



LIFESCAPES WRITING GROUP 2019

LIVING LEGACIES

BRANTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY



12TH EDITION

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

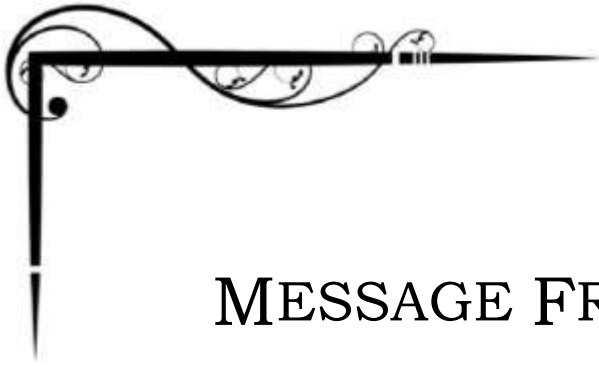
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Cover by Haley Down

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bertha Joseph	
An Unplanned Trip.....	9
Searching.....	16
Brenda Wright	
A Collection of Poems.....	19
Brian Bosnell	
An Informal Demography of the 50s and 60s (East Ward Remembered)	27
Gillian Holden	
A Day Well Spent With Aunt Bella.....	49
Recollections from a Picture – 1955.....	54
Herbert Sormin	
Oh My Papa.....	57
Kay Boyd	
From Duplicate Bridge to Miss Canada.....	78
Knock, Knock. Who's There?.....	85
Lois Oliver	
Pursuing A Dream.....	93
Ronald Sutherland	
The Early Years.....	103
Susan Szathmary	
Bellies of Babies.....	111
Wayne King	
Heads.....	119
Special Anniversary Feature.....	129



MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

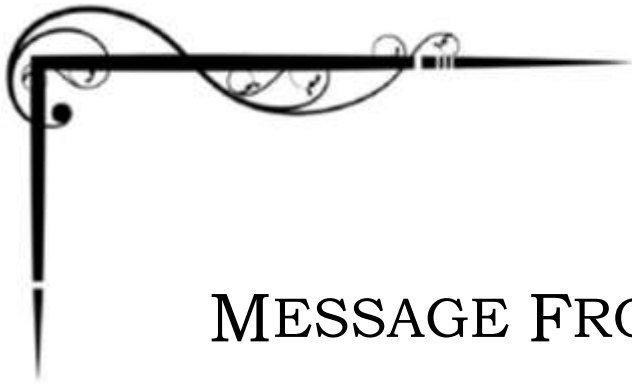
By Robin Harding

Lifescapes is a writing program created to help people tell their life stories, to provide support and guidance for beginner and experienced writers alike. This is our 12th year running the program at the Brantford Public Library and *Living Legacies* is our twelfth anthology to be published.

This compilation represents a dynamic mix of nostalgia, struggle, and whimsy. As a special feature, we're concluding with a short selection of items submitted by younger aspiring writers. Collectively these stories remind us that memories are precious at every stage of our life's journey, and that even small moments can offer life lessons – be they about family, community, overcoming fears, or challenging beliefs and expanding personal boundaries.

On behalf of Brantford Public Library and this year's participants, I would like to thank guest speakers Gary Barwin (*Yiddish for Pirates*) and Alison Pick (*Far to Go, Between Gods*), whose visits were made possible through partnership with Wilfrid Laurier University. Thank you also to guest instructors Lorie Lee Steiner and Larry Brown, and to co-editor Haley Down.

It has been my pleasure to be a part of the process, and I am immensely proud of everyone involved in this year's anthology. My sincere congratulations to all!



MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

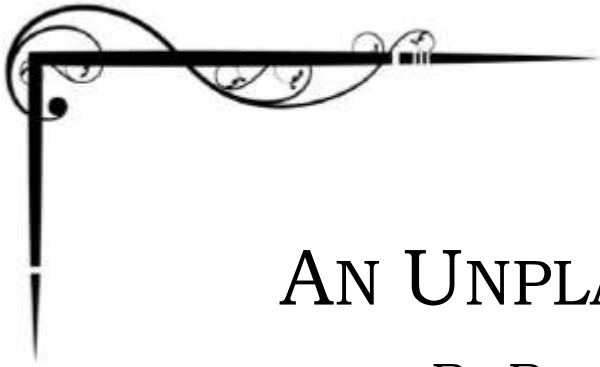
By Haley Down

Throughout the months leading up to the launch, I had the privilege of working closely with the stories that make up this anthology. Our authors have dedicated many hours in the Lifescapes workshops and beyond to creating captivating, honest stories for us to read.

From the moment I joined the library team I was touched by the encouragement and support these authors shared with one another. They joked around, they shared memories, and they asked the necessary questions of one another to get their work to the next level.

The stories which you will find in *Living Legacies* are unique and varied. In one go, your heart will be warmed and tugged on. You will be connected to the authors by reading about the struggles and life milestones that we all must go through. You will laugh at the joy of life these authors have woven into the pages through their words. Mostly, you'll be touched by the power of story-telling.

It is a difficult task, committing to a story and following through to the end. Especially when writing such personal things as in a memoir. Each of these authors contributes something special. I am grateful to have been a part of helping share that. I hope you enjoy them as much as I have.



AN UNPLANNED TRIP

By Bertha Joseph

On a beautiful morning in early August, my husband Peter and I were up and on the road by 4:30 a.m. The night before, our luggage was packed in the trunk of our '77 Olds. We were on vacation and on our way to Nova Scotia. Every August since 1964, we made this trip to visit our parents. In about twenty-eight hours, we would be driving into my mother's driveway. I could hardly contain my excitement of seeing our mothers and our families again.

We were soon on the 401 heading east. All was going well, when Peter suddenly asked, "Bertha, how would you like to go to New York City?"

"When?"

"Now."

"I don't know, I never thought about it."

"Tell me now, or we can forget it, I am coming to the U.S. turnoff. Yes or no?"

"YES!" I shouted.

An Unplanned Trip

We left the King's Highway 401 and were on our way to New York City. It was lovely driving into New York State. I soon got used to the highways and turnpikes. Peter told me wonderful stories about the history of each community as we passed through.

We would be going into New York City by way of the Bronx Bridge, through the Bronx, Harlem and into the heart of New York City. Peter stopped in the Bronx to ask directions to Harlem, as previous signs were no longer evident. He parked the car, warning me to not to take any pictures, to keep the doors locked, and the windows up. He went off to speak to a couple of men standing on the corner.

In a short time a little boy, probably eight years old, came up to the car and knocked on the car window. He was selling calendars which were outdated by a year. Speaking to me through the closed window, he explained that the date didn't matter because the calendars had nice pictures. I thought to myself that this little guy would someday make a great salesman. I rolled down the window a little crack and asked him how much. He said one dollar. I agreed to buy one. When I took out a Canadian dollar bill he got very upset; he thought I was pulling a trick on him. I explained I was from Canada and it was Canadian money, but then he asked, "What's Canada?" I ended up giving him a dollar in change and off he went, happy as a lark. Peter, however, was not happy with my carelessness.

Driving through the Bronx, I was saddened with what I saw. I always believed that all Americans were rich or at least comfortable. The poverty I had seen in Canada seemed like royalty compared to the Bronx.

We went through Harlem and on into the city. We booked into the Howard Johnson Hotel. Everything about the hotel was excellent, including the security. The car was parked underground and locked, with the car keys surrendered to security staff. We could not take possession of our car until we signed out of the hotel. There were security guards on all the floors and outside our door.

That evening Peter had a surprise for me: he wanted to take me to his own personal restaurant for dinner, and he would order something very special for me. Arriving at the restaurant, I looked up and saw the name PETE'S PLACE. We had a chuckle and went in.

We were seated by our own personal waiter. I sat at the table, my chair comfortably placed under me and a large red napkin spread upon my lap. Thinking it would slide from my dress, I tucked it in the belt at my waist. Peter ordered a lobster tail for me. It was more like the tail of a whale, it was so large. It was served on a platter, with a large bowl of melted butter and home-made bread rolls. I swear it weighed two pounds. The meal was scrumptious; it was the best lobster I ever ate.

As the bill was being settled, our accents gave us away as Canadians, so a lengthy discussion followed. Thanking us, they invited us to return anytime we were in New York. We spent the evening wandering and looking around. We took a yellow cab to a Lebanese Club. On the way, I placed my hands on my lap and noticed that my dress felt strange.

"Oh my Goodness," I exclaimed.

Pete responded "What's wrong?"

I realized I had walked out of PETE'S PLACE with the red napkin still tucked in my belt. The manager, waiter and cashier never let on, all the time we stood there and talked. I bet they had a good laugh.

Peter didn't though, he said, "What are you going to do?"

"I don't know," was my reply.

An Unplanned Trip

Folded, I put the napkin into my purse and it travelled on to Canada with us. I still have it, as part of my memory of New York. *(Image right.)*



At the Lebanese Club we were favoured with Lebanese delicacies.

Back to our hotel by Yellow Cab, tired out, we slept well.

Peter woke me at the break of dawn, saying, “Get dressed, you have to see New York in the early morning.”



*Left: Image credited to Richard Perry.
Source: New York Times. “Trash remains
one of the city’s leading exports.”*

We were off. I could not believe my eyes. There was no room to walk on the sidewalks, and we had to walk on the roads with great care of the passing vehicles. The sidewalks were piled high with garbage. It was an amazing sight and I still wonder where all that garbage ended up.

We had a New York Breakfast and then walked the streets. As the morning progressed I witnessed more amazing sights. A particularly memorable one was Telly “Kojak” Savalas sitting up on a chair at a shoe-shine stand, getting his shoes polished with a sucker in the corner of his mouth. I wanted to stop and speak to him.

But Peter said, “Leave the guy alone, let him have peace”.

Still, I wanted to go so badly. I kept looking back at him and he smiled at me. I saw a real live movie star and that, to a down-home gal, was really something.

Men walked the streets with their arms and hands loaded with watches, rings, and gold chains, soliciting people to buy gold at a really cheap price. There was a man lying on the sidewalk as people stepped over him, not caring if he was living or dead. I squeezed Peter's arm, wanting to see if he needed help. Then I got a lesson or two about the streets in New York and leaving such matters to the Police, who incidentally were everywhere.



Empire State Building (aerial view).
Source: Wikipedia Commons.

Peter took me to a very fine jewellery store ran by a Lebanese Gentleman. He only allowed one customer in his store at a time so no one else could come in while we browsed. There were bars and locks on the door and windows.

We took a yellow cab to the Empire State building. *(Image above.)* We went up to the observation towers. It was exciting to view New York City at night, with its thousands of lights mingling with the sounds of a city that never sleeps and penetrating the darkness.

In Time Square we were entertained by a group of young African American break-dancers. Then we paid visits to Macey's, Bloomingdale's, and Tiffany's. We located a Museum Store, where I purchased a Brass Dome Kaleidoscope, a gift for my mother. *(Image left.)*



An Unplanned Trip

Hailing down another yellow cab, we were back at the Howard Johnson for a night's rest. Morning dawned another beautiful bright sunny day; I was ready to continue homeward to Nova Scotia.

However Peter had another surprise for me. He was taking me to Framingham, Mass. to visit my Aunt Bertha, my father's sister, for whom I was named. We located their home and enjoyed a lovely visit. While Peter and Uncle Joe were in deep conversations with the usual man talk of current events and war stories, Aunt Bertha and I made our way into her bedroom.

When she was young and living at home, her eight sisters had the habit of visiting each other in their bedrooms, sitting and lying on the bed with their heads propped up on their hands. Even at over 90 years of age, Aunt Bertha was comfortable lying across her bed like some famous movie star, with her high-heel slippers crossed at the ankles and head held up by her hand, talking up a storm. I had not seen her since my father's funeral in 1950. At that time she was a vibrant middle-aged woman, all American, although Canadian born. This unplanned and unexpected visit was a great gift to Aunt Bertha, Uncle Joe and especially to me.



*Image credited to Mac Mackay. Source: BlogSpot.
"Scotia Prince – End of the Line"*

We decided to drive to Portland, Maine and go back to Canada by taking the overnight Scotia Prince Ferry to Yarmouth, N S. We purchased our pass and were told we would get overnight accommodations onboard, however the ferry

was overbooked and no beds were available. Before relaxing we took twenty dollars each and played the One Arm Bandit, coming away poorer than we arrived. It was fun anyway.

We found a clean spot under an alcove of the ship and dozed. Just then another couple decided to share the same accommodation. As they were about to get down Peter jumped up and said,

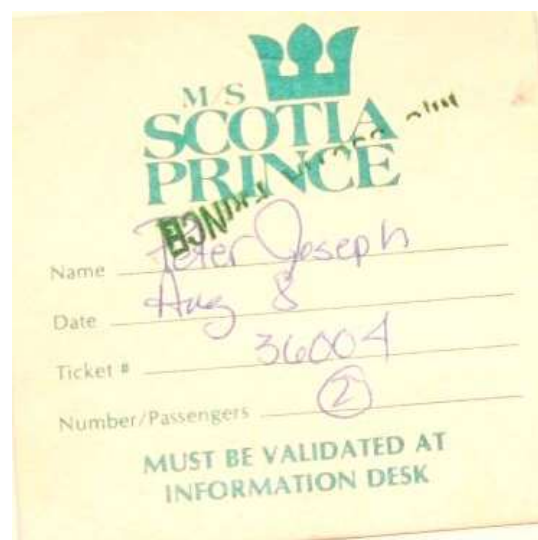
“Hold it right there, Sir. Do you have reservations for those spots?”

The couple were dumbstruck and started apologizing. Realizing that Peter was joking and making fun of our sleeping accommodations, they took it all in good cheer. We all had a good laugh and bonded in new friendship.

Morning dawned and we had breakfast together with our newfound Florida friends. After breakfast I made a lame excuse I was going to look around.

My husband suspected I was going to try my luck again, so he and the couple got a spot where they could watch me. I got another twenty dollars and played the One Arm Bandit. All of a sudden, the tray filled with coins, and being stupid about such things, I played all the coins back into the machine and left empty handed. We all had a good laugh.

The Ferry docked at Yarmouth. We were on Canadian soil and once again on our way home to Springhill.



SEARCHING

Tripod slung over my shoulder, camera bag in hand and my camera hung about my neck, I was always on my way, searching for that one Special Shot.



Labour Day weekend 1983, was spent in Aldershot, N. S. at The Black Watch Association (Atlantic) Re-Union. On the way home, we visited friends and enjoyed a beautiful Maritime day. We spent the evening sitting around a bonfire enjoying a corn boil. A lot of reminiscing and stories were told along with a few ghost stories.

The next morning it was pouring down rain. Attired in borrowed rain coat and boots, with my camera and accompanied by the dog, I was off through the woods to an old barn to search for that Special Shot.

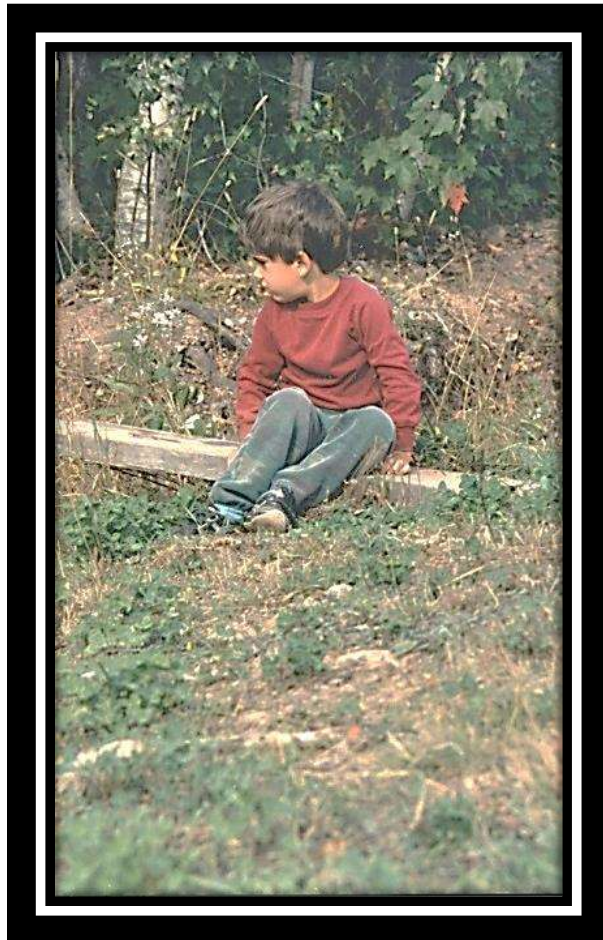
While snapping photos I heard a strange noise, believing it was only the wind. I heard footsteps, from where I could not determine. I suddenly remembered the

ghost stories which had taken place in this old barn. Then, there came a series of mournful sounds. I skillfully got myself together and was heading out just as something came flying down from the loft, mournfully screaming.

“GOTCHA!”

The ghost (my husband) and I, in laughter, strolled to the house.

Clouds drifted away leaving a lovely blue sky with lots of sunshine. There, before my very eyes, I found my gem, right back at the beginning of my search.



A Dear Little Boy, sitting on a log, lost in his own Little Boy World.

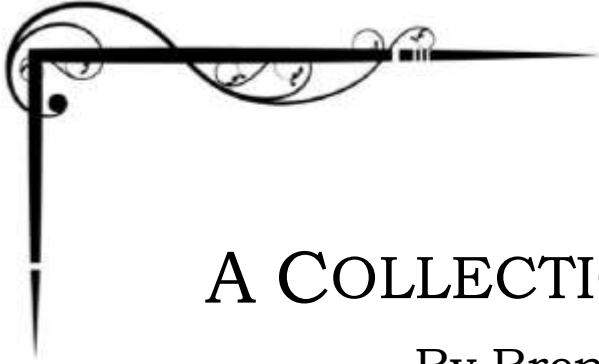
ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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.



A COLLECTION OF POEMS

By Brenda Wright

COFFEE

*(Dedicated to most of our family, those who
predominately carry the COFFEE gene!)*

Saturated black
Slides thick bitter buoyancy
To ramp up the day
Embrace the hot mug
Comfort and warmth all around
Stream of liquid gold
Extract of berry
Welcome to my posada
Bronze umber java
Percolated brew
Magic lozenge elixir
Transformative mood
Distillated press
Spiritual cafe comfit
Noir rocket fuel



*A small cup of coffee. Source:
Wikipedia Commons.*

ESTUARY

*Many in our sea of humanity, subsist with millimeters of fluid
some restrained drops contend, content to plane, to plan
in our emerging insights, our global community discerns, we beings are
kin*

*Our sailing vessels are keys to lives explored and enlarged
enhancing an expansion not only for greater good and ancestors,
for those whose souls need to play on earth, tide and stream*

*Our fellowship encompasses not only the here and now
but the collective awareness for our loch-arcs toward another dimension,
sentinels in the waves, clouds, & skylights beyond*

*Our web of connection, embayment, it is in the now
and may our ripples be never-ending, swelling, receding*

*In our harbours of friendship, may we,
will we, deeply fjord, come what may*



Mattole River Estuary 2005. Source: Wikipedia Commons.

MANDALA

Sacred journey with a tentative first step
Tap into the realm of the Benevolent
Ancient tradition
Solitarily revealed on this circular path

Allow the draw to the eye of the core
Hindrance unshackled, exquisite release
Pray
Focus
Meditate
On notice by Mystical force

Sweet freedom from distraction
Reverberation, echo the Wise Ones
Conclude your former way
Forward with conviction

Steadied heart, invigorate hope
Engulf our unconscious longings
Inner
Sanctum
Spiritual
Walking the Labyrinth

Through clarity, vision is granted
Fortitude reawakened, vows renewed
Encouraged to share
Give into each other's and receive

Honoured, I thus ensured Divine notice
Sourced exclusively, revealed circuitously
Experience
The Mandala
Walk the
Labyrinth

MOTHER

(For Barbara "Jo" Joan Wright nee Foster)

Registering 80 plus years of awakenings
She holds tender compassion against all of the odds
Perseveres despite disadvantages and challenges
Gathers and imparts lyrical gems as if Odes

Born at the beginning of World War 2
On a Tetreault farm amongst an uncle and 5 aunts
Grandparents too... early years seem idyllic
Core, days of yore fully suffused... and teamwork

Innocent blue-grey eyes soon to be happenstanced
To Catholic convent school at age 6 for 5 years or so
Older sister tried to shield, reduce stringency
Would sneak in to cuddle her any manner of hour

Penitence required multiple times a day
Usurpation of parents, meant precious few hours alone
Parents visit some weekends, occasionally a home one
Far too relegated especially for young girl's

In the 50s a move to Toronto and learn English
"Look for the Silver Lining" movie would be a 1st step
Then dear father's health would begin to fail
Would traumatize his daughter's heart's to the core

Move to be nearer aunts in St. Catharine's helpful
Bell Canada job at 16, would help them survive
A co-worker, soon to be mother-in-law
In each other, our mother and father found solace and strength

Worthy of note, 65 plus years of journeying together
Despite early losses of fathers, security with each other
My 2 younger sisters and I now fully appreciate
Our upbringing, largely wonderful

Earliest memory of mine is swathed, swaddled in flannel
Nestled, buried in moms soft neck, arms cradling me
To this day mom sways in her Windsor maple chair
Where she once nursed, cuddled and soothed us three

Rock on, our dear mother, you rock!
(and I'll admit I still love to rock too!) I LOVE YOU!



WALKING THE LABYRINTH

The wilder the better she thinks
Intermittently she sees
Flashes of light in the chilled northern sky
Yeah, she surmised, off and on, just like life
Clouds overbear amidst hues of maroon
She waits for this magic
Slithering lines all around
When lightning explodes
serpents in the nightscape
Her solitary figure stokes and fans the embers
Her fire to reignite...
From splintered embers
The mandala became symmetrical
Carefully circumferenced
Judiciously considered
A pivotal journey from behind a
Dammed wall of emotion
To a stream of enlightenment, a conscious existence
A phrase re-echoed in her brain
"Use your head, use your head... to lead your heart, use your head"
So she dampened down her heartstrings, centered herself
Led her foot to the uncharted path and
Confirmed, that she had indeed
begun her own dance in the moonlight



*Credit: Picture owned by Five Oaks and accessed from
<http://fiveoaks.on.ca/amenities-and-services/>*

Thank you Grandfather

(Cedric Hiram Foster)

Thankful for ethereal sentinels

Guides, who gently bid us

release and rise

Spirit cadence, countenance towards

me ... as arms enfolding

Knowing earthly how all can be, hear

his ministrations, echoing

Ancestors embracing ... and their empowerment

Prone as we are, misled, or to forget ...

assimilating, transfer ... energy, he reminds us

Vibrationally ... unmastered yet

Cloud to cloud or cloud to ground

Transformed heat ... red hot, blue jets

Ribboned & staccatoed, sheet, beaded, forked, or rocket

May be ... each of us, transfigured, by any one of these

5 seconds for each mile, the spasm of energy unfolds

Brief glow, electrified flash, and remembering

Herald the rumble ... remembering

May you hear the thunder, remembering

We are all energy in transmutation

We were all lightning before

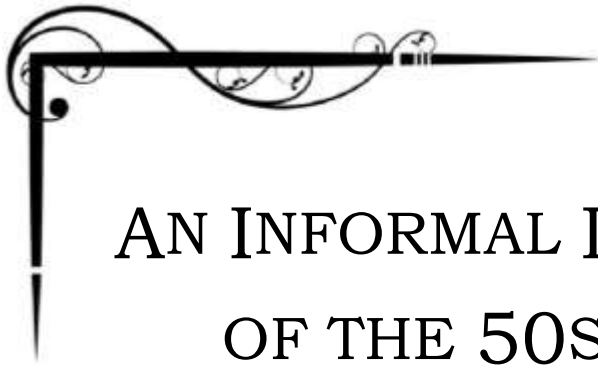
We were thunder ... lest we forget

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Brenda Ann Wright was born in 1959 and raised in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada. She is the eldest of three daughters (sisters: Gail and Sandra) born to a “Port Boy” (Port Dalhousie, On) and “La Petit Maman” from Montreal, Quebec. In the early 1970’s for Remembrance Day, The St. Catharines Standard selected her poem for publication. Entitled “Sons’ Dying,” it was dedicated to her Great-Uncle Alex who served in World War II. Brenda appreciates her association with members of the Lifescapes at the Brantford Public Library: (Thanks, Robin Harding and Lorie Lee Steiner!) Brantford Writers Circle, Brantford Poetry Guild, Barb Days’, “Speak Technique”, and

Mary M. Cushnie-Mansour. Brenda has assisted on a number of published works/books, Anthologies etc. Brenda has a consuming/keen interest in music, (Blues, Jazz, etc. and the clarinet,) Poetry (Cohen, Neruda, Gibran, among others) and Literature. Brenda has preference for Historical Fiction/Non-Fiction, Biographies and Genealogy. Brenda has three daughters: Lisa, Marianne and Sarah, and the youngest, a son: Neil Mallette. Brenda is Nana to 9 grandchildren. How very important it is to record individual’s life stories, generationally, for reference and as to how our lifetimes were.



AN INFORMAL DEMOGRAPHY OF THE 50S AND 60S: THE EAST WARD REMEMBERED

By Brian Bosnell

From the porch one observes the simple rhythms of daily life: the neighbor setting out the garbage in the early morning, the woman from the next street who regularly walks her little dog just after suppertime, the school-age boys exercising prowess in bicycling, the elderly widow receiving a rare visit from an in-law, the business-like drivers of passing cars whose faces mirror their intent to get where they are going.

On the porch one hears the sounds that surround us—the worried chirping of jays hovering over a nest, the cries of a waking baby across the street, the approaching bell of the ice cream man’s truck, [distant] sirens from the city, the neighborhood dogs whose resonant barks carry airborne canine conversations well over the barriers of fenced-in yards.

Seated upon the porch one finds it unnecessary to comment upon or analyze what one sees and hears. It is enough that it is. Being is not something to be breathed in and celebrated with sweet contentment and a grateful heart.

~Wright, Wendy M. *Sacred Dwelling: a Spirituality of Family Life*. Crossroad, 1989.

An Informal Demography of the 50s and 60s

In 2011 a childhood friend—much to my delight—decided to come home to Brantford, back to East Ward (now Ward 5), and back to their family home on East Avenue. (See figure 1 on page 22.)

The intent was to renovate, rejuvenate, and retire to the home of his birth. That goal was realized but it took a year and more of hard work and contractors constantly in and out – of planning, designing, demolishing, constructing, painting, dry walling, and everything in between.

One summer morning—say this isn't synchronicity—my friend took a quick coffee break on his front porch. My friend had just taken a sip and was about to set his cup down when a vaguely familiar figure strode through his line of sight. He quickly set the mug down and craned to greet the walker passing by on the sidewalk. We all know the ritual: politely make eye contact and greet them. You know right away if a verbal exchange is in order, and whether to start a conversation.

No need! Greetings were dispatched from the sidewalk. “Douglas Stafford Townsend, you're back here?”

“Vinner! I haven't seen you in thirty years!” Vigorous handshakes, hugs, and shoulder pats followed. Vinner, also known as Bob Vincent, sat down for coffee.

They came to find out that Vinner now lived in a small apartment two blocks over on Dalhousie. He had lived as a youngster two blocks over (in the opposite direction) on Victoria. Now what about those fifty years in between?

Many more discussions took place over coffee, at barbecues and get-togethers, and most importantly during extended sessions of recollection at McDonald's. Oh, those memories of growing up in East Ward, Brantford.

I joined Doug and Bob (and others) many times. In the good weather right through the fall I'd dismount my bike, park myself in a lounge chair and reminisce. If the weather didn't cooperate, we'd retreat to McDonald's and gather up some extra chairs.

"This looks like an important business meeting!" was a comment I heard several times.

I'd brandish my notes and agree. We kept it up all winter long. Our group expanded to include Rick Smith, Ralph Lucente, and Norm Greenfield.

I knew that Vinner had an excellent memory but didn't realize at first that it was truly eidetic. Rick Smith's was exceptional, too! An idea burst into my head during one of our initial group sessions. Why didn't I just *data mine* their memories? Thus, the idea for an informal *census* of East Ward was born.

MAP OVERVIEW

To create this map (*Figure 1, next page*), I took a current Ward map (Brantford, 2018, Ward 5), and scanned it to my hard drive. I used the natural boundary of the old canal and Mohawk Lake as my southern border, Forest Road, Park Road South and North as my eastern, Elgin Street as my northern, and Clarence as my western. Thus, the East Ward of my youth was bounded.

By saving the map in Microsoft Paint I could modify, erase, or add symbols. A dozen times or more we brainstormed as a group while I scribbled furiously. I took Vinner out on three separate occasions with my smart phone on the dash and my hands on the steering wheel while cruising East Ward, street by street. We started at Park Ave. E and fanned out in this fashion: first, streets from East to West, and then streets from South to North.

An Informal Demography of the 50s and 60s

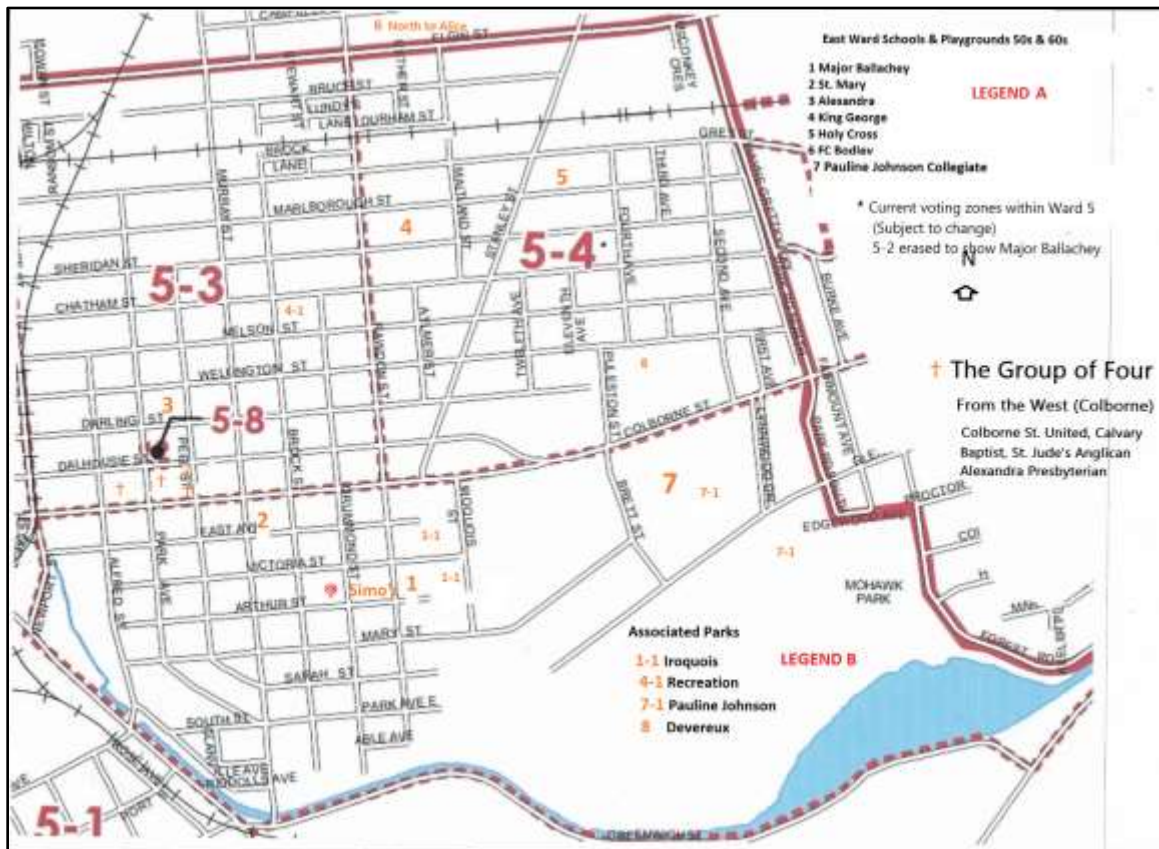


Figure 1: East Ward Schools and Playgrounds in the 50s and 60s

I recorded all conversations twice, once on a USB recorder and simultaneously on an Android phone application.

I've listed people by name below. Anyone with whom I had a personal memory has been attached by name to a street. If a connection has persisted to this day – and many certainly have – they are underlined. I did the same thing for high school acquaintances and those who came into our mini universe. Surnames – I did check spelling to the best of my ability – are bolded. Corner houses sometimes pose an issue involving frontage so I decided to place family names on the street whose entrance I was most familiar with. However, this is not a formal, strictly defined survey. We – my contributors and I – must be excused if our memories are blurred (See the footnotes). It was impossible to list everyone in order of birth so they've been ordered as family members came to mind. An asterisk indicates that a person is deceased.

GRID ONE: EAST/WEST STREETS: PARK AVE EAST TO MARLBOROUGH

Park Ave E to Murray

Kuchocki-Dave*, Joe, Stan, Larry, Alex

South Street to Alfred

Bury-Karl*

Sarah Street to Peel

McIvor-Betty*: **Cradder**-Lesley (?): **Dumesnil**-Mark: **Howard**-Ray, Wayne, Lenny, Bobby: **Strong**-Rob: **Bristow**-Larry, Louis: **Lavergne**-Rocky: **Bjelan**-Donna (see Simo's & Marlborough St.)

Mary Street to Alfred

Curtis-Elaine: **Lear**-Leonard*, Joseph: **Guiliani**-Mickey: **Arseneau/ Smythe-Jon**, George, Francis (Frankie*): **Davis-Harold**: **Jackson (Adshade)**-Brenda*¹ **Carl**-Jane: **Eves**-Cheryl

Arthur Street to Alfred

Marissen-Jerry, Sheila: **McLaughlin**-Mickey: **O'Reilly**-Dennis*, Sandra, Linda*: **Hunter**-Brian, Rick: **Munroe**-Rob: **Reidy**-Mike*: **Marsilio**-Madalana (Maggie), Pardo*, Theresa: **Nyp**-Gary: **Wickson**-Eric: **Maurich**-Danny: **Giles**-Ken: **Davidson**-William (Bill)*, **Rod**: **Sanderson**-Paul, Rick: **Alonzo**-Judy

Victoria Street to Alfred

Minutillo-Angelo: **Nagle**-Sister Theresa, Joseph, Philip*, David*, Patricia*, John*, Paul*, Michael (Mike)*: **Poulton**-David, Danny: **Visocchi**-Mario: **Mysliwy**-Richard, Stanley: **Lucente**-Raffaele (Ralph), Leo, Walter (Wally), Mario: **Andretti**-Bill, Tony, Dominic: **O'Leary**- Ed (Eddie): **Wagg**-David, Brenda: **Kusch**-William (Bill), Good-

¹ This corner house (south-east corner of Brock & Mary) fronts Brock Street. The Harold Davis I knew as a child lived in a hole-in-the-wall apartment off Mary Street at the top of a rickety set of stairs. Brenda Jackson (Adshade) bought the house over twenty-five years later. She was best friends with Debbie Matcheski (one of my wife's sisters). The stairs and Brenda are gone, the first torn down and the second taken by breast cancer. Other than Harold, I'm the only one left to remember sitting in that tiny kitchen at the top of the stairs as he readied to play baseball for Rossini Lodge.

An Informal Demography of the 50s and 60s

Joan: **Grieve**-Victoria, Gordy, Ruth, Marianne, Cathy, Doug: **McKinnon**- Scott:
Waterhouse-Larry: **Labelle**-Alf: **Vincent-Bob**, Susan: **La Belle**-Alfred (Alfie/Tiny),
Ricky: **Hemsworth-Christopher (Chris)**

East Ave to Alfred

MacAskill-Gary, James (Jim)*[wife Karen], Clayton, Valerie: **Lowe**-Raymond,
Warren: **Matcheski-Linda, Brenda, Reggie, Lorna, Debbie, Dale*, Lisa**: **Oakes**-
David: **Flannery***-Paul: **Van Bradt**-Donald*, Brenda: **Haddow**- "Butch": **Stefanelli**-
Michael: **Woodcroft**-Bobby, Elaine: **Goold**-Kim*, Peter*, Candi, Eric, Randy:
Bowerman-Linda: **Money**-Wanda, **Tom, [wife Debbie]** Dyan, Barb, Kristie: **Buckel**-
Paul: **Grundy**- Marty, Judy, Lori, Gregg*, Lynn, Eric: **Grinter**-John, Joanna:
Chadwick-Billy, Teddy: **Everingham-Ernie, Terry: Townsend-Judy, Doug**: Rossi-
Tom: **Marlett-Donna: Yanchus-Mike**

Colborne Street to Alfred

Milton-Stephen, Michael: **Chub**-Roy, Edward: **Eves**- Robert Clarence*(Slick), Gee
Gee, Brian, Gary, John

Dalhousie Street to Alfred

Knowles-Judy: **Oliver**- Bruce: **Farley**-Bruce, Phil: **Alford**-John: **Gallant**-Joe:
Norman-Susan*

Darling Street from Stanley to Alfred

Bonyun: Norm, Keith, Brian, Peter, Steve

Marlborough Street from Stanley to Park Ave

Bjelan- Dennis, Nick, Marilyn, Claudia, Simo Jr.*, Cindy, Dana, Tracey, Carolyne:
Greenfield-Norm

GRID TWO: NORTH/SOUTH STREETS: PARK AVE TO PULESTON

Park Ave from Murray to Grey Street

Chandler-Roger*: **Stefanelli**-Mike (not the one on East Ave) Vincent-**Bob (Vinner)**
(lived in five different houses all in East Ward) [see introduction and Victoria]:
Kniaziew-Richard

Peel Street from Mary to Sheridan Street
Dignan-John

Murray Street from Park Ave E to Grey Street
Cunningham-Valerie: Hartwick-Jon Gardiner-Earl: Lamb-Ken

Brock Street from Park Ave E to Grey Street
Sutton-Mike, Gregory: Sparks-Janet: Beal-Bob: Felice-Eric: Prine-Marilyn:
Caldwell-Larry, Sharon: Good-Joan: McLaren-John, Bruce: Nagy-Robb: Bosnell
(Self)/Brian, Lynn, Bruce, Leanne*: Smith-Rick: Barkley-Grant*, Mary, Bridgett,
Ann, Cathy, Jane*, Margaret*: Miller-Debbie: Crandall-Don: Bishop-Billy:
Patterson-Bill: Hazard-Bob*: Percival-Paul

Drummond Street from the Canal to Chatham Street
Dostal-Steve*, Mike*: Skeggs-Barbara: Hooper-Edward, Lee, Cathy: Ferrell-Lee,
Les*, Len*, Cindy: Inder-Carol: Cleary: Mike, David (Dave): Ferras-Linda, Joe,
Shane, Tony, Mick: Simo's Confectionary Simo Bjelan Sr. (Proprietor): Waddell-
Bob, Cal

Rawdon Street² from the Canal to Grey Street
Buszchak-Bob*, Irene, John:

Maitland Street from Chatham to Grey Street
Hallett-Len

PRINCIPAL ARCHITECTURE

With mathematical precision, the structures and places of my memories fan out like the spokes of wheel away from 118 Brock Street (**Bosnell**). There's 115 Brock Street (**Smith**), then 82 East Ave (**Townsend**), followed by 133 East Ave (**Matcheski**) and 146 East Ave (**MacAskill**). 84/86 Drummond (**Simo's Confectionary**) and 51 Victoria (**Vincent**) complete the most significant homes.

² In 1875 Rawdon Street was the eastern boundary of the town of Brantford.

An Informal Demography of the 50s and 60s

Let's look:

118 Brock

Our phone number for years (60+)—in its oldest form: 753-6557.



Above left: 60-year-old rose bush, circa 2010. This is regrowth after a severe winter.



Above right: Dad's old workbench had to stay. My brother Bruce and I dug out the space for it with pick and shovel.

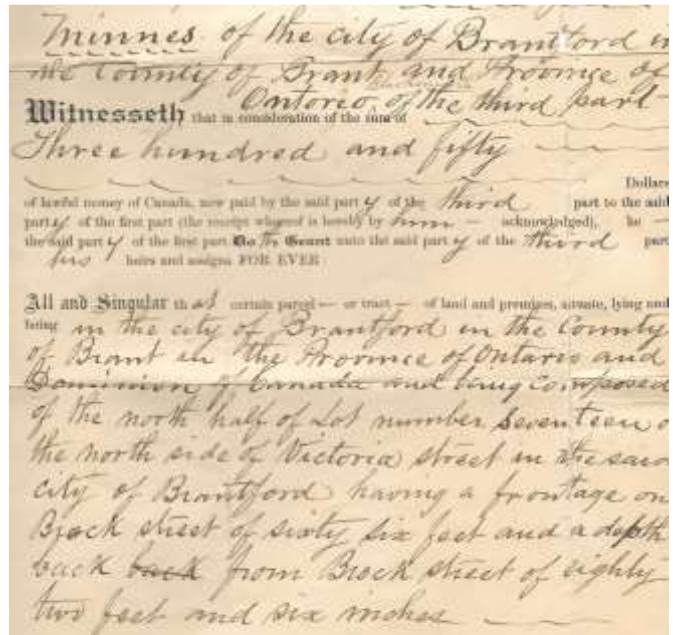


Above left: When Mum moved I buried a time capsule in the crawl space. A copy of the last TV Guide ever published was included.



Above right: Grampa Ken Vallance with my sister Lynn, circa 1957.

115 Brock



Above left: 115 Brock in the background. My sister Leanne circa 1965.

Above right: The original deed dated 1898.



Above left: Betty Smith (115 Brock) during a snowstorm. Note no maple tree and no porch.

Above right: A page from the Bible discovered hidden in a wall during renovations. The same family is listed on the deed.

An Informal Demography of the 50s and 60s

82 East Ave



Above left: The garage. Doug and I used to clamber about in the rafters.

Above right: The garage after restoration.

133 East Ave

Ted (Tadeusz) Rudkowski bought this fire-damaged house in the early 60s and moved into it with his adopted family, the Matcheskis. In the early 70s he constructed a new home on Albert Lake in Barry's Bay, just down the road from Kaszuby—the first Polish settlement in Ontario. Ted and my soon-to-be mother-in-law would spend almost the entire summer of 1971 constructing that house. This house became Party-Central as the MacAskill Ford pickup, Turkey Point, Riders on the Storm, Lorna Matcheski, the lowering of the drinking age, and Simo's Confectionary, converged. Many life-defining moments whizzed by during this summer, the summer of 1971!

Right: An excerpt from a property description on the Heritage Inventory website. Consider the concept of “sister houses”. I searched for an architectural reference but couldn’t find one. I assume that neighbouring houses were sometimes built in matching styles. All images such property descriptions are sourced from the search engine at <https://www3.brantford.ca/inventory.nsf>.

133 and 135 East Avenue are sister houses.

Features to note: flat roof addition at rear; gable roof frame shed was being erected at rear of lot at time of photography.

Historical Description

Architect	
Builder	
Original Owner	residence
Original Use	residence
Building Permit #A1123; Owner: T. Rudkowski; repairs to fire damage; 9/20/1963; 133 East; \$500. #A2720; Owner: T. Rudkowski; sunroom; 8/31/1965; 133 East; \$600. #A2721; Owner: T. Rudkowski; garage; 8/31/1965; 133 East; \$1,000	

146 East Ave

Jim (James MacAskill) moved to East Ave from Eagle Place in the early 60s. He transferred to Major Ballachey School where I first met him from King Edward School in Eagle Place. His sister Val continues to live at this location to do this day. Jim and I remained close friends until his death in 2018.

Property Address: 146 EAST AVE	
Neighbourhood (Central and East Wards (Area 2))	Lot ID: 4-5-114
Common Reference Name:	
Year Built: 1899, 1909	Year Built Qualifier: N
Year Built Source: building permit, SAS	
Designation Information	
Designated as a Heritage Property under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act	No
Within a Heritage Conservation District designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act	No
Architectural Description	
Architectural Style	Hip Roof
Original Building Type	Residence
Number of Stories	2.0
Exterior Surface	brick (white)
146 and 148 East Avenue are sister houses. Italics:ate Features to note: white brick chimney shaft rises from east wall; front windows have skewback arch heads in brick; front left entrance is within semi-circular arch of coursed brick on the front corner (arch has since been filled in with exterior front door); side wall of front door corner has a similar brick arch over a 2/2 double-lung window.	

An Informal Demography of the 50s and 60s

84/86 Drummond (Simo's Confectionary)

Property Address: 84-86 DRUMMOND ST				
Neighbourhood		Central and East Wards (Area 2)	Lot ID	4-6-206
Common Reference Name		Drummond Convenience Uncle John's Variety		
Year Built	1948	Year Built Qualifier	N	
Year Built Source	SAS			
Designation Information				
Designated as a Heritage Property under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act		No		
Within a Heritage Conservation District designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act		No		
Architectural Description				
Architectural Style		Commercial		
Original Building Type		Double Commerical Residential Building		
Number of Stories		2.0		
Exterior Surface		brick (red); concrete block		
Features to note: parapet front has coping over a soldier brick course; windows have flat soldier course heads and concrete sill; brick and concrete block is quoined at front corners.				
Historical Description				
Architect				
Builder				
Original Owner		Pat Rossi		
Original Use		Commercial Residential		

Sometime in the early 60s, Simo's Confectionary became our – by this I mean my social group's – meeting spot of choice (See: Bjelan). When drivers' licenses were obtained and the ability to jump into a friend's car became routine, Simo's became our shrine, our dispersion point. For almost ten years Simo's remained at the center. Relationships were forged, habits entrenched, and excursions spontaneously invented.

My cigarette habit began at Simo's with the occasional shared cigarillo on weekends. Quickly the odd cigarillo became a daily pack or more of Rothmans. That habit would last some twelve years. I found a contemporary reference, fifty years after the fact: "...vaping is a "gateway" to smoking for teenagers, with vape companies and convenience stores trying to lock in a next generation of customers."³ Hmmmm!

³ Ferguson, Rob (2019, March 24). Corner-store beer, wine on the way? The Toronto Star, p. A7

Now I wonder, all these years later, did our group help the store economically or were prospective visitors deterred by the constant presence of hormonal teenagers? We still maintain connections to the Bjelan clan. My son Jon worked with Dennis at SC Johnson – I cannot help but call it Johnson’s Wax – and there is also contact on Facebook.

51 Victoria

Bob told me that he lived in five houses all within the confines of our East Ward. Its construction date is listed as 1870 which predates all the others in my list. As the above notes it also appears on the 1875 Bird’s Eye View Map. I checked and it does. You can download this interesting document here:

<https://www.loc.gov/item/75696736/>.

Property Address: 51 VICTORIA ST			
Neighbourhood	Central and East Wards (Area 2)	Lot ID	4-6-154
Common Reference Name			
Year Built	1870	Year Built Qualifier	estimated
Year Built Source	is on the 1875 Bird's Eye View map		
Designation Information			
Designated as a Heritage Property under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act		No	
Within a Heritage Conservation District designated under Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act		No	
Architectural Description			
Architectural Style	Side Gable - hip rear portion		
Original Building Type	Double house		
Number of Stories	1.5		
Exterior Surface	brick		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- the 1919 Fire Insurance maps show this as a brick veneer building- house sits low to the ground- steep pitch roof with two gables on front above doors - these gables have partially intact vernacular Gothic vergeboards- doors on second floor front under gables open onto flat roof of entrance vestibules below- in the gable end, second storey 2 over 2 windows with segmental shaped tops are noticeably taller than the the same type of windows below on the first floor- second storey windows in tail of building are not as tall as ones on second storey front and their tops are under the eave- chimney on centre of gable end wall has been removed at roofline			

This is the only house (a double one) that I ever knew Bob lived in until he told me about the other four during one of our car excursions. Note in the description that the gables have partially intact vernacular Gothic vergeboards. Now that’s architectural jargon at its best!

An Informal Demography of the 50s and 60s

Several more structures and locations played key roles as we grew up in East Ward. Let's examine the area schools, playgrounds, and parks:

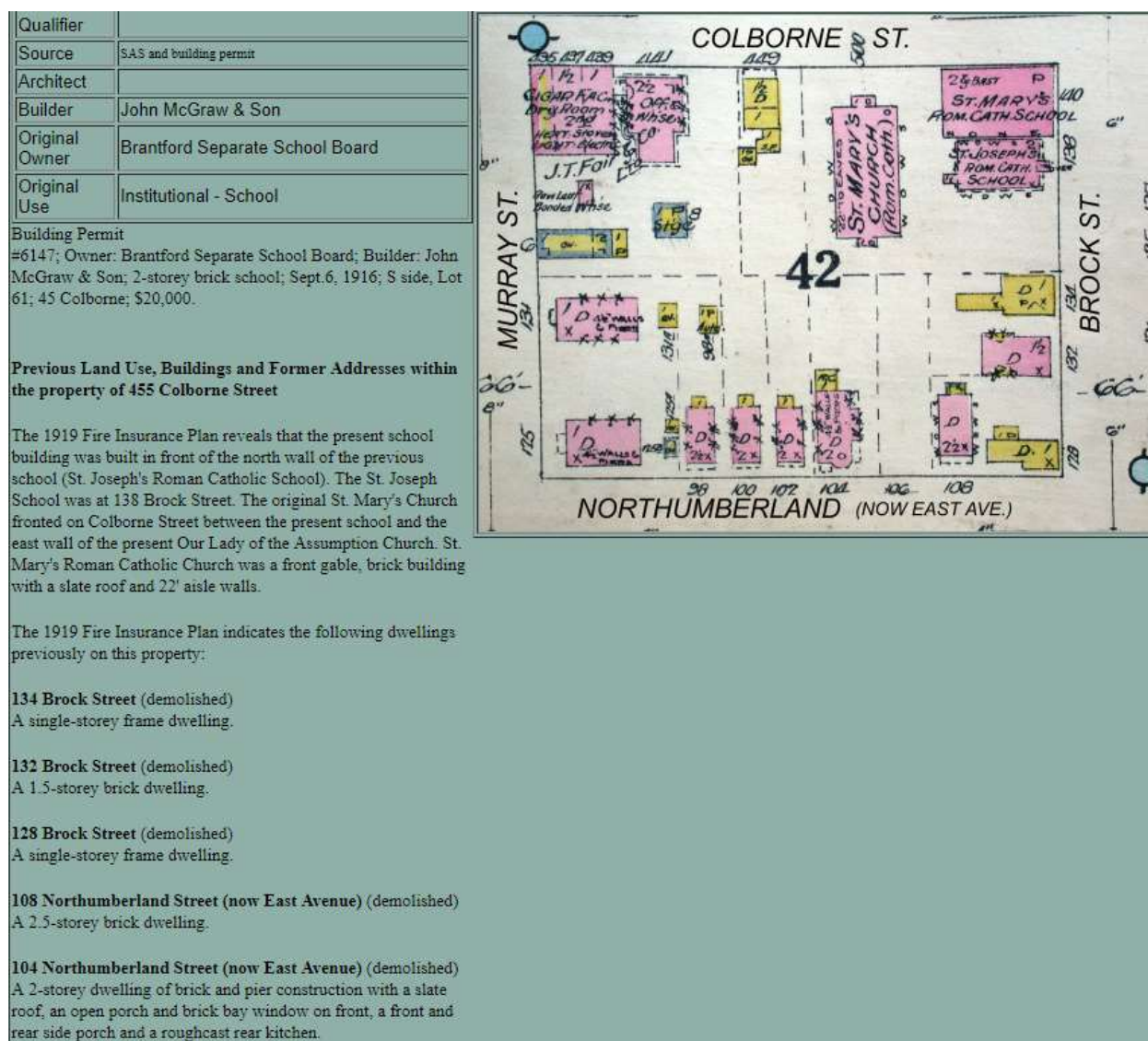


Figure 2: Map of key schools, playgrounds and parks in the East Ward

St. Mary's Roman Catholic School: Now St. Mary Catholic Learning Centre

The school and playground were practically adjacent to my home on Brock Street. The old church had three basketball rims on the back. There was a full court facing East Ave, with several hoops on separate poles. My friends and I spent hours there shooting hoops and playing basketball.

One of the Dignan⁴ brothers taught me how to shoot one-handed. Gary Szoke (see list) wandered to the playground from north of Colborne somewhere and played too. Often during the summer break a raft of young ladies would sit in what little shade there was on the pavement to watch the basketball action. This playground's uniqueness came from its paved mini-hills that bordered the basketball court. In time houses were torn down on East Ave and Brock to enlarge the playground. The old church was demolished and a new one constructed—hall attached. I can still picture the crane lifting those heavy concrete beams into place. Sometimes we migrated inside. One of our Roman Catholic players would knock on the rectory door and ask a priest for the key to the hall. Almost always the request would be granted.

Major Ballachey School and Iroquois Park(s)

I vividly recall the 75th anniversary of Major Ballachey School in June of 1994. I submitted a binder of material hastily assembled from bits and pieces collected by my siblings. All of us attended Major Ballachey. The 100th anniversary—if my calculations are correct—would be in June of this year.

There isn't one square foot—I use foot because I grew up with the Imperial Units of Measure—between the school playground, the front steps to the school, and the two parks that I did not traverse. I watched the steam shovel—really a steam shovel in 1960—excavate for the Iroquois apartments from a tree in the small park. I fell out of that tree while doing so. (A quick painful evacuation of my lungs, that's all!)

⁴ One of John Dignan's brothers—I couldn't have been older than seven—showed me how to shoot a basketball with one hand. John and I then many years later played racquetball together at the "Y" and Park Racquet and Fitness. It's all gone, the game included, the game that saved my life. (That story is forthcoming.)

An Informal Demography of the 50s and 60s

That small adjunct to the park behind the school played several significant roles. In the summer “park leaders” would help supervise the wading pool and provide activities for any youngster who came to the park. During non-school hours—because we were not allowed on the road—we would make home plate somewhere on the dividing line between the girls’ playground and the boys’ playground (in the 60s the playground was divided) and smack rubber balls over the fence, across Victoria Street into the park. That was defined as a home run. Sometimes we used softballs, too. We also played “Rounders”, a game out of our Phys-Ed curriculum.

Major Ballachey had a unique set of concrete, front stairs at least a dozen feet wide. We invented—unnamed I think—a hitterless ball game where the player who was up fired a ball between the riser and the tread of any step. The angle of ricochet could be changed easily, and the ball could be quite difficult to catch. We tried with an India rubber ball but the chances were too good that it could hit something breakable across the street.

We played marble games wherever the playground met the building. At that time it would have been with so-called cat’s-eye marbles (the small ones) with the internal sliver of glass that looks like a cat’s pupil. We also played baseball-card games where the cards were tossed against the wall – “standsies” and overlapping cards played important roles within the game. The various cards came packaged in bubble gum. All of us had huge packs of cards bundled with elastic bands. Trading or bartering for the cards themselves was unheard of. You would win more cards by physically throwing them—wrist action was the key—against a wall.

But the absolute primal boyhood activity whether on ice in the winter or on pavement at all other times—yes, summer, too—was hockey, be it ice or ball. I learned to skate on the natural rink behind the school. Mum (not Dad) would tie my skates in the warmth of our Brock Street kitchen and I would trudge with

skate guards mounted to the rink, to join the throng of blue and red—Toronto blue, Keon, Montreal red, the Rocket. Many times, we watched the man-who-flooded-the-rink soak it before our eyes. We would grind down the initial bumps and the rink would be re-flooded in the evening. Inevitably too many skates would clog the surface with snow and we would have to shovel it. Lights were strung for evening play and an adjoining rink was constructed for skaters only. No boards surrounded this rink, only ice mounds.

In its heyday (half-a-dozen years or so) the Iroquois Park rink's seasonal life stretched to six weeks plus. There hasn't been a rink at that location for fifty years now.

Once spring arrived, we played ball hockey on the playground. We used a gate that marked an exit to the playground as one goal and a wall of the school as another, the goal delineated by a discarded jacket or sweater. Occasionally, as portable nets came into vogue one of the boys might drag one down to the playground. Tennis balls were the ball of choice, those red, blue, and white bouncy balls were just that, too bouncy, and the orange ball in current use hadn't been invented yet. All we did was run.

Unbeknownst to me those days of run-and-gun set the groundwork for my continuing go-go days of today. I'm grateful.

The Group of Four

The central crest (*photo, right*) stood for the Alexander Park Sunday School Athletic League.

The floor hockey league was run out of the Colborne Street United Church hall. It was a Saturday morning league complete with body checking comprised of



An Informal Demography of the 50s and 60s

Sunday School attendees from the four churches—no longer extant—that bordered Alexander Park. Marlborough Street Church joined a little later. For me, the only things that evolved out of Sunday School were the two for-life friendships that were forged with Doug Townsend and Jim MacAskill. It certainly wasn't Sunday School. I hated the *Sunday best* routine in order to attend Colborne United and I am still permanently perplexed by the endless proselytizing. Ironically, the proselytizing continues elsewhere while the buildings remain. Just a single congregation exists, as belief wanes.

King George School

In the fall of 1964, an educational innovation appeared. King George became one of the first Senior Public Schools. My new grade eight class from Major Ballachey now had to travel down Rawdon Street (a few blocks) to King George. We were introduced to the high school rotary system and in a sense groomed for high school. Friends made at King George in one year were soon to be classmates at Pauline Johnson. In a very concrete way attendance at King George helped to expand the bubble from a few streets in East Ward to the entirety of east Ward. And in turn attendance at Pauline Johnson helped to expand the circle of friends even further - some amazingly to this day. Let's look:

Pauline Johnson and Beyond

And then, of course, as my groups' mobility increased, we met a whole host of others that would drift in and out of our ever-expanding social group—at least for five or six years! One interesting educational tidbit of the times is that this era was before all-encompassing funding. Separate school education had to be financed by parents. If those fees couldn't be maintained or students began to demonstrate slipping grades in the separate high school stream, then the option to transfer to the public-school cohort was made available—to the next grade. Several of my high school friends came to "PJ" that way.

Ann Thomas	Angela Henry	Bonnie Brittain	Adrian Herschell	Art MacLeod
Barbara Frankowski	Antoinette Giannetti	Cecil Alkema	Bill Baker	Barry Plant
<u>Chris Lund</u>	Bernadine Frabotta	Dave Stout*	<u>Brian Kellam*</u>	Bill Agoston
<u>Donna Marlett</u>	Catherine Niemeyer	David Yamamoto	Bill Currie	Chuck Bowen
Janet Crawford	Donna Fraser	Eleanor Ludavicious	Darla Robbins	Debbie Plant
Jerry Hogeveen	Gord Ott	<u>Glenna Allen</u>	Dave Mayhew	Doug Bell
Jim Valade	Irene Hladish	Jack Low	Debbie Dingman	Doug James
John Huff	Jane Adshade	<u>Joan Mulrain</u>	Debbie Dorsey	<u>Drew Gordon (Capper)</u>
Lyndsey Stewart	Jim Carmen	<u>Kathy Bутtenham⁵</u>	Evelyn Merz	<u>Jan Schmidt</u>
Nancy Miller	Joe Gallant	<u>Mark Todd</u>	Fausto Leonetti	Gary Szoke
Pat Churchward	Linda Bradley	<u>Marty Carefoot</u>	Jim Ruth	Judy Knowles
Richard Logozny	Mark Haley	Nancy Cowie	John Gefucia	Jim McCracken
Roy Stout	Mark Johnson	Pat Woodburn	John Staples	Ken Buote*
Tanya Duhaime	Mark Maloney	Reid Pearce	Marilyn Field	Norm Brown
Terry Bouchard	Natalie Mazur	Richard Hachigian	Neil Tottle	Pat Guest
Terry Lalonde	Pat Iorio	Rick Guscott	Ralph Petrella	<u>Peter Prowse</u>
Todd Andre	Susan Norman*	Rob McKinnon	Rick Guscott	Ralph Petrella
Tom Poirer	Tom Poirer	Ron Blacker	Sandy Gray	<u>Tom Van Kooten</u>
Valerie Howes	Val Petrella	Susan Norman*	Tom Maich	Veronica Wroclawski
Vito Picheca	Wendy Belontz	Terry Spiers	Willy Yanchus	Walter Rzeszutko

High school acquaintances. If a connection has persisted to this day, I've underlined and bolded their name. An asterisk indicates that a person is deceased.

And now to the others whose lives, however briefly intersected with mine who were not necessarily “PJ” attendees or East Ward residents. The “PJ” yearbooks spanning (Owanah) the years 65-70 proved to be an invaluable resource. My focused reading revealed some interesting details like the myriad of spelling errors to some of the antics captured by the camera.

My 9E Homeroom Class, 1966

There were thirteen grade nine classes from 9A-9M. Each class represented a proportion of students from the three city wards: East Ward, Eagle Place, and Echo Place as well as the Six Nations and rural portions of Brantford to the East and South.

⁵ Kathy Bутtenham has been married to Terry Everingham for a long time.

An Informal Demography of the 50s and 60s

This list (*right*) was snipped from a report card marks' list posted outside of the homeroom. There were no confidentiality issues back then!

I remain close to this day with several members of this list more than fifty years later.

CONCLUSION

I have posted our universe-as-we-once-knew-it to a Facebook group called **If You Grew Up in Brantford You Remember**.

That way even though a hard, final copy will be produced this exposition will remain alive. I'll be able to revise and re-post for as long as I can type. And after that I'll designate my digital executor to do so.

Someone might think: *I grew up three blocks from you or I knew you in kindergarten. Can you add my name?*

Another might insist on not being listed. I know that misspellings remain. Gently let me know and I will correct.

As well, there are probably many more individuals who are gone that I haven't acknowledged. Tell me!

This group may be located on Facebook at:

https://www.facebook.com/groups/IYGUIBYR/?multi_permaLinks=2551131138292203¬if_id=1554571757249032¬if_t=group_highlights

Once again, a final thanks to Doug Townsend and Bob Vincent. If those two had not returned to the fold and re-connected, then this project would never have been completed.

Student
Adlam, Brian
Agoston, William
Allan, Glenna
Andre, Todd
Balfour, Heather
Bosnell, Brian
Crawford, Lynn
Frankowski, Barbara
Gilmour, Darlene
Gray, Alexander
Hachigan, Richard
Haley, Mark
Hamilton, Robert
Hogeveen, Gerald
Howes, Valerie
Johnson, Mark
MacAskill, James
MacLeod, Arthur
Maich, Thomas
Maloney, Mark
Mayhew, David
Pearce, Reid
Reynolds, Robert
Robbins, Darla
Rzeszutko, Walter
Snoddy, Linda
Spiers, Terrence
Straiko, Brian
Tottle, Neil
Townsend, Douglas
VanLuven, William
White, John
Whitney, Sandra
Williams, George
Yamamoto, David

I really enjoyed playing out the expansive universe theme. The outermost edges are now like our collective memories blurred. Some cosmologists theorize that universal expansion will slow, stop, and gather like a Tai Chi move to contract to the Big Crunch. Perhaps in some parallel universe just a breath away another East Ward will explode from a singularity.

Now I'll leave you, the reader, with this:

I tell myself the walls are just walls. Our past isn't folded into them, our joys and sorrows aren't etched on the door frames, our tales have not stuck to the kitchen cupboards like turmeric and nicotine. I remind myself we get to keep our memories and stories, take them with us wherever we go.

- Tsabari, Ayele. *The Art of Leaving: A Memoir*

Brian (The Boz) Bosnell, August 2019

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Brian Bosnell is a retired elementary school teacher. Now, early in every day, he's learning to write and at any other time, he's a pathological reader.

A DAY WELL SPENT WITH AUNT BELLA

By Gillian Holden

Everyone should keep a little corner of their heart separate for remembering what it was like to be eight years old.

When I was eight, I spent many summer holidays with Aunty Bella and Uncle Jack, and I have nothing but good memories of my time in Hamilton with them. Aunty Bella was like a grandma to me. She spoiled me on one hand but also kept me in check. Our days were filled with shopping, egg collecting, visiting, and looking after Uncle Jack.



Uncle Jack and Aunty Bella

Aunty Bella's bedroom was at the back of the house overlooking the garden. She had a blue couch and a matching chair with three cushions. After removing the cushions from the couch, the stack of three cushions in front of the chair would become my bed. She had a wonderful, miniature set of drawers in which I could keep my clothes and dolls.

A Day Well Spent with Aunt Bella



Aunty Bella's daughter, Joyce

In the morning we would stay in her room until her daughter, Joyce, and son-in-law, Russ, had finished in the bathroom and then left for work at the Steel Company. Just before she left, Joyce would pop her head in and give me some coins to spend.

Then our day began. Aunty Bella would get me washed and dressed, we would make up the couch and tidy around. Aunty Bella would do her hair. She had long hair, past her waist. She would brush it, bring it over her shoulder, and braid it, winding excess hair around the end to hold it in place, then wrap it into a bun and pin it in place. I just loved watching her do her hair.

Aunty Bella's husband, Uncle Jack, had a stroke which paralyzed him on his left side. He had lost his ability to speak but somehow we were always able to communicate. Aunty Bella and I would go down to the kitchen for our breakfast and to prepare the table for Uncle Jack. She would give me some money, a little basket, and send me next door to her neighbor, Pearl, to buy some eggs. Pearl had a chicken coop and a vegetable plot in her backyard.

Two eggs were put on boil. She would scrape them into a bowl and chop them up for Uncle Jack's convenience. She would make two slices of toast, cut off the crusts, slather them with butter and marmalade, and cut them into bite size pieces. When we had finished our tea, Aunty Bella would add boiling water, sugar and milk to the teapot and cover it with a tea cozy. All of this made it easier for Uncle Jack to eat his breakfast. Uncle Jack was able to dress himself and shave. He would come downstairs backwards so he could hold the bannister with his right hand – the hand he used to manage it all.



Aunt Bella and me at Dufferin School

Once Aunt Bella had organized everything for Uncle Jack's convenience, we would head out to do the shopping. She would give me some coins for my change purse so I could buy a treat. We would catch the bus right across the road from her house and ride it a short way down Main Street.

Aunt Bella knew everyone,

and everyone knew her. We would go to the butchers, the fish monger, the grocers, and the bakery. The lady who worked there always gave me an Empire Cookie. Everyone greeted Aunt Bella.

"Hi Mrs. Hamer," they'd say, "And who is this with you?"

We would then go to a store that sold everything from china to pots and pans. They had a counter at which you could buy a sticky bun and a cup of tea. Aunt Bella would then take me to 'Woolworth's 5 and 10' so that I could buy my treat. I always bought paper dolls. Always!

Then we would catch the bus home, which stopped right outside Aunt Bella's front door. I would play a game in my head, hoping that the doors of the bus would open right level with her front path. When we arrived home Uncle Jack would be sitting in



My mom, Aunty Aunt Bella, Joyce, Uncle Jack and me.

A Day Well Spent with Aunt Bella

his chair by the front window. He always wanted me to show him what I had bought with my spending money so he would nudge me with his foot.

My time with Aunt Bella and Uncle Jack was time well spent. They took such good care of me and when I was with them, I knew I was part of their family. They taught me to have compassion. When I look back, it took such work to care for Uncle Jack, but Aunt Bella and Joyce did it so well. He had the nicest disposition and I think it was because of the good care he received.

Joyce and Russ belonged to a theatre group that put on musical productions. Joyce had a beautiful singing voice and they both danced. I was always taken to see them perform. Joyce also belonged to the Bach Elgar Choir. She was always happy and singing.



The Hamilton Savoyards, 1956

Aunt Bella, Uncle Jack, Joyce and Russ spent many Sundays at my house for dinner. My dad loved to spend time with Uncle Jack. They communicated well in their own way.

I really do have so many warm memories.



Me on Aunty Bella and Uncle Jack's back porch

RECOLLECTIONS FROM A PICTURE

1955

The pictures in this story, all taken in 1955, were sent to me by my cousin in 2017. They were found in her mother's album. Her mother was my Aunt Rhoda, my dad's sister.

What do I recall?

Our house was full of Christmas. There were lots of parties and yuletide merriment. Of course, I was more than excited at the thought of Santa Claus arriving.

I waited with anticipation for the mailman every day. Parcels from England, all wrapped in brown postal paper, tied with string, and slightly damaged. Small tears revealed the Christmas wrap inside. They were



covered with stamps, green decals, and declaration forms. My mother would let me remove the brown paper and set the parcels under the tree. "Don't be reading the declaration forms to see what's inside," she would warn. I did read them, of course.

On Christmas morning when the gifts were opened, not one of them contained that which had been written on the declaration form. A box of chalk was really a pack of Players cigarettes for my dad. Where one form had listed a tablecloth, the opened package revealed a pretty dress for me. Toblerone chocolate bars were the highlight of Christmas morning.

I received many books. Inside the inscriptions read:

To Cousin Gillian from Tony and Terry, Love from Grandma, and, many happy hours of reading from Auntie Annie and Uncle Cyril.

I asked my mother to tell me again who they were. I had never met any family so I wanted to hear all about them. My mother would sit under the tree and take pictures to send along with thank you notes to all the relatives in England.



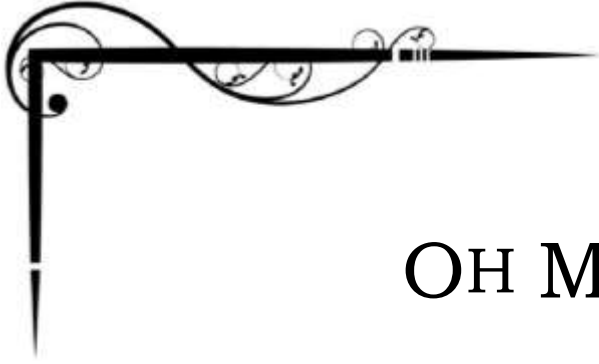
Family pictures also came to us. So much mail crossed the ocean. My mother and her family kept the lines of communication open. I never met them, but at least I knew who they were.

This is what I do recall: There were no Christmas cards or presents from my dad's side of the family.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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, card-making, sewing children's jackets, and writing class. There are not enough hours in a day.



OH MY PAPA

By Herbert Sormin

*Oh My Papa
To me you are so wonderful
Oh My Papa
To me you are so good.*

*Gone are the days
When you would take me on your knees
And with a smile
You'd turn my tears to laughter.*

*Oh My Papa
To me you are so wonderful
Oh My Papa
To me you are so good.*

*- ~Music and Lyrics by Paul Burkhard. Translation
by John Turner and Geoffrey Parsons*

BATAK HERITAGE

My Papa, Mian Pastin Sormin, was born in the village of Onang Hasang on March 27, 1908 to Mr.& Mrs. Gideon Sormin. Onang Hasang is in the district of Tapanuli, which lies in the sub-district Pahae in the province of Sumatra, the largest island in the country of Indonesia. He was the fourth child in a family of four brothers and five sisters.

I had the privilege of visiting my Grandparents in 1952 and 1957. Ompung Doli owned over two hundred acres of land that produced rice, coffee, pepper, rubber, palm and coconut trees. Ompung Boru (the Batak way to address Grand Ma) was warm and engaging. She'd hand me a wooden pestle and I'd pound black rice in a wooden bowl to make delicious tea. Every day Ompung Boru would send me with two wooden buckets to help Cousin Arta fetch water. It was a half kilometer walk down to the base of a waterfall - an open park where folks had their daily showers, chatted with friends, filled their buckets, and headed back home. I remember those slippery walks down to the waterfall and back up to Grandma's kitchen door and cherish memories of the delicious rice puddings, cakes, and fried bananas she made for us.

"Muliate goodang, Ompung!"

My paternal Ompungs were Christians and faithful members of the Rhenish Lutheran Church. After supper and before bedtime we had Bible readings and prayers. They attended Church on Sundays. My Papa would tell us of Ompung Doli praying fervently for God's blessing before he planted the rice seeds at the start of the rice planting season.

Years later, as I was growing up in Ayer Manis, Sarawak, my Papa taught me to count the fruits at harvest time. Every time I counted 10 coconuts, 10 durians, 10

papayas. He told me to set the 10th fruit aside as the tithe, holy to the Lord, a Biblical principle that I humbly practise today.

School in Sipogu

Papa attended the vernacular school run by the German Rhenish Lutheran Mission in his village. School rules were strict: if a student missed a class without permission or missed Sunday school, he was to stand on one foot for 10 minutes with both hands on his head in front of the class. Or he was asked to carry a stone as large as his head from a nearby creek to the school compound. If it was a serious matter, he would be ordered to go and stay in the chicken coop for ten to fifteen minutes.

Papa loved going to school and returning home to do house chores while his parents, brothers, and sisters worked in the fields. One day his maternal cousin, Julianus Pohan, a student at the Malayan Seminary, a Seventh-day Adventist institution in Singapore, visited them. He suggested that his younger cousin, Mian (my Papa), might consider attending the Batakland English School in Sipogu, Sipirok, pioneered by Pastor Dallas S. Kime and his wife, both Adventist missionary nurses from the United States in 1921.

In Papa's words: "There were no means of transportation. I had the privilege of having my father with me. We had to walk barefooted with bundles of clothes hanging on our backs. We had sore feet walking two days and one night to reach the school. Upon our arrival in the village of Sipogu, we discovered that there was no school building. Classes were held in three large rented houses in the village with seating for 200 students and students boarding with villagers. The family I boarded with had a 5 ½ month old baby girl and it was my duty to look after her while her parents worked in the paddy fields and I had to bring the baby to her Mama every meal time to be fed.

“In the second year I moved to a new home with two other guys where we took turns cooking our own meals and discovered that we spent less than when we were boarders. The school year went on smoothly as we got better acquainted with our friends and teachers. Teachers invited us to their homes on Friday and Saturday evenings. We learned to sing in English and searched the Scriptures together.

“In the third year, the new school building was completed with five classrooms and an office on the Adventist Mission compound named “Huta Kime” (Village of Kime) by the Dutch government. Three barbed wire gates were built at the entrances to protect people from the Sumatra tigers that roamed the area at night. When the dormitory was completed, the students happily moved in. Theophilus D. Manullang, a native Batak who had been running a newspaper and publishing business in Tarutung, Tapanuli at the invitation of Pastor Kime, joined the teaching staff. He was also the Dean of Men who cordially invited students to his home for meals and Bible studies in the evenings that resulted in Papa accepting Christ as His Lord and Saviour under the cover of darkness on December 26, 1926. He did this with another student from Sipogu and a village chief at a baptismal service in the Segeaon River conducted by Pastor L. V. Finster, Superintendent of the Malaysian Union Mission.

Malayan Seminary in Singapore

In January 1927 Mian bade “Good-bye” to his Amang, Inang, Ompung Boru, Ahkhangs (brothers) and Eethaws (sisters), took an overnight bus ride to the sea port of Medan. They boarded a ship to Singapore to attend Malayan Seminary. It was the Adventist training school for pastors, teachers, Bible workers and accountants that would take Christ’s Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, 20: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.”

At the seminary Mian met students from Burma, Ceylon, China, French Indo-China, India, Java, Malaya, North Borneo, Sarawak, Siam, and Sumatra. The school environment opened his eyes, mind, and heart to a deeper understanding and respect for people of other cultures who spoke strange dialects.

One afternoon in 1962 in my first year of mission service, I was relaxing in a corner of the library of Adventist English School in Bangkok, when Mrs. Ee Mui Kim, the Librarian, came up to me, smiling and said,

“How’s your Dad?”

“You know my Papa?” I responded and she burst out laughing.

She told me of meeting Papa at the Seminary, of how she enjoyed his singing and playing the piano, and that he had sold Christian literature and health books in Bangkok during the school break. She invited me home for dinner and to meet her family. It was inspiring to discover that I was walking on the streets of Bangkok where my Papa walked, sharing the Good News of Jesus’ saving grace to the people of Thailand.

Having teaching in mind as a career, Papa enrolled in the Normal Teaching Course. To help defray his school expenses he cleaned the drains around the dormitory and cut the lawn. But that was not enough so after nine months of classed he began selling religious literature and medical books during the three months break. Kuala Lumpur, capital of Malaya, was his first assignment.

By knocking on doors with a fellow colporteur, trained by N. J. Hutaaruk, the Assistant Publishing Director of the Malaysian Union Mission, he earned his first full scholarship. He was glad that his parents didn’t have to send him money to keep him in school. In his third year, he and his colporteur buddy sailed to British North Borneo to sell books in the cities of Sandakan and Jesselton.

They were excited about returning to the Seminary to complete their studies only to be told that college would be closed because of the shortage of student enrollment.

WHEN GOD STEPS UP

But God stepped up and opened the door for mission service. Papa's friend was invited to teach at Sunny Hill School in Kuching, Sarawak and Papa was invited to teach at Tamparuli Training School in Jesselton (Kota Kinabalu, Sabah) and assist Pastor J.W. Rowland, Director of the Mission, in January 1930. This began his first year in denominational work with the Adventist Church of the Malaysian Union Mission.

After graduation in 1931, he was called as a Bible worker to minister to the Sea Dayaks in Sarawak. There were two things required of any Mission appointee to work among the Sea Dayaks: language study and getting married. Mian dove into learning the Iban dialect but marriage had never entered his mind. He recalls getting on the motorized long boat with Pastor A. Munson, Director of the Sarawak Mission, and Pastor J. T. Pohan, his cousin, on his first mission trip to Enkellili, home of the Sea Dayaks.

The Adventist Mission boat was intercepted on the Sarawak River by a government boat and a letter was handed to Pastor Munson. It was from the Raja Muda, the younger brother of Sir Charles Vyner Brooke, the white Raja of Sarawak and it declared the prohibition of the Adventist Mission entering into Enkellili.

Soon after, Papa was invited to work as an accountant in the Business Office of his alma mater, Malayan Seminary. Then, in 1936 he received an official call by the Sarawak Mission to teach music at Sunny Hill School in the morning and be the accountant at the Mission Office in the afternoon.

In 1937, after seven years of mission service, Mian and his colleague, S. M. Hutapea, received their first furlough. They were instructed by the Mission officers to return with a wife!

Buddies on a Secret Mission

On their first home leave both Papa and S. M. Hutapea had a special mission: to find a wife. Unbeknownst to both of them, they had proposed to the same gal. Via the “adat Batak” (Batak custom) they’d both written to their parents to reach out to Pastor & Mrs. Theophilus D. Manullang for the hand of their oldest daughter, Alma Octavia.

When we learned this, my siblings and I asked, “Mama, what happened?”

“Well”, she replied, “Ompung Doli liked one guy, Ompung Boru liked the other. So I prayed to the Lord, Father, that the guy who eats out of my hands be the right one. His will be done, Amen. Both of them got off the same boat in Medan. Your Papa’s colleague went to see his parents but your Papa came to my parents and asked for my hand. He was invited to stay for the night. I served supper. The rest is history”

Mian and Alma were married on March 22, 1937 on a bright Monday morning in a little church a few hundred yards from the beautiful, clear waters of Lake Toba. Over 200 guests attended; relatives, friends, and church members from the churches that Ompung Manullang was in charge of. Pastor G. A. Wood, President of the Adventist Malaysian Union Mission conducted the wedding service.

Papa and Mama reached out to S. M. Hutapea, going from village to village looking for another gal interested in mission service and soon the Sormins and the Hutapeas returned to Sarawak to serve the Lord.

Adventist Mission in Sarawak

The Radja Muda favoured the Anglican, Catholic and Methodist missions but placed restrictions on the Adventist Church, one being the sale of Adventist literature. In the late 1880's Abram La Rue, a retired seaman converted into the Adventist Church left the United States and began selling Adventist literature in Hong Kong and Southeast Asia including Kuching, Sarawak.

In 1914, Mr. S. S. Phang, an Adventist colporteur from Singapore sold Christian literature to the Chinese community in Kuching that resulted in 16 persons requesting a Chinese minister to teach them. In response to the request, R. P. Montgomery, director-designate of the Borneo Mission of the SDA's, sailed for Kuching on January 12, 1915 on board the SS Rajah of Sarawak laden with books and tracts for distribution.

Upon disembarkation two days later, he was confronted by security officers and escorted to the government rest house. His books were confiscated and four days later placed on the same ship back to Singapore.

In 1970, while researching the archives of the Church and the Sarawak Museum, I read of the arrest of an Adventist literature salesman who was imprisoned. Can you guess who it was? My Papa!

In 1915, C. M. Lee, a former editor of the Chinese Signs of the Times, an SDA periodical edited in Shanghai, and preaching evangelist in Singapore, retired after losing his voice. He moved to Kuching where his sister, Amy, and brother-in-law, S. M. Tan, a dentist, led the Chinese congregation in his clinic. As the congregation grew, it moved to the spacious Lee Studio.

On Saturday, April 9, 1916 a severe test came to Lee. Rajah Sir Charles Brooke had sent for him to take pictures of the official opening of the Sarawak National

Railway. Lee kindly told the officer that it was the Sabbath and that he would rather obey God's commandments than the Rajah's orders. "Mr. Lee," the officer countered, "the word of the Rajah is law and if you disobey he can deport you anytime without notice."

The next week went by slowly for Lee. Then suddenly, on Friday, the Rajah came to the studio flanked by officers. He smiled, looked at the glass roof and the side lights of the studio and said, "So this is your studio, eh?"

The Rajah put his hand into his hip pocket and handed Lee a bunch of films for him to develop and print. Soon a friendship developed between the Rajah and Lee, with Lee taking photographs for the Rajah on official occasions.

Less than a year later, on May 17, 1917 Sarawak mourned the death of her Rajah. Seven days later, Vyner Brooke, son of the deceased, was installed as the third Rajah. At his coronation, he proclaimed: "I make known to you Datus, Pengirans, Abangs, Inchis, Chiefs, and all classes of people in Sarawak that I will, on no account, interfere with the Mohammedan faith or with any religions or beliefs of the people."

Sarawak celebrated its 100th Anniversary of Raja Brooke's rule in 1941. Shortly after World War II it became a colony of the United Kingdom, and then become part of Malaysia in 1963.

The Legacy of Pastor Gus Youngberg

In July of 1968 I received an official call to teach at Sunny Hill School and be the associate pastor of the bi-lingual Kuching Adventist Church located on the campus of the School. In December, while attending my first Inter-Faith meeting at the St. Thomas Anglican Church and planning for the Inter-Faith Christmas Celebrations, all pastors were invited to introduce themselves. When I mentioned my name and

church affiliation, the Arch Deacon of the Anglican Church turned to me and shook my hand, saying, “Do you know your Pastor, Gus Youngberg?”

I responded, “No, I’ve never met him but my parents and grandparents knew him.”

Still holding my hand and turning to the rest of the clergy, he said, “We Anglicans consider your Pastor Youngberg a Saint. He ministered to the prisoners of war during WW II. He is a saint.”

A few days later, I took time to visit Youngberg’s grave in the Anglican Cemetery, located between St. Thomas School and the Sarawak Museum. As I stood by his graveside, I pondered, “Here rests a man of God. He gave his life in service to the Lord.” I prayed, “Lord, I am weak but Thou art strong. I surrender my life to You.”

Youngberg left Riverside, California on July 14, 1941 for San Francisco to take the last ship to Singapore. He did not have to.

The General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church realizing the danger of war in the Orient and the recent death of a missionary due to malaria suggested he remain in the States.

In Norma Youngberg’s words:

“All the way to the British Consulate he prayed ‘God if you do not want me to go back to Borneo at this time, hinder me in some way.’ He got his visa. Borneo reached out in the fall and told of many improvements being made, of students flocking in, the scourge of malarial mosquitoes had been dealt with, and he felt the place to be healthful enough now.”

- Norma Youngberg, Under Sealed Orders

Auntie Mauli, our Beloved Nanny

Mama's younger sister, Auntie Mauli, was a teenage girl when Papa and Mama got married. She joined the young missionary couple and travelled with them to Sarawak. Papa and Mama put her through school. She was and is the beloved Auntie Mauli to many nieces and nephews, so many she nicknamed them ABCDEF.

Alice Lauraine Partogi was born on Papa's Birthday, 1938 at the Kuching General Hospital.

Beatrice Irene Dame was born in 1940 at the Kuching General Hospital.

Clarance Herbert Sahat Matoua, was born at home, hovered by durian trees at Third Mile, Rock Road, in 1941.

Dorothea May Pertua was born in 1944 in a bamboo house, Ayer Manis.

Edwin Victor Mangaradja Parmonang was also born in a bamboo house in Ayer Manis, in 1946.

Florence Grace Asi was born above the library of Sunny Hill School in 1947.

Except for Alice and Beatrice, all the others were birthed with Papa as the mid-wife and Auntie Mauli, as the "assistant nurse".

Auntie Mauli, our beloved Nanny, loved and cared for ABCDEF. May, my baby sister often played on the bamboo floor. On one hot day in January of '46, while playing with Cousin Lawrence under the guava tree in front of the house in the village of Ayer Manis (Sweet Water), I saw women running up the bamboo steps into Mama's bedroom. I heard women screaming and a baby crying. I saw Auntie Mauli smiling with a bundle in her hands.

"Is May okay?" I cried.

"May's okay. Mama's okay. You've got a brother!"

When the War ended, Papa returned to his work as Treasurer of the Sarawak Mission and Mama taught at Sunny Hill School. We lived above the Library, with the school building on our left and the Kuching Adventist Church on our right. Behind the Library sits the baptismal pool and a water well where I learned to draw buckets of water for Mama's kitchen.

The War Years

During the War, Mama, Auntie Mauli, and other church members would often visit and bring food to Pastor Youngberg and missionaries from other faith groups at the pow camp that is now Bukit Lintang Teachers College.

I remember missing Papa when he was taken away by the Japanese soldiers to do forced labour repairing the war tarmac that is now the Kuching Airport. I would miss Papa and often wondered if I'd see him again.

On Friday evenings, the missionary families living on the Ayer Manis Mission compound, thirty-seven miles from Kuching would gather for supper around a fireplace. We'd celebrate the Sabbath with the singing of hymns, Bible Reading, and prayer. Often Japanese soldiers with their red-caps and rifles and the sun shining on their bayonets would march up to our Sabbath gathering.

Fear would rise up within me but then greetings of "Kuni-chi-wa!" would be exchanged. They would be invited to supper, and slapped on their backs by the elders. "Ari-ga-to! Go-chai-i-mas! (Thank you)" and then they were gone. I would often ponder that Papa was missing and yet the Japs were enjoying our food, and singing hymns with us. How could they be enemies?

SOUTHEAST ASIA UNION COLLEGE

In 1948, Papa was called to be Treasurer of his alma mater, Malayan Seminary. Mama taught school at a Chinese School operated by a Christian family in the village of Potong Pasir, just a mile down Upper Serangoon Road. In the afternoon she ran an embroidery school at home.

Under the Girls Dorm

We lived in one of the staff homes under the girl's dormitory until I was eighteen. Imagine growing up in a home with girls running above you! It was fun. I'd sit on the footsteps of the dorm and watch gals from Burma, Ceylon, China, Hong Kong, French Indo China, India, Indonesia, Malaya, the Philippines, Sarawak, Sabah, and Thailand talking in different dialects.

After a couple of years, Mama was invited to head the Housekeeping Department at the Youngberg Memorial Hospital, just half a mile from Papa's office at the Malayan Seminary that was renamed Southeast Asia Union College in 1958 because it was now part of the Southeast Union Mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Love for Youth and Community

Papa and Mama were parents who loved and cared for ABCDEF and other kids in the community. They were involved in the Red Cross and church activities. They were both Master Guides and led out in the Pathfinder Club, a church youth organization much like the Boy Scouts. The juniors started as Friends, Companions, and Guides then finally as Master Guides to lead others to follow the Lord Jesus. I remember the first Youth Camporee I attended in Pulau Senang, an island in the Malaacca Straits, sleeping between Papa and Mama in a tent by the beach.

Oh My Papa

There were over two dozen tents. I remember the raising of the Union Jack, the marching by units, enjoying the beautiful sunrise, and swimming in the ocean. Then there was Pulau Ubin camporee across from the state of Johore of the Malayan peninsula at Pongool Beach. It overlooked the RAF Seletar Air Base and Changi Beach.

There was family time on Sabbath afternoons. We'd have lunch packed before going to church and then after church we'd run to the bus stop, and get on the bus - ten cents for children and twenty-five cents for adults.

We would head to the Botanical Gardens, spread the mats, and enjoy our sumptuous meal under the tamarind trees. We'd feed groups of white tail monkeys as they walked out of the bush, enjoy chirping sparrows above us, sing hymns as the sun set, then head home.

TIME FOR GROWING CHILDREN

In 1968, after my comprehensive exams for graduate studies, I proposed to Sunipa under an umbrella as rain showered above us walking across the college campus in Baesa, Caloocan City. I invited my parents to join us. They flew to the Philippines and added joy to our engagement party in the home of Dr. & Mrs. Sydney Allen, Dean of the School of Theology.

Wedding Bells Call

The next year, early in August, a week before our wedding, Papa flew to Toronto for my oldest sister, Alice's wedding to Maarten Keyer. Maarten was born in Indonesia and a veteran of the Netherland Army. Understanding adat Batak, he had written to Papa and Mama proposing for Alice's hand in marriage. Maarten, a chef, and Alice, a nurse, both worked at the North York Branson Hospital.

Papa was proud to place Alice's hand in Maarten's at the Willowdale Adventist Church, on Sunday, August 5. The next week, Mama arrived in Bangkok for Sunipa and my wedding held at the Bangkok Adventist Chinese Church on Sunday, August 12, 1969.

Rin and Win

In 1970, Irene, my second oldest sister, was expecting her first child at the North York Branson Hospital. After completing her nursing studies at the Balmain Hospital in Sydney, Australia, Irene returned to Singapore and served at the Youngberg Memorial Hospital for a few years before moving to London, UK where Florence, our youngest sister was doing her nurse's training at London Jewish Hospital. Shortly after her marriage to Winston Galloway, a guy from St. Kitts, at the Oxford Adventist Church, they moved to Toronto and Irene joined Alice as a nurse at Branson Hospital.

Dr. Steele Calls

A few weeks before she was to birth her son, Irene became very ill. She had previously had a medical problem and surgery while in nursing school. Now in the maternity ward, the old problem returned. After many medical procedures, Dr. Robert Steele, the physician attending to her and who had served at Youngberg Memorial Hospital, called Papa on the phone. He shared with Papa the critical condition that Irene was in and suggested that he and Mama fly over immediately.

God Performs a Miracle

Papa and Mama arrived at Toronto airport and rushed to Branson Hospital. Winston met them and said, "Irene is in the ICU," and led them to her room.

Oh My Papa

She was unconscious. After much thought and prayer, Papa and Mama requested of Pastor Schanders of the Willowdale Adventist Church a special anointing and prayer. With members of the family standing around Irene, Pastor Colborne, Chaplain of the Branson Hospital, anointed her with oil and offered a fervent prayer requesting the Lord to heal her. A miracle took place. Irene's son, Halomoan, was born two days later on December 16.



Today Halomoan, his wife, Kym, and daughters, Asia and Ella reside in Ajax, happy to visit Ompungs in Markham. *(Image above.)*

Bangkok Visits

In October 24, 1971 we were blessed with the arrival of Linda Rotua, our first child at the Bangkok Adventist Hospital, delivered by Dr. Wes Youngberg, son of Pastor Gus Youngberg. Papa and Mama flew to Bangkok and visited us in our home in Ekamai at the Thailand Mission compound.

Then again, in 1974, Papa and Mama took time to visit and to welcome Clarence Oloan into the family.

When Clarence was old enough to travel we flew to Singapore and were welcomed home by Ompungs. Mama and Papa took time off from work and drove us in their Morris Minor to Changi Beach, where many years back ABCDEF enjoyed family picnics.

CANADA CALLS

Aside from serving in the Treasury Office of the Malayan Union Mission, Papa served as Treasurer of Southeast Asia Union College until his retirement in 1975. At that time he and Mama emigrated to Toronto where my sisters, Alice, Beatrice, and Florence lived. Edwin was nearby, in Chatham, Ontario.

Papa and Mama found a place just around the corner from Branson Hospital. They attended the Willowdale Adventist Church, next to the Hospital. Papa got a job in a bank and Mama worked at Branson Hospital.

A few years later as membership grew at the Willowdale Church, a group of members worked with the Church Board and went on a mission to start a new congregation in the Downsview community, just a few kilometers west of the Church on Finch Avenue.

Papa and Mama were charter members of the Downsview Adventist Church, located at 37 Bakersfield Street. There they led the Youth and Pathfinders Club activities.

Papa and Mama's Golden Anniversary Celebration

On June 21, 1987 we had the joy of celebrating Papa and Mama's Golden Wedding Anniversary at the Willowdale Seventh-day Adventist Church. Those present were: ABCDEF and their spouses, Auntie Flora Hutabarat, a retired missionary to Sabah and Singapore from Avondale, Australia, Dr. Wellington Manullang, Mama's brother, a retired medical doctor and his wife, Darlene, from Seattle, Washington, Auntie Thelma Tobing, a retired nurse and husband, Sutan Tobing, from Los Angeles, California, Archimedes Sormin, our Cousin and a missionary at the Saigon Adventist Hospital, from Indonesia, Madam Chin Kim Meng, mother-in-law to Florence, from Malaysia, Maybelle Bradshaw, daughter

Oh My Papa

of Auntie Mauli, from Oshawa, Arnold Hutabarat, son of Auntie Flora, from Michigan, US.

Ten grandchildren were there as well, including, Alicia and Martin Keyer, Halomoan Galloway, Linda and Clarence Sormin, Shawna, Chad and Tim Sormin, and Gracelyn and Randy Ban.



Papa and Mama's 50th wedding anniversary celebration

Organist Arnold started the service with Meditation in Music as honoured guests - uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces, children and grandchildren, friends and Church members were seated. Arnold rendered a vocal solo, Spirit Song.

As the golden bride and groom were ushered, Trumpet Tune filled the air. The congregation sang How Great Thou Art. Grandchildren sang Our God is a God of Love. Uncle Tobing offered the Invocation.

Clarence Herbert stood at the pulpit, the Lord was praised for blessing Mama and Papa, celebrating their Golden Anniversary, because of His love. The congregation was challenged to hold on to their mates, not by their strength but His!

Daughters and daughters-in-law sang Silent Wedding Prayer. Uncle Wellington Manullang offered Prayer of Consecration. A mixed sextette of children sang Our Thanks, O God, for Fathers. Then ... Horas! Mangan, Ahmang! Mangan, Inang! Let's eat and celebrate!

Poem Celebrating Papa and Mama's Golden Anniversary

In preparing for the celebration of Papa and Mama's Golden Wedding Anniversary, I worked on a poem entitled Silingdung Love Song. (See next page.)

Papa and Mama celebrated their 60th Anniversary in 1997 (*below*) and now rest peacefully in the Lord, at Westminster Cemetery, Yonge Street, Toronto.



SILINGDUNG LOVE SONG

Tapanuli rivers flow
gently watering Silingdung
Valley;
Always nurturing seeds of love
That rains romance from
above.

When Balige bells did ring,
Two hearts, woven as ulos
Batak
Walked down the aile in
"thirty seven"--
Two lives, bound by earth and
heaven.

All too soon came mission
service
Away, across the Java Sea--
Kuching, Sarawak, Borneo
bliss,
To witness souls set free.

Sunny Hill, siren screaming--
Kuching Harbour, ship not
waiting;
Serian days, see wet rice
planting
Auntie Mauli, baby's crying!

Yet through the toilsome tasks
and tears,
A-B-C-D-E-F are sure:
Mama and Papa through those
years,
Love and devotion did grow.

Singapore squeaks of Change
Alley,
Potong Pasir, S-A-U-C,
Youngberg Hospital, err wait!
Serangoon Garden Estate.

How pleasant it is that always
There's someone standing by
you--
Someone to touch and love
you,
Someone to hold on, too!

Someone to call you, "Dear",
"Honey",
To look at you when you're
wise;
Someone to care when you're
sorry,
To kiss the tears from your
eyes.

When life has begun to be
weary,
And youth to melt like the
dew,
To know, like the little
Children
Somebody's standing by you.

The path cannot be so lonely,
For Someone walks beside you,
dear,
The golden years come
without fear
Because you're standing by
me!

Can you think of anything
fairer
Than to feel when days are
few
To reminisce the valley of
Silingdung
And know that heaven's near.

*To Mama & Papa
On your 50th Anniversary
Love,*

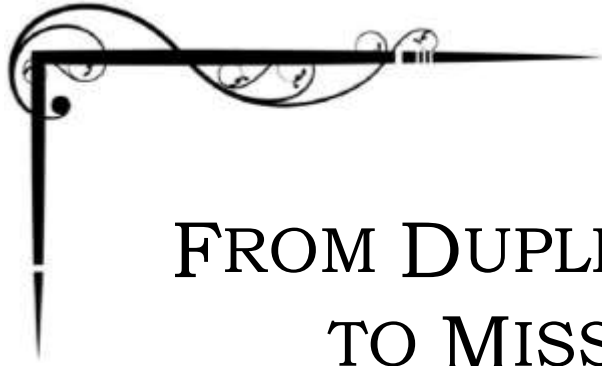
*Herbert B. Jonni
March 22, 1955*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



The Sormin Family, 1997

Herbert and Sunipa Sormin are happily retired in Brantford, celebrating their 50th Anniversary on August 12, 2019. Their daughter, Linda, is a professor of art in New York University, and son, Clarence, is Creative Supervisor & CG Visualization, Lead of Whirlpool in Michigan.



FROM DUPLICATE BRIDGE TO MISS CANADA

By Kay Ridout Boyd

"Here she comes, Miss Canada 1967."

The studio of onlookers and TV personnel burst into laughter and brought the upcoming show rehearsal to a complete halt.

- - -

As a single parent, I learned how to pinch my pennies rather well.

There used to be a little secondhand children's clothing shop on Colborne Street where Humble Taxi used to be and where the Beckett Building now stands. I frequented that little shop quite regularly looking for clothes for my family of four. At that time my children ranged in age from six to ten years old. Those are ages when growth comes in spurts and children quickly grow out of their clothes. The little shop offered a wide selection of clothing, all in very good condition. I shopped there often and became acquainted with the two ladies who ran it. As I searched through the racks, we chatted and they learned a great deal about me and my family. In fact, sometimes they would call me if they thought I might be interested in something that came to the store. They knew that I was on my own, that I had a business background, got along well with people, and could play bridge.

One day while shopping, one of the ladies asked me if I would be willing to work on a Saturday. I told her, of course I would, since my mother was home on Saturdays and could take care of my children. She explained that the Grand Valley Duplicate Bridge Tournament was to be held at the old Jolly Baron Hotel in Echo Place and they needed someone to type up the scores as the games were played. It would be a paid job.

I leapt at the opportunity inasmuch as every penny counted and a few dollars would certainly go a long way in my meager budget. Maybe the ladies knew that it didn't matter what I was paid, they would probably get it all back in their store anyway!

When the day arrived, I presented myself at the Jolly Baron where they had a creaky old typewriter set up on a table near the large room where the bridge tables were lined up in rows. Although I played bridge, I didn't really consider myself a good player and I'd certainly never experienced a tournament. It was quite interesting. While the play was on, it was very quiet but once the hands were played and it was time to move to another table, the room filled with noise as everyone discussed the just-played hand. It was my job to type the score sheets up as quickly as possible so we'd be ready for the next round. It wasn't a difficult job, but it kept me busy throughout the day. When the tournament was finished, and I had completed typing the scores, I was tired but it had been an interesting day. I was paid and happily went on my way home with enough money to take some strain off the family expense.

A few months later, one of the ladies called me and asked me to come into the little shop. She told me that she had another job for me. Anxious to know what it might be, I went in. She explained to me that she was involved with the Miss Canada Pageant as a chaperone and that another person would be required to fill the place of an official chaperone who was retiring. She told me I would be away

From Duplicate Bridge to Miss Canada

from home for an entire week. She knew that I might not be able to arrange that but she felt that I would make a good chaperone inasmuch as I was just the right age and had the personality to be able to get along with everyone. I also learned that there was no pay involved but that all of my hotel costs, food and transportation would be paid, and that it was really a lot of fun.

I was somewhat overwhelmed about the idea and of course I couldn't make a commitment until I talked to my mother to ask if she would be able to look after the kids while I was away. She agreed and I telephoned to say that, yes, I could take on that responsibility. This was definitely going to be a whole new life experience and I was looking forward to it with great anticipation.

The base for the Pageant was a new hotel near the new CTV station in Scarborough. When I arrived, I was met by the head chaperone and introduced to Mr. Rice who was a principal in Cleo Productions who owned the rights to the Miss Canada Pageant. As I recall, there were 12 chaperones, each responsible for two competitors. Chaperones had private rooms next door to the room their contestants would be in. The upper rooms, which were set aside for pageant personnel, were off limits to absolutely everyone except the contestants and the chaperones. There was a guard on duty twenty-four hours a day. During an initial meeting of chaperones, we were instructed about our roles and responsibilities.

Chaperones were required to write a personal letter to the parents of our candidates so that they would be secure in the knowledge that their daughters were being well taken care of. Many of the young ladies were away from home for the very first time and needed constant attention. We would help them with their clothing, take care of any home sickness, make sure they had everything they needed throughout the week, and accompany them when they were attending all of the arranged functions during the week-long run up to the show. They were like our own daughters and were to be taken care of accordingly.

When the girls were in rehearsal for the show, the chaperones simply sat in the background and stayed as quiet as a group of ladies can. We chatted with each other, some knitted, but mostly we just watched with interest all that was going on. All of the girls had to learn the various dance routines for the show and some of them had never done anything like that before. It was a new experience for everyone, including most of the chaperones. One learns very quickly that there is no room for error. Live shows have to be timed to the second, everyone must be well prepared, and that includes the camera operators, floor directors, and hosts - absolutely everyone must do as instructed.

The hotel ballroom was used for blocking the show and during daily rehearsals. Sometimes a public relations event was planned for which the girls had to appear well dressed with their provincial or city banners. On those occasions the chaperones had to be with them at all times. There were many photography shoots as well. In the evenings, dinner was usually a special event with everyone on their best behavior and properly attired. Crammed between the rehearsals were fittings for long gowns and bathing suits.

The days were long and arduous for everyone involved in the pageant. As well, the girls were being interviewed by the official judges several times throughout the week. There were tears, there were boyfriends, parents, and siblings being missed, and more tears. When that happened it was the duty of the chaperone to help get the girls back on track and comfortable, with supportive words and lots of hugs. There was a lot at stake for those young women. Contrary to popular belief, this was not a 'beauty' pageant as such. Whomever was crowned would receive a large educational scholarship, a new car, and the opportunity to travel from coast to coast as ambassadors. There was a lot riding on each and every one of them.

When the live telecast was near, the rehearsal venue moved to the TV studios for more practice. It was fascinating to watch that show being put together.

From Duplicate Bridge to Miss Canada

The day before airing, it was clear that everyone was beginning to wear a bit thin. The producers were shouting and nerves were on edge. While we sat at the back of the studio we were feeling sympathetic to the girls - they had to keep going over the opening set to get the timing and the blocking correct and it wasn't going so well.

One of the other chaperones and I decided that something needed to be done and we didn't care if we got into trouble for it. We found our way to a props room and gathered a very old bouquet of waxed roses that had seen better days. We made a shoulder banner out of toilet paper, and found a pretty ragged looking silver cardboard 'crown'.

Naturally, it fell on me to sneak back behind the set and when the announcer said, "And, here she comes, Miss Canada 1967, Barbara Kelly," the curtains opened on the stage and I hobbled out onto the stage and took a bow.

At the sight of my red hair, wobbly high heels, toilet paper banner, and too much makeup, the entire studio erupted into laughter. The producer looked shocked and annoyed, and I thought I was surely in trouble, but he too burst into laughter and almost doubled over. It took the entire studio by surprise, even although it was only about two minutes in all. Finally everyone settled down and got back to work and things appeared to go much better. Later on, the producer approached me and said it was just enough to give the girls a break and quell their anxieties. He was very gracious.

We were ready for the big night. The contestants' parents would be in the audience, and everyone would be dressed to the teeth; most of the men would be in tuxedos, even the cameramen! This show would be aired live across the country and would probably have the highest ratings of the season. It had to go well. The chaperones were busy in the dressing rooms making sure that their

charges had everything they needed and that their dresses, sashes, shoes, and accessories were examined and in place, and jitters were dealt with.

The show was on. It was magnificent and went off without a hitch. Parents were beaming with pride. Sponsors hoped their candidate would win. Jim Perry, the host, was ready and did a great job keeping the girls at ease as the hour-long show progressed.

The chaperones had become well acquainted with all the girls and we had our favourites. We even made a small bet together although our guesses were way off. One of the contestants that year was a sweet young girl from Prince Edward Island who said one day that she really wanted to win. She was quite small and I almost told her that she was not the right size, but good judgement kept me quiet. That young lady from P.E.I., Carol McKinnon, was declared the winner and the audience roared with approval, including the chaperones. She was indeed a perfect choice for Miss Canada. Carol was whisked away to a private spot where she underwent some training before being allowed to become the public figure she would be for the next whole year.

The show was over and the next day we packed and set out for home. The chaperones all hugged, said goodbye with a promise to stay in touch. What a week that was! Although there was no monetary compensation for our contribution, we received many wonderful gifts from the various sponsors. Despite how tiring, we'd all had a great time.

I chaperoned for the next three years until I went back to work full time and had to give it up. When I told the head chaperone that I wouldn't be able to do it again, I mentioned I had a sister who would make a great chaperone and was also a registered nurse as well. There was always a nurse available if needed, and now they could have a nurse and a chaperone all in one. They contacted her and she took on the task. Because I knew everyone well, I volunteered to accompany my

From Duplicate Bridge to Miss Canada

sister to the hotel so that I could say hello to my chaperone friends before leaving her behind.

When we walked together into the hotel, Mr. Rice was in the lobby, and said, "Oh my gawd, there's two of them!"

Everyone laughed. My sister was also a chaperone for the newly minted Miss Teen Canada and actually ended up as chaperone to the winner one year. We often laugh about what a wonderful experience it was.

The show began to decline in the 1980's and was eventually cancelled in favour of the Miss Universe Pageant. The Miss Teen Canada Pageant continued until 1990. The same ladies who suggested me for the chaperone position also found me another interesting job.

But that's for my next story!

KNOCK, KNOCK. WHO'S THERE?

I knocked gently on the door of the apartment.

"Come in."

I hesitated with apprehension, and knocked again.

"Oh, I'm coming", a man's voice answered, sounding annoyed.

The door opened and I'm sure I stood with my mouth open wondering what to say. There stood a fellow with a medium build, bare topped and with his chest slathered shiny with what I supposed was body oil and wearing a brightly coloured floor length patio skirt!

"Oh, you're not who I expected", he said. I wondered exactly who he did expect.

I stammered, "I'm taking the census, and I need to ask you some questions."

Knock, Knock. Who's There?

"Oh, well, all right," he said and with a grand flourish, threw open the door and stood aside expecting me to enter. I stood in the hallway and wondered if I should step inside. Good training prevailed and I stayed where I was, balancing my clipboard with my left hand and writing with the other.

"Are you the head of the household?" I asked.

"Well of course I am."

"You're last name please." He spelled it for me.

"And, your first name?"

"Well it's Bobby. That's what my friends call me but it's really Roberto. My mother thought I looked like a Roberto. Well, she was a romantic, wasn't she?"

"Are there any other members in the household?"

"Heavens no. I do have lots of company but they don't stay over – well, not always."

"What is your date of birth?"

"I absolutely never tell anyone how old I am, must I tell you?"

"It is required."

"Well, alright, I'm 32 but I'd appreciate it if you didn't spread that around. I'm expecting company. Will this take long?"

"No, that's all I need. Thank you." Dare I? Why not. "I love your skirt."

“Well, thank you, I got it on sale. Don’t you just love it?” He made a pirouette as he said this.

Such is the life of a census taker. As a single parent, I leapt at any opportunity to earn some money wherever and whenever I could and this job paid ten cents a name after it was typed up on the prescribed forms. After thorough training as to how we were to record the census information, I was given a specific block of addresses and I set out on my task. The training failed to mention some of what we might expect. Certainly not young gentlemen wearing brightly coloured patio skirts! I pressed on.

Next stop was a somewhat seedy hotel at the intersection of Colborne Street and Brant Avenue and which rented rooms to permanent guests. With clipboard in hand, I entered the lobby and approached the gentleman behind the desk.

“I’m taking the census and I will need to speak to anyone who is a permanent resident.”

“Sure you are,” he said, “Do you want a single or a double?”

“No sir, I don’t want a room, I just need to ask some questions of your permanent guests.”

He eyed me up and down, hesitated, and then said, “There’s no one here right now.”

“When should I come back?”

“Are you sure you don’t want a room?”

Knock, Knock. Who's There?

"No, I will come back later. Would seven o'clock be okay?"

"I don't think I'll have any rooms available at seven."

"Thank you, I will come back at seven."

I decided that I wouldn't come back but that I would leave this address for a more mature male census taker. Drat. More unearned money.

Next stop, a very large house on Nelson Street. Again, I knocked on the door and a large, unkempt, middle aged lady answered. I explained who I was and that I would be asking some questions.

"Are you the head of the household?"

"Yes."

"What is your last name?" She told me and spelled it. "What is your first name?" Again, she spelled it for me.

"How many people live in the household, beginning with the oldest?"

She gave me the name of her oldest child and told me that she had seven children. In order to speed up the process, I had begun to write the last names down the sheet. She gave me the name of the next child, with the explanation that his last name was not the same as hers. She gave me his last name and then his first name and then the second, stopped me, and went into a long explanation as to why the last names of her children were not all the same. She hadn't married all their fathers but because they wanted to maintain the family name, she had registered the boys differently than the girls - well, at least four of them. It was a struggle to get it all down correctly. I glanced into the house. It was wall

to wall clutter. She invited me in for a cup of tea. I declined as nicely as my mother had taught me. I thought, well at least my kids have all the same name!

Next stop, a small apartment at the back of a larger house. I knocked. A middle-aged gentleman opened the door and eyed me with a certain lecherous look that made me uncomfortable right away.

"I'm taking the census and I need to ask you some questions."

"Please come in," he said. I stayed put on the door step.

"What is your last name?" He spelled it for me.

"What is your first name?"

"If you'll come inside, I'll tell you."

"No thank you. I'll just need to ask a few more questions. Are you the head of the household?"

"Yes, but I would like some company." Getting nervous, I dropped my clip board. He picked it up quickly and said he'd only return it if I came inside. The training hadn't covered this eventuality.

"No, this is fine." As I reached for my clip board, he grabbed my arm and yanked me inside. Oh my. I reckoned that I wouldn't have too much trouble fending him off. He grabbed my shoulder and proceeded to try and kiss me. The training certainly didn't cover kissing! I ducked down, grabbed my clipboard off the table where he had placed it, and fled out the door, saying "I'll come back later."

"Be sure you do, honey."

Knock, Knock. Who's There?

Another follow up call by a male census taker was in order. The training had covered making an excuse to come back later when in an awkward position. This was certainly awkward. Another 10 cents a name lost. Damn.

As I approached the next address, all I could hear was what sounded like many little kids crying. No one answered my knock. I knocked again. Still no answer but the crying continued and I could hear that there was more than one person crying. What to do? I knocked again, this time with more force. No answer. The training hadn't covered this either. As a mother of young children, I felt fearful about young children who appeared to have been left on their own. I stood for a few more minutes, wondering what the right thing to do was. With great trepidation, I went across the road to a small store and asked if I could use the phone. The proprietor lifted the cradle phone from below the counter. I didn't know who to call. I didn't want to get anyone in trouble but I could not just walk away. I looked through my papers and found the number we were to call if we were in difficulty. When the call was answered, I blurted out the story of the children who seemed to be left on their own and crying. I was told to wait at the address and someone would arrive shortly.

I went back to the house and waited. Within a few minutes a policeman arrived and banged on the door. No answer and still the crying grew louder. With one thrust of his shoulder against the locked door, it flew open. There were three little children, two toddlers, and a baby in a very dirty and wet crib. I started to cry. The policeman didn't seem to know who to look after first, me or the little kids. I was sobbing and trying to explain to the policeman that I was a single mother and would absolutely never leave my wee ones unattended. He called me ma'am and told me that there were lots who did. Eventually, a social worker appeared and took the children away. The policeman thanked me for doing what I did and said it would be all right for me to go on now.

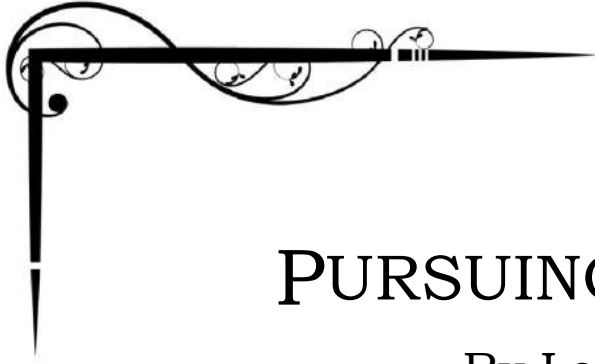
I couldn't do any more calls.

I went to my mother's where my own small family was being looked after by their Grandmother. I hugged them so hard that I nearly squeezed the life out of them. I told my mother the whole sad experience through my tears. She hugged me and told me that no decent mother would do that, and assured me that I had done the right thing. I don't know what ever happened to the absentee mother. I didn't want to get her into trouble but I couldn't understand why she would leave such little ones alone. I've never forgotten that experience.

Ten cents a name doesn't sound like much, but when totaled up, I earned enough money as a census taker to buy my kids some clothes at the secondhand store and some treats. And, of course it was a new life experience for me! It was the ladies who ran the store that had secured the census job for me and I was truly grateful for the opportunity. When I told them what had happened along the way, they laughed and laughed. It wasn't that funny for me!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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



PURSUING A DREAM

By Lois Oliver

Robert Stewart Wood was often described as everyone's friend; generous to a fault, but under that devil-may-care exterior Bob's personality disclosed his love of life, his mental toughness, his determination, and natural leadership. He would not let anyone or anything stand in his way to pursue a goal, using any method it took except dishonesty or hurting someone to reach that goal.

In his earlier years, Bob started his business career as a salesman for a large construction company in Toronto, where he grew up. Eventually, he progressed to a management position in Brantford, Ontario; moving his wife and three children there in 1970. He then became General Manager of the concrete pipe division of Lake Ontario Cement Company in Kitchener, Ontario. In the latter years of his career he was offered the opportunity to start a new concrete pipe company in Guelph, Ontario as President of the company.

He started the new company in a small farmhouse which sat in the property of an existing plant with one telephone, one secretary, a general manager, and his son as sales manager. An office was set up in the farmhouse while he oversaw the renovations to the plant, including offices, machinery, washrooms with showers for the employees, and a restaurant with a chef and kitchen staff. As he was so proud of the end result he hosted a grand opening for family, friends, and business associates.

Pursuing a Dream

It grew to be a very successful business under his leadership, and has multiplied over the years with his son taking his place as President after Bob's passing in 1992.

Bob was well respected in the industry while making life-long friends along the way. He treated his employees like a second family; helping them with any problems in their work and personal lives, but in return demanded loyalty and trust. He hired and encouraged young men who were just learning the business to give them a start in the industry. He was also a man that helped many people in his personal life. If anyone had a problem he would quietly find a way to help.



A twist on Bob's motto. (Source image created and owned by Gary Larson.)

He gave 100% in everything he did, including sports and recreational activities. His philosophy was that every minute of every day should be enjoyed. His motto - "Stop and Smell the Roses." Bob passed his ideology on to his three children. If they needed him, no matter where they were, he would be there for them. He was a very proud father as he watched each one of them graduate from university to pursue their own goals.

At age 42 Bob was diagnosed with diabetes. It did not deter him from participating in life. He became President of the Brantford Diabetes

Association, promoting fund raising for diabetes while speaking at different venues on behalf of the Association.

Over the years he had gained a lot of weight. He made it his personal goal to deal with it by joining the Y.M.C.A., working out five days a week before he went to work. He enjoyed the company of friends that he met there who had the same determination to keep fit. They would regularly run several miles around the city, enjoying the camaraderie and the challenge. He demonstrated the same personal discipline in the sports he played as he had in business, such as running, racquetball, tennis, golf, and riding his two motorcycles. At the age of 58 he won the racquetball championship at the “Y” against a much younger man in his twenties!

When he accomplished his goal of losing forty pounds and was in good physical shape, he was asked by a friend to accompany him riding his bike to the 1976 Montreal Olympics. His friend, previously a professional CFL football player, encouraged him. Never refusing a challenge, he accepted. It took excessive training to cover the 450 miles of highway between Brantford and Montreal in six days. They slept in motels along the way; then met their wives in Montreal. They did not cycle back.

As the trip was for a worthy cause, they were sponsored by various groups and individuals. With his self-confidence and determination, he accomplished the ride with great fanfare and was pleased to donate his portion to the Diabetes Association.

In the 1980’s Bob was instrumental, along with others, in starting the Rotary Club’s Boston to Brantford Classic Run which raised money for crippled children.

Right: Bob adjusting tire pressure on the ride to Montreal. Source: Brantford Expositor.





Although he was not known as an “elite runner”, he was always first in pledges. As quoted in the local newspaper, he personally raised \$30,000 over the ten years he participated to donate to the Lansdowne Children’s Centre. *(Image, left.)*

Even though he was always the last runner to cross the finish line he took pride in accomplishing his goal. After the grueling thirteen mile run he was quoted as saying: “Sure I wanted to quit all the way, but my pledges were meaningless unless I finished. I had to finish.”

Needless to say, he also enjoyed the attention he received.

In 1991 Bob sat at his desk reading about a challenge he couldn’t resist in the literature before him. Other than riding his bike to Montreal, he had never challenged himself physically in this way! This was different! This was something he had always wanted to do! He felt that he could do it, but the technicalities stood in his way. Certain qualifications had to be met. Doubts crept into his mind about his physical condition, his age (57), his weight and lack of some of the qualifications. He also had to clear his busy schedule for June 27th to July 2nd one year ahead.

Wrestling with his conscience, his usual self-confidence took over, and he quickly filled out the application form and sent it to the Midnight Sun Marathon Committee for the 32k run in Nanisivik, Northwest Territories.

Several days later, in another office many miles away, Peter Collins, also known as “Polar Pete”, the director of The Midnight Sun Marathon, sat opening the applications. He noted that a fifty-seven years old, six-foot-two-inches, 200-pound

man is not the usual body type of an elite marathon runner, yet his qualifying times were quite impressive! This time it looked like Bob's usual charisma wouldn't count - he could not talk his way into this one like he usually did. Fate intervened. Polar Pete was in a good mood that day, and thought that if this guy had the nerve and determination to do it, why not give him the chance?

Bob checked his mailbox every day. Weeks passed, until one day, his wife called him at the office and said there was a letter from The Midnight Sun Marathon Committee.

He immediately blurted out: "Open it!"

The news fulfilled his dream. He was accepted!

Now the challenge began! No more rich foods or indulging in his passion, ice cream. It would now be early mornings up and outside training in every kind of weather. His usual genial demeanour became "a little testy at times", as his wife was quoted as saying. Everyone around him would be glad when the race finally happened.

Of all the races he had run in the sixteen years since he was diagnosed with diabetes, this would be the most rewarding. Most of the others he participated in, in cities to which he travelled all over the world and at home, were very gratifying because he was helping contribute to charity. This one, however, was strictly for his own satisfaction.

Canada Day weekend finally arrived. Runners from Eastern Canada and United States met at Toronto Airport. Bob sought out Polar Pete from Nova Scotia. He found him amongst all the runners wearing their T-shirts with the Polar Bear insignia. Pete recognized Bob's name.

Pursuing a Dream

“I’ve been anxious to meet you, Mr. Wood. Between you and me, you have a lot of nerve! The only reason I approved your application was personal. Nine years ago I had a slight stroke. I thought my life was over. I started running. It gave me my life back, and I’ve been running marathons ever since. This is my fourth Midnight Sun.”

Bob replied, “Thanks Pete. I owe you one.”

The plane took off for Nanisivik, 480 miles north of the Arctic Circle, arriving, because of flight delays, 22 hours later in Nanisivik; the land where there is 24 hours of daylight.

Bob and Pete surveyed the barren country. There were no trees, bushes or grass, and a road consisting of crushed rock that went from Nanisivik to Arctic Bay, the Marathon course.

“Hey Pete, are there any bears around here?” Bob asked.

Pete replied “Just keep your eyes open friend.”

They found their accommodation in one of the miner’s house along with some other runners, then went to a local cafeteria.



On the day of the race they woke up to ice, sleet and 30 m.p.h. winds. They waited until 3:00 p.m., then started out at

Left: The starting line at the Midnight Sun Marathon in Nanisivik, Northwest Territories.

28 degrees with a constant wind, making the temperature drop to about 8 below zero.

Bob and Pete started together, but eventually Pete pulled ahead. Bob was beginning to lag behind.

“After all,” he thought, “I’ve only run 10k before and this is 32k.”

His original goal was just to be there, do his usual 10k, pleading stomach cramps for not finishing.

“Who would know the difference?”

As he ran alone at the back of the pack seeing nothing around him, he talked to himself. “Why did I tell them that I had done this many times? Are there bears out there?”

His fierce determination kept him going.

Near collapse and beginning to hallucinate, he stumbled over the hill and thought he was dreaming! There, at the bottom of the hill, stood a bagpiper, in all his regalia, piping him into Amazing Grace, as he dragged himself to the finish line.



At that point he felt he would never survive; when helping hands reached out and put him in a warm sleeping bag. Many hours later, when he opened his eyes, Pete was standing looking at him. “Well done friend,” he said. “How about next year?”

Left: Bob’s certificate for completing the Midnight Sun

Pursuing a Dream

Months later Bob was relating his experience one more time to a group of business friends. An old friend, much younger than him, who was a “real” elite marathon runner said to Bob, “I have tried for years to get into The Midnight Sun Marathon, and I have always been rejected. I can’t figure it out. I always come in ahead of you in every race we have run together.”

Bob replied, with the usual twinkle in his eye, “A little white lie doesn’t hurt the odd time.”

Bob lived life to the fullest; never turning down an opportunity to have fun. The most important day of the year to him was April 17th, his birthday. He always had to have a party to celebrate. He was known to go around his office marking April 17th on the calendars of his office staff to make sure they didn’t forget. On his



One of Bob’s office birthday parties.

50th birthday he organized his own party as his wife was busy preparing for their daughter’s upcoming wedding. He rented a hall, hired a disc jockey and a caterer, and sent out invitations to many old friends from Toronto, all his Brantford friends and several business friends.

The highlight of the evening was that some of his friends had hired a belly dancer to entertain. She sat him in the middle of the floor and proceeded to gyrate around him, enticing him to dance, but he was so speechless he called out to his wife.

This was one time that he was at a loss for words! To this day, his children still remember his birthday by dining on his favourite dinner, spaghetti and meatballs, on April 17th.

Always loving attention and never one to pass up a challenge, he also enjoyed modelling in fashion shows in which his wife was involved.



Left: Bob modelling in a fashion show.

The day before he passed away he ran a golf tournament for business friends, then entertained them with a barbecue back at his farm.

On a beautiful sunny day a few weeks after his death, a tree planting ceremony in his honour was held in front of the cement plant. As the ceremony was about to conclude, unexpectedly, there was loud crack of thunder and a bolt of lightning struck. Everyone there had the same

reaction; Bob was ensuring that he wouldn't be forgotten!

Ironically, a few weeks before he suddenly passed away, he received correspondence from the Midnight Sun Marathon Director with information for the next marathon, including this poem written by one of the runners:

*Life Goes Round
You Get One Chance To Live It
So We Will Run A Marathon
From Arctic Bay to Nanasivik*

About the Author

A note from the author: It was an adventurous journey being married to Bob for 37 years before he passed away suddenly. As the old saying goes, "There was never a dull moment." He certainly made life interesting for myself and our three children, Vicki, Brian, and Leanne. It was a pleasure to write this memoir for our seven grandchildren who never had the opportunity to know their grandfather.





THE EARLY YEARS

By Ronald Sutherland

*There was a young man from Borneo,
Who left to travel the world*

*In England the Germans bombed him
The Canadians came and chased them home*

*He went to the land of the "Long White Cloud"
He visited the Geysers of Rotorua
And went hunting with a Maori Prince*

*Then this Wandering Albatross of a man
Went to find the Land of the Canadians
The Rockies, Great Plains and the Land of the Great Lakes
On the Drumlins of Guelph he found the love of his Life*

*Now the happy couple live close to the Six Nations
In the Bell City on the banks of the Grand
Their offspring happily married too
With children of their own*

THE EARLY YEARS

On April 6, 1933, I was born on a Dutch Ship, The Motor Vessel Erria, during a typhoon (or severe tropical storm), on the Indian Ocean. My mother, a medical doctor, was on her way from the Far East, the Philippines, to Switzerland where I was supposed to arrive, giving me the opportunity to become a Swiss Citizen, if I wished.

I was smuggled off the boat with the help of Mr. Gruer (a rubber plantation grower on his way home from Malaya, who became my Godfather) in a small wicker basket (which mother kept for years), and against the wishes of the ship's Captain. The port was Aden.

Mother and I caught another ship back to the Far East, where I presume Dad was working as a Mate on one of the Straits Steam Ship Company's ships. Esther, my sister, arrived on schedule in Geneva Switzerland, on 19 August 1935 and I was Mother's traveling companion.

Again we returned to the Far East, where Mum and Dad now had a house overlooking the port and harbour of Sandakan, the sea between the neighbouring Islands and the nearby jungle.

This is the first home I remember and it was situated on the north east corner of the large tropical Island of Borneo. This was centrally located for Dad who was sailing between Sydney in Australia, Singapore in Malaya and Hong Kong in China, at this time and passed through Sandakan on a regular basis. Dad would blow the ship's horn when he came into harbour and we would all run to the window to see him arriving at the Port.

The house was built around a central square courtyard garden, without a roof. There was a large wooden post in each corner of the courtyard which supported

the large two-story house. The ground floor contained the kitchen and other workrooms and where some local people helped mother do the house work and cooking. We lived in the top storey where we had a good view of the city and the jungle. Up here were the bedrooms, a large play room and a living dining room area, as I remember it. There were also other gardens around the house.

One morning while we were having breakfast in the courtyard, Dad heard a noise in one of the corner posts. He got up, went over to the post, and knocked at it with his knuckle. It was hollow! He climbed the post, knocking as he went. Then he climbed the other posts, all the posts had been hollowed out by termites and had to be replaced. I do not remember that happening.

This is the only place I remember seeing Mother in her Brown Owl uniform helping her Brownies with their program. There was quite a mixture of races represented in her class: Chinese, Malayan, European, and the local people from Borneo.

One day my family and I got onto Dad's Ship for the trip to Hong Kong. Here I had the interesting experience of watching a nice Chinese man carve a small Camphor wood box which we still use as a trunk. We bought several trunks and went home to pack them for our move to Malaya where Dad took command of his own ship, as Captain.

The home port for his ship was Singapore and our new home was a few miles north of the port, on the main road. It was a nice new bungalow built on stilts out over the water of the straits of Malacca, where we could see Dad's ship sailing by, up and down the coast, and again he would blow his horn as he went by.

The only other time I remember being on Dad's ship was the morning a taxi took us to his ship. We all went up the gang plank onto the ship and up to the bridge, where Dad started giving orders.

The Early Years

“Cast off the mooring ropes.” “Full steam ahead.” And many other orders.

Eventually two tugs brought the ship into the dry docks and they closed the gates and started pumping the water out.

“They will scrape the bottom off and paint it and it will be good for a few more years at sea,” Dad said.

But we left for home long before any of that happened.

Unfortunately, my parents could see World War II coming. Hitler was chancellor in Germany and the Japanese had invaded China and appeared to be going further. So they agreed we should move again to a new house in Petersfield in England, southwest of London. Mum, Esther, and I went home by boat and Dad caught up to us in the new house, in a new subdivision a little way out of town.

While Mum and Dad fixed up the house to their liking, Esther and I went to grade one in the local Bedale’s School.

That summer after school we all went for a car trip holiday to the Continent, the only trip I remember with Dad. He drove the whole way. We had a brand new Morris Minor, which we loaded up with all the things we thought we needed.

First we drove to Dover, where we caught the ferry to Calais and then we drove through France to Paris where we stayed about 10 days looking around at the beautiful Louvre Palace and its many paintings including Da Vinci’s Mona Lisa.

We also climbed the Eiffel Tower – what a beautiful view of the city from up there. We also went around the Arch de Triumph several times, as the traffic is a little difficult there.

Next Dad drove us to Switzerland and Interlaken, and then up the mountain to Grindelwald, and Musher Mender's holiday home. I think he rented us rooms and we ate in the dining room. It was beautiful there among the mountains looking up and down the valley to Interlaken. We made several day trips, one to see the Jungfrau Mountain and another to Innsbruck in Austria where we bought a teapot cozy, with pictures of the square on one side and dancers on the other. Then we had to leave for our home in the south of England.



Left and right:

*The teapot cozy we
bought in Innsbruck,
Austria.*



WORLD WAR II

Dad's Holiday was over, he flew back to Singapore and his job as Harbour-Master. Meanwhile, Mother's parents were having problems in their nice retirement house on the coast at St. Leonard's. We moved and lived with them for about a year. Esther and I went to a local day school nearby, while Mother helped her mum and dad.

The house was one in a row of either Victorian or Georgian houses across the road from a large park which had nice lawns and flower beds. In the basement of the house the cook prepared the meals and the Maid brought them up to the next floor, on a little hand elevator. Here we ate with them in the dining room. On

The Early Years

the next floor up there was a large carpeted room in which Esther played with her dolls and I would play with toy trucks and cars. On the next floor were the bedrooms. Again up in the attic there were small rooms looking east over the park and the city. One night I was up there when a large bomber went by (probably a Dornier) chased by two or three fighters.

“Come down out of there and get in the basement!” Mother yelled and that is what we all did.

Another night a large bomber returning from bombing London (north of us) dropped a bomb in the park in front the house with such a loud bang that the noise and the shock killed both of Mother’s parents. A few days later we went to a very formal funeral for both of them. Some time later we all moved back to Ron-Esther, our home in Petersfield.

Eventually mother got the disturbing news that Dad and his ship was missing in action and there would be no further pay cheques. What a shock, what would Mother do? She divided the house into two apartments, one upstairs and the other downstairs which she eventually rented.

That spring we walked out into the country and found a large oak tree, on a hill overlooking a dairy farm, with a forest behind the tree. Another day we caught the train to a nearby town and walked to a place selling camping trailers.

Mother found one she liked, it had three berths, a small kitchen and place for her to write. She had the trailer put under the tree and we moved in for the summer.

That summer we went for walks in the woods and to the dairy farm to see the cows being milked, and at night, while Esther and I were sleeping, Mother wrote

articles for papers and magazines. One evening the trailer started to shake and Mother called out “Will you Kids leave off horsing around and go to sleep!”

We had been asleep and it was not us making the trailer rock. We looked out the door and there was a large, brown Belgian horse scratching his rump on the corner of the trailer. He looked down his long nose at us and left. I do not remember seeing him again. In fact, I left for boarding school that fall (called Blynkbonnie and I think it was in Ringwood) and never saw the trailer or the horse again.

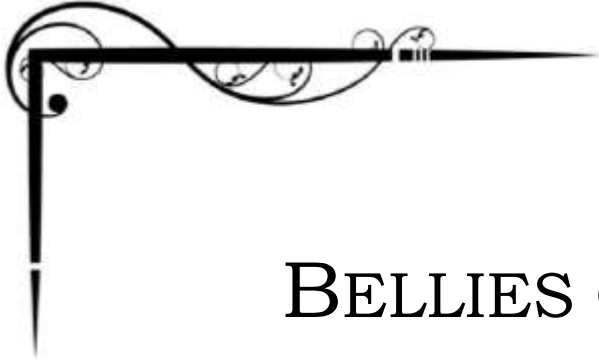
When we came home the next summer we found Mother had a new home near Privett. It was a large, old farm house, with a large, unkempt garden, and next to a large farm yard and farm buildings. She had filled the house with “Churchill’s Children” and was looking after them with the help of several local ladies.

POSTSCRIPT



*Image from a card given to me by my daughter for
Father's Day. Artist unknown.*

*My little girl used to ride on my shoulders
That way she could see where we were going and loved the view
Also I knew where she was in a crowd or on a busy street
Down town on market day was good this way
One summer we saw Scotland this way, what fun it was
But my little girl is not a little girl any more*



BELLIES OF BABIES

By Susan Szathmary

1997

I received a response around the first week of October, completely surprised. I held the phone to my ear. “Hey ... you got a letter from Brantford!” he said. My heartbeat raced.

“Can you bring it over?”

Les was dressed in his black leather jacket when he handed me the letter. I lived in Jasper National Park, where the trail of my love for Les had led me. We were no longer partners by then, but we still shared a friendship and a post office box.

“Come in.” My heart was pounding. I took the envelope from him and examined it. The blue ink seemed friendly. The handwriting was attractive and legible. I carefully peeled the envelope open. It was dated September 16.

*Hi, my name is Rebecca Ann,
I am writing to you because I saw your birthday greeting in the
Brantford Expositor on Saturday September 6. I am a little curious. I
was wondering if you could write me back and let me know ... is there
a chance that I am the one that greeting was meant for?*

She was born in Kitchener. I asked myself how many adopted girls were born in Kitchener on September 7, 1974 and raised in Brantford.

1974

Don't get your hopes up. Hope that I wasn't pregnant. Hope that the result of the urine test at the pharmacist's would be negative. Hope that it was a bad dream. Hope that someone else would tell my parents the news.

"Show me," Mom said. She didn't believe me. My baby barely showed at five months. I was a stick figure with a bump. I lifted up my smock up to reveal the undone top button of my jeans, exposing a soft round belly. She cried.

Later that night we faced the inevitable. Telling my Dad was a dreadful task. "Couldn't wait to get your pants down," he sneered. I am not sure what I said to him. Silence was always the best. I was fifteen.

A friend's advice and a trip to the Children's Aid Society resulted in shipping me to an unwed mother's home in Kitchener for the last four months of my pregnancy.

By the end of the 1960s there were fifty-one maternity homes in Canada. St. Monica's on Hebert Street in Kitchener, Ontario opened in June 1968, as a 26-bed residence. At that time the mandate was to provide residential care and support exclusively to single, young, expectant women. Unmarried pregnant women were considered a blight on society, kept secret and hidden. Young women came from out-of-town, gave birth, relinquished their children for adoption, and then returned to their homes. They hid from families, neighbours, friends, and school.

St. Monica's offered a new city and a new life. I happily packed my bags.

The order, schedules, routine, community, and respect were welcome. Each room had two beds and my roommate Natalie was also five months pregnant. All the girls had two daily chores. We were even tutored. We ate all our meals together in a large dining room. Friday evenings we played Bingo in the dining room. We listened to records and danced in the large recreation room. We sang along with Elton John to *Crocodile Rock* and *B-B-B-Bennie and the Jets*. In June of 1974, Paul Anka released *Having My Baby*. We went bowling on Thursday afternoons – twenty-six bellies full of babies in teenager's bodies, at the bowling alley.

I felt accepted into a 'pregnant teenagers club'. I wrote my grade nine exams there. I crocheted, sewed and read Harlequin romance novels by the dozens. I belonged.

Once a week during July and August we all went swimming in a nearby pool. Twenty-six bellies of babies in swimsuits, with towels, double filed down the sidewalk. Time stood still as I laid my belly down on a lounge chair, bathed in the warmth of the sun. The thin rubbery straps stretched tightly across my belly at seven months pregnant without any discomfort. One of the girls sunburned herself on purpose, slathering up with baby oil to help her fake storyline of being in Florida on a vacation with her aunt.

My roommate Natalie planned to take her baby back to the reserve and raise her. I was happy for her.

One hot afternoon in August we went out to a nearby tavern to celebrate our due dates, and my sixteenth birthday. We ordered draft. The waiter did not ask us for I.D. The cold, frothy amber beer tasted so fine and the effects of the alcohol soothing.

“Cheers!” We clinked our glasses together.

“To us, and to our babies!” Natalie said.

“Cheers! To all of us, and all our babies!” I responded joyfully.

In a dark corner, in a seedy tavern feeling uninhibited, we sat proud and grownup. We returned to St. Monica’s acting silly, without a care in the world, and smelling like beer. We were given a week’s curfew. They called it consequences. I didn’t mind - at least they didn’t yell.

The heat and the pungent smell of hops from the nearby brewery marked the last weeks of August. Natalie was gone. Maria Muldaur sang, “Midnight at the Oasis, send your camel to bed ...”

Two weeks after my due date I was scheduled for an inducement.

A social worker drove me to the hospital. We filled out paper work. I was taken to a room and prepared. I observed myself being shaven. I was given an enema. My labour was started by placing two tablets to dissolve inside my mouth between my upper lips and gums. A nurse inserted a long needle-like instrument, an amnihook, to break the water.

Within an hour the labour pains were razor sharp and five minutes apart. I was given an epidural anesthesia. The nurse jabbed a needle into my lower back. Soon I felt nothing, frozen from the waist down. Nine hours later I was in the delivery room.

Push, push, not feeling a thing.

The doctor delivered my baby girl at 10:17 p.m. Tears poured down the sides of my face onto the white sheet that covered the cold steel table. She was not placed on my chest to bond and suckle. No eye contact. She was cleaned and wheeled away.

She was pronounced healthy and weighed seven pounds, two and one-half ounces. I was cleaned and wheeled away. I was told to lay flat on my back but I curled up into the fetal position, my breasts flowing with milk, alone, my womb emptied and my heart numb.

The following morning, I hobbled down the florescent lit halls to the baby ward. I searched and found her in one of the rectangular containers. Cheri Marie was the name I had chosen for her. I gently picked her up.

From inside of me, to outside of me.

I marveled at her tiny fingernails. I kissed her soft forehead. I inhaled her sweet scent. I ached to breast feed her.

Goodbye, my love. I wished for her what I wanted most - a normal, loving, healthy family.

The policy at the time was to allow three months to decide about adoption. My oblivious father offered to raise her on the condition that my parents would be called mother and father.

She was born on a Saturday just before Labour Day. I was back to school on Tuesday.

I was given one opportunity to visit her during that three-month decision period. The social worker brought her in to a small room at the Children's Aid Society of

Brantford. I had a small, portable instamatic camera. Click and shoot. The photo was developed later and put into a locket which I lost. My only photograph, gone forever.

The papers were signed at court. A doctor at the Women's College Hospital stated that "when she renounces her child the unwed mother has learned a lot. She has learned to pay the price of her misdemeanor and this alone, if punishment is needed, is punishment enough."

A year passed and I received the non-disclosing information called the Adoptive Home Profile. The file included facts around her early infant health and generalities about the couple who adopted her.

The father was a teacher, the mother a nurse. They had a good marital relationship. They were financially secure. They were considerate and had respect for each other. They had already adopted three boys and wanted to add to their family.

I desperately wanted to know if she was okay. I fantasized about breaking into the Children's Aid Society. I could stay and hide in a closet, or in a washroom. When everyone left the building for the day I could go find the office and check the big grey metal filing cabinet under the letter S to try to figure out where she was placed. Then I could walk by her house to see if she was okay.

I dreamed, schemed, and wrote imaginary letters.

Dear Cheri Marie,

How are you? I think about you all the time! Are you happy? Where do you live? Have I ever seen you on a bus? What do you look like? Are you in a good home? Are you alive?

I waited till she turned twenty-two, in 1996, to submit an ad into my local newspaper on her birthday. I placed the ad in the Brantford Expositor classifieds, under the birthday announcements.

September 7, 1974. HAPPY 22nd

Cheri Marie! Birthday wishes from your birth mother. Contact Box 1376 Jasper Alberta.

In 1997, I placed an ad for a second time. The odds of finding my daughter in a country in which 33.74 million people lived was unlikely. The population of Ontario alone was thirteen million and the city of Brantford at 90,192.

Whatever the odds, in the end, I just wanted to celebrate and commemorate her birthday.

1997

I ransacked my home and found the non-disclosing Adoptive Home Profile papers. I photocopied and sent them, express, to her return address in Brantford.

A week later I opened my post office box and pulled out an express envelope.

My heart raced as I walked to the Legion, where I worked, only to discover I had left my keys in my post office box. I went back to the post office, retrieved my keys that were dangling in the box lock, retraced my steps back to the Legion door with the keys in my hand.

I unlocked the door. I made my way down the hall, down the steps, down into the chair, and finally opened the envelope and read:

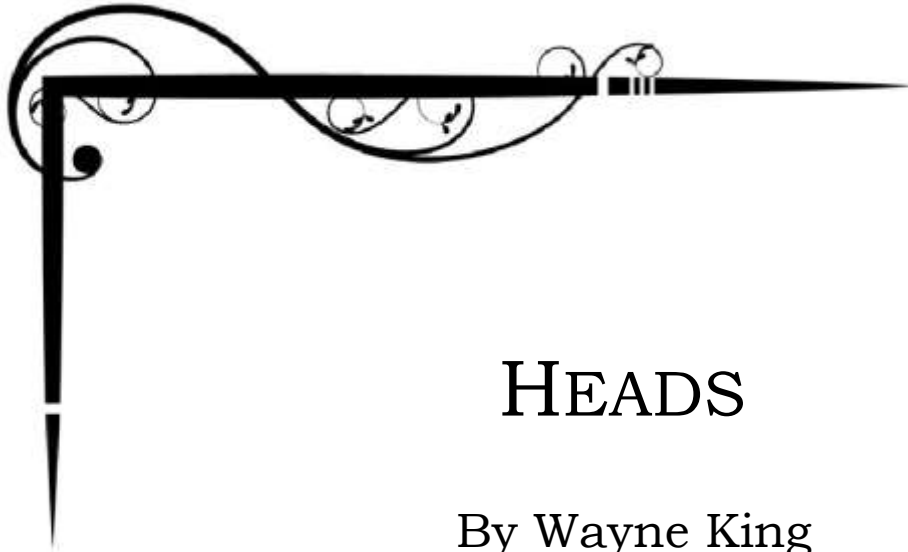
Dear Susan,

You would not believe my amazement! I never stop to read the classifieds. Something made me stop and read it. And what I am trying to say is that I am the one you are looking for - I am your birth daughter! I need you to know that I bear no ill will towards you. I would very much like to see you!

I finished reading the letter, alone in the empty legion. My daughter's letter. I cried, I sobbed, I wept, and I wailed - I was the Niagara Falls of tears.

You would not believe my amazement when we met.

En route to Brantford, with my birth daughter, all passengers were invited to the cockpit to view the Aurora Borealis. The luminous arches and streams of shimmering greens, blues and pinks. Lights swirling like dancers in celebration. The beauty, the miracle, and the amazement of this moment was beyond my dreams. And in this sky, and on this plane, with the northern lights and the billions of stars, my daughter and I, forever imprinted as my life's greatest miracle.



*There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.*
- Hamlet, William Shakespeare

ABANDONED

A warm November night, 1994. Mohawk Park neighborhood, Brantford. Following a festive evening, I walked home, alone. Rounding the curve in the road, my house loomed in the near distance.

Hmmm. No lights ... quiet.

I entered, switched on the kitchen lights and scanned for signs of life.

Heads

Dirty dishes, some disorganization, nothin' serious. Kids likely had friends over. Where are they?

The kids are my children, Amy, Aaron and Ian.

Oh, here's a note.

Picking up the note from the counter, I read. *The boys are staying at their mother's. Amy's staying with a friend.*

Mystery solved. I walked into the living room, intending to pick up the remnants of chips, pop and whatever, before retiring.

What's that?

Right in front of me, on the sofa, reclined a large round object. Stark white, it contrasted sharply with the emerald green of the sofa.

I edged forward. The object took form.

A Styrofoam head!

Everyone knows what a Styrofoam head is. You've seen them lots of times, but probably didn't take much notice. You're not supposed to. Their sole purpose is to display hats, spectacles, jewelry of various types, wigs and other accessories pertaining to the human head, not to draw attention to themselves.

What's a Styrofoam head doin' here? What's been goin' on?

Ah well, nothin' serious. The kids will fill me in when they get home.

Nevertheless, I am a curious sort.

I leaned over, picked up the head, inverted it and read the information on the base. The usually male given name of "Kenney" was hand printed in green ink.

The extra "e" in "Kenney" drew my attention.

Probably just the owner's quirk spelling.

A small round sticker announced that Kenney hailed from Worcester, Massachusetts.

Also imprinted was a company name, Kartiganer Inc., likely the manufacturer. The number 21½ also appeared.

The number mystified me. None of the dimensions were anywhere near 21½ inches.

Could it have another meaning, or connection I'm not aware of?

Righting Kenney I passed him from hand to hand scrutinizing his flat face. (*Image, right.*)

Crude lines were drawn in pen and ink. Brown for his eyes and eyebrows, red for his mouth.

Unfortunately, Kenney's moon shaped head lacked ears, nose and hair.

Decided disadvantages in the looks department, but fine for a display prop. My examination left me with no clue as to why Kenney was left here, or who left him.



I reassured myself: *all questions will be answered when the kids come home.*

My first impression? Despite his physical challenges Kenney radiated an aura of happiness and good will.

I finished cleaning up, placed Kenney on the kitchen table and turned in for the night.

The next day, Amy returned home first. I showed her Kenney and asked, "Whose head is this? How did it get here?"

Her reply was disconcerting to say the least, "I don't know anything about it. Aaron and Ian probably have something to do with it."

Kenney with an aura of happiness and good will

Aaron and Ian came home. I questioned them. They vehemently denied all knowledge.

Over the next days, I asked the kids' friends and anyone else who visited what they knew, if anything, about Kenney. No one knew a thing.

Someone has to know something – don't they? Why doesn't someone own up? It's not a big deal.

Maybe not a big deal, but I admit to being frustrated at the lack of information. I asked myself, *could Kenney be a stolen good?*

A disturbing thought, but what else am I supposed to believe? A stranger entered my house ... for the sole purpose of abandoning Kenney ... leaving all my property intact? It doesn't make sense. There are many ways to dispose of an unwanted Styrofoam head. Why my home?

Something had to be done to bring some sort of closure. So it was that I confided to the kids and their friends that I would keep Kenney, with the proviso that if his rightful owner ever claimed him, I would willingly surrender him – no questions asked.

INTERLUDE

Somehow, a quarter century has flown by since Kenney first made his appearance.

Kenney's previous life remains a mystery. I have come to accept that I will never, ever know why Kenney was abandoned, let alone why in my house? All I know is Kenney isn't talking and likely never will.

Occasionally I raise the subject of Kenney's abandonment with the kids. They always deny knowing anything. I have to believe them. After all there's no good reason for them to cover up – is there?

I do admit that I sometimes wonder how I would react if a stranger appeared at my door to claim Kenney.

What I do know is Kenney fit seamlessly into my household. My first impression remains firm. He's a happy guy. He's easy to live with. He's proven a calming influence in my sometimes hectic life.

But that's not the end of the story. Read on, dear reader.

REDEMPTION

Fast forward, almost exactly a year, to the fall of 1995. While visiting my parents in St. Thomas a beautiful Saturday afternoon lured me outdoors. I decided to explore a part of Kettle Creek I had never hiked before.

I walked to the west end of St. Thomas and crossed the creek via the New York Central trestle.

I turned to the north and headed upstream. I ambled along enjoying the pleasant afternoon.

Prairie grass lurked aggressively on the margins of the path and patches of grass burst out in a number of places on the trail itself.

All was silent save for bird song and the swishing of tall grass.

Hmm. Not many people pass by here.

A short distance later I spotted a forested area up ahead.

I quickly reached the tree line and observed that the forest concealed a gulley that I would have to cross.

My eyes scanned the gulley. A tiny creek cut across my intended path. A remnant of the last ice age, this unnamed creek cut deeply into the sandy soil producing a deep, but narrow V shaped gulley lined with trees, vines and shrubs.

I descended the gulley, treading carefully. My eyes and ears wide open.

Autumn's carpet of multi-coloured leaves covered the ground. Their dead, dry smell perfumed the air. Stripped of their leafy coats each tree aggressively thrust bare branches high into the sky.

Heads

The gulley seemed peaceful, like a holy place where the ancients celebrated sweet nature.

Somethin's movin' over there!

I glimpsed subtle movement on the far side of the gulley, a short distance past the creek. I stood still, brought my eyes to bear, but could not pick out a definite object.

Too far away ... hafta move in closer.

Advancing slowly, carefully, I reached the creek and jumped it. Now I could make out what this mysterious object was. What I saw astounded me.

No, it can't be, but there it is, waving in all its glory ... a Styrofoam head!

A Styrofoam head impaled on the top of a six-foot-high slender shrub. Someone had stripped off the branches and carved the top section into a sharp point. The shrub's trunk remained firmly rooted in the earth, light enough to bend before the breeze. Kenney instantly sprang to mind.

But this head was completely different physically from Kenney. Whereas Kenney was bluff, moon faced, optimistic and happy, this head appeared, at first glance, to be the opposite. *(Image right.)*

The face reflected much suffering and hard living; dark eyes circled in black, sunk back into the face, rendering eyeballs invisible; nose broken off; mouth, a round, gaping void, appeared to be gasping for breath; neck missing – severed roughly from his head until no pedestal remained to balance him properly; skull cracked open in a number of places; face narrow and pinched.

Looks rough. Here's one Styrofoam head that's not in any shape to model merchandise.



And yet, like Kenney, I sensed in him positive qualities of humour, intelligence, and a feeling of happiness. Despite the drastic difference in circumstances I found myself asking the same questions I had asked when Kenney first appeared.

How did this Styrofoam head get here? Why here? What are the odds that another Styrofoam head would appear to me, almost exactly, a year after Kenney, under even more mysterious circumstances? No one knew I was going to be here so it's not a prank. It has to be fate or a major coincidence that I found him.

I reviewed a couple of other possibilities, but they were too far-out to take seriously.

Could it be that this head was being punished for some awful crime committed? Doomed to wave in the breeze forever, goin' nowhere, achieving nothin'. Like Sisyphus, forever forced by the gods to push a boulder uphill only to see it roll back down every time it almost reached the summit.

No, it couldn't be. A Styrofoam head committing a crime? Doesn't seem likely. How would he get to the scene of a crime, let alone escape?

On the other hand, could it be a message? But what's the message? A warning? You've seen it in the movies where the intrepid explorer comes upon indigenous people who endeavor to warn off strangers by displaying scary items, such as shrunk heads, to frighten foreigners from their country.

No, Not in Southwold Township. Farmers would simply put up a "No Trespassing" sign – wouldn't they?

I could have speculated forever, but what it got down to was, I had a decision to make. I thought of the kids and Kenney. I felt strongly that all of us would get along fine. My mind was made up.

Whether its fate or coincidence I'm destined to rescue him. I will free him from this prison.

Determined, hesitation overcome, I plucked him from the stake, carried him out of the woods and hiked back to my parents' home.

Heads

Etiquette and social acceptance demanded he have a name, I decided to call this head Benny, to rhyme with Kenney. For the sake of simplicity I left out the additional “e”.

Upon arriving back in Brantford I introduced him to the kids and Kenney. Benny was instantly accepted into the warm bosom of our family, where he remains to this day.

IF TWO HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE, THREE MUST BE EVEN BETTER



Kenney (left) and Benny (right), showing off their favorite vinyl.

So ends two tales of mystery. A common thread binds them to me; their mysterious appearance.

Adding fuel to the fire, one day I told their stories to a friend who observed, “You don’t suppose that those two actually knew each other beforehand and planned all this?”

I had never considered that possibility. Yes, another question, another mystery. One thing is certain, Kenney and Benny aren’t talking.

Whether modeling various styles of head gear or watching over me as I work in my office, writing my memoirs, I can always count on Kenney and Benny for quiet loyalty. They are incredible sounding boards, but have never disagreed with any of my decisions once made. Jealousy and conflict between them are non-existent. They work for the common good of our household, without fear or favour.

Kenney and Benny are heads after my own heart.

That's why I say with utmost confidence. "If two heads are better than one, three heads must be even better."



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Born and raised in St. Thomas, Ontario, I have made my home in Brantford since 1981. I am married to Sharon and father to Amy, Aaron and Ian. My work career focused on sales/marketing for a variety of businesses, both local and international. Interests include gardening, history, cycling, photography, brewing, genealogy and walking/tai-chi/yoga.

Being retired I am able to devote more time to creative writing and reading. I have enjoyed and been inspired by the work of many authors throughout the years, but will mention only three – PG Wodehouse, Pierre Berton and George MacDonald Fraser. OK, I will add three more – Bernard Cornwell, John Steinbeck and A Conan Doyle.

2019 marks my tenth entry the Lifescapes anthology. I am thankful that the library supports such a wonderful program. I look forward to future writings.



SPECIAL ANNIVERSARY FEATURE

Compiled by Editor Haley Down

2019 marked the 135th anniversary of the Brantford Public Library. In celebration of this milestone, the Lifescapes program offered members of the Brantford community the opportunity to dip their toes into the waters of memoir writing.



We asked people to share their memories. They could write it in any creative way they chose - story, poem or picture form. Without restrictions on age or content, we received many wonderful submissions. Here are our selections:

THIS IS ME (ALISON, AGE 4)

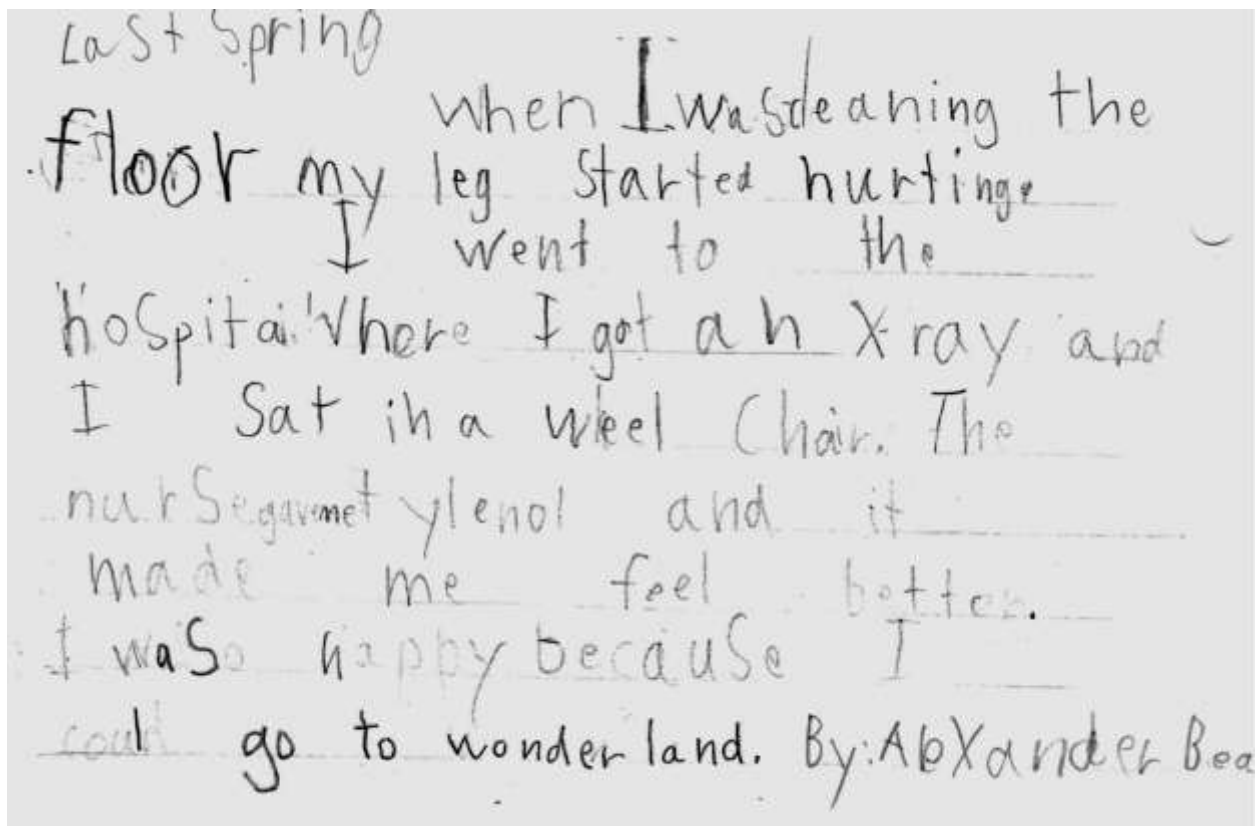


Me and my friend Cameron walking down the street together.



This is me, Alison!

LAST SPRING (ALEXANDER, AGE 6)



Last spring, when I was cleaning the floor my leg started hurting. I
 went to the hospital where I got an x-ray and I sat in a wheel chair.
 The nurse gave me Tylenol and it made me feel better. I was happy
 because I could go to Wonderland.

LAST DAY AT CAMP (ARAYA, AGE 6)



my friend Selma with me on the last day
of camp. my pet nori came with me to camp.
She always followed me at camp.

My friend Selma with me on the last day of camp. My pet Nori came with me to camp. She always followed me at camp.

SHE WENT ON THE ROLLERCOASTER (KATHERINE, AGE 7)

Once upon a time there was a girl who was
scared of going on rollercoaster. but she went
on the rollercoaster.



Once upon a time there was a girl who was scared of going on a
rollercoaster. But she went on the rollercoaster.

WE SAW A WOLF (WILLIAM, AGE 7)

my mom, sister and i
went to the Zoo
we saw a wolf.

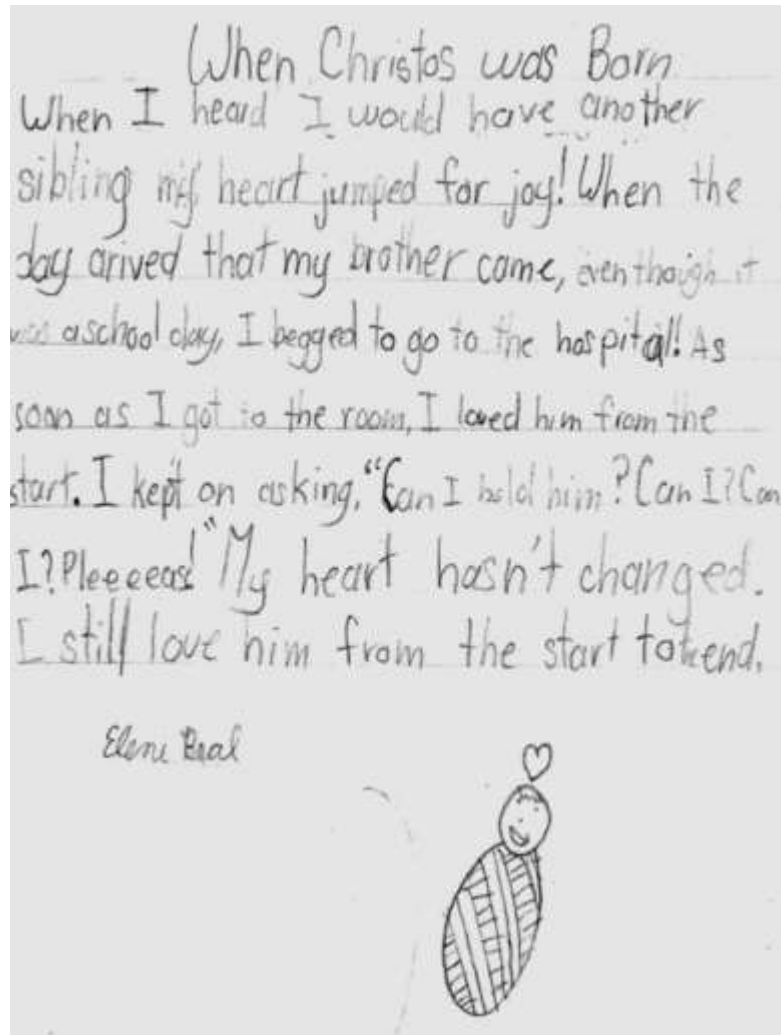


William
Doxatah

Age: 7

My mom, sister and I went to the zoo. We saw a wolf.

WHEN CHRISTOS WAS BORN (ELENI, AGE 9)



When I heard I would have another sibling my heart jumped for joy! When the day arrived that my brother came, even though it was a school day, I begged to go to the hospital. As soon as I got to the room, I loved him from the start. I kept on asking, "Can I hold him? Can I? Can I? Pleeeease!" My heart hasn't changed. I still love him from the start to the end.

HOW SOFT DRINKS CAN TEACH COMPASSION (VICTORIA)

Although my workplace sometimes feels like a hopeless environment, during one nightshift at my fast food job, an individual I met there helped me to see my surroundings in a new light.

Through the smell of bacon grease, the piercing sound of the shake machine, the wet beads of sweat rolling down my face, and a minimum-wage motivation, an elderly man helped me understand how a positive attitude can make even the most mundane of tasks rewarding. It gave me a tangible sense of compassion for the vulnerable, encouraging me to be thankful for what I have and where I am. Although I usually don't receive revelations when I clean, this time it helped me discover the power and joy of being a servant.

The bright orange advertisements and the blinding lights filled my eyes as I mustered up the energy to plaster a fake smile on my face. I tried not to take the customers' blank stares and short tempers to heart. Their sense of apathy was unfortunately contagious.

At least a contagious *sickness* would have granted me the right to call in.

Leafy greens and fresh vegetables were sadly juxtaposed beside processed food, their freshness seeming out of place. Like a usual Friday night, it dragged on and on. My eyes were fixed on the clock behind me each time I had the chance to take a breather.

As I looked around at my other co-workers, I could hear the impatience in their voices, the barely noticeable yearning for something more than dealing with customers who cannot wait a measly five minutes for their food. Customers expected their food to sizzle and be grilled to perfection while also being prepared at lightning speed. The atmosphere often left a bad taste in my mouth, and the monotony of it all made it hard for me to believe in my value.

At least, that was the case until a skinny, hunched over elderly man with thin white hair hobbled in.

Immersed in the current burger I was garnishing, I almost missed him. Thank God I didn't, for if I did, I would have missed out on learning a lesson that would change my life.

Something about the situation smelled fishy, and not just the fish burgers in the fryer, when I saw a tray of drinks slowly slide off the side of the counter and forcefully plop into the old man's wrinkly hands. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the man slowly inch his way towards the door. I didn't think much of it until the lobby cleared, and there was only him left – at the front door, with all four of his adult-sized soft drinks sprawled across the grey tile floor.

My co-workers had already gone to the back because there were no more orders, so I was the only one left. I hastily ran over to the man, and when I looked at his face, I saw was an overwhelming sense of shame. My heart ached for the

man out of embarrassment, for I wondered how many times he has had to endure such feelings of helplessness.

I went to the man and told him not to worry – that I would take care of everything. I put his food up on the counter, got him four fresh drinks, mopped up the lake of soft drink, and told him that I would bring the food out to his car for him.

As he shuffled out of the building, he stressed how grateful he was to me.

“Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you,” he shakily mumbled.

I could tell his countenance had lifted as he slowly lowered himself into the car. I placed his food and drink in the backseat and continued to console and assure him that it was my pleasure to help. With a last “Thank you,” he puttered out of the lot.

The weak smile on his face as he drove away hit me like a ton of bricks. As I yanked open the door and strode into the restaurant, I oddly felt a wave of emotion rush over me.

I couldn’t even explain why, but I felt so sorry for the man, pondering how it must feel living with constant shaking and a disability. I experienced tangible empathy in a way I hadn’t before. I went to the back and felt tears roll down the side of my face. I tried my best to quickly recuperate, and a few minutes later, headed back out to the front line.

Sometimes when I look back on it, I feel embarrassed. Many may say that I was over reacting. Deep down, I know I learned true value in my job that day. Just being a kind person, listening to a customer’s story, or even just being the one ray of hope a customer experiences that day makes a difference.

What made me the saddest was how many times he thanked me. Helping a disadvantaged person in need should always be the natural action of a human being. How selfish has society become that helping someone pick up their drinks is heroic?

I learned that hot summer night the importance of and power behind doing even the smallest of things if they are the right things.

I had such compassion for that man, for he must always feel like a burden to others. No human should feel as if they are not worthy of being helped. I'm glad that I could help him see this, even if it meant the pathways of communication were through a mop, one to two litres of sugary water, and a few paper cups.

I guess what my mom jokingly suggests to me about my job is true; I do "change the world, one burger at a time."

Lifescapes Writing Group Presents *Living Legacies*

"Being part of this memoir class has opened up a whole new world for me. Writing these memoirs have given me a venue to record for my family the memories that I have had in my mind for many years."

- **Lois Oliver, Lifescapes 2017 - 2019**

"Communication, interaction, reminiscing, and connecting with friends. [It's] so important for all of us."

- **Gillian Holden, Lifescapes 2014-2019**

Celebrating the 135th anniversary of the Brantford Public Library with memory based works from members of the Brantford community. See them featured inside!

