incorporate the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis

Cover page of CCFF Bylaws

Foundation. The application for the charter was submitted in mid-July 1959 and the charter was granted one year later – July 15, 1960.

Between the time of submitting the application and the granting of our charter, we were busy organizing everything to make the Foundation function properly. An office was set up in our Brantford home and Donna was the first administrator, despite having to look after our house and three children, one of whom had Cystic Fibrosis and required treatments that took more than two hours each day.

Donna decided we needed to publish a newsletter to communicate on the progress of the work in establishing the foundation, information we received from the NCFRF regarding developments in CF, what was being done to organize chapters of the Canadian Foundation, news of participation by other parents working to promote the development of the organization, and what the Board of Directors were doing to make the foundation become a

reality. She wanted it to provide 'current, up-to-date-facts' and still be candid about the reality of the situation for the parents and their children. Thus, the name became "**Candid Facts.**" Donna was publisher and the first editor. This newsletter still exists today.

The Board of Directors met twice more in June, establishing a list of doctors we would ask to become members of a Medical Advisory Committee for establishing clinical treatment centres, as well as a Research Advisory Committee to advise on the establishment of research centers and approval of funding grants, as money became available. Funding began as six summer student grants of \$800.00 each for medical students who wanted to spend their summer in a research laboratory studying the cause of Cystic Fibrosis. This was a bold, forward-thinking move, considering that in our first year we had a budget of only \$15,000 and did not yet know how, or if, we would be able to raise that amount. It demonstrated the confidence (or naively foolish anticipation) that we would soon be able to find funding for these programs and our on-going operations.

The other big decision from the Board was to ask our treasurer, Bob Ivey, to collaborate with Peat, Marwick & Mitchell, his company's firm of Chartered Accountants, to develop an Imprest Accounting method. This method required all of the funds collected by the chapters or associated organizations and donors to be deposited into a bank account that would automatically be transferred into the bank account of the national office at the end of each month, in order to issue federal charitable tax receipts under one national charitable tax designation number. The chapter would receive operating funds, not to exceed 15% of the funds collected by them each year. This would be returned to them, subject to submission of a proper chapter budget showing how the funds would be spent.

In June 1959 we started following up on correspondence received from parents of CF children and interested doctors, as well as those we met at the May meeting. They lived in various cities in Ontario and I began meeting with them to encourage organization of group meetings that could develop into chapters of the fledgling Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. It was gratifying to see them rise to the challenge by arranging Ontario meetings where I was invited to speak.

At Toronto were Tom and Moira McChesney and Allen and Aileen Studhome. They collaborated with Dr. Douglas Crozier, who became the director of the CF clinic at the Hospital for Sick Children that organized a meeting of parents and started that chapter. At Hamilton it was Callum MacIver, who became National President. In London it was Bob and Marty Ivey and Wally and Betty Dowden. In Brantford, Dr. and Mrs. Elizabeth Cleary and Doug and Donna Summerhayes. In Kitchener, Merlin and Grace Jutzi. In Niagara Peninsula, Cliff and Jean Leavere. In Ottawa, Mr. and Mrs. Douglas Dale, Mr. Harry Brown (who became national president) and Lyle Blackwell (who became National President and founding director of the International Cystic Fibrosis Association). In Kingston it was Frank and Joan Newberry and Dr. Alex Bryans, Chief of Paediatrics and the CF Clinic at Kingston Children's Hospital, Queens University.



Dr. Emmett and Mrs. Elizabeth Cleary invited Donna and I to attend the IX International Congress for Paediatrics in Montreal in July 1959, where we met Dr. Wynne Sharples, President of the National Cystic Fibrosis Research Foundation in the United States, and her husband Dr. Robert Denton. We discussed matters to do with the establishment of their organization, told them of our plans and asked for a collaborative arrangement with them. At the end of the congress, they offered us the display (including a lighted exhibit of a diseased lung) that they had brought to the conference, instead of going through the bureaucratic hassle of returning it to the US. We graciously accepted. This brought about a long and beneficial collaboration that exists to this day.

At the conference, Donna and I saw a piece of medical equipment that a child could sleep in for the treatment of pulmonary problems. It was called a Mist-O-Gen Tent and was manufactured in Oakland, California at a cost of \$2,000 US plus transportation, Canadian duty, and taxes. We were so impressed that we immediately ordered one for our daughter, Pam, at the conference. At that time, the mist tent was deemed to be the most advanced treatment of CF. The foundation board members decided they wanted to find a way to make them available in Canada at an affordable cost. Bob Ivey's company (Emco Brass Ltd.) manufactured brass plumbing fixtures, and they went about designing a mist tent that could be manufactured and sold at a small fraction of the price of the imported Mist-O-Gen unit. This new mist tent was approved by the doctors on the Medical Advisory committee and made available to CF patients.

In September 1959, it was my good fortune to meet Dr. Keith Armstrong, Executive Director of the Canadian Council for Crippled Children and Adults, through a mutual acquaintance. We met several times at his office, discussing plans for establishing a foundation to aid children afflicted with Cystic Fibrosis. He tried to get the Ontario Crippled Children Society to include these children in their organization mandate, which they declined to do as the children did not have a visible physical disability. He then agreed to help with our efforts to establish the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation by collaborating on a plan to meet with groups of people across Canada.

That same September, Donna and I took a four-day trip to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Dr. Douglas Gibbon, a paediatrician treating children with Cystic Fibrosis in St. John, New Brunswick, arranged a meeting of parents, doctors, nurses and other interested people at the St. John Catholic General Hospital. When we arrived, he showed us the posters he had put up all around the hospital, telling everyone that the President of the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, an 'expert' in Cystic Fibrosis, was coming to bring information and to form a chapter! He had also advertised on the radio and in newspapers that the meeting was set for Saturday at 2:00 pm at the hospital.

Parents of CF children came from Fredericton and Moncton, as well as St. John, and decided that a chapter should be started. Mr. and Mrs. Fred M. Blizzard agreed to join with Dr. Gibbon, Mr. and Mrs. Ronald Bemrose from Fredericton, and other parents from the area to spearhead the formation of a chapter in St. John. Dr. Gibbon ultimately became a Regional Director of the CCFF. Fred Blizzard served as a regional director and also became Canadian president from 1972 to 1974.

A reporter by the name of John Land from the St John Telegraph-Journal and The Tribune, both owned by the Irving family, was assigned to report on the meeting. He chose not to attend. Later, though, he had second thoughts (possibly about what might happen to his job if he didn't turn in a news story) so he phoned our hotel room and asked if we would meet him for an interview. We agreed and when he came to the door, I answered.

"May I speak with your father?" he asked.

"Not very likely," I replied, "since he has been deceased for three years."

"May I then speak to Mr. Douglas Summerhayes?"

"You are now," I said.

He looked very confused and surprised at that answer. We invited him into the room, where he started the interview with a lame excuse for not attending the meeting and a profuse apology. "I was expecting someone much, much older, so I avoided going to hear some stuffy old man speak."

Once he took his foot out of his mouth, he became very affable and our interview produced excellent story coverage for the fledgling chapter.

On the move again, we next spoke at a meeting of the Halifax CF Parents Group, telling them about our efforts to start the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and inviting them to become a chapter.

We met with Dr. William A. Cochrane, Professor of Paediatrics at the Halifax Children's Hospital and Dalhousie University, who was also the CF Clinic Director and a member of the CCFF Medical Advisory Committee, Mrs. Freda Vickery, his clinic associate in charge of Physiotherapy and treatment for CF children, who became the Regional Director for Nova Scotia, and a number of parents. We discussed issues involving treatment of children at their clinic and invited them to actively assist the CCFF in adopting similar programs to those in operation at their hospital.

While Donna remained in Halifax, I flew to Sydney in Cape Breton, where I attended a meeting of parents and medical personnel, arranged by Dr. MacLean, regarding the possibility of starting a chapter in that city.

In mid-October 1959, the National Cystic Fibrosis Research Foundation held a two-day conference for its chapters in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and we were invited to send representation. Bob and Marty Ivey and Donna and I agreed to attend. As we were checking into the hotel, a number of other attendees learned we were from Canada.

Some of them inquired: "Will there be a Canadian hospitality room this evening?"

"There sure will be," Bob replied.

We then decided that instead of getting two separate rooms, we would get a two-bedroom suite. It became the conference hospitality suite and hosted more than 100 people that evening and the next. That first night, we only had one bottle and one flask of Rye whiskey and the same amount of Scotch with us for the whole evening. Needless to say, we went through an awful lot of mix and ice to make it last.

Talking to the chapter members, we learned a great deal about Cystic Fibrosis and how chapters were formed and operated in the United States. This information was of great benefit in helping to form chapters in Canada.

At the conference, we listened to Dr. Leroy Mathews, a doctor from Cleveland, Ohio, speaking about the treatment protocols at the CF clinic and treatment centre at Cleveland's Rainbow Baby Children's Hospital. As the CF clinic Medical Director his approach to treatment was so refreshing and advanced that we each decided to meet with him following the panel discussion and then to take our daughters, Pamela and Karna, to him for treatment. This lasted for about three years until similar centres were established in Toronto at the Hospital for Sick Children under the direction of Dr. Douglas N. Crozier, to which Pamela attended, and at the London Children's Hospital, with Dr. Ecclestone as the director, that Karna attended.

Meeting Government Officials

Shortly after we returned from Philadelphia, Bob and I flew to Ottawa in his Cessna airplane, equipped with pontoons in place of wheels, to meet with Dr. Cameron, the Deputy Minister of Health, his assistant Dr. Ratz, and a Department of Health lawyer. This was to discuss information required for our federal charter to be approved and granted.

We were told that we would need to form (or be in the process of forming) chapters in all, or at least most, of the provinces before our charter could be granted. We must also adhere to the 15% formula set out in the by-laws, regardless of how much or how little money was raised in the early years of operation. With this information in hand we flew home and prepared to comply with their wishes.

Expanding West

We had already met with parents and garnered interest in organizing chapters in Ontario and Eastern Canada so, following our trip to Ottawa, I considered traveling to Western Canada to comply with the mandate given us to establish chapters (or groups of people interested in establishing chapters) in all or most of the Canadian provinces.

Dr. Armstrong provided me with contacts in the medical and social services field. One of these was Dr. Alan Rohr, who was with the Saskatchewan government Ministry of Social Services and Executive Director of the Saskatchewan Crippled Children Society in Regina. He arranged for me to meet with a number of CF parents from Regina in November 1959. A six-day trip was planned to go first to Winnipeg, where Dr. Harry Medovy (Professor of Paediatrics at the University of Manitoba, Medical Director at the CF Clinic at the Children's Hospital of Winnipeg and member of the CCFF Medical Advisory Committee) and Stan & Dawn Green had arranged a meeting of parents and the medical profession at the Children's Hospital. They became the driving force behind establishing the Winnipeg Chapter, with Stan as its first President and Regional Director for Manitoba.

Then, on to Edmonton where Judge Sydney V. Legge and Mrs. Legge arranged an evening meeting at their home with a number of other parents and doctors, including Mr. and Mrs. Alex Marshall. A decision was made to establish the Edmonton Chapter, and Alex became the first President and Regional Director for Alberta. Judge Syd Legge became president of the CCFF from 1970 to 1972.

My western trip ended in Regina, where Dr. Rohr had arranged a meeting at the Regina General Hospital. Arriving at the hotel, I discovered the bottle of rye whiskey that I had in my suitcase had spilled its contents and penetrated the clothes I intended to wear to the meeting. Dr. Rohr arrived at my door just as I was on my knees beside the bathtub trying to salvage some clean clothes to wear. I don't know what he thought, as the room reeked of whiskey.

A significant number of people attended the meeting, including Frank and Barbara Lieir. After some persuasion, Frank agreed to undertake the establishment of a chapter in Saskatchewan and became the first President, as well as Regional Director for the province. He became known as "Mr. CF" throughout Saskatchewan.

First Annual General Meeting

By the end of April 1960, when we held our first Annual General Meeting in Toronto, I had spent a great deal of time and logged many miles traveling across Canada at my own expense. We had established chapters (or were in the process of organizing them) in 18 communities across the country.

These were in Toronto, London, Hamilton, Brantford, Kingston, Niagara, Ottawa, Kitchener, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and North Bay in Ontario; Saint John, New Brunswick; Halifax and Sydney/Cape Breton, Nova Scotia; Winnipeg, Manitoba; Edmonton, Alberta; Regina, Saskatchewan, and Vancouver, British Columbia. We had met the Health Department mandate, and so advised them, in order that they would have the Canadian Department of the Secretary of State office issue the Letters Patent to Incorporate the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation as a not-for-profit children's medical health organization.

Federal Charter Granted

The Letters Patent of Incorporation for the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation was granted on July 15, 1960 and presented to the Board of Directors and members by Dr. John A. Charlton, D.V.M, MP for Brant, at a Charter Night Gala Banquet held in Toronto at the King Edward Hotel on October 1, 1960.



The Next Big Move

At the end of September 1961, the office moved from Brantford to the offices of the Canadian Council for Crippled Children and Adults at the City Park Apartments in Toronto, at the invitation of their Executive Director, Dr Keith Armstrong. We then hired Miss Margaret McGuinness as office administrator and secretary.

In November of that year, Margaret McGuinness and I were going to meet with Cliff and Jean Leavere in Port Colborne to finalize establishment of a chapter in the Niagara Region. Prior to leaving, I learned that Mr. George Barrie, Executive Director of the National Cystic Fibrosis Research Foundation was going to be in Buffalo that same day, and I arranged to meet with him at the Statler Hotel. We had previously conversed by telephone, regarding the possibility of establishing an international organization to bring together all of the Cystic Fibrosis organizations that were in the process of being organized in many other countries in the world. This would provide a forum to coordinate and take mutual advantage of all the treatment methodologies and research being undertaken by the medical profession in these countries. Our meeting proved quite productive, and by 1964 an International Cystic Fibrosis organization became a reality. Mr. Lyle Blackwell, retiring president of the CCFF, became one of the founding directors and Secretary Treasurer.

Late in 1961, negotiations were undertaken with the Health Ministry of the Province of Ontario for provision of medicine and equipment for treatment of children diagnosed with Cystic

Fibrosis. By the time of our AGM, at the end of April 1962, a grant of \$250,000 had been approved. With the help of Dr. Armstrong, arrangements were made with the Ontario Crippled Children Society to administer these funds and provide a program of community nursing services and access to their camping program. Mr. Alan Studholme was appointed to the Board of Directors of the Ontario Crippled Child Society to represent the interests of the CF children and our foundation.

In 1998, collaborating geneticists Dr. Lap Chee Tsui, Dr. Reardon at the Hospital for Sick Children, and Dr. Francis Collins at Michigan University Hospital identified the gene that causes Cystic Fibrosis. This exponentially led to tremendous advancements in the research and treatment of CF – to the point where those afflicted are now able to live a good quality of life into adulthood, with some even living to 60 or 70 years of age.

For more than 50 years, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation (now re-branded Cystic Fibrosis Canada) has attracted thousands of talented, energetic and committed people to make it a leading organization investing in critical research, clinical care and advocacy initiatives, and offering access to medications that improve the health and quality of life for those afflicted with Cystic Fibrosis. The newest initiative is to establish newborn screening in every province and hospital across Canada.

Since that first momentous meeting with the doctors at the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children in March 1959, Cystic Fibrosis Canada has invested more than 150 million dollars into life-saving research and clinical care for those afflicted with Cystic Fibrosis. A new medication called Kalydeco is now under clinical trials and appears to be one of the control medications we have so desperately searched for in all of our research. We are confident that an effective control or cure will be found in the not too distant future.

Honours

Our daughter Heather nominated us to receive the **Order of Canada** for our leadership in establishing the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. Donna was appointed a member in July and invested in October 1987. I was appointed in July and invested in October 1988. These ceremonies were wonderful experiences – being inducted into the Order of Canada by Governor General Madam Jean Sauvé in Ottawa on both occasions.

In April 2010, we were honoured by the presentation of the **Hall of Fame Award** at the 50th Anniversary Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation “in recognition of your long lasting commitment and unfaltering dedication in the fight against Cystic Fibrosis.” We were both subsequently presented with the **Hal Rogers Fellow Award** by the Kin Foundation (Kinsmen and Kinette Clubs) of Canada in May 2013 for our continuing dedication to the CF cause.

Memory!

Our thoughts flood back to that fateful day in March 1958, when we were told that our beloved second daughter Pamela had a terminal illness and would not likely live to go to school. We were told to take her home, keep her comfortable and love her.

We did everything we could to keep her alive. One of the ways we did this was to bring together many parents of children with the same diagnosis, and a number of wonderful, dedicated doctors and medical personnel across Canada, to create a world-class children's health organization, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation (now Cystic Fibrosis Canada). We thank God that we were able to help so many other children, and now adults, to survive and become priceless human beings, able to live a useful life with quality and a foreseeable future.

Pamela lived to be 26 years of age, completing her education as an Early Childhood Educator. In 1975, she started the Three Bears Nursery School with two of her contemporaries, which they ran together for four years.

Pamela died on Labour Day, 1980.

Our Family

Donna and I have lived a very interesting and exciting life together. We travelled extensively on business and as volunteers for various not-for-profit organizations, while at the same time running several businesses and raising our family. We had the good fortune to have four wonderful children: Heather Anne, born in 1952, Pamela Gaye, in 1954, Douglas Gregg, 1956 and Earl Jeffery, 1961.

Heather Anne, our eldest child, graduated from the first Theatre Performing Arts class at Ryerson University and became an actress performing in Toronto, Winnipeg, Calgary, Stratford and New York City. She married actor Leonard Cariou of the Broadway Musical and Stage fame. She then wrote the well-received book *"Sixty Five Roses, A Sisters Memoir"* – a story about growing up with a sister and brother with the terminal illness Cystic Fibrosis and how the family coped with this diagnosis.



The family, 1966. From left to right: Doug, Heather, Pam, Donna, Jeff, Gregg

Douglas Gregg, our elder son, graduated from Sheridan College Law & Security course. He proudly served as an Ontario Provincial Police Officer for 33 years and is now enjoying retirement. He married Janice Fillion and has four sons, Daniel, Brian, Matthew and Scott.

Earl Jeffery was diagnosed with Cystic Fibrosis in 1961. He has lived a storied life as a Blacksmith/Farrier, line worker at Ford Motors Oakville Plant and a White Water Kayak Instructor, Swift Water Rescue Technician and White Water River Rafting Guide. At 54 years of age, he is still paddling kayaks and working on the Grand River guiding rafts.

In 1975, after the children had grown up and left home, Donna was finally able to pursue her long-held desire of a career in nursing, working as a Registered Nursing Assistant (RNA). She then went back to nursing school at the age of 45 and graduated as a Registered Nurse in the spring of 1980, just a few months before the death of our daughter Pamela.



Donna, 1980

Donna and I are very proud of the tremendous progress and accomplishments that Cystic Fibrosis Canada has made, since the momentous occasion when we met with doctors at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children in March 1958. The shocking, life-changing diagnosis we heard that day, led to the formation of what has become a great children's medical health organization.

We thank God that we have lived long enough to see and participate in this fantastic adventure that has helped so many children in Canada and throughout the world.



Things Aren't Always What They Seem

By Vickie Stam

The corridor was long and well lit. I weaved in and out of human traffic without any trouble. I was in a hurry and time felt like it was breathing down my neck. If I made eye contact with anyone, I don't remember. Any evidence of our passing disappeared the moment I stepped through the sliding glass doors to the Emergency Department. I felt a lump rise in the back of my throat when I glanced around the room. I quickly took note of the number of people waiting. Deep down I knew it wasn't unusual for a hospital nestled in a city the size of Hamilton.

I grew up in the Steeltown, a place very dear to me. I like to call it "my stomping ground." For me, navigating my way through the city streets was easy. The sun had gone to sleep a few hours before. It was almost eleven o'clock; not a good time for a woman to be walking alone. I hurried. My purse was tucked close to my side. My right hand fastened to the strap. I could almost feel the eyes in the back of my head wake up and peek through my shoulder length blonde hair. As I walked, I tried to make sense of the conversation I had with my father over the phone.

"Something's wrong," he said.

"What is it, dad?"

"I'm not sure," he replied. His voice sounded full of despair. He never complains, so I knew this was more than a common cold.

"What do you think it is?" I asked him, hoping he would provide me with more details.

"I can't put my finger on it, little girl, but something's definitely wrong."

Those words triggered goose bumps up and down my arms.

"Write my name and number on a piece of paper for the EMS, dad."

"Call 911."

"Do it now!" I said. And I hung up.

The hospital was very familiar to me. My mother spent a few weeks in there before she passed away. In fact, I probably could have walked from my car with my eyes closed. When I stepped through the automatic doors no one greeted me with a smile. There was nothing inviting at all. In that moment I wished my sisters were there with me. I felt so terribly alone. Karen had moved to Prince Edward Island in 2009 right before my mom passed away and Angela had moved to Bala that same year. Neither of them lived close by.

Overtop the chatter I heard someone coughing. It sounded muffled as if their hand was over their mouth in an effort to stave off any germs they might contribute to an already infectious arena. A baby was crying. Pain hung in the air like a dark cloud but none of this distracted me from the mission I was on.

It wasn't long before I found my nephew standing next to my father. His six foot frame towered over the stretcher that seemed to swallow my father's tired body. Melissa was there as well. Seeing both my niece and nephew helped extinguish the feeling that I was on my own.

Chad was holding Dad's wallet in his hand. I couldn't help but wonder if the man I regarded as "my hero" was in serious trouble. He looked far too frail. Not at all like the strong and vibrant man I remembered. My mind was plagued with thoughts of his family history, of a family riddled with heart disease. All I could think about was the artery in his left leg. It had been blocked for months, cutting off his circulation, which in turn changed his skin tone from just above his ankle down, to a not so pretty shade of red. He was already in danger of losing his toes and maybe even his foot. Just two more days and we would have been on route to visit the surgeon.

Please don't take him away from me, I prayed silently. I couldn't imagine losing him. He wasn't anywhere close to a hundred and twenty five years old, the age he preordained for himself. I

pictured his devious little grin and the childlike manner in which he always told me exactly that: "Little girl, I'm going to live until I'm a hundred and twenty-five."

I chuckled inside. And for a moment I wished he was right. At seventy-six years old, he still had a ways to go.

I kept thinking about my mother. If she were here, she would make him open his eyes. She would be the one to beg him not to leave us. I wanted to lean over him and put my ear next to his mouth so I could listen to the sound of his breath going in and out. But I didn't. My attention was suddenly stolen by a small bag lying next to him. It revealed some sort of yellow bile. Vomit.

"I'm here dad," I whispered, but he never responded. I was so focused on him that the walls surrounding us could have been painted fluorescent pink, lime green, or even something as black as coal, and I wouldn't have noticed. Everything around me seemed meaningless. Everything ... except my father.



Mom and Dad, early 1970s

The nurse's fingers pounced on the keyboard the minute she started hurling questions at me. I struck out on the first one. Something as simple as the year and day my father was born proved difficult for me. My mind went blank. After what seemed like a long pause I finally announced, "November 10th, 1935." A few seconds later I was opening my dad's wallet, searching for his health card. I felt like I was trespassing.

The last time I peeked in there I was nine years old. I remember standing on my tip-toes. My father ran his thumb over the end of his tongue and carefully separated each colour-coded bill. I thought he was rich. "Look at all that money," I whispered under my breath. No sooner had the words rolled off my lips but my father quickly closed the vault. My nose was still intact but I soon realized his wallet was private and not something that should concern me.

"Someone will call you when they have your father settled," the nurse said in a pleasant voice. I placed the health card back in dad's wallet exactly where I found it and gently tucked it inside my purse. All that was left for me to do was wait.

When I entered my father's room, I was surprised to find him sitting in a chair. Although it reclined, he was sitting upright with his eyes still closed. I quietly searched the tiny room. There was no call bell to be found. This seemed strange to me. In a soft voice I let him know once again that I was there. He simply muttered, "That's good." A nurse came in and took his blood pressure and temperature and then we waited for the doctor to come in. The minutes ticked into hours. It was ridiculous to say the least. I was growing tired and uncomfortable.

Eventually a doctor wearing a white lab coat walked into the room. His dark framed eye glasses helped him read the lab report. Dad never moved a muscle when he pulled up a chair and sat down in front him.

"Why can't you open your eyes, sir?" he asked, very directly.

"I feel dizzy. Sick to my stomach," my dad replied.

The doctor asked my father to stand up but he couldn't without help and even then he almost toppled over. His balance was way off yet he managed to touch his finger to his nose when he was asked to. But answering questions regarding his day and what lead up to his arrival in the hospital was laced with confusion. Dad couldn't explain why he felt ill or his symptoms really.

"My father needs to be in a bed," I told him.

"He's free to call the nurse whenever he likes. She's just down the hall."

I felt angry when the doctor said that. It was as if he didn't care.

"My father can barely stand up." I said.

The doctor continued to flog him with questions and the conversation suddenly took on a different tone.

"Do you like to drink?" he asked.

"I'm a social drinker."

I'm not an expert in medicine but it didn't take me long to figure out where his line of questioning was leading.

"I'm not an alcoholic, if that's what you're implying." My father looked broken, as if he'd just been robbed of his dignity.

I felt weak in the knees. The question caught me off guard. After the doctor left the room an uneasy silence filled the air. Even though we were not talking much before that moment, we certainly felt the doctor's insulting tone, and this left me wondering about the effects of alcohol on a person. I knew my father like to drink beer but I had no idea just how much.

After more than nineteen hours of sitting in a chair beside my dad, I just wanted someone to admit him and explore all the possibilities for his being ill. I was struggling to make sense of his condition.

A few hours later my father turned an unfortunate corner.

"Karen. It's me," I said, tears streaming down my cheeks. I held the phone tight to my ear. I could feel Karen trying to come to grips with a an early morning call.

Her voice sounded groggy the moment she said "Hello." Waking up to a telephone ringing at 2:30 a.m. would startle anyone.

"Dad's not good," I said. "You need to come home."

"What's happened?" Her voice was suddenly choked with fear.

"He fell in the washroom at the hospital and hit his head. He had a seizure and they had to intubate him."

"I'll be on the next flight out," she said, before the line went dead.

When Karen and Angela arrived at the hospital we embraced each other. A feeling of peace washed over me. All of his "little girls" were finally beside him, waiting for him to get well. He was so heavily sedated that speaking to him only made me cry inside when he couldn't answer.

Eventually my sisters and I demanded the doctors take him off the medication that kept him from waking up. We wanted to speak to him, to hear his voice and know that he was okay. We also requested an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) and we wouldn't take no for an answer. The medical team in charge of his treatment complied with our request and began reducing the medication but it was still three or four days before they sent him for an MRI. In the meantime his speech was not clear. He was slurring his words and the first audible sentence came as quite a shock to us.

"Where is my wife?" he asked, looking around the room.

"She's not here right now" seemed like the only reasonable response. We certainly didn't want to upset him with the news that she had passed away three years earlier. At this point we weren't sure what was going on with him.

The MRI revealed he had suffered a stroke and it wasn't the first one. We finally had an answer. There was evidence of an old stroke, of damage that had been there for a while, although the doctor never said for how long. The more recent stroke affected his frontal lobe. We learned it would take time for him to recover and time before we would know to what extent.

The news left me wondering if a piece of his blocked artery broke off causing the stroke, something I thought wasn't impossible. I was full of questions. Was the fall in the washroom a result of the stroke or did the seizure cause the fall? What caused the seizure? I could hardly wrap my brain around everything that happened. In what order did all of this happen?

When my father was sleeping, us girls ran our fingers through his hair searching for a wound. We found a lump, evidence of his fall. We were told a report was filed by the staff who were on duty when he fell but I didn't ask to see it even though I wanted to. I'm not even sure they would've allowed me to look at it because there was always a fine line they seemed to dance on. Something called "patient confidentiality". It seemed as though the hospital had a trump card they could pull out whenever they needed to.

Whatever the case, I was upset with myself for having left him alone. I had gone home to try and get some sleep. I had only been sleeping a couple of hours when the hospital called to let me know of my father's unfortunate turn of events. The first thing I thought about was the lack of a call bell in his room and knowing my father and his stubborn nature, I knew he would've never asked for help.

Three Years Later

This memory is only a glimpse into my family's journey three years ago. My father's stay in the hospital and his recovery were not seamless. Not only did he work fearlessly to regain his speech and his ability to walk again, he also had to fight the debilitating effects from contracting C-Diff. His weight plunged, causing him to lose a great deal of strength, yet he never gave up. After two months in the hospital he finally made it back home.

Dad had to learn where everything was in his home of thirty five years but I hoped he would and I vowed to help him. By now my sisters had gone back to their homes, not because they wanted to but because they had to. It wasn't an easy decision for them.

Chad, myself, and my husband Tony requested a meeting with hospital staff and the Chief of Medicine. When it was granted we expressed our deep concerns over what our family felt was a failure on their part to provide quality care. The long wait time in a room without a call bell and a bed was appalling to us. What was even more astounding was learning how the doctors came to the conclusion that my father need only sit for a while and wait for the effects of what they had deemed to be alcohol-related to subside and then he would be free to go home. It seems the EMS team who responded to the 911 call informed the hospital of a lone beer bottle sitting on my father's kitchen counter and when they questioned him about this he appeared confused as to when he had indeed consumed it. When we asked to see the results of his toxicology' screen, the hospital refused. ("Patient confidentiality.") My father was not present at this meeting and we didn't really want him to be there. Their response to our concerns was simple: "We dropped the ball on your father and for that we are sorry."

I have accepted their apology and moved on. Today my father is doing very well. I'm happy to say he doesn't remember the events of that frightful day in the spring of 2012. He truly is my hero.

I chose to share this moment in time as a true reminder that things aren't always what they seem.

I was raised a city girl. I can't deny that the tall buildings, busy streets, and fast paced lifestyle were once a significant part of who I am, yet these days I am content with the peacefulness of rural living. I'm a farmer's wife! My husband Tony and I start each day with the task of raising pigs. The farm is my primary focus but when I have time, I enjoy writing. My passion for it has flourished into something I can't abandon. Every person has a story to share. The choices we make in life reveal the common threads of humanity. The things that shape our lives can only be heard by telling them.

