



CHERISHED MEMORIES

Lifescapes Writing Group 2022
Brantford Public Library

15th Edition

CHERISHED MEMORIES



Brantford Public Library
Lifescapes Writing Group
2022

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

Editorial Team: Robin Harding and Victoria Vernassa

Cover and book design by Victoria Vernassa

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Foreword

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

On behalf of Brantford Public Library and this year's participants, I am delighted to thank Victoria Vernassa for her hard work as editor and book designer. Victoria, you have vision and an infectious enthusiasm for written and artistic expression, and it was a real pleasure to work with you.

I must also thank our presenters for persevering past the technical challenges of ongoing online workshops to provide us with their guidance and insight. Joan O'Callaghan, Melodie Campbell, Margo Karolyi, and Cheryl Freedman, we appreciate you and hope you enjoyed your time with us.

To the writers ... you give this program meaning. Watching your progress has been a wonderful experience and I respect your commitment to finding meaningful memories and sharing your stories. I truly hope you found joy in the remembering, pride in the telling, and fulfillment in working together to create a greater legacy.

These are all memories worth cherishing.

Sincerely,

Robin Harding, Editor
Program Coordinator (Adult & Senior)
Brantford Public Library

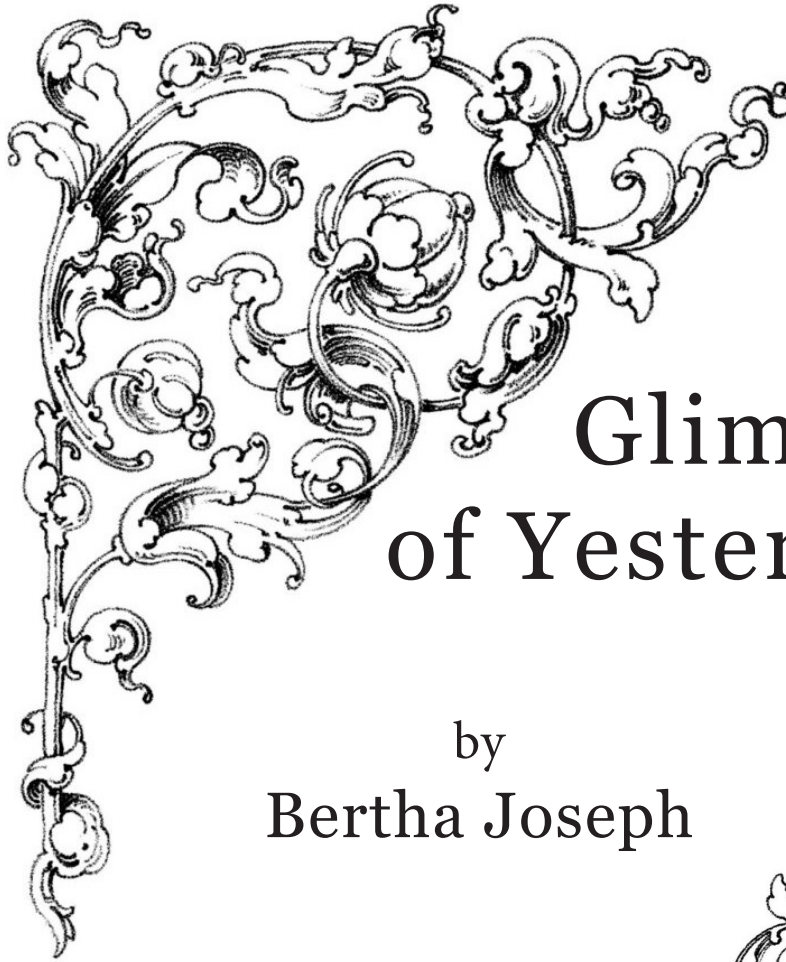
Message From the Editor

Victoria Vernassa

First and foremost, I'd like to extend the warmest congratulations to the group of authors that have put their energy into this year's edition of Lifescapes. While, by great misfortune, I was unable to meet you all, after this lovely summer I've spent immersing myself in the worlds of your most cherished memories, I must say I do feel as though I have met you, because the pages of your stories all glimmer with little reflections of yourselves like light on moving water. You all write with heartfelt depth, and you all have captured, at once, both the bittersweet current of years passing and the still ponds of our fondest moments ever so beautifully.

This note is veering into incredible corniness, but still I'd genuinely like to express my gratitude for how you've offered up your hearts to this anthology. This experience has enriched my view of living in the world. As I'm beginning my final year of university in a week's time and trying to come to terms with the lightspeed at which I've somehow gotten here, the inevitable fear of not having lived large enough or made the most of these years that every person ever has said are the best has crept up on me. What your beautiful reflections on times past have taught me is that for the most part, it's not so much the highly anticipated milestones or grand moments of logistic success that stay with you. It's those little air pockets of joy you find yourself in every day with those you love that carry you through. It's lying in the snow, angelic beneath the sky with your friend. It's taking a hungover rest stop to brew some coffee and watch water fall. It's sitting with your father at the dining table, top lit with a pencil and absolute adoration. It's right here, though we may not even be aware of it in the moment, that is the grandness and the greatness that we long for in our lives. Thank you for this experience. You should all be filled to the brim with pride.

GLIMPSES OF YESTERYEARS



Glimpses of Yesteryears

by
Bertha Joseph



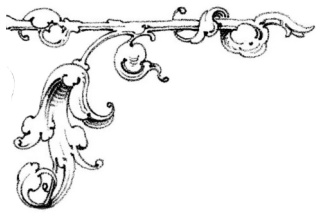
I remember ...

When a blue heaven adorned with fluffy white clouds disappeared, dark clouds filled the sky. Snowflakes fell and danced up a winter storm. Winter storms in years past brought us much joy. Children were delighted, spending hours outdoors, making up our own games and above all making memories.

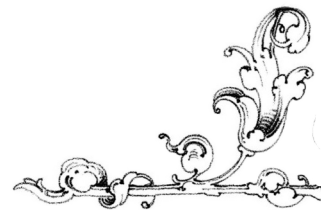
One such memory was the walk home from sledding, making angels in the snow and just hanging out. Clothes frozen hard with wet snow, faces red in the winter night, we looked to the lights from our windows, cascading across the driven snow. Smoke from the chimneys spiralled into the heavens. Our doors were never locked. Inside, wet cold clothes were stripped off, leaving us standing in long white underwear. It was fun outside but so much more fun to be home by the stove.

Snuggled all together in one bed, sleeping, dreaming of tomorrow, of making angels in the snow, of sledding down the tallest hill, of snowmen and snowball fights, thinking:

Oh, what fun when tomorrow comes...



FADING YOUTH



Drawing back the shades of night, I looked out and beheld a world of white and wonder. My heart blossomed with joy. The trees lay heavy with snow, their branches leaning earthwards. Only the sound of birds filled the air as their tiny footprints disturbed the resting snow. All was so quiet and peaceful. A dog barked, breaking the glorious silence of a beautiful world. This winter scene brought me the joy of memories of days long past.

I looked out my sunroom window at the Christmas fir, sitting in a bucket in my back yard, its branches heavily laden with snow. I wonder if it is waiting for lights to grace the world. Only a month past now, lit with over six hundred miniature soft white lights, the fir graced my living room warming our hearts. I will miss the fir, for soon its branches will be feeding the forest floor and its trunk will be making canes.

I opened my door to a brisk winter day. Taking a deep breath, the cold air was invigorating and fueled my thoughts. I travelled down Memory Lane. I was young once again.

In the winter of 1946, big white snowflakes were falling. Excitement was in our home at 46 Spring Street in Amherst, Nova Scotia. After supper, we dressed in our winter clothing, along with the warm outer clothing that always took their place behind the kitchen range. This was one time we didn't mind putting on that long underwear.

We ran and looked out the window. Outdoors, neighbourhood friends were gathering in our yard. We had a lot of work to do: making a big snowman, building a snow fort and making a pile of snowballs for a snowball challenge to end the evening.

We laid down and made angels in the fresh fallen snow. On this crisp cold night, the snow stopped falling, the sky became clear, and the moon and stars appeared.

We laid there spreading our wings.

We rolled and rolled three balls of snow. Placing them in position, a snowman was being formed and the fun started. We laughed and argued as the eyes, nose and mouth were chosen from lumps of coal. An old, worn black fedora rested on his head. A scarf from last year's snowman was wrapped lovingly around his neck. Black buttons of coal rested on his make-believe coat. His arms of twigs held a broom. The final touch to welcome the snowman was the gift of placing a corn cob pipe in the corner of his mouth.

The boys were building a snow fort while the girls were fussing over the snowman and printing our names under the angels. The snow fort was grand. It was large enough for the boys to sit in. The outside was designed to look like an igloo.

It was a joyous time. We stayed out until our clothes were frozen stiff and our fingers, toes and cheeks so cold they felt numb in the frosty cold night air. The man in the moon aglow as he looked down and I swear he smiled at us. We sure entertained him.

I remember one night; we had just finished our tasks of building the largest snowman on the block and creating our angels in the snow when the unexpected happened. Gloriously happy, when suddenly we felt a flake on our lips. Looking up, heaven was depositing more snow.

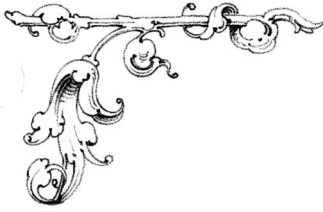
Oh no!

Oh well!

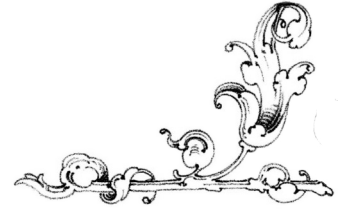
We looked toward home; smoke rolled into the sky from our chimneys. The windows bore the lights of welcome, reflecting across the snow. We opened the never-locked door of our home and stepped inside.

Momma helped us out of our frozen garments and stood them like soldiers on parade behind the stove, to thaw and dry for the morrow. A pot of hot chocolate sat on the back of the stove. Changing into our flannels, we drank our hot chocolate and ate our pap. Momma always made us pap before we went to bed. Pap, a slice of torn up homemade bread soaked in hot milk and topped with sugar, was the feast that warmed our insides. Both the pap and the hot chocolate warmed our hearts.

What a beautiful memory. Snow... Snow makes for memories when our *youth fades*.



THE CIRCUS



A veil hides the clear image of what I am remembering. When I was nine to ten years old, the circus came to Amherst. The town was disquieted by the clamor of its arrival and the setting up of the massive circus tents. The animals bellowed, letting us know they had arrived and calling us to come visit them.

My brother and I, along with our neighbourhood friends, were told by our parents—in no uncertain terms—that we were not allowed to go near the circus unless we were accompanied by them. Our group of kids made the decision it would be perfectly alright to just go to the corner; maybe we would see some of the action. The grey veil lifts a bit, enough for me to see us forgetting, as children conveniently can, and found ourselves very close to the circus grounds. Swearing each other to secrecy, we went home to play in the yard.

The next day, we returned to the corner and by magic, we found ourselves on the circus grounds without any money for admission. We were told to come back when we had money. We decided that maybe we could get on the grounds through the back of the tents. We saw Hank Snow and his wife leave their tent. We sneaked in under their tent, and as opportunity knocked, we entered out on the grounds.

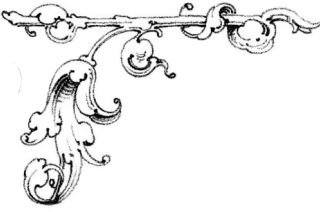
With excitement accompanied by fear for what we did, our eyes beheld the Wonders of This World. Men were shouting to come to their tent to see the Greatest Show on Earth. Guilt and fear caused us to escape the circus grounds before we were discovered.

The next day was Friday. My father and mother decided to take us to the circus. Admission paid, we excitedly entered through the gate. The first thing I heard was a man shouting, “Only twenty-five cents! Enter and see a two-headed baby!” My father believed it was important for us to see the Wonders of the World, so admittance was paid and we went in. Well, I saw the two-headed baby, a two-headed snake, the fattest woman in the world, the tallest man and the shortest man in the world.

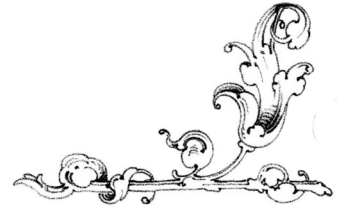
We watched Hank Snow perform with his whip, cutting strips of newspaper into two even parts, held between his wife’s hand and her teeth. He did tricks with his famous horse, Shawnee. We got moveable stick toys and Mexican jumping beans. We visited the animals, elephants and the little monkeys. The rides were fun. We enjoyed a tasty circus hot dog. To top off the wonders of the circus, we were on our way home with a stick of pink cotton candy. We were so happy.

The veil lifts and I see the name of the circus in bright red and white, on a ribbon across the front of the huge circus tent. The name of the circus lost somewhere down Memory Lane.





TWO FAMILIES



The late 1940s and early 1950s brought life changing events into the lives of two families. The McFadden and the Sanders families were close knit friends. We attended the same church and lived a few blocks from each other. The Sanders were missionaries, having served in Zulu Land, Africa. Dr. and Mrs. Sanders retired home to Amherst, where they continued Christian work. Several of their adult children remained in Africa as missionaries; the others returned to Canada with their parents.

It was through the church that our two families met, and as the years passed our two families became bonded friends. Dr. Sanders had passed, so the Sanders household was Mrs. Sanders, Miriam and Judson. James Price was also part of the family home. My family was complete with my father, Norman McFadden, my mother, Jean, and seven young children aging between 2 and 13 years of age. Both families were very happy.

However, May 16, 1950 and May 29, 1950 altered the lives of these two families.

A son, Norman Joseph Sanders, was born in Africa on May 14, 1913. Norman's early life was spent in Zulu Land, Africa with his missionary parents, Herbert and Estella Sanders. Norman's father was also a doctor. When the family returned to Canada in 1935, Norman was twenty-two years of age. Africa was his homeland and this instilled in him a desire to return to African soil. He was raised in a family who dedicated their lives to God, caring for the souls and health of the African people.

So, Norman began preparing himself as a missionary in order to

return to his homeland. He studied theology. Norman felt he could preach all right, but if someone was sick, he needed to be able to care for them. He was ready to leave for Africa when he became inspired to study medicine.

The years passed, and finally, Norman was once again ready to fulfill his calling.

But he was troubled.

Yes, he could preach all right, and if the people were ill or hurt, he would be able to care for them. But what if they required surgery? He would not be able to help them. Once again, Norman returned to university to study surgery.

The year was 1950, and Norman was ready.

Belongings were packed and shipped to Africa. Before they set out for Africa, his wife, Bessie, along with his son and daughter, David and Betty, were on a thirty-day visit to her family. Norman was meeting up with his brother, Judson, in Yarmouth. Unbeknownst to Norman, Judson had a surprise for him. Their brother, George, had arrived home from Africa and was in Yarmouth to surprise Norman. They would leave Yarmouth for Amherst together, where Norman would spend thirty days with his mother and family.

The day was Tuesday, May 16, 1950.

On the other side of the world in Germany, Johannes Georg Bednorz, a German Physicist and Nobel Laureate, was born. On this side of the world in New York, Bruce Coville, a famous American children's author, was born.

While families in Germany and New York were celebrating, events of a different kind were happening in Dayton, Yarmouth, Nova Scotia.

The brothers celebrated their coming together and congratulations were given to Norman. George rented a float plane for the trip to Amherst, where their mother and family excitedly awaited their arrival.

They boarded the float plane. George was an experienced pilot. The

plane was out on the lake, getting ready for takeoff, when a problem arose. They were unable to get the plane back to shore.

Norman, an expert swimmer, decided he would swim to shore and get help. He entered the water and was swimming toward shore, when he was overtaken by a cramp.

In Germany and New York, new lives were born and celebrated. In Nova Scotia, a life so full of potential was lost.

Norman drowned.

Two days before, on May 14, Norman celebrated his thirty-seventh birthday. Ready to finally fulfill his calling, Norman's life on earth was over.

As hearts broke and tears flowed, there was a celebration of this young man who spent his life in the service of the Lord. He was a wonderful family man and a fine student. Above all, he was a Christian ready to meet his Lord and Saviour.

Norman was laid to rest in Highland View Cemetery, Amherst. Bessie and the children remained with the family in Amherst. A few months later, a baby girl was born, named Norma Jean, after the father she would never know.

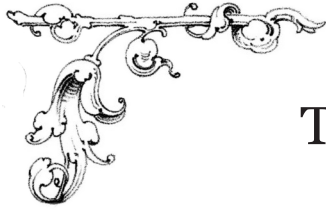
The day was Monday, May 29, 1950. On this day, Norman McFadden rose from his bed. After dressing, having breakfast, and looking in on his children, he said tootle-loo to his wife and left for work.

That morning at work, all went well at Robb Engineering.

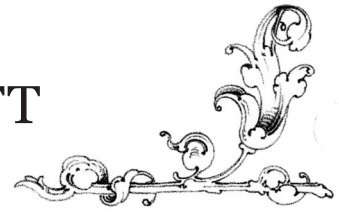
Until the accident occurred.

My father, Norman McFadden, tragically lost his life in an industrial accident.¹ In a matter of 13 days, our two families suffered the tragic events that altered our lives forever: the loss that left us with only beautiful memories of two fine fathers.

¹ See "Lives Asunder" by Bertha Joseph in *Remember When* 2014 Lifescapes anthology



THE TRAVELLING GIFT



Sameha, my mother-in-law, spent fifty years being a homemaker and, I must add, an excellent one. Her life was mostly spent in the kitchen cooking Syrian food for her coal miner husband, Sam, and the family. She also cooked, baked and delivered food to the aged, sick and shut-ins in the small mining town of Springhill.

All that changed when Sam passed away; Sameha started to travel. Her first trip was back to her homeland, Deirmemas, Lebanon. Sameha arrived in Canada in 1923 and for fifty years she had longed to return to her motherland.

The following years, Sameha travelled to Ontario visiting family and to the United States visiting her niece, May, her sister, other relatives, and friends.

On one trip visiting Lansing, May decided she would drive Sameha back to Canada, bringing her to our home in Brantford. Travelling along with May were a couple of her friends to enjoy the drive to Canada and for company on the way back to Lansing, Michigan. When they arrived, all were welcomed in the usual Lebanese fashion: we sat in the living room, chatting, laughing and having a joyous time.

Suddenly, Tena, May's friend, jumped to her feet and ran to the fireplace, staring at the mantel. In a loud voice, pointing at the mantel, she demanded, "Where did you get it? That's mine. I want to know how you got it. It is mine!"

My husband, Peter, stood up beside her and spoke softly.

“Tena, first off, what are you pointing at? Secondly, just calm down, there is no need to get excited and upset. If something here is yours, then you can take it.”

“I can prove it.”

“If you can prove it, then take it.”

“I don’t want it. I just want to know how you got it. I carved my initials on the bottom of it; see for yourself.”

A few years before, Sameha had made another trip to Lansing, Michigan. As usual, there was the excitement of her visit. The greetings took place; luncheons, dinners, visitations, and entertainment were arranged for Sameha. On this special occasion, she visited many times at the home of Rita. When Sameha’s visit came to an end, Rita wanted to give Sameha a parting gift.

Unable to go out to purchase one, Rita went to her china cabinet and took out a special gift that had been given to her. This gift meant a lot to her; it came from her late friend. Rita cherished it and hated to part with it, but she could never buy anything as special for Sameha, so she gave it to her as the parting gift.

The gift brought Sameha many memories of her homeland. Sameha appreciated the special gift and carefully wrapped it and placed it within her suitcase to protect it from breakage.

Sameha left Lansing, Michigan and visited Lilly in Texas. When her visit came to an end in Texas, she took a flight to Orlando, Florida to visit her daughter, Doris. After a few weeks, Sameha took a flight home, landing in Halifax, NS. She then travelled by car to Springhill.

In August that year, our vacation was spent in Springhill, visiting Peter’s mother, Sameha, and my mother. Our youngest son, Peter, took a great liking to his Sitti’s special gift, which she received from Rita in the United States. After much persuasion, I asked his Sitti to will it to him.

When we were leaving Springhill to return to Brantford, we found the gift tucked into Sam's suitcase.

This special gift made another journey ending up on our mantel. Tena had made the special white camel and carved her initials on the bottom of it. She gave this gift to her special friend, who in turn gave it to Rita, who in turn gave it to Sameha, who in turn gave it to her grandson, Peter.

After a number of owners and thousands of miles travelled, the White Camel sat on our mantel and to this day is placed in a prominent spot in our home.

As Paul Harvey would say, "Now you know the rest of the story."²



2 Source of quote: My memory. In the past, I always listened to Paul Harvey on the radio.



FROZEN

In the winter of 2003, chilled to the bone, I awoke in my mother's home to a world encased in ice. Only an icicle could be seen reaching for life outside the water tap. The goldfish were suspended in their new frozen world.

In the early hours of the morning that February, due to an ice storm, power lines heavy with frozen rain hung down to the earth, depriving homes of electricity and heat.

Dressed in layers of clothing to try to stay living in the frigid temperatures, I chose to make the best of a worst scenario. I made my way into the kitchen. Needing a cup of tea, I chipped away at some frozen water, placing it in a small pot. I gathered up candles, placing them on flat bottle tops, then placing them under a screen on the oven door.

Lighting the candles, I proceeded to prepare my breakfast. The ice was already melting for my tea. In a small frying pan, I melted some butter, dropped in two eggs, and over the screen I toasted two pieces of bread. My audience of sisters appeared, staring at me as if I had lost my mind. I was determined it would work.

After sitting down to a long awaited breakfast and a very pleasant cup of tea, I enjoyed a very tasty meal.

I looked up and one sister, the one who had said my technique wouldn't work, was following suit while the others were asking her to hurry up.

Now one sister, who never ate breakfast, said she was going outside to shovel the driveway. I added more layers of clothing. I grabbed my camera

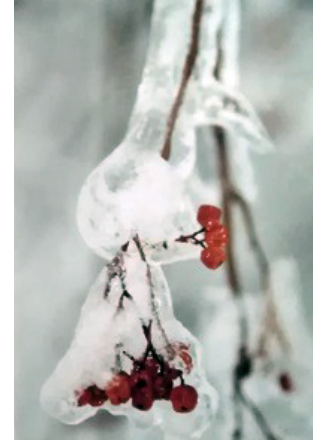
and walked outside to a frozen world.

Trees were crackling, breaking and falling under the heavy weight of ice. The ice storm had transformed the earth into a fairy land of frozen rain.

As I slipped around the yard, I was astonished at the beauty. It appeared the whole world was under a thick layer of ice. The world at that moment was as cold as my heart.

It was then, as I photographed the red berries encased in a thick layer of ice, I knew life was not lost, as the spirit lives on just as fresh red berries would again appear in the spring. I said to myself...

What if we were to return to another day a quarter of a century ago?



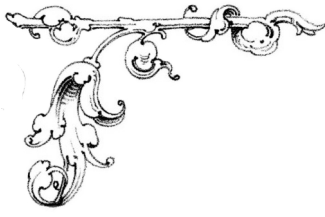
During the warm August days of 1979, everyone was excited. We were all together once again.

It had been many years since we were all under one roof at the same time. From Western, Mid and Eastern Canada, we joined each other to celebrate a family reunion with our mother. Even the elements favoured us with beautiful August weather. Friends and relatives arrived to give best wishes. Tables sat arrayed with food and sweets. As the musical brother and sisters exhibited their talents, music filled the air, while the dancers took the floor. Stories, confessions and yarns were spun in an uproar of laughter and tears. Our mother beamed with joy. She was so beautiful and young even then at age fifty-seven and as a mother of nine children.

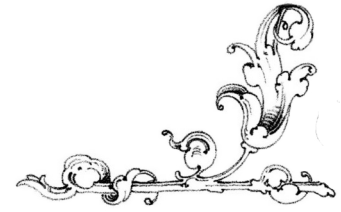
Amidst all the joy and laughter, thoughts were going through many minds and one particular question.

When would we ever be all together again?

What if ... the ice storm of 2003 and mother's leaving were only a dream?



TOGETHER AGAIN



White fluffy clouds sailed by in a brilliant blue sky. An overnight snowfall left everything covered in white blankets, until disturbed by gusts of wind causing blinding snow squalls. All was calm until the next gust.

I looked out the south window of my home. The world was beautiful, white, clean and peaceful. It was a good time to finish a little task. Going through some of my photos, I came to a precious one that touched a special spot in my heart: a photo of Jacqueline “Jackie” Wood.

Jackie and I were childhood friends. A wonderful friendship spanned the years of elementary and secondary school days into our teenage years. Hours of joy were spent playing house, serving each other on little red toy dishes and pretending dolls were our children. Then we were faced with the excitement of the growing-up years. Jackie became a teenager before me; my turn came two years later.

During these growing-up years, we spent our times together walking and talking. We had a lot of things to discuss. I came from a large family of seven children. My mother, now a widow, relied heavily on my brother and me. There was less carefree time, as we had to help out at home. Jackie’s family was also large with seven children. We had long conversations about our families. As teenagers usually do, we bragged and grumbled about all the good and not-so-good traits of our parents and our siblings. I was fascinated when she told me that some of her siblings were twins and that she herself was a twin.

Jackie and I told each other our secret thoughts of growing up and

our feelings that cause young girls to worry. There was always much laughter, joy and tears in our visits with each other and we always parted ways looking forward to our next get-together.

Then things changed.

During our teenage years, Jackie fell in love. Whenever our group saw Jackie, she was hand in hand with Clarence Corbett. They appeared glued to each other. It was decided among our friends: "One will never live without the other."

The year was 1952; Jackie and Clarence married and lived in Amherst.

In 1953, I relocated to Springhill and later married. One sunny day in July 1955, Jackie and Clarence arrived at our home to visit. It was a wonderful surprise and we had a joyous time together. Then with life came babies, trials and tribulations, and we did not visit again. Our friendship continued by way of exchanging Christmas cards every year. We had our memories to lean on.

In 1991 sad news came; Clarence passed away at a young age of sixty years. Words came to mind from so many years before.

One will never live without the other.

I felt fear. I convinced myself that these words were just the romantic thoughts of teenagers.

One late fall day in 1992, I received a telephone call from my mother. She told me that someone very special to me had called and wanted my phone number in Brantford. Jackie was coming to visit her children in Ontario and wanted to see me. I asked my mother to call Jackie right back and tell her I can hardly wait to see her again.

In December 1992 my phone rang. It was Jackie. With great happiness, plans were made. She would call me again and we would get together before she returned home to Nova Scotia.

1993 brought Jackie and I together once again. My husband and I drove to Jackie's daughter's home and picked her up, bringing her to our home to visit.

I still picture Jackie dressed in a green pant suit looking slim and beautiful. I was astonished by how slim she remained. She looked the same as when we last saw each other. She told me she never did gain weight, and that even after having babies she would return to her slim self. We sat alone in the living room. We chatted about our children, old times and above all how wonderful it was to be together again.

She was soon leaving Brantford for home. Our visit was coming to an end, when I asked her about her family and her twin brother. A sad story unfolded. Jackie told me the following:

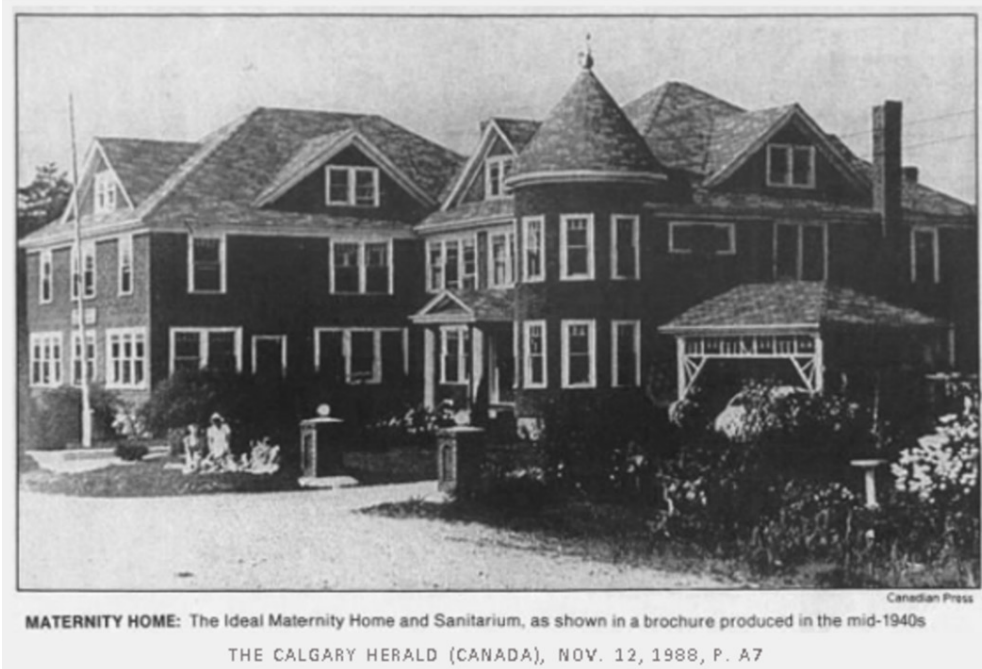
There came a time when upon the advice of a medical professional, Jackie needed to find a match. She didn't elaborate nor did I ask. She had returned home to question her family and received sad, heart-wrenching news. It was a double wound.

"I have no twin. There are no twins in my family," she said. "I have no blood relations. I am a Butterbox Baby."

Jackie was birthed at the Ideal Maternity Home.

The Ideal Maternity Home, East Chester, NS was opened in 1920 under the name The Life and Health Sanitarium. In the late 1920s, the name was changed to the Ideal Maternity Home. It was owned and operated by William Young, a licensed chiropractor, and his wife, Lila, an obstetrician and midwife. The purpose of the home was to give maternity care to couples from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Unwed mothers were promised careful birthing and placement of the child, for a service fee of five hundred dollars plus other expenses, or eighteen months of work until the debt was paid.

Babies were sold on the black market for up to ten thousand dollars, disguised as a donation.



Credit: Evie Magazine.¹

Between 1928 and 1946, fifteen to eighteen hundred babies were believed to be born in the home. Only the healthy babies made the adoption list. Any baby who had no placement potential was allegedly starved to death on a sparse diet of molasses and water. They were disposed of in small wooden dairy boxes for coffins. The Butterbox Babies were buried on the property, at sea or sometimes burned in the home's furnace.

It is believed Lila Young murdered hundreds of babies.

With tragic luck, Jackie was adopted.

Jackie had one outlet for her distress; she wrote a message and placed it in the personal column of the Halifax paper. She was seeking her birth mother.

After supper hour in Nova Scotia, evenings were spent relaxing. People did different activities like knitting and reading. In Halifax, one man chose to read his daily newspaper. Always leaving the classified for last, he ended by reading the personal column.

On this particular evening he read Jackie's message. Folding the paper to expose the personal column, the man approached his wife. He told her there was something of interest to her and that she should read it. His wife flatly refused to have anything to do with it.

The man was greatly troubled. Haunted by the contents of the message, he had a meeting with his children, explaining the urgency in the message he read in the Halifax paper.

A meeting was arranged with Jackie, minus her birth mother.

Jackie's visit came to an end, as she wanted to get back to her daughter's home. We drove her back. She left the following morning for home in Nova Scotia. Jackie did not talk about any illness with me. I asked no questions, thinking we would discuss it when I went home to visit in Nova Scotia that year.

Days and weeks passed. My mother called telling me Jackie was in Victoria General Hospital in Halifax. She was not doing well. To brighten her day, I ordered flowers to be delivered to Jackie. Jackie called me. We had a nice conversation. She assured me she was okay and not to worry. I prayed for her.

There was sadness in Jackie's eyes, when she had visited me. I didn't invade her privacy to ask why. Since that day I often wonder what Jackie really wanted to tell me.

Shortly thereafter mother called giving me sad news. Jackie passed on February 18, 1993, two years after Clarence's passing. I felt sorrowful. It was at that moment words from the past echoed in my mind.

One will never live without the other.

Clarence and Jackie are together once again.

1. Baumgartner, Jessica Marie. "The Butterbox Babies: The Stolen Babies of Nova Scotia." *Evie Magazine*, 2 Feb. 2022. <https://www.eviemagazine.com/post/the-butterbox-babies-the-stolen-babies-of-nova-scotia>

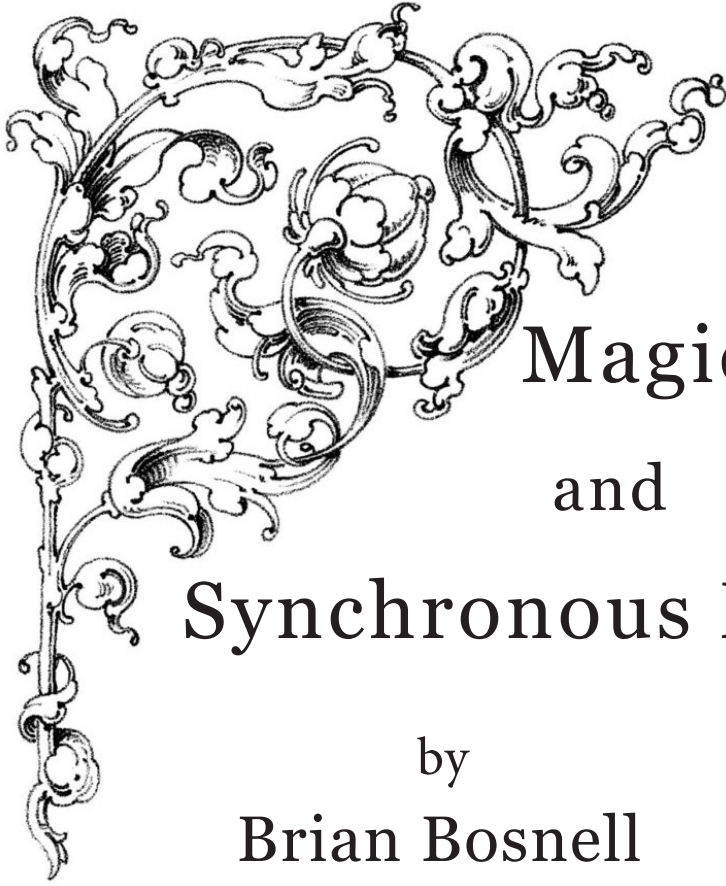
MEET BERTHA

I was born and raised in Nova Scotia. 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.



The catalog of emotion that disappears when someone dies,
and the degree to which we rely on a few people to record
something of what life was to them, is almost too much to bear.

—Sarah Manguso, “Ongoingness: The End of a Diary”



Magical Things and Synchronous Moments

by
Brian Bosnell



I know that I keep too many things.

I don't mean in the hoarding sense (other than books), but in a more utilitarian sense. I keep the things that, for me, evoke the most intense memories. I keep the things that elicit emotion when dug out and looked at or listened to. The *stuff* that I've consciously kept around, and not disposed of in one of my wild tidy-up binges. There's even living *stuff*.

Of course, contemporary purveyors of proper feng shui insist that most of this *stuff* must be thrown away. Not me!

For instance, examine this pan.



It's at least a hundred years old. The original seasoning remains after all those years.

I remember sitting at a 1940s red and white porcelain table in a tiny kitchen with my grandfather. I watch as my grandmother fries a single sunny-side-up egg on the new (newly invented, that is) electric stove. In seconds it slides out of the pan onto a freshly buttered piece of toast. A second slice of toast spread with marmalade waits on a separate plate.

Some sixty-five years later I can still pull up that exact memory whenever I open the pots and pans drawer on my kitchen stove. Every single time, the sight of this pan generates that scene in my mind.

I am now going to reach inside my memory cabinet and examine the contents of a few drawers.

Sixty years after their construction in seventh grade Industrial Arts, my bookends are still in use, holding a few of my Books To Read. They take a place of honour right on my headboard.



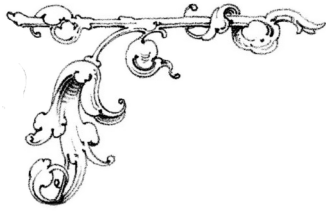
The amount of sanding and staining that went into these was amazing. Several friends and I competed to see how smooth the surfaces could become. I must say, the pieces held up well!

Notice the small jig saw cut at the top of the horse's mouth.

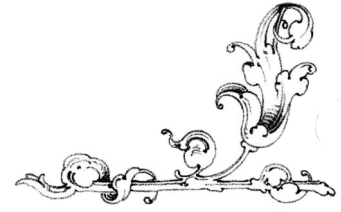
That's a delicate cut for an eleven- or twelve-year-old to make. The piece had slipped during cutting and the jig saw cut my finger right at the junction where the nail meets.

Mr. Cuthbert was quick to stem the flow and bandage it. I went into shock after seeing how much blood came from such a tiny little cut, but Mr. Cuthbert remained calm, and soon my colour returned and I found my way home for lunch.

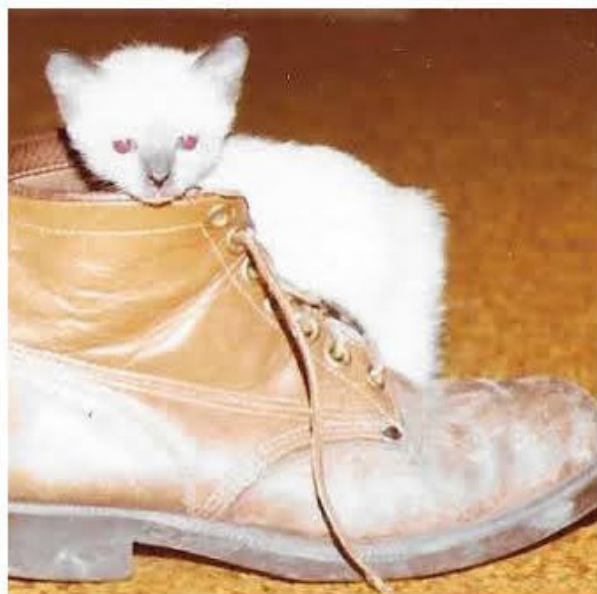
Whenever I glance at the bookends, I can flip that finger and find that tiny scar.



A MATING PAIR



Siamese love to perch up high. The female (Tasha) was found in a bin at Cockshutt's, where I worked at the time. Shortly after rescuing her, the pair produced a litter of four. One of them cavorts in a work boot.





From 1979 to the present: Max, Missy, and Pumpkin.

The black kitten disappeared after a few days.

When we first moved to our present location there were no trees on the boulevard. The city had planted several trees, but each had died early on despite being staked and watered regularly. The city gave up. In my backyard, I had marvelled at the persistence of a spindly four-foot sugar maple that had wound its way through the chain links of the fence to raise its head above the fence top. As an experiment I carefully dug up the root clump and disentangled the tree from the fence. It lost many leaves. This untitled poem written in 2004 refers to what I have named My Sugar Maple.

My Sugar Maple

Cut from the jaws of a vise,
Fence wire excised from your bark.
Spaded up by the roots,
Spindly branches freed from galvanized grip.

Stuck in a decaying hole
Rotten with three trees tried.
Watched from the stoop
Watered from the hose.

Shivered through thunder
Stretched through gust
Silence wrapped in ice
Saved from a snare.

You acknowledged your freedom and grew.
Now grant my reward tree.
Cool me with your shade.

In the summer heat at the stroke of noon I can sit in my chair and read in comfort. Breezy days in the low 20s (Celsius) can be quite cool.

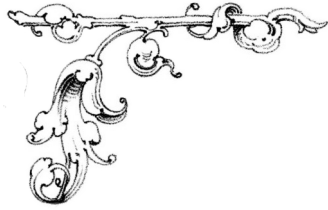
My sugar maple had grown substantially after its placement on the boulevard around 1996. It was joined a couple of years later by My Linden Tree on the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Lynden Park Mall.

And presently: to the right of my sugar maple rests my linden tree.

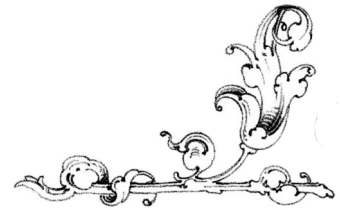


An advertising department that obviously knew its way around homophones gave linden trees away on the 25th anniversary of the Lynden Park Mall. That was 1999. However, the mall's opening year of 1974 is even more significant.

At that time, I worked for a maintenance firm to offset my university expenses. I grew quite close to the proprietor and would often accompany him as he “drummed up” business. That included timely pub luncheons and after hour construction trailer meetings. Butch, as he was affectionately known, secured the initial Lynden Park Mall cleanup after several drinks. To this day whenever I enter the former Sears store (now Sport Chek), I can walk its unique, circular tiled aisles knowing that I scrubbed and waxed them before any shopper had set foot.



THE PICNIC TABLE SAGA

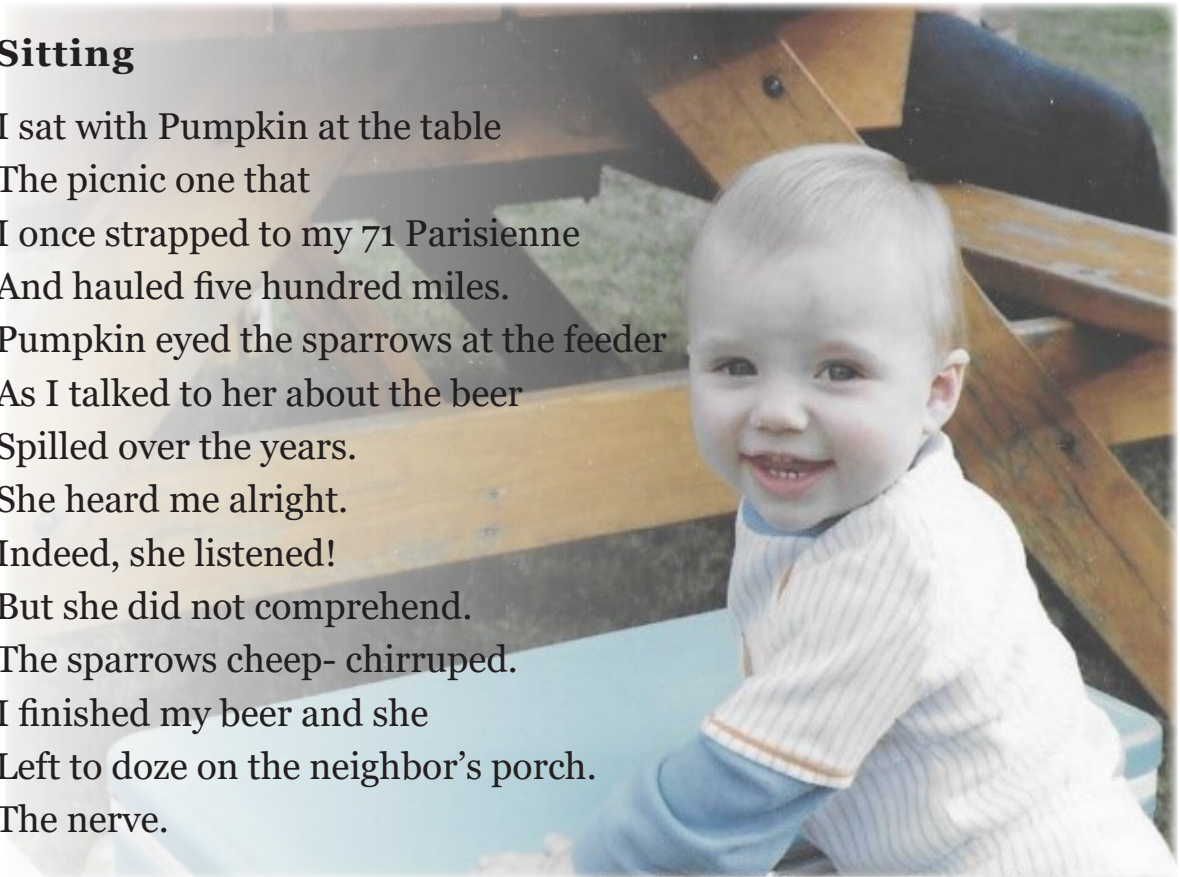


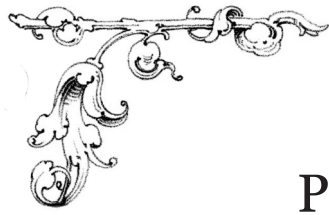
My father-in-law constructed this picnic table from lumber just laying around in Barry's Bay, ON. I strapped it to the roof rack on my boat-of-a-car (71 Pontiac Parisienne) and trucked it five-hundred miles along the 400 Series highways to Brantford. You wouldn't be able to go five miles now. I hated chopping it up.



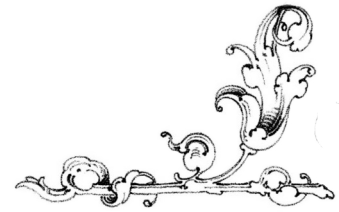
Sitting

I sat with Pumpkin at the table
The picnic one that
I once strapped to my 71 Parisienne
And hauled five hundred miles.
Pumpkin eyed the sparrows at the feeder
As I talked to her about the beer
Spilled over the years.
She heard me alright.
Indeed, she listened!
But she did not comprehend.
The sparrows cheep- chirruped.
I finished my beer and she
Left to doze on the neighbor's porch.
The nerve.





METAMORPHOSIS + PLANT PERSISTENCE



How about change over time? Here's a slow burn of change over twenty-five years compared to change over a week.



From the photo on the left only five *items* remain: the concrete ledge that abuts the sidewalk, the sidewalk, the spindly trees to the right in the distance, my son, the lighter coloured fence, and the adjacent house.



Everything else is gone. Our feline at the time named Quick, the fence, the shed, its contents, most of the larger trees, almost everything. The conifer to the right of the new shed is one that I planted a couple of years ago.

But wait! There was significant change in the marked-up area: note the hint of green.

That was a very sturdy scrap door that I had placed over a decaying worktable. Of course, it had a keyhole. Within days a very *adventurous* Manitoba Maple (an aggressive invasive species) popped up through that keyhole. Adaptation or what?



The other plant, my money plant, died last summer. All that was left was a portion of the stem. I decided to leave it and wait. Well, look what happened! It regrew and now sits in my best south-facing window. (Many more leaves, of course!)

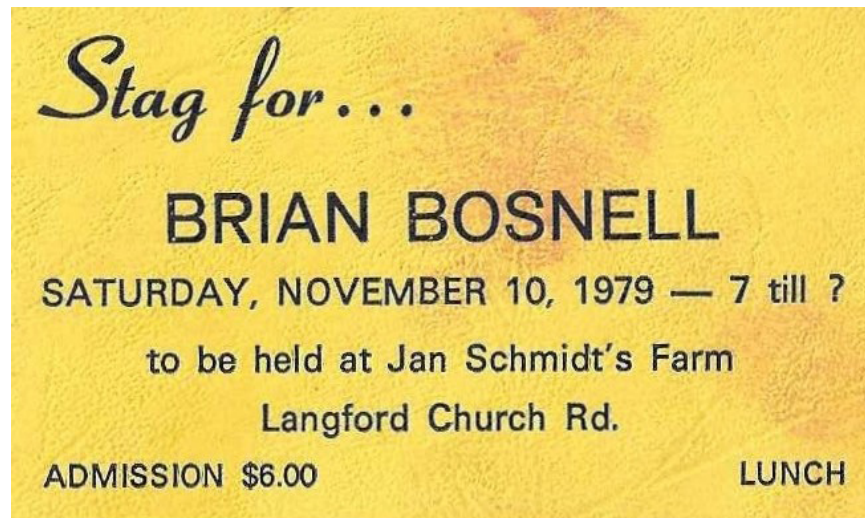
One weekend not that long ago my daughter arrived unexpectedly one Halloween Saturday. She brought some finger paints and we experimented by smearing them over a selection of canvasses.

I was going to title my creation Boo, but suddenly remembered my reading of Mary Karr's *The Art of Memoir* where she mentioned the phrase "Spooky understands."

This phrase was first spoken by an American GI during the Vietnam War and recorded in Michael Herr's *Dispatches*. It may have been a reference to the best-selling pop song of the day by the Classics IV (Spooky) or the rapid-fire machine-gun-armed helicopter (Spooky). Recalling that, I re-titled my art *Spooky Understands*. I believe that she does. I don't because sixty years later rapid-fire airborne machine guns have transformed into precision fired supersonic missiles.



Spooky Understands



From the mid-70s right through the 80s many of my friends married. A critical part of this progression was the bachelor party or stag. Above you see a ticket to mine.

Mine was uneventful compared to the tale I am about to weave.

For years my tale was embellished and added to. It took on a life of its own at every subsequent get together where tongues were loosened.

At the time I drove a dark green 1967 Volvo (real leather interior) that was gifted to me by my grandmother. I arrived late, probably just after 11:00pm and offered to ferry several of the stag-goers to a downtown location.

I had just come off a 3-11 shift and did not have time for a beer as several of the “boys” wanted to leave at that moment. As I put the Volvo in reverse a drunken patron brandished a stolen fire extinguisher from the hall and covered the Volvo’s exterior in foam.

Imagine what my green Volvo now looked like.

With my companions screaming in my ear to leave I quickly drove my foam-covered Volvo downtown, parked it, and joined the party on the second floor of a downtown apartment building.

I can't remember handing over my car keys to someone for a pizza run. That person returned and didn't say a word to me, just came back pizzas in hand. He never did mention an "accident."

Around 1:15 am I begged off, citing tiredness. No doubt I had shared a joint or two but did not see myself as over the line.

I was a little worried about discoloration to my car but hoped that I could safely navigate the short drive home and wash it off in the morning.

That short drive home did not happen. Just four blocks down Colborne Street East, at the corner of Alfred and Colborne, I was surrounded by four police cars. The officer who spoke to me looked first at the car and then at me quizzically.

Apparently I didn't even come close to fitting the description of the driver that the officer had.

The other three departed and I was instructed to follow that officer to the police station which at that time was situated at the corner of Greenwich and Newport, about two blocks away. He allowed me to drive and park my car to the rear of the station.

Fearing the worst, I followed the officer fully expecting to be locked up for the night. I couldn't understand why the *arresting* officer let me drive my Volvo to the station.

As I tagged along behind the officer to an upstairs interview room, I walked past the so-called duty desk where the supervising sergeant sat. I exchanged glances with him and then tripped going up the stairs.

As my rambling interview progressed, I smoked a cigarette. I had to put it out as suddenly when I was given permission to return to my car. I was told to drive it home and park it.

As I recall, that three or four block drive was unescorted. I do not remember washing the foam off the next day.

But confusion set in. It cleared when I called my close friend who was

also at the party and who had had troubles of his own. He had been found sound asleep at the wheel of his car in his driveway by his now off-duty staff sergeant father.

Dad's comment: "Your mother is very upset. Get in the house."

Ah, clarity!

The person at the duty desk and my friend's father were one and the same. With one glance my best friend's policeman father had enabled my escape. What kind of random wizardry (synchrony?) is this?

My Volvo had a small hitch on the back. As my *friend had* backed up to leave the pizza place, he smacked the car behind him not once but several times, damaging that car's front end. The owner had been in the vehicle and called police from a payphone in the pizza place to provide the details. Thus, the ensuing pull-over.

Not one single time did my friend's father mention the incident. No lectures, no heart-felt confessions on my part, no reaction whatsoever. For the next sixty years until his passing at 103 years old my saviour kept his intervention to himself. We interacted hundreds of times right up to the time of his death.

The car's owner contacted me. We bartered a deal and I paid for the damage.

As for the driver of my Volvo, he may not have known that he had backed up into the car behind him at first but it wouldn't have taken long to figure it out. It did take some time before I realized that he had done it. He never mentioned it, and I had paid his unfortunate victim right away. Before I could approach my *friend*, he had moved out of province.

Fun With Figures

We have 4889 for the game today. One 9, two 8s, one 4. Using all four each time, but no other digits at all, you form expressions for the consecutive numbers from one up.

Any arithmetical signs may be used, but no summation or factorial symbols, and no words. Don't forget decimals, regular, and repeater, also powers, and roots. For example $89 + 8 - 4$ is a solution for 93.

The limit without a break in continuity seems to be 114 with 111 as a real challenge.

This is an old puzzle dating from the 60s composed by J. A. H. Hunter. He wrote a puzzle newspaper column for years. This brain teaser I solved many years ago, while in high school: all except for two 107 & 111.

I have tried several times over the years to find solutions for 107 & 111 to no avail. I approached a mathematician, posted on several puzzle websites, and even thought about going to my high school math department. I have not but it sure would be great to finally complete this puzzle.

I enclose my calculations as proof that I did indeed tackle it:

- ① $9+8-8\sqrt{4}$
- ② $\sqrt{9}-\sqrt{4}+\frac{8}{4}$
- ③ $8+8-9-4$
- ④ $\sqrt{4}+\sqrt{9}-\frac{8}{4}$
- ⑤ $89-8+$
- ⑥ $\frac{8}{8}+9-4$
- ⑦ $\frac{8\sqrt{4}}{8}+4$
- ⑧ $\frac{84}{8\sqrt{4}}$
- ⑨ $\frac{88}{8}+\sqrt{4}-\sqrt{9}$
- ⑩ $8+8-\sqrt{9}\sqrt{4}$
- ⑪ $8-8+9+\sqrt{4}$
- ⑫ $8-8+4\sqrt{9}$
- ⑬ $\frac{8}{8}+4\sqrt{9}$
- ⑭ $98-84$
- ⑮ $8 \times 8 - 49$
- ⑯ $\frac{4\sqrt{4}}{4}+8$
- ⑰ $8+8+\sqrt{9}-\sqrt{4}$
- ⑱ $8-8+9\sqrt{4}$
- ⑲ $\frac{8}{8}+9\sqrt{4}$
- ⑳ $8\sqrt{9}-8-4$

- 23 $9+4+\frac{8}{8}$
- 24 $+8-8\sqrt{9}$
- 25 $\frac{88}{4}+\sqrt{9}$
- 26 $8\sqrt{9}+\frac{8}{4}$
- 27 $8+8+9+\sqrt{4}$
- 28 $9 \times 4 - \sqrt{8 \times 8}$
- 29 $8+8+9-4$
- 30 $94-(8 \times 8)$
- 31 $\frac{88}{7}+9$
- 32 $8(\sqrt{4}+\sqrt{9})-8$
- 33 $9+8+8\sqrt{4}$
- 34 $\frac{8}{8}\sqrt{4}+4$
- 35 $\frac{88}{8}-9$
- 36 (9×4)
- 37 $9+(9 \times 4)$
- 38 $(8+\sqrt{4})\sqrt{4}+8$
- 39 $88-79$
- 40 $3\sqrt{9}+8\sqrt{4}=40$
- 41 $\frac{98}{\sqrt{4}}-8$
- 42 $(9+8)\sqrt{4}+8$
- 43 $48+\sqrt{9}-8$
- 44 $8\sqrt{9}+\frac{8}{4}=44$
- 45 $\frac{98-8}{\sqrt{4}}$
- 46 $9 \times 4 + \frac{8}{8}$
- 47 $\frac{88}{\sqrt{4}}+\sqrt{9}$
- 48 $\frac{8\sqrt{9}}{4} \times 8$
- 49 $98 \times \frac{4}{8}$
- 50 $98-48$
- 51 $8 \times 8 - 9 - 4$
- 52 $\frac{8\sqrt{9}}{4}-8$
- 53 $\frac{48+8}{\sqrt{4}}$
- 54 $9(8-\frac{8}{4})$
- 55 $4(8+8)-9$
- 56 $(9 \times 8)-8\sqrt{4}$
- 57 $\frac{98}{\sqrt{4}}+8$
- 58 $8 \times 8 - \sqrt{9}\sqrt{4}$

MAGICAL THINGS AND SYNCHRONOUS MOMENTS

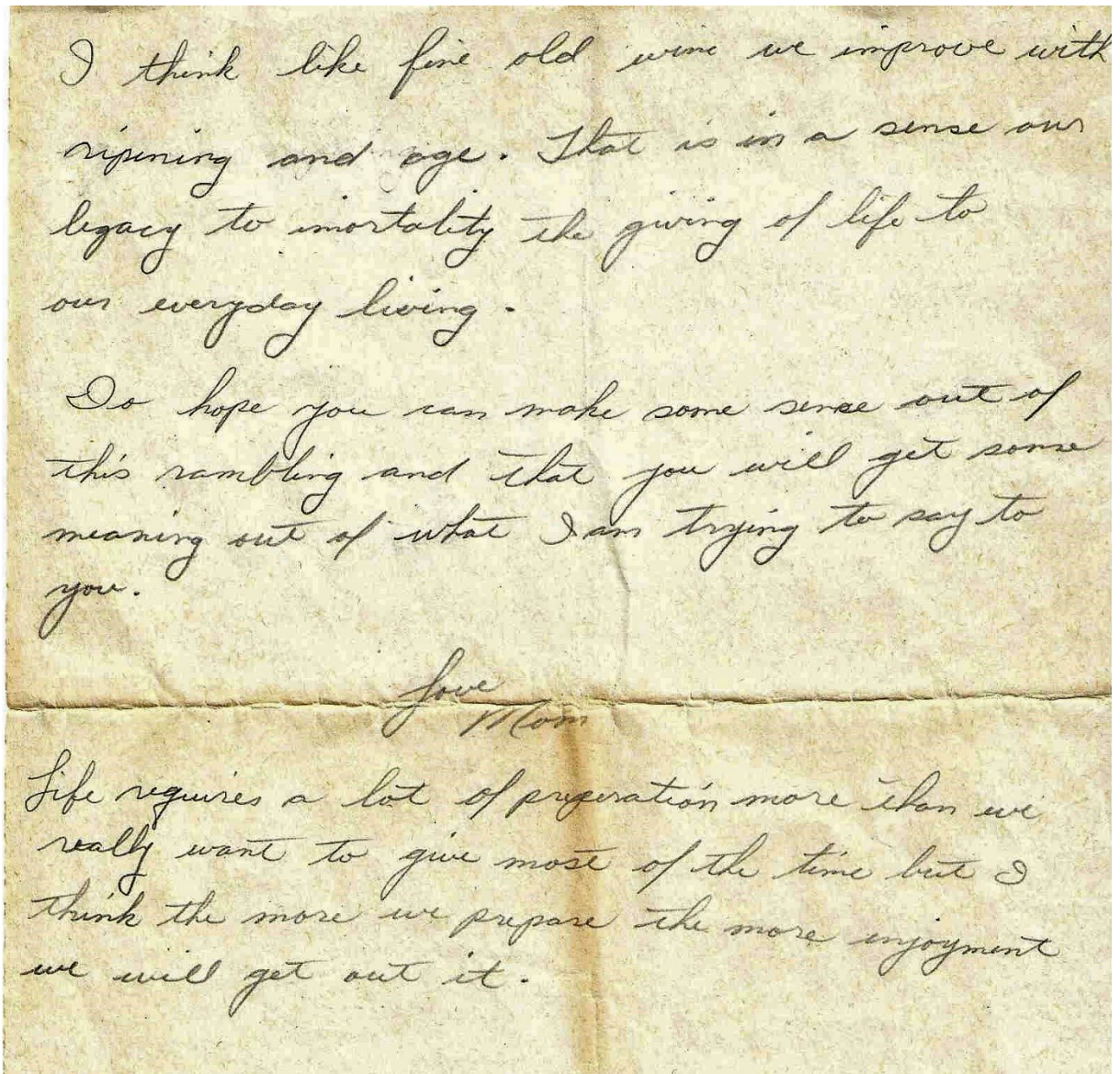
59	$49 + \frac{8}{8}$	91	$89 + \frac{8}{4}$
60	$54 - 8\sqrt{9}$	92	$98 - 8 + \sqrt{4}$
61	$4(8+8) - \sqrt{9}$	93	$88 - 4 + 9$
62	$8 \times 9 - 8 - \sqrt{4}$	94	$98 - 8 + 4$
63	$4\sqrt{9} - \frac{8}{8}$	95	$88 + 4 + \sqrt{9}$
64	$4\sqrt{9} - 8 + 8$	96	$98 - \frac{8}{4} = 96$
65	$49 + 8 + 8$	97	$9\sqrt{4} + 8 + 8$
66	$98 - (8 \times 4)$	98	$\frac{8\sqrt{9}}{4} + 8$
67	$54 - 8 - 9$	99	$89 + 8 + \sqrt{4}$
68	$\frac{8}{8} \times 8 \times 9 + 4$	100	$98 + \frac{8}{4}$
69	$8 \times 8 + \sqrt{4} + \sqrt{9}$	101	$89 + 8 + 4$
70	$8 \times 8 + \sqrt{9}\sqrt{4}$	102	$94 + \sqrt{9}\sqrt{8}$
71	$\sqrt{49} + 8 \times 8$	103	$(\frac{8}{8})\sqrt{4} + \sqrt{9}$
72	$48 + 8\sqrt{9}$	104	$94 + \frac{8}{8}$
73	$89 - 8\sqrt{4}$	105	$89 + 8\sqrt{4}$
74	$(9 \times 8) + \frac{8}{4}$	106	$88 + 9\sqrt{4}$
75	$88 - 4 - 9$	107	
76	$\frac{8}{\sqrt{4}} + 8 \times 9$	108	$84 + 8\sqrt{9}$
77	$89 - 8 - 4$	109	$(\frac{8}{8})\sqrt{4} + 9$
78	$94 - 8 - 8$	110	$98 + 8 + 4$
79	$89 - 8 - \sqrt{4}$	111	
80	$9\sqrt{4} - 8 \times 8$	112	$(8+8)(4+\sqrt{9})$
81	$88 - 4 - \sqrt{9}$	113	$8 \times 8 + 49$
82	$98 - 8\sqrt{4}$	114	$98 + 8\sqrt{4}$
83	88 $89 - 8 + \sqrt{4}$		
84	$(9 \times 8) + 4 + 8$		
85	$89 - 8 + 4$		
86	$98 - 8 - 4$		
87	$89 - \frac{8}{4}$		
88	$98 - 8 - \sqrt{4}$		
89	$84 + 8 - \sqrt{9}$		
90	$\sqrt{9} \times \frac{8}{.8}$		

My mother never presented me with this letter. It is obviously a rough draft. It was found while sorting through her *stuff* after her death in 2011, some thirty-seven years after its composition. (A transcription is available at the end of this story.)

My Dear Son,
 Right now there is a struggle going on inside you whether to continue your education or not, I say do not let this be the effect of you. You will find as your life goes on over the years you will face many decisions some which you will find, will tax you to your innermost self, but I say do not lay down on the job at that most critical time put the best of your fighting ability into to the problem and you will come out a better man for it.

Brian I am finding as life goes on that we have lessons to learn all the days of our life. I believe that your education is very important in your life and please do not throw a God given gift down the drain. Your ^{training} will make you a richer man in the years to come not just financially but in your everyday just plain living. I firmly believe that if you continue your schooling that you will be better prepared to cope with life, and I guess in a sense that is what living is about, being able to roll with the punches. Good or bad.

I know that when you read the line where
 I use the term "God given" you will laugh and
 think "well she had better practice what she
 preaches" granted I am telling you something
 I have not practised very much. That has been
 the down fall of my life. at a time in my
 life when I should have had faith to get
 me through I was tried and found lacking.
 I paid the price for it in physical and mental
 illness. When it comes right down to it we only
 get out of this life exactly the amount of living
 on our part that we put into it. Maybe you
 will read this and still not get out of it what
 I am trying to say, but just to repeat myself
 I still think your education will enrich your
 life not just the financial side of life but your
 just plain living day to day life. Not in any
 way that you can see now, that will have
 to come with time. But I firmly believe that
 you will look back 10 maybe longer ^{years} but you
 will look back and say thank heaven I went
 ahead not backwards. your life can be
 limitless when you go ahead. Going backwards
 only brings defeat at an early age.



I believe she wrote this after my graduation from McMaster in 1974. I think she sensed that I was going to return to White Farm where I worked for several summers. The money sure was great.

I did, however, take her advice and after a short European trip went to teachers' college in the fall of 1975. Still, I wasn't aggressive enough to tap my network to secure a teaching position. Indeed, to her chagrin, I did go back to White's.

White Farm collapsed in 1985 and only then did I fall back on my credentials to begin my teaching career. It took another five years before I was able to secure a part-time contractual position.

She must have been relieved although she never said.

Her letter reveals several other interesting themes. First, I never perceived my mother as one who would sit down and put an argument to paper. She did and as I read it these decades later it is a logical argument. I'll never know why she didn't sit me down to express her views or present me with a good copy of her letter.

I'm happy that the letter now exists in the cloud as a testament to a mother's hope for her son's future.

And so, this recounting ends. It ends with descriptions of a few of my favorite objects. It ends with the detailing of a life-altering event. It ends with examples of evolution over time and a mathematical puzzle. And finally, it concludes with a long undiscovered letter from my mother.

The more I teased out the details the more vignettes rose to the surface. Version number two, perhaps?

MEET BRIAN

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.



Appendix: Mom's Letter Transcribed

My Dear Son,

Right now, there is a struggle going on inside of you whether to continue your education or not. I say do not let this be the defeat of you. You will find as your life goes on over the years that you will face many decisions. Some will tax you to the core, but I insist do not lay down on the job. Put the best of your fighting ability into the issue and you will come out a better man for it.

Brian, I am finding as life goes on that we continue to have lessons to learn. And that I believe, is for all the days of our lives. I believe that your education is very important and please do not throw a God-given gift down the drain. Your training will make you a richer man in the years to come, not just financially, but in your everyday life. I firmly believe that if you continue your schooling, you will be better prepared to cope with life. That's what life is all about, rolling with the punches.

I know that when you read the line where I use the term God-given you will laugh and think, well, she had better practise what she preaches. Granted, I am describing something that I have not practised very much. And that has been a downfall in my life. At a time in my life when I should have

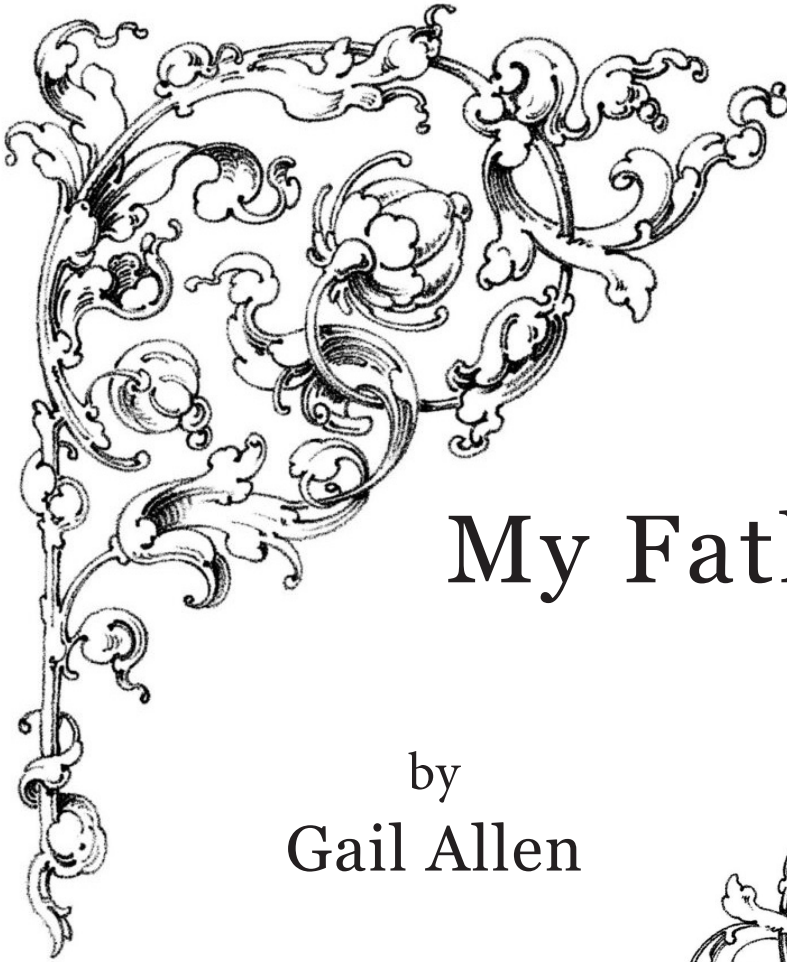
had faith to get me through, I was tried and found lacking. I paid the price for it in physical and mental illness. When it comes right down to it, we only get out of life the exact amount of "living" that we put into it. Maybe, you will read this and still not get out of it what I am trying to explain. To repeat myself: your continued education will enrich all your life, but not in a way that you can see now. That will come with the passage of time. You will look back and give thanks that you went ahead and not backwards. Going backwards would only result in defeat. Like fine wine we can improve with ripening and age. In a sense that's our legacy to immortality: the giving of life to our everyday living.

I hope that you can make some sense out of what I am saying.

Love,

Mom

MY FATHER



My Father

by
Gail Allen



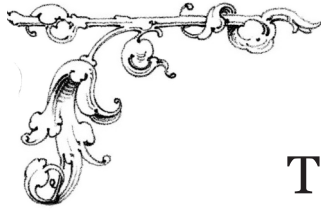
Dear Dad...

I thought of you today, but that is nothing new.

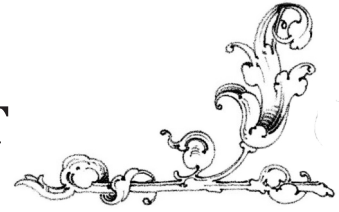
I thought about you yesterday, and days before that too.

Your picture in its frame. You are always in my heart...

But your memory is that keepsake, from which I'll never part.



THE SCHOOL PROJECT



Most fathers love to help with school projects, and given his love of tinkering, my father was no exception.

In grade five I decided to do a very hands-on project covering the subject of electric currents. Perhaps what inspired me were those nights I spent beside my father replicating the electrical circuits he would draft for his engineering studies. Or, it may have simply been my own interest to create all manner of things from an early age. But let's face it, a science project on electrical circuits was not your average school project for a fifth-grade girl in the sixties.

My father said it would be better to demonstrate an electrical circuit instead of simply drawing or writing about one. We went out to his workshop in the garage and began to rustle around for things that could run on a large battery—the type with two large terminals on top and that was about the size of a can of Spam.

To start with, I found a two-by-four piece of wood and painted it with the leftover peach paint from my bedroom. This was the only overtly girly touch to the whole project. The next finds in Dad's treasure trove were a small light bulb, a buzzer, and a small motor about the size of my thumb.

The large battery was battened down with a wide band of black rubber. These were the kinds of bits and bobbles that you could find in my father's workshop: a plethora of widgets, tools and gadgets.

I attached each of my treasures to the peach-painted two-by-four plank and used a staple gun to run wires down each side of the board. I

researched the inside workings of a battery, all the components of a battery that made it work, and the difference between the positive and the negative terminals. Wires on the left side of the board attached to the positive terminal of the battery, ran down the board to each tiny electrical item, and ended at a metal tab that hovered over a wire connected to the gadget. Over on the right side of the board a wire ran down and attached to the Barbie-sized light bulb, motor, and small buzzer.

I was starting to get excited about the possibility of seeing these tiny items come to life!

My father explained that in order for the light, motor and buzzer to work we would need to create a complete electrical circuit. In other words, there would need to be no break in the wiring to the little items whenever I wanted them to activate. It was with my research and with the help of dad's explanations in simple terms that helped me to realize: if that metal tab was pushed down, the circuit was closed and complete. The electricity could flow freely and the little motor would start up. It would light up the tiny bulb and would sound the small buzzer. Once those metal tabs were released, the circuit was broken. The electricity could flow no more, and my tiny widgets would stop working.

One by one, I tried out the circuit by closing it off. I was amazed to see the light bulb shine. Next, I closed the tiny motor's circuit, and it began to whirl. The buzzer was the last piece of the puzzle to put in place.

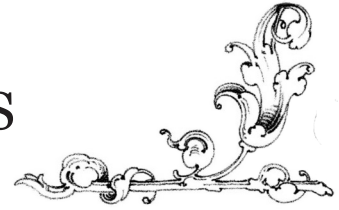
It all worked!

Little did I know; this grade school project would supply a valuable lesson in troubleshooting why that kettle isn't working or why the stereo won't turn on. Here's to the POWER of circuits!

The electrical circuit project is long gone except for two pieces: the tiny thumb sized motor which I keep on my bookshelf, and the memory of that night at our dining room table. That night my father and I spent building an electrical circuit—the night we built a memory.



ADVENTURES IN SUMMER VACATIONS



“Not another God damn *peep* back there, do you hear me? NOTHING! I’ve had just about enough of this bloody fighting. Shut up and enjoy the ride!”

Aah, sweet memories of summer vacation and car rides pulling a trailer (says I, tongue in cheek).

We spent summer vacations pulling our trailer to various campgrounds across Ontario. Looking back, it really was a wonderful opportunity to see the beautiful province we live in. The towing the trailer thing though... Let’s just say it is not for the faint of heart!

During this particular summer I was fourteen and my sister was four. With that much of an age difference, the things we had most in common were the things we found to squabble about. Especially in the hot, cramped backseat of a car on a long drive. Need I say more?

The day after Dad had lost it on my sister and I, you could hear a pin drop in the backseat of that car. At one point we began to pass through an area with steep hills up either side of the road.

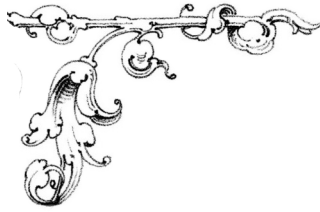
As I looked up to my left, I could see a deer charging down the hill.

Do I say something? Should I risk the wrath of Dad? I kept my mouth shut and hoped the deer might decide to turn around.

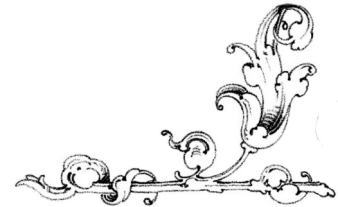
To this day, I can still see the deer’s head over the hood. Its body swung so hard that the side mirror embedded into its neck. Dad used to drive with his arm resting on the door and it suffered terrible bruising. The car? It was a write-off.

Police reports were taken and once we were able to stop shaking, I apologized to Dad for how I'd seen the deer but didn't warn him. Dad put my worries to rest. It turns out there'd been a car right behind us. Dad told me that slamming on the brakes could have made it much worse.

I have no recollection of that car behind us, but I will always remember how when all was said and done, my dad put my mind at ease—not for the time I was yelling, but for the time that I *wasn't* yelling in the back seat of the car.



SCHEMATICS



My father loved to tinker. He was a genius at fixing things, building things, and teaching himself music.

I truly did not know there was such a thing as a repairman until I was well into my twenties. To this day I am still slightly baffled by men who cannot fix things. Can it be true? They must be joking. Don't all men know how to do these things like my father did?

It is to the credit of my father that I know the difference between an Allen key and a Philips screwdriver, what an electrical circuit is, and how to cast a fishing rod.

There was a point in my father's life where after dinner, for nights on end, he would roll out large sheets of paper onto our dining room table. Fine lines, boxes, tiny letters and numbers ran everywhere. They were schematics of electrical circuits. I can recall that he would be drawing on them and making modifications to them. I would sit beside him at the table. He'd set me up with my own special paper and finely sharpened pencils, and I would draw my own schematics, repeating the shapes and

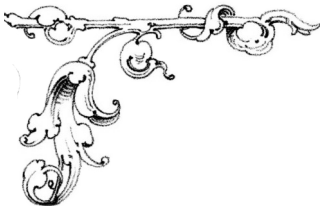
the maze-like lines. They fascinated me. To me, they were their own form of hieroglyphics.

One night my father called my mother in.

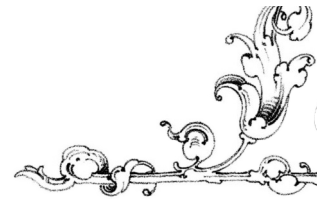
“Kay, come and see this. Look! See here? Look at the detail in her drawings. Look at how these all connect, and how the words are all in the right places.”

My cheeks flushed and my eyes looked to my mother then back to my father.

I could draw in a way that meant something to my father, through these complicated drawings that he was working on and that meant so much to him. I could draw in a way that caught my father’s attention.



HURRICANE HAZEL

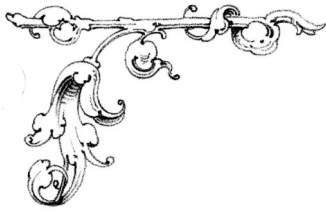


Sixty-seven years ago, my mother and father came home to find their new home destroyed by Hurricane Hazel.

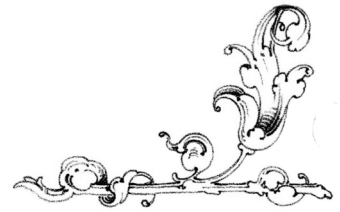
They were newlyweds, with many of their gifts that had hardly even been opened. Everything they owned had been flooded with overflow from the nearby creek and was now covered in silt.

My mother described opening boxes to find silt and small guppy fish from their fish tank amongst the towel and blanket gifts they had yet to open. That night, my parents drove back to New Toronto to stay with my father’s family.

Now, they say that for every bad there comes a good. After the loss of their trailer home, Mom and Dad purchased their first house! It was the home they brought me into as a newborn. The home that I grew up in.



SPAM



There is a story that stands out in my mind which my father loved to tell about me as a child. It revolved around, of all things, buttermilk.

When I talk about buttermilk, most scrunch up their nose and some even find it revolting, but my father loved buttermilk. One of his favourite things to do was to fry up Spam and dip it in a cold glass of buttermilk.

Just in case you are too young to know what Spam¹ is, the label lists its basic ingredients as pork shoulder meat with ham meat added, salt,

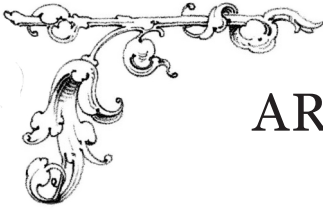


water, modified potato starch as a binder, sugar and sodium nitrite as a preservative. There is a "natural gelatin" that typically forms in tins of Spam while on the production line. Many have noted that Spam is of questionable nutrition, due to high levels of fat, sodium, and preservatives.

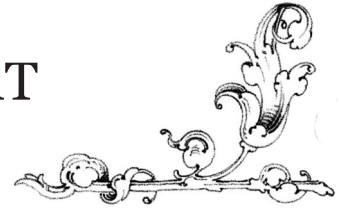
There was never any question in my father's mind about how good Spam was, and that it was even better when dipped in buttermilk. Much to the horror of my mother, another thing my father would dip into buttermilk to give me as a baby was my soother. My father would say, "Buttermilk is good for her, Kay. And besides, the way she sops it up, I can *plainly* see she loves it as much as I do!"

To this day, my love of buttermilk remains. I pour a tall cold glass of it, salt the top, and raise the glass in a toast.

"Here's to you, Dad."



ARE YOU KEEPING THAT JUNK?



The other day I was unpacking some boxes in our garage. They still need unpacking from our move here three years ago. I am not one to believe in that common adage: “If you don’t use something in a year, throw it out!”

There was a box that had gotten wet with snow and rain drifting in under the garage door. I had known for months but was afraid to open it in case it contained a treasure that the moisture had damaged. I have a lot of treasures. I am the keeper of family stories and moments and memories. I take the brunt of family jokes because of the “junk” I keep.

So, back to the wet packing box. I got up the nerve to open it, and sure enough, it did have treasures inside.

Sheet music that was my fathers and that I now use. Wet but not damaged. Nothing a little airing out on the living room floor wouldn’t fix.

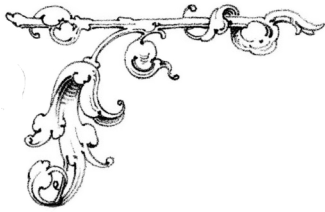


Finding treasure.

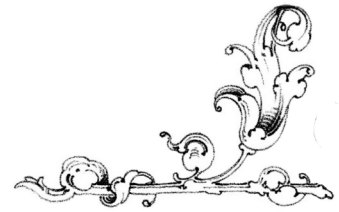
Then... This box. My heart sank. The box was quite wet, and when I opened it the bits and pieces inside were wet too. I spread them out along with the sheet music to let them dry. Today... All is good.

This treasure box was my father's since he was a boy. It is filled with remnants of the model boats and airplanes he used to build. Tiny gas tanks, tubes, and propellers. But most of all, when I open that box, I can smell my father. I am taken back to my childhood, standing beside him in his workshop.

I ask you, just what kind of "junk" can tug at all of our senses like that?



BILLY CLARK JR.



One evening, Billy and Ann Clark and their son, Billy Jr., came to visit Mom and Dad. While the adults caught up on things, Billy Jr. and I decided we would go out into the driveway to play with a few rolls of caps I had recently bought with my allowance from Nick and Jean's Variety store.

Now, if you have never had the joy of playing with caps, you will have missed the thrill that children of the sixties experienced playing with a small explosive like this.

Caps looked like a thin roll of red ticker tape with dots on it. Typically, you used the caps in either a toy gun or rocket. Yes, we had toy guns back in the day. To use them in the toy rocket you would tear a piece off the ticker tape, put it in the head of the rocket, then toss the rocket up in the air. When

it landed the rocket would make a firecracker noise.

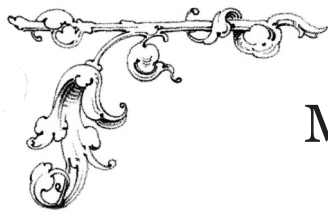
For some odd reason Billy Jr. and I thought that idea to be far too tame.

We went into my dad's workshop and brought out a large, heavy sledgehammer.

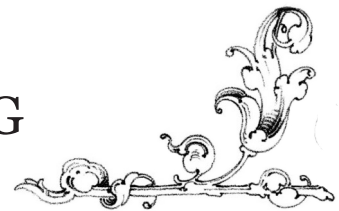
We decided it would be way more fun to lay the whole roll of caps on the asphalt and whack it with the hammer. I was the one that did the whack. Let's *just* say that Billy Jr. and I were fortunate to still have functional eardrums after that.

To this day, I still remember the ringing in my ears like the tolling of a VERY LARGE BELL. That ringing went on for quite a while and Billy and I sat staring wide-eyed at each other, mouths agape. It's no surprise all four parents came rushing out of the house. I am sure they thought Armageddon had hit. Boy, oh boy, did we have some explaining to do. That is, once our ears stopped ringing and we could hear what they were asking us!

All in a day's creative play in the 60s.



MY FATHER'S PASSING



September 3rd, 1998. It was a beautiful fall day, the sun shining and the air crisp.

My mother and I had picked apples from the trees I had given my parents for their retirement. The trees my father took great pride in

pollinating by hand every year. We had been at the hospital for several days and Dad seemed to be picking up. We had decided to make the two-hour drive back to my home to freshen up, bake an apple pie for Dad and then come back the following day.

Around eleven in the morning we started out for the hospital. We were going to show Dad the fruits of his labour and to let him know that Mom and I were going to bake an apple pie for him...We arrived at the hospital only to find that things had taken a turn for the worse. Dad had been doing so well the day before!

He was gone within the hour. 12:15 pm, to be exact.

I am thankful and blessed that I was able to be there with my father at that time. It was Dad's final gift to me—the gift of saying one last goodbye. I am forever grateful for the many gifts my father shared with me in his lifetime. He inspired me in so very many ways. I miss him more each year, but deeply I feel him watching over me, guiding me, and protecting me as he did in his living.

I know my loss is shared by many. If you had met my father, you too would feel that loss. He just had that kind of effect on those that knew and loved him...

Oh, my father; that first man that I loved.

1. Spam wall - Flickr - freezelight.jpg. Attribution: freezelight, CC BY-SA 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Spam_wall_-_Flickr_-_freezelight.jpg



Treasured Time Together

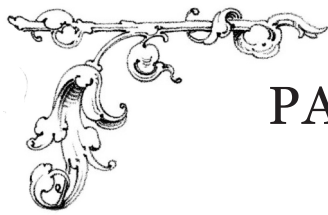
by
Herbert Sormin

In 1986 I had been teaching at the Orillia Church School for six years. With my wife Su's support, I decided to complete my doctoral studies at Andrews University. We sold most of our belongings and prepared for the move to Berrien Springs, Michigan.

But first, we stayed with my sister's family for a couple weeks before moving to the university campus.

My sister Irene had completed her nursing studies at Balmain Nursing College in Sydney, Australia. After working in Singapore for two years at the Youngberg Memorial Hospital, she moved to the UK to work at London Jewish Hospital. There she could be near our baby sister Florence, who was herself in London to study nursing. While in London, Irene met Winston Galloway, originally from St. Kitts, at the Sussex Adventist Church. They fell in love, married, and moved to Canada, where they settled in Markham, Ontario.

It was a great time together: two families sharing childhood stories and cultural roots.



PASTORAL CALLS ACROSS ONTARIO



It was a surprise to receive a phone call from the Ministerial Director of the Ontario Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, inviting me to pastor the Owen Sound and Harriston churches.

After much prayer, Su and I decided that we'd accept the call and that our children Linda and Clarence would continue their studies in Canada.

We moved to Owen Sound and bought our first home at No. 38, Eighth Avenue East. It had three bedrooms on the top floor, a spacious kitchen, dining room and living room overlooking the backyard, a basement under the bedrooms where we enjoyed playing table tennis, and a lovely cherry tree in the front yard that bloomed every spring.

When the Conference Delivery truck arrived with our furniture and belongings, our neighbours kindly helped to unload. We learned that Larry, who lived across the street, was the younger brother of Jesse and

Mansel Barnes, our dear friends in Orillia! Sister Jesse met Su when they both worked at the Huronia Regional Centre, and brother Mansel ran their family farm just close by the Orillia Church School where I taught. When Clarence drove home from Andrews University, Michigan, he'd stop over at their home on his way to Sudbury. Mansel introduced Clarence to deer hunting. Our freezer might be packed with deer meat with Clarence preparing and delivering it. Jesse introduced us to Canadian way of living and was truly a loving mentor. The OPP found us at a camp site at Grundy Lake on Manitoulin Island one summer to bring the sad news of Jesse's passing. Rest in peace, Jesse. We love you.

I attended my first Inter Faith Ministerial meeting at the Anglican Church in Owen Sound. The Arch Deacon welcomed us and asked that we introduce ourselves. As I shared my name and church affiliation, the Arch Deacon walked up and shook my hand. Turning to the other pastors he said, "Welcome Pastor Herb. When the Anglican Church in Oshawa burned down, the Adventist Church invited our congregation to worship at your Church on Sundays until our Church was restored."

I took a course in Counselling for Clergy taught by the Arch Deacon and have had the privilege of volunteering at the General Hospitals and penitentiaries across Ontario. What a blessing it is for Churches to support and work together to bring joy and hope in times of need!

Just ten minutes down the road from our home there, we could turn left passing the Library and up the hill to the Owen Sound Church on Grey Road South. On the left after the Library is a beautiful park where Clarence, his pals and I would go fishing. Past the church we'd drive up the hill to another park where you had a beautiful view of Owen Sound and its Harbour. You could drive on to the ferry to Manitoulin Island, but that's not all. A small waterfall flowed down the hill where we harvest fresh water cress – my favorite veggie. The water cress flourishes along the stream beside the Belleville Church. Much to the surprise of my Church members, it was edible!

My family also enjoyed our tenting days, and sitting by the campfire as the moon shone above us.

Our first fishing day at Manitowaning Bay on Highway 6 on Manitoulin Island, Clarence and I were casting our fishing baits and suddenly his rod bounced up and down. I pulled in my rod and cheered him on. When a huge fish jumped up and splashed back in to the lake he kept reeling the fish in. I didn't have a fish net to help him, but just then two guys came by with their nets to help. "Keep reeling!" they cheered, and as the huge salmon leapt they scooped it up and congratulated him with high fives. That was the start of many fishing time together. Mama, Papa, Linda and Clarence ... family time!

Another memorable spot that we loved for swimming and fishing was Wasaga Beach, just a short drive on Highway 26 east from Owen Sound. We returned there many times through the years to stay at a beach home owned by Tu and Quoc, a Chinese couple who came to Canada from Saigon as refugees during the Vietnam War.

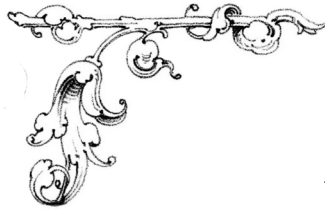
Tu worked at a restaurant and learned English at the Library where Su was a volunteer teacher. A friendship developed, and one day Tu mentioned that the rest of her family would be arriving as refugees at the Toronto Airport.

Su told me of Tu reuniting with her family. I had my school bus driver's license and she suggested renting a bus to pick them up from the airport. Su, Tu, and Quoc chatted as I drove the bus to the airport. We walked to the arrival counter and soon there were greetings in Vietnamese and Chinese – "Nee how mah!" and "How! How!" I was touched by the hugs of love and tears of joy of a family reunited in Canada.

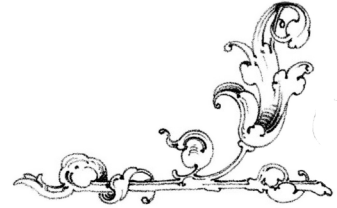
Through the years we have spent many great family times together, at their Wasaga Beach home, travelling together to Shanghai, Peijing, sailing down the Yang Tze River, gazing across Tiananman Square, and climbing the Great Wall of China.

In October of 2010 I had the privilege of officiating the wedding of her son, Ton An, in Toronto. Ton An and his wife now reside in Markham and he is an executive in the Coco Cola industry.

In 2019 we received a call from Tu's younger brother, Kevin, who resides in Paris and works at the Toyota plant. We celebrated Chinese New Year with Tu and the family at his home. When Covid 19 struck, Kevin would call Su on the phone to purchase groceries for us. That happened many times. What a great guy. Friendship brings us all together, eh!



PASTORAL CALLS
VERSUS
DOCTORAL STUDIES



While pastoring the Owen Sound and Harriston churches, I was blessed by the opportunity to pursue my desire to complete my doctoral degree in church ministry. I would drive south west on Highway 21 from Owen Sound to Sarnia, cross over to Port Huron and on to Highway 69 west, to Highway 94 west on towards Chicago, and take exit 28 to Berrien Springs, Michigan. It was an eight-hour drive to Andrews University. In the summer I would do a two-month semester course and then head back home.

We loved both the Owen Sound and Harriston Churches. There were members of many cultures: Brits of English, Scottish, Irish background, Germans, Dutch, French, Spanish, Ukrainians, West Indians, Native Mohawks, and Chinese ... all bound in Christian love for their community. These church members opened my eyes in learning to respect our cultural differences, especially during pastoral visits and tasting delicious family meals. Yummy!

After five years, I was invited to the North, to pastor the Sudbury and North Shore (Espanola) churches. Yes, the sign board reads, “Welcome to Sunshine City”, and it’s the truth. Sudbury may be hit by minus 30 Celsius in the winter, but the sun shines from around 10:30 am to mid afternoon, whether it snows or not. The drive to North Shore can be hazardous, though. I remember flipping the car over one winter on the way back to Sudbury, and almost being crushed by 15-foot logs that jumped off a truck on Highway 6 as I drove towards Espanola after visiting a new church family on Manitoulin Island (they’d moved from the Maritimes). God is good and we survived. Love the North!

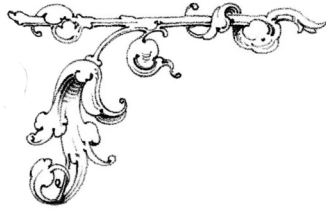
The drive to Andrews University would be 14 hours from Sudbury. Heading west on Highway 17 to Espanola, on to Sault Sainte Marie, crossing the border into Michigan, USA, heading south on Highway 75 and on to Highway 94 to Ann Arbor, then west towards Battle Creek and finally south on Highway 31 to Berrien Springs. All to earn the doctoral degree.

In 1995 we were called to minister to the Kingston and Belleville churches. Su had the privilege of teaching English at Queens University while enjoying and being part of the Potters Guild, and helped start the Soup Kitchen that served free meals every Wednesday afternoon. That led many to join the evening service, take Bible studies, and accept the Lord Jesus via baptism. The Belleville Church was also a very warm and accepting congregation. They also have a soup kitchen for the community and a prison ministry program like the Kingston Church. This led to me having calls from the penitentiaries and detention centres for Bible studies and baptisms. Praise the Lord for His call to minister to those in the community and pens. He is a God of love and grace.

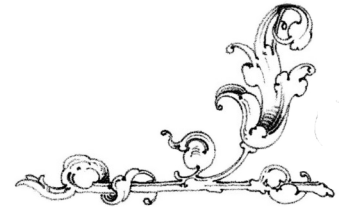
In 2000, shortly after the Quintennial General Conference held in Toronto concluded, Su and I were invited to return to Thailand, to help start Mission College and eventually witness the College being recognized as a Degree granting institution in 2002. Today the college is called Asia Pacific International University and recognizes Dr. Siroj Sorajakool,

our former student at the Ekamai International School, as the new APIU President. He taught for many years as a Professor at Loma Linda University, California. Many other former students teach at APIU too.

We returned to Canada in wintery February of 2004, called to serve the Simcoe and Six Nations Churches.



CHERISHING FAMILY TIME



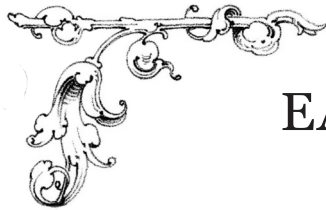
Shortly after relocating to Brantford, I drove to Andrews University for my first summer studies with the hope of completing my doctoral studies. The course was entitled Family Life and concentrated on how a family will stay together when they find time to spend happy times together. As the Professor introduced the course that first day, she placed her lecture notes on her desk and looked towards us – all pastors – and asked: “How much time are you spending with your wife and family? What’s your special time together? Are you building cherished times together?”

Wow! Those questions truly affected me. When I returned home, I shared my feelings with Su and she smiled. Imagine me away during the summer, with Su teaching through the day, returning home alone through the night to be alone with the computer ... no way. Family comes first!

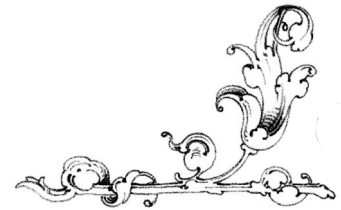
Early in June 2022, shortly after I had to spend a night at the Sleep Clinic in Paris, Linda and her hubby Seth drove all the way from New York to visit us. I was relaxing on the sofa when she walked up to me and said, “Hey! Pa! Take a look at this!” She placed a package in my hands I opened it, and wow! It was a picture of Linda and me. Linda was reaching out to a giraffe at Dusit Zoo, located just around the Royal Palace, home of King

Rama and Queen Sirikit. Next door to the front of the Palace is the Bangkok Adventist Hospital where the Children of the Royal Family were born and also where Su birthed Linda and Clarence.

In early July, Clarence, Janelle, and grandson Olo drove from Michigan for Family time together.



EARLIER AND RECENT TIMES TOGETHER



Our first family trip was in 1975. Linda was four years old and Clarence was one year old. We took a two-night train ride from Bangkok to Penang, Malaysia where Auntie Evelyn, my Mom's younger sister, was nursing at the Penang Adventist Hospital.

Staying at the guest house, we enjoyed the vegetarian meals prepared by Chef Wong, father of Wong Yew Chong, my college mentor at Adventist University of the Philippines. Our kids enjoyed beautiful beach walks, the delicious rambutans and mangoes, and climbing up Penang Hill mingling with the white tail monkeys.

Later that year, Linda and Clarence enjoyed their first air flight from Bangkok to Singapore to visit Grandpa and Grandma just before they immigrated to Canada. On Sunday Mama drove us in her tiny Morris Minor to Changi Beach, where years back our family would enjoy happy times on Sunday picnics.

In 1980, while teaching at the Orillia Church School, Linda suggested that we visit the home of Anne of Green Gables in Summerside, Prince Edward Island. It was our first drive across Canada, and as we drove across beautiful Montreal towards Riviere-du-Loup, traffic stalled on both sides

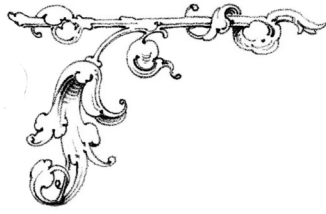
of the highway. We heard cheers of “Terry! Terry! Terry!” Yeh! That’s Terry sprinting and waving at us! And we cheered Terry Fox on his historic run across Canada!

We enjoyed our first trip to the Maritimes. Crossing the Confederation Bridge, visiting home of Anne of Green Gables, fishing with other families on board a fishing boat, getting our share of the fish all cleaned and packed as we left for our camping site, enjoying tasty Atlantic salmon at supper by the camp fire, driving through the beautiful city of Charlottetown and amazing Peggy’s Cove in Nova Scotia.

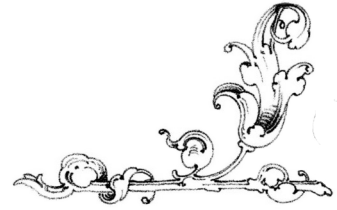
Another memorable trip across Canada was in 1985 to the World Trade Fair in Vancouver. Driving across the border at Sault Sainte Marie for cheap gas price, through Michigan and north to Minneapolis, Minnesota, then northwest. Seattle, Washington was home of Uncle Oloan, younger brother of my Mama. As we were drove through Yosemite Park, traffic stalled and we gazed in amazement as giant bison trekked up the mountain. Auntie Darlene is of Japanese descent, and met Uncle Oloan at Loma Linda University. This happily married nurse and doctor serve the Lord in the church and community. With Uncle’s blessing, both Clarence and our grandson have Oloan as their second name.

After a week enjoying Auntie Darlene’s delicious Japanese meals, we drove north to Surrey, British Columbia where my oldest sister, Alice, lived with her husband Maarten Keyer, a Dutch Army vet, and their children. They are not far from our youngest sister, Florence Grace, her hubby John Ban, and children, Gracelyn and Randy. Both families moved west when Branson General Hospital in Toronto and other Hospitals were closed by the provincial government.

It was a happy family reunion, especially for the cousins, and who celebrated the second weekend of July 2022 for cousin Marty and Abby’s wedding at the beautiful Sun Yet Sun Park of the University of British Columbia. Su and I were blessed to have Clarence streamline the wedding ceremony and enjoyed greeting the lovely couple during the reception.



STAYING CLOSE TO CHILDREN DESPITE THE STORM



As our children grew up and pursued their careers in life, time together became a real challenge.

Clarence's passion for photography led to work in advertising with Whirlpool in Benton Harbor, Michigan where today he is one of the top executive officers.

Linda had a great love for art work and literature and graduated *cum laude* in English Literature at Andrews University. She did art studies at Sheridan College and went on to complete an MA degree in Ceramic Arts at Alfred University in New York, teach three years at Emily Carr College in Surrey, BC, then four years at Rhode Island School of Design, Rhode Island. After four years of teaching at Sheridan College, Linda was invited to teach at Alfred University and then in 2019 she was invited by New York University where she is an Associate Professor of Studio Arts.

The six to seven hours drive from Brantford to Clarence's home has always been pleasant no matter the weather. Enjoying family time together, swimming in the backyard pool, helping to trim the front and back yard, cheering on grandson Olo as he scored goals with his hockey team, the True North, and our last attendance at Kalamazoo in the winter of 2019.

Now, with me having to give up my driver's license and Su not desiring to drive long distance for safety reasons, we look to our children to visit us, which they do as work schedule allows.

The long drive to Providence, Rhode Island was challenging, especially the Massachusetts Turnpike in the winter, but we enjoyed the

historical sites in Boston and New York, walking Lin's pet Wags in the park next to the Army base across from Lin's apartment, and attending Fanny Crosby's home church. It was a happy time, and we were together.

One time, Lin flew from Providence to New Orleans for an art show. We drove from Brantford via Niagara Falls to Buffalo, south through Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Louisville, Nashville, Huntsville, Birmingham, and across the causeway to beautiful New Orleans. Arriving at the hotel late at night, we missed breakfast and headed to Chinatown for lunch.

We walked to the harbourfront, met Vietnamese fishermen unloading their catch, and strolled across a beautiful park to the Art Centre where Lin's ceramic pieces had been installed. We were ALL excited to be there for the next day!

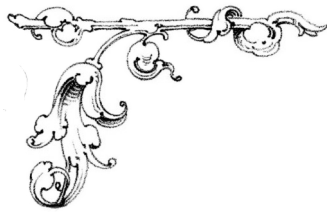
Walking across the park, we could see tree branches swaying and hear thunder roaring, the rain soaking us wet by the time we got to the hotel. After a change of clothes, we set down in front of the TV and listened to the news as rain stormed against on the window. There were announcements: *Tornado Coming! Tornado on the way!* Suddenly guys were nailing protective metal sheets over the windows and the phone rang with the message: "Hello! Tornado is coming, you must evacuate immediately!"

We packed, prayed for God's protection, exchanged hugs and kisses, and Lin got a taxi to the airport while we jumped in our car and headed towards the causeway. "Bye, bye, New Orleans!"

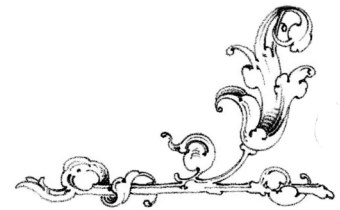
By the time we got on the causeway the storm was raging. Lightning flashed and the 15 minute ride across the causeway took an hour and a half. As we passed Nashville we decided to shift on to Highway 69 North through Indianapolis to Fort Wayne. We planned to go through Detroit and Windsor, and take Highway 401 to Brantford, but the tornado kept blasting and we had to spend the night at a hotel in Fort Wayne.

We arrived home late afternoon on Monday only to find that the

storm had followed us. After unpacking I went to the garage to take out garbage and recycling. When I placed two garbage bags by the roadside I noticed our red maple tree was swaying back and forth. I went back for two blue boxes and headed for curbside. But then, barely two steps away ... *boom! boom! bang!* My neighbor's basketball stand crashed over the blue boxes! Wow! Thank God!



FAMILY TIME TOGETHER



Despite growing up in different places, Su in Bangkok and me in Singapore, we found that we loved the beauty of the ocean and rivers, in Asia and North America and across the world. We remember boating down the Chao Phra Yaow River, swimming at Bangsaen Beach and Pattaya Beach with Lin and Clarence in the 1970s, enjoying our 40th Anniversary with Lin and Seth at Bako National Park, boating down the Sarawak River in 2009, and holidaying at a beach house on Kok Samui in Thailand in 2018 with grandson Olo and the rest of the family. Olo liked to feed the elephants.

When Lin and Clare were in university it was just Su and me going on happy holidays. Tenting and fishing, Truro, Peggy's Cove, Cape Breton, Charlestown, the Maritimes, Trois-Riviere, Montreal, Ottawa, Grundy Lake ... summertime at Killarney and Grundy Lake are memorable from when we moved to Sudbury in 1990. We loved the short drive and the kids loved time around the camp fire, fishing and canoeing in the lake.

In 2016 Su proposed that we invite our children to join us on a family trip to Costa Rica. Seth drove us from the airport to a beautiful beach

house with four bedrooms, a spacious lounge and kitchen, swimming pool, and even mango trees and white tail monkeys enjoying the mangoes. Every day the friendly custodian would bring us a basketful of mangoes. He told us: “Enjoy your time. This was the home of Mr. Bacardi, the rum magnate.”

Lin’s hubby Seth speaks Spanish, making shopping in the market an enjoyable time. One afternoon as we were returning home, Su screamed, “Seth! Stop! Let’s buy the rambutans!” Su and Seth returned with a basket full of delicious rambutans – a red, hairy tropical fruit with pure white, juicy flesh. We especially enjoyed watching as grandson Olo savoured his first bite!

We would walk out the front door on to the beautiful beach, enjoying the walk and splashing into the ocean waves. On both sides of the Bacardi home you could see tourists sunbathing under colourful beach umbrellas and restaurants.

Then, it came time to go fishing on a boat, a day I will never forget!

On board the boat, out in the ocean, everyone was handed a fishing pole and the boatman helped to hook the bait.

The blue sky and sun shone above when Olo cried, “Mommy! Daddy got a fish! Daddy got a fish!” Everyone reeled in their line cheering Clarence.

The boatman rushed to help Clare and unhooked the great catch, a giant, sparkling tail fish. He smiled and held up the catch and said, “I am sorry but this is a rare and protected species. We have to let it return to the sea.” He congratulated Clare, shook his hand, and after photo shots were taken the fish



was gently splashed back into the ocean. But we didn't give up. Throughout the day everyone was able to reel in their catch. The boatmen helped in cleaning the fish catch, packing them neatly before we were back to shore. Most of the catch went into the freezer for our daily meals but a selected bunch were to taken to a nearby restaurant where we enjoyed a delicious Costa Rican supper.

The following year, during spring break, Su and I drove up north to our favorite camping site at Grundy Lake. Su always had one specification when it came to tenting: no hot shower, no camping! That's what we love about Grundy Lake. We always book either campsite No. 21 or No. 24, which offer a short walk to the washroom, hot showers, and the lake.

Grundy Lake had been a memorable spot for our kids while in high school, but even after they were off to University, Su and I continued camping there. We were sleeping one night when suddenly a car drove next to our tent with headlights beaming towards the lake. I got up and looked out. Then Clarence stepped out of his car!

I grabbed the flashlight, turned to Su and said, "Get up, Clare is here!" Wow! Clare had driven all the way from Andrews University, Michigan to join us at Grundy.

The summer of 2017 was truly another memorable family time. Clarence, Janelle and Olo driving from Michigan in an RV, Seth and Linda coming in from New York, Su and I from Brantford ... family get-together at grand Grundy! Arriving at the campsite first, Su and I pitched two tents, one for us and the other for Lin and Seth. Clare, Janelle and Olo stayed in their RV.

It was a grand time fishing and canoeing with grandson Olo, eating by the campfire and sharing stories of happy family time growing up in Canada. We were blessed with three days of pouring rain and celebrated 40 years of Canadian living. We're grateful and proud to sing "Oh! Canada, our home and native land" and to celebrate our country's 150th birthday.



Then in the fall of 2017 it was a family gathering with all my siblings. Visiting Alice and the Keyers, Maarten, Alicia and Marty, who reside in Surrey, BC, baby sister Florence, and her children, Gracelyn and Randy and their families, Gracelyn and her missionary family from Guam, Randy and family from Oregon.

A number of us took the time to visit Uncle Wellington and Auntie Darlene in Oregon because Uncle was not well and couldn't join us in Vancouver. We're glad we did because the next year Uncle Wellington passed away. Rest in peace Tulang Oloan, for whom both my son Clarence and grandson Oloan are named. We enjoyed a week at Sunshine Beach, soaking in the sun, swimming, playing ping pong in the park and taking the hop-on-hop drive through the beautiful scenic sites. When we returned to Vancouver Su and I decided to take a drive through the Okanagan Valley. We drove by the Surrey Adventist Church where Alice was the church pianist, then on to Abbotsford where the British Columbia Adventist Conference had a campsite and its headquarters. It was my hope on our return from Kelowna in the Okanagan Valley to drop in and visit Pastor Wesley Torres, President of the BC Conference, a colleague and former pastor of the Hamilton Adventist Church.

We had a great time in beautiful Okanagan, swimming in the river and enjoying the sights. After a couple of days, we hit the road hoping to meet Pastor Torres.

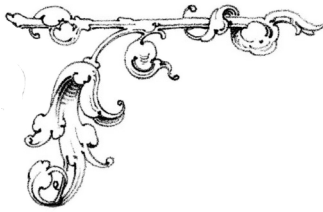
While driving we noticed road signs that read Beware of Deer. We drove carefully behind another vehicle not expecting anything. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a great deer smashed right across the right of the car. Su screamed and I hit the brakes. The right side of the car was crushed, the windshield smashed, and if Su had been inches closer she could have been killed. Thank God she was safe. Kind truckers came to our help, and we were okay. The car started, and we followed one of the truckers to the nearest RCMP station.

After reporting what had happened, the Officer smiled and said, "I am

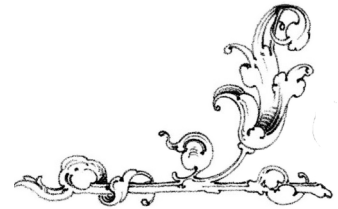
glad that you both are safe. It's early morning and that's when the deer go down the river for their breakfast."

We called CAA and as we headed back to Vancouver, the truck driver told us: "I've been driving this highway for many years and have smashed into a deer 11 times. Glad you're okay."

We later received a letter quoting almost \$8,000.00 for repairs but also a note stating that no payment needed because our credit card covered accidents. Wow! Thank you, Lord!



OLOAN TRAVELS TO THAILAND



In the fall of 2018 we flew to Bangkok and met up with Lin and Seth. We rested at the Golf Club Hotel across the Bangkok International Airport and looked forward to meeting up with Clare, Janelle and grandson Oloan. Olo had been asking questions about Thailand and showed a deep interest in Thai culture. He was nine and we told him that when he turned ten, we'd take him to Thailand.

The day before Olo was to arrive, we decided to head to China Town where Su grew up. She lived in a four-storey home on Rama IV Road a short distance from the Central Train Station. I remember my first visit meeting her family and bonding with her brother Santi, whose kids grew up with ours. I remember going up to the top of the house where they had a flourishing garden of vegetables and flowers instead of a roof. Her dad ran a dental clinic on the ground floor. After the shopping spree, Lin asked to see where Mom's home was. We hopped on the bus and just as we passed her home, Su cried, "No way! It's a Domino restaurant!" We all had a laugh.

TREASURED TIME TOGETHER

The next day we met up with Olo, Clare and Janelle at the Airport. Together we flew down south to Kok Samui, the island off the southern tip of Thailand in the Indian Ocean. Kok Samui is known for its Elephant Sanctuary and draws thousands of tourists from across the world.

We spent the week in a beautiful four room home overlooking the Indian Ocean. Olo enjoyed walks on the beach and swimming in the blue ocean. Three homes down the beach we could all take time for Thai massages.

Walking to the main street were London Drug Mart, Pizza Hut, Tim Hortons, McDonalds, and many more foreign restaurants. Our choice of course, was to walk down the beach to a Thai restaurant ... enjoying delicious meals with the ocean splashing under our dinner table and the sun setting over the ocean.





Left and above: memories from Thailand

TREASURED TIME TOGETHER

Most important about this trip to Kok Samui was Olo's time at the elephant sanctuary. We'd take a "took took" (Thai tricycle) ride to the sanctuary where aging 50- and 60-year old elephants live on acres of land. Olo walked beside me with a bucket of bananas and tropical fruits. I had a bucket of water. We approached a huge elephant and Olo held the banana as the elephant munched one banana after another. Grandpa and Olo feeding elephants and stroking the elephant's trunk was a moment we'll always remember. Later, returning back to school, he had a great time showing off pictures of his Kok Samui trip.

After that memorable week we flew back to Bangkok to meet with Su's family. It is a reunion I will always treasure. Olo finally meeting Grandma's family, having lunch with Grand Uncle Santi's family, and New Year's Day lunch with the rest of the family.

As we walked into the living room, we were greeted by Su's older sister Sunee and her husband Khun Chao. Olo walked up to them with both hands pressed together, bowed his head and greeted them in Thai saying, "Sawat dee khrap. Sawat dee wan pee mai khrap." (Greetings! Happy New Year!) There were handshakes and hugs, smiles all around. Another family moment I'll always remember. I am now getting old and am reminded of Abraham's experience recorded in the Bible that reads:

Now Abraham was old, well advanced in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all things. Genesis 24:1, NKJV

Thank you, Lord. Amen.

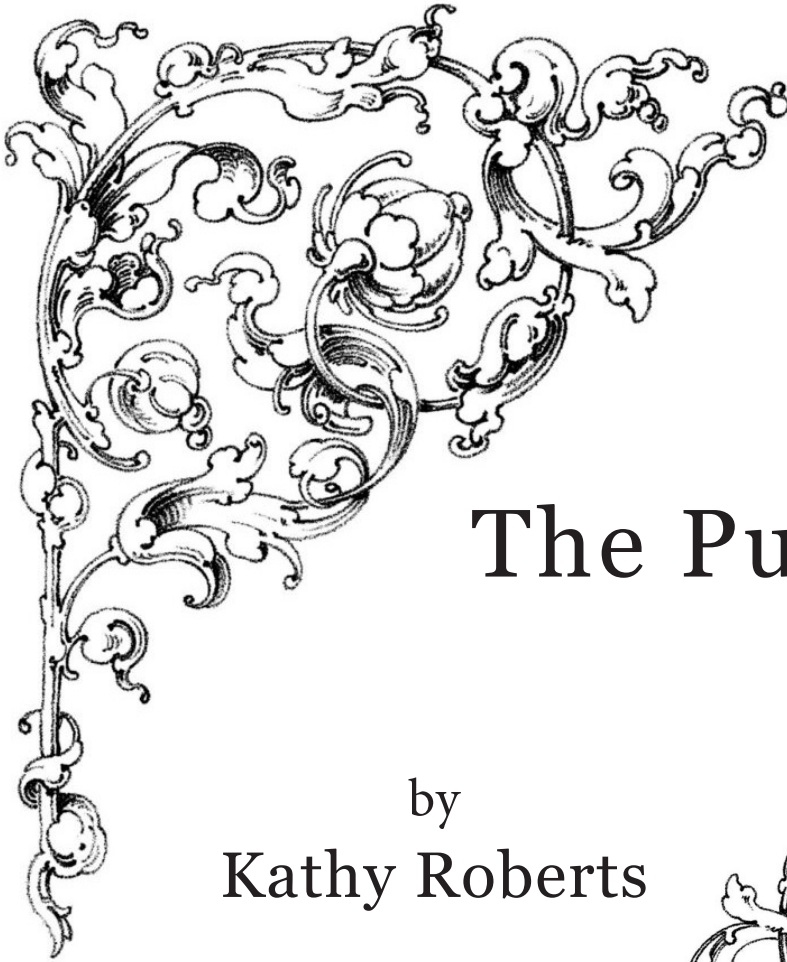
MEET HERB

Herbert and Su Sormin have lived in Brantford since 2004. He was called as a young missionary in 1961 to teach at the Christian Training Centre (Ekamai International School), Bangkok where he met Su. They immigrated to Canada in 1977 with their children, Linda and Clarence. Su has been a strong support in church ministry while teaching ESL and helping new immigrants.

One of their highlight in service was in 2000. Herb was pastoring the Kingston and Belleville churches and Su teaching at Queen's University. The Seventh-day Adventist Church had just completed its World Quintennial General Conference in Toronto when they received a call to help start Mission College in Muak Lek, Thailand. It was a great time of service and to be present at a graduation ceremony with Princess Somsawalee handing out diplomas. Today the College is called Asia Pacific International University.

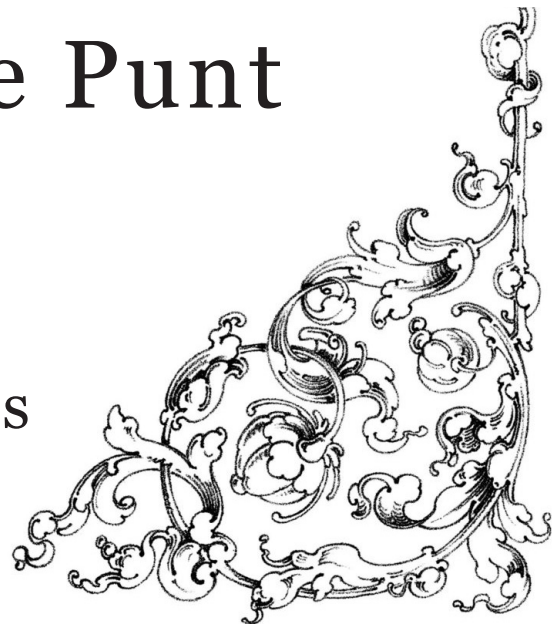
Daughter Linda is now an Associate Professor of Studio Arts at New York University, and son Clarence is Creative Studios Manager at Whirlpool Corporation, Michigan.

THE PUNT



The Punt

by
Kathy Roberts



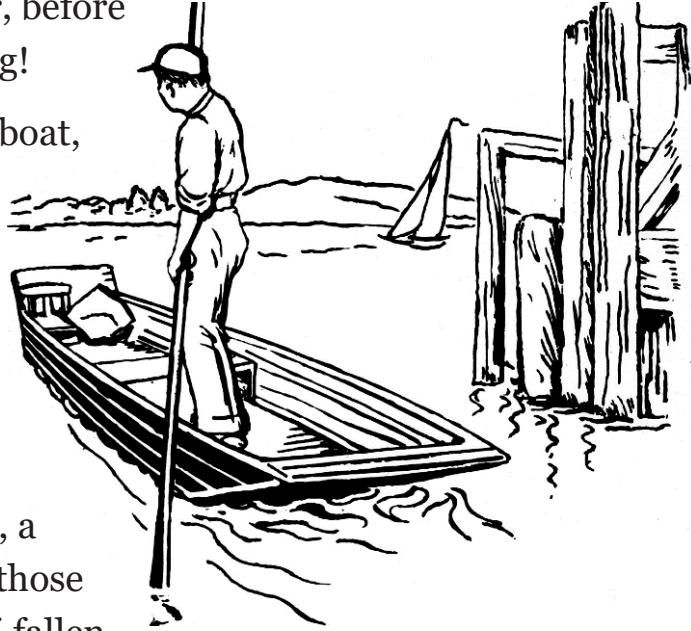
Could I do it by myself? I've been fishing with Dad lots, but can I catch anything by myself?

I grab my fishing rod in one hand. With the other, I pick a large red and white bobber from Dad's tackle-box. My thumb pushes the little button upwards to lock it around the line. Closer to the hook, I squeeze on a sinker. Then I slip the hook into one of the eyes on the rod and turn the reel just a bit so it stays in place.

I tear down the embankment to the shore, running pell-mell, legs flying, hand stuck to the top of my head, holding my sun-hat on.

There it is! Blissful freedom! Dad had tethered the punt to the shore with a 200-foot rope earlier, before breakfast. It was perfect for fishing!

The punt's a short wide rowboat, square at both ends.¹ It's made for one man to hide in the reeds and wait for unsuspecting ducks. From there he can blast them out of the sky. Poor ducks, they'll never see it coming.



Out of duck-hunting season, a fisherman could use it to get into those tricky places, like under trees half-fallen into the water, or closer to sunken boulders.

To us kids, this summer, it means precious alone-time.

I'm the oldest. There're three noisy brothers under me, then my baby sister.

I love 'em all, to pieces. But I love my alone time too, ya know?

Two overstuffed lifejackets lie on the ground beside the boat. The old-fashioned kind. Both red, faded and child-sized. One smaller than the other. I'd outgrown the small one a few years ago. The three little boys (ages three, four and five), are big enough now; they can use it.

I slide my skinny seven year old arm into the big jacket. The armhole hangs down, almost to my waist. Dad says I'll grow into it.

But wearing it means I can go to the punt and have precious fishing time, **alone**, away from the endless bickering. My brothers argue about almost **everything!**



The “three little boys” and I (1961)

On the front of the lifejacket, a canvas strap runs through a double buckle to cinch it together. I tighten it. The two bulky front pieces rise like balloons. The canvas rubs against my cheeks, soft, like butterfly snuggles. Yuck! That old familiar stale smell of sun burnt kapok. I ignore it.

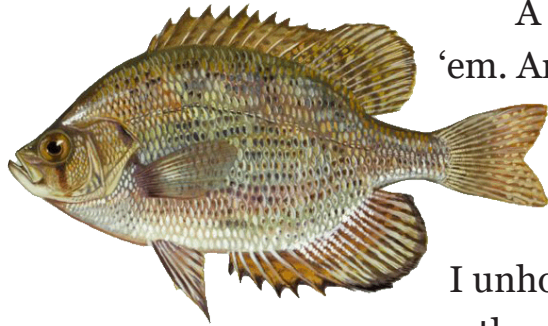
I row out. The water’s calm, smooth as a mirror. No breeze at all. Dragonflies hover in the air, like sparkly helicopters. The sun’s warm on my bare arms and legs.

I love being out here on the water. Quiet, peaceful. I’m free to day-dream. Free to let my mind wander. Just free to be me.

There’s a half cup of worms-in-dirt on the floor beside the bailing can. My fingers reach in and find a fat worm. I pull it out, pinching it in half to

make the bait last longer. It wiggles quite nicely on my hook. I drop the line into the water.

A few seconds later, the bobber jiggles! A bite! I jerk the line. Then I pull it up to see what I caught.



A sunfish!² You can't eat those! No meat on 'em. And anyhow, he's just a little guy, probably only two inches. The rule is they hafta be eight inches to keep.

I unhook his lip and throw him back in. I put another piece of worm on the hook.

What? Another bite? Already? I pull it up, hoping for something different. But no! Another sunfish. **Again!**

I repeat this whole rigmarole over and over. *Maybe I'm catching the same fish*, I wonder. *How can I mark them?* Carefully I pull out one scale and throw the fish back into the soupy water.

I keep catching 'em just as fast. And nobody's missing a scale.

I start breaking half-worms in half. As much as I try to ration them, eventually they run out.

I've been out here for a couple hours now. Sun's blazing and my tummy's rumbling. *Must be time for lunch.*

I row in. Grinning ear-to-ear and pleased as punch.

I caught something! All by myself!

1. Line art drawing of Punt. Author: Pearson Scott Foresman, via Wikimedia Commons. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:PSF_P-730005.png

2. Flier (*Centrarchus macropterus*). Author: Duane Raver, via Wikimedia Commons Source: [commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Centrarchus_macropterus_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Centrarchus_macropterus_(1).jpg)

MEET KATHY

Hi, I'm Kathy.

I've been a camper, a fisher, a lifeguard, a swimming instructor, a counselor and worked in a library. Presently, I'm a retired volunteer and a writer.

I've been living in Brantford since 1985. I was busy raising children for the first twenty years or so and now I enjoy being a Grandma.

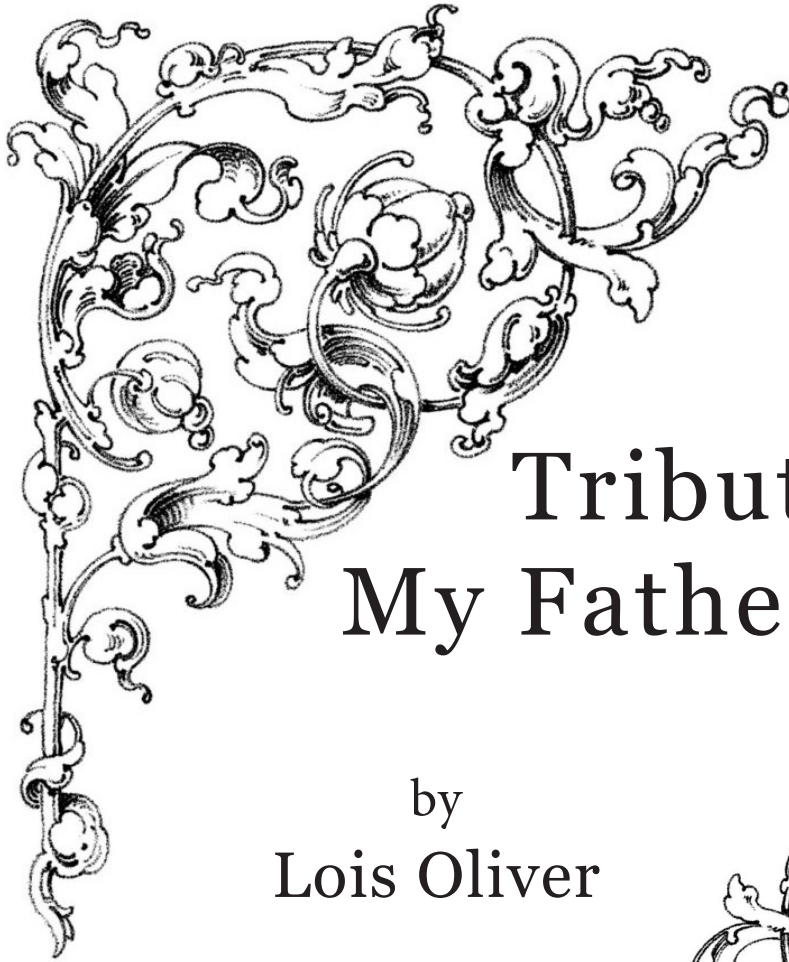
My personal interests include but are not limited to: reading, writing memoir, as well as exploring new genres and different forms of poetry.

I also enjoy cooking, theatre, sewing, knitting and most forms of crafting. I will continue writing for Lifescapes as well as stretching afield.

Through writing these memoirs, I hope to merge my past more smoothly with my present. I feel most satisfied with this year's memoir.

Thanks to the Library for letting me share and thanks to **you** for reading.





Tribute to My Father

by
Lois Oliver



Some find it interesting to read stories about heroes or revered people who are known for accomplishing exceptional things.

I, however, am writing about my father: a normal family man who was loved and respected by everyone who knew him. My beloved father, James Goldie, was born in Glasgow, Scotland as the second of five children. He was five years old when his family immigrated to Canada.

TRIBUTE TO MY FATHER

Dad grew up to be a quiet and gentle man, yet courageous enough to enlist in the Canadian Army at 37 years old to serve in World War II. He left his wife and two daughters to go overseas and fight for our country. He had five younger brothers-in-law that had already enlisted, and a younger brother in the United States Army, so he must have felt it was his duty to enlist as well.

After training in Brantford, Ontario at Mohawk Park, he left for Toronto in 1942. My sister Joyce was 12 years old when he left, and I was four years younger.

We were with our mother at the family cottage on Lake Simcoe when Dad came to say good-bye. Together we walked up a country road to see him off. There was a bus waiting to take him to Toronto Union Station. From there he would travel to Halifax, where he would then embark on a troop ship to go overseas.

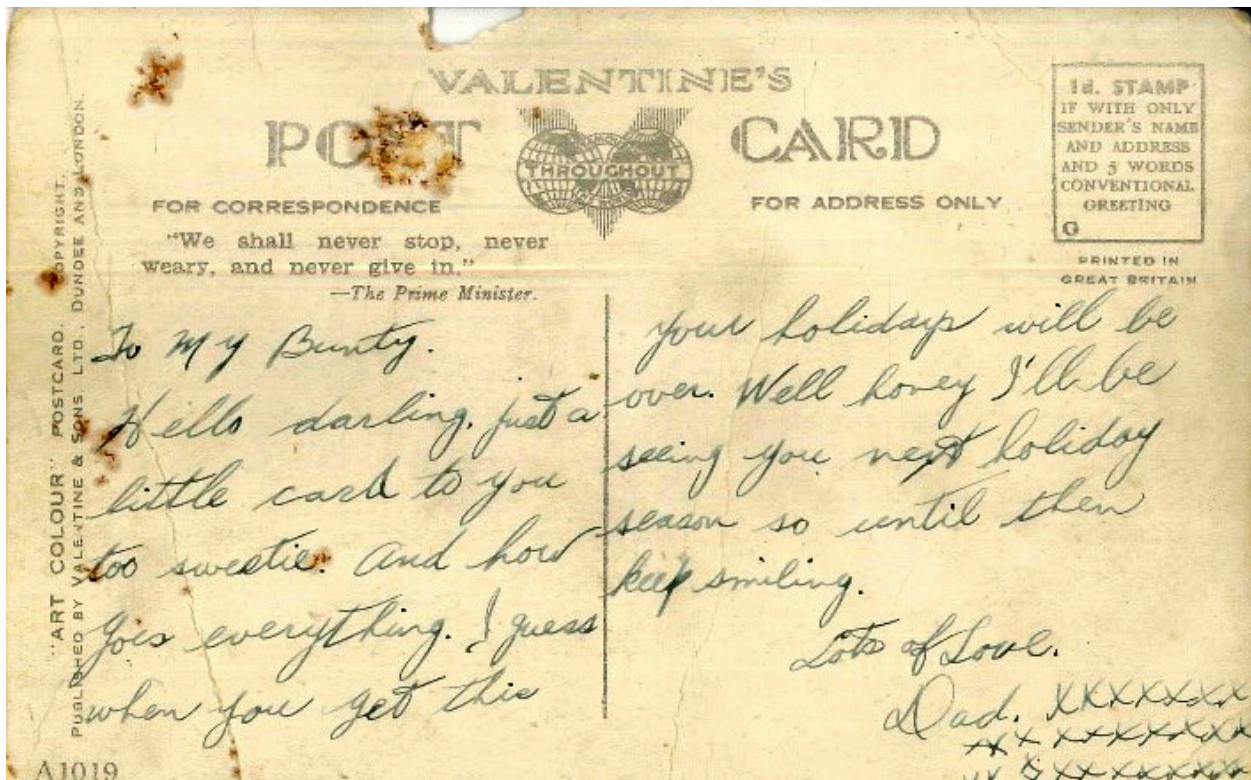
I will always remember how heart-wrenching it was to say good-bye, not knowing when, or if, we would see him again.

Dad wrote home as often as he could. I still have a postcard from him, addressed using his pet name for me, Bunty.

Everyone dreaded receiving telegrams from the War Office. It was devastating when Mom received one stating that Dad had been injured. There was no explanation as to how badly he was hurt until later, when another telegram arrived stating that he had broken a foot while working on a tank that shifted.

We were all very relieved, knowing that previously Mom had been informed that one of her brothers had been killed while driving a tank.

When Dad returned home in 1946, he marched into Union Station with his platoon. Many friends and relatives were there to greet them. I had wiggled up to the front of the crowd behind the ropes when I spied him, calling out "Dad, Dad!" but he was calling "Where's my wife? Where's my wife?"



Postcard from Dad

TRIBUTE TO MY FATHER

He was a different man when he came home.

He had always been quiet, but it was difficult for us to understand how much he had changed. We had always known him to be such a pleasant and easy-going man. He never talked about the horrors and devastation he must have witnessed. Instead he often left the dinner table for a walk, not coming home for hours.

We had to acknowledge how hard it was for him to adjust to civilian and family life again. We also had to realize how much he had endured and how much we also had changed. When he came back after being away for four years, my sister was 16 years old and dating her future husband, John. I was 12 and in high school. Eventually, over time, he became the husband and father that we knew and loved.



Left to right: Pop, Joyce, Mom, Lois.

I was told that when I came into this world, Dad was quoted as saying (in fun): “She looks like a prize fighter!” I believe that he was anticipating a boy. However, we always knew how much he loved his two girls.

In his younger days, Dad was very involved in sports. He played soccer and became a trainer for a soccer team, complete with first aid training and certification through St. John’s Ambulance. He also trained one of my mother’s younger brothers in boxing.

In a broader sense of the word, I was his boy. He took me to boxing matches, and to hockey and baseball games. When I played on a girl’s baseball team at school he had me pitching to him in our backyard, possibly hoping that one day I would play for the Toronto Ladies Baseball Team.

Although his tutelage did not shape my life as he had hoped, he did contribute greatly to my educational studies. My favourite subjects were History, English, and my writing class, which was called Composition then. Dad would sit with me at the dining room table by the hour, helping me to compose my essays.

In Grade 10, with Dad’s help, I won the Senior Writing Award for my fictional story called The Common Cold. I recall that there was a lot of humour involved, making it an interesting story for the audience and judges. The only line I can remember started with “When you cough and wheeze and sneeze.” I was very proud to have won over entries from grade 10, 11, 12, and 13 students.

On the other hand, Dad was always so patient with me trying to understand my worst subject, math.

After my sister and I married and had our children, he was delighted to have two grandsons and four granddaughters who always called him Poppa or Pop.



Brian, Pop, Mark

He was my son's biggest fan at his hockey, lacrosse, and baseball games. I recall one particular hockey game where my son was hit in the head by one of the opponents. We had to hold Dad back from climbing over the boards after the person who hit him.

He was a very proud grandfather when he attended all of their weddings, and he always had a dance with the brides.

In his last few years he developed emphysema, and needed an oxygen tank to help him breathe. He was content sitting in his chair, listening to his music and watching sports on the TV until he passed away in his 89th year.

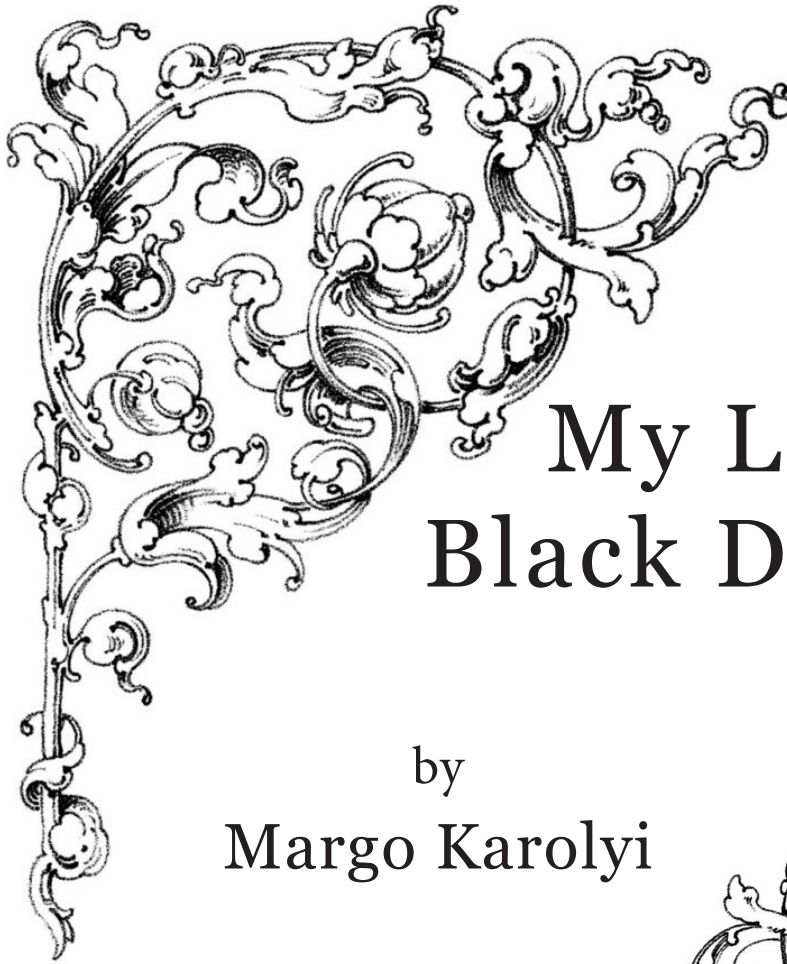
Dad had been an active member of the Canadian Legion. He was very proud to march in the Remembrance Day parade every year. It was very touching when members of the legion marched in and contributed to his service.

He is always in my heart.



IN LOVING MEMORY OF
JAMES GOLDIE

MY LITTLE BLACK DRESS



My Little Black Dress

by
Margo Karolyi



“**W**hy is she crying?” my father asked, looking perplexed. He glanced from my tear-streaked face to my mother’s smiling one, and back again. “I thought she wanted it!”

“Those are tears of joy,” my mother said, placing one hand lightly on my shoulder. “She didn’t think we’d ever buy it for her. She’s overwhelmed.”

She was right, of course. On all counts. I just didn't have the words to explain my emotions to my father. He generally left the room whenever intense feelings were involved. I wasn't sure why he'd stayed this time. Maybe he was hoping I'd just smile and say "Thank you," and that would be it. But I hadn't reacted quite that way.

Instead, I was standing in front of my parents' open bedroom closet, staring in disbelief at the dress hanging in front of me, and bawling my eyes out. I was completely speechless (which was rare for me; I was something of a chatterbox at age 11).

I reached out, stroked the soft black velvet sleeve tentatively, fingered the crisp white lace at the bottom edge, heard the rustle of the built-in crinoline beneath the skirt as I ran my palm down over it.

I couldn't believe my eyes. Or my fingertips. It was REAL! Hanging right there between two of Mom's Sunday-best outfits. The most beautiful dress I had ever seen. The one I'd wanted more than anything else in the whole wide world.

And it was – apparently – mine. All mine!

"You said it was too expensive," I blubbered through my tears. "You said ... you said ..."

"I know what I said," my mother replied, patting my shoulder. "And I meant it. Ten dollars for a dress was too expensive. But they marked it down again last week. And you wanted it so badly, I decided to splurge and get it for you."



She looked directly into my eyes, adding, “For Easter. And your birthday in November. And maybe even part of next Christmas.”

For a moment I thought maybe she was kidding. But she wasn’t. Not really.

“We can’t afford it” was a common refrain in our house whenever one of the kids (there were five of us) asked for something non-essential.



Dad & Mom, late 1960s

We might have lived in a nice middle-class neighbourhood in a nice middle-class town (Oakville, Ontario), but my father didn’t have a nice middle-class job like my friends’ fathers did. He was self-employed, and always had been. Which meant he didn’t have a steady income. Mom managed the household—paid the bills, bought groceries, hand-made most of our clothes, set a few dollars aside for birthday and Christmas gifts—on whatever funds came her way. As a result, we’d learned to be frugal, and to differentiate between a want and a need, from a very young age.

A black velvet party dress was definitely on the want side of things. I understood that. But it was a want that went deep.

I’d been pining for the dress from the moment I first saw it in the fancy downtown children’s clothing store just after New Year’s. Every time I accompanied Mom shopping over the next few months, I’d pull her over to the window, point to the Sale rack just inside, and plead my case.

“It’s a lovely dress, Margo,” she’d agree as she dragged me away, time after time. “But it’s far too expensive. I could buy half a week’s groceries for ten dollars. Besides, you already have two party dresses in your closet that still fit you.”

She was right, of course. I'd gotten a lovely blue and white organdy and velveteen dress for my tenth birthday, and my sister Sharon had just passed down her yellow Sunday school dress to me (most of my clothes were second or third hand; I had two older sisters). But neither one was as elegant as the little black velvet dress at Harrison's!

The dress I just HAD to have!

The one that was hanging right in front of me now, with a tag that read Final Sale: \$5.00 dangling from the end of one sleeve.

"That's okay," I said, sniffing a little as I acknowledged Mom's comment about no more gifts for quite some time. Honestly, I didn't care if I never got another birthday or Christmas present. So long as I had the dress.

I wiped my cheeks with the back of my hand, pulled in a deep breath, and smiled up at my mother.

"It's beautiful," I told her. "Thank you so much. I love it. I do. And I'll never ask for anything else ever again. I promise."

At that moment, I actually meant it.

Mom ran her hand across the top of my head, down the length of my hair, and twisted her finger in the curl at the bottom as I reached out and touched the dress again. My hand shook just a little. I still wasn't sure I wasn't dreaming.

"Can I try it on?" I asked.

"Of course," my mother said, reaching in and the lifting the dress down. She laid it on her bed. "Let's see how it fits."

Taking that as his cue to leave, my father squeezed past my mother and me, and headed towards the bedroom door. As he left the room, I heard him muttering, "It's just a dress for heaven's sake. What's the big deal?"

The big deal, of course, was that it wasn't "just a dress" for me. It was so much more.

It was a dream come true.

Two years later, when I went through the inevitable teenage growth spurt and the dress no longer fit, I carefully pulled a plastic dry-cleaning bag over it and tucked it at the back of my closet. More than fifty years have passed since then, and a lot of things have changed (naturally). But I still have the dress. I had hoped to someday pass it along to a daughter, but I had two boys. Perhaps, if I'm lucky, I will see one of my granddaughters in it (even for just a few minutes), when they reach the appropriate age and size. We'll see.

That, too, would be a dream come true.



*Me wearing my little black dress,
Easter Sunday, 1965*

You might think this is the end of the story – but it isn't. Not quite, anyway. Long after I had hung up my little black dress and (almost) forgotten about it, my mother surprised me with a very special gift.

In the summer of 1994, she bought an antique doll at a yard sale, and had it restored to look (reasonably) like me as a little girl (rosy cheeks, blue eyes, curly black hair). She then meticulously hand-sewed a replica of my little black dress for the doll, added a tiny black velvet purse (with coins inside, for luck), and hung my paternal grandmother's cameo around the doll's neck. She named her Blanche (my middle name) and gave her to me for Christmas that year.



Blanche

Needless to say, when I unwrapped the doll I cried at least as much as I did in the spring of 1965 when I'd seen my little black dress hanging in Mom's closet. It was another truly emotional moment.

But this time Dad didn't ask why there were tears being shed!



Christmas 1994 (even Dad is smiling!)

MEET MARGO

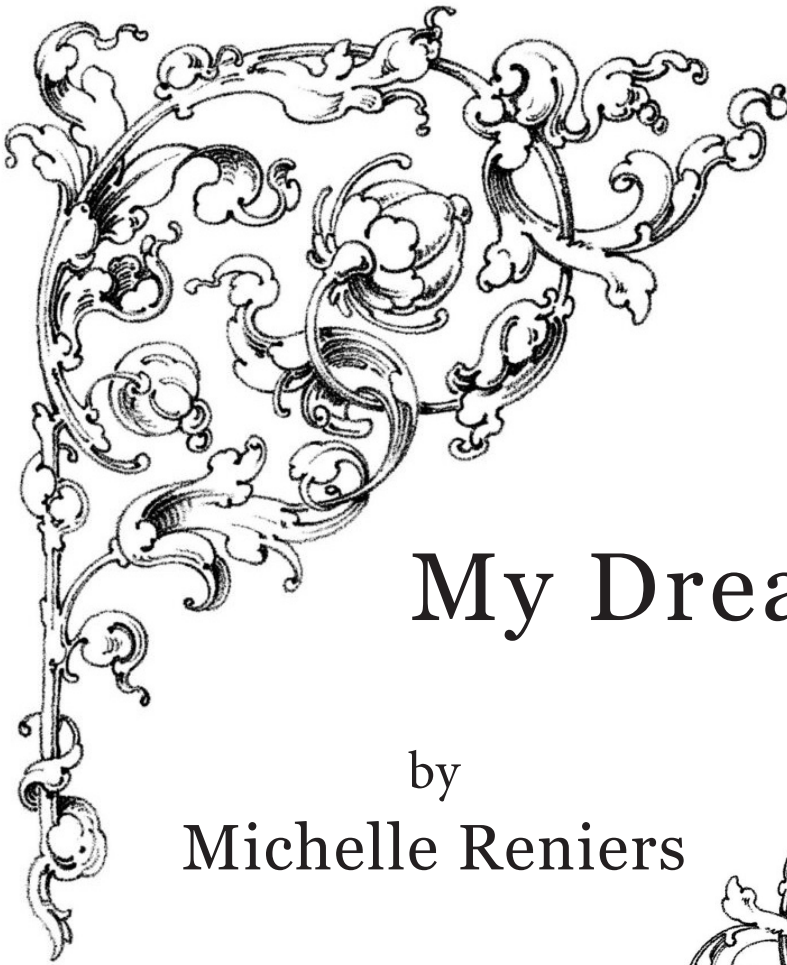


Margo Karolyi is a retired Community College professor who lives in rural Scotland (Brant County), Ontario. She spends her days reading, writing, delving into her family history, and puttering in her garden (when the weather permits). “My Little Black Dress” is one of several memoir pieces she has written about her long and varied past; she also writes short stories (several of which have won contests and/or been published in various anthologies), poetry, and longer works of romantic women’s fiction. Samples of her work, as well as nearly 200 personal experience pieces, can be found on her blog at: <https://theothersideof55.wordpress.com/>.

MY DREAMS



This was me working
at my first job, at
Sir Sandford's lab school.
I was so lucky to
get it because the working
environment was ideal.



My Dreams

by

Michelle Reniers



Everyone has dreams about what they hope to achieve throughout their life. I know that I did.

It is a warm, sunny summer day. I am sitting in the backseat of our Oldsmobile. We are out for a Sunday drive. This was a common occurrence in the sixties. As I look out my window and see several horses galloping around in a field, I pipe up and say: “When I grow up, I want to be a jockey. It would be so exciting to sit on top of a horse and race around the track.”

My dad gives my mom a sideways look and in a sheepish voice says, “Oh Michelle, to be a jockey you have to be not only small and lightweight, but you also have to be a man.”

That’s all he said. That’s all he had to say. I knew in that moment that what he meant was that I was too fat to be a jockey, and even if I wasn’t, I was the wrong sex. I felt hurt and disappointed. It was as if I had had a balloon, but into it my dad had stuck a pin and popped it.



Always wanted to ride horses. The picture is blurry but you can see how happy I look.

I have always had the gift of gab, and even as a child I liked to tell tales. Mom would say I had a wild imagination. Once I got over the idea of becoming a jockey, I started to think that maybe I could become a writer

and have my stories published. Around the age of nine, I started to write my very first book. The main character in the story was a girl by the name of Shelly. Coincidentally that was the same nickname that I liked to call myself. Anyway, once I had written pages and pages of childish dribble, I summoned my family to the living room so that I could read to them, proudly, the first chapter of my story.

“Hmm,” said my dad.

“Very nice,” said my mom.

“Aggh,” moaned my brother Guy. “That is awful!” With a shake of his head he jumped off the couch and ran outside to play.

Pop went another balloon.

Well, that dream was short-lived. Next, I started pestering my dad to buy a piano. I wanted a piano so that I could make beautiful music. I loved tinkering on Granma’s old church organ whenever I went to visit her. My friend Anne played the piano. I really, really wanted a piano. Maybe when I grew up, I could be a great musician.

“Pianos cost a lot of money,” Dad said. “Anyway, we don’t have room for one.”

Instead, he bought me an accordion.

“What the #@%\$?”

I guess you could say that getting an accordion is like getting half a piano. Oh well. I tried to make the best of it.

I started accordion lessons and I was soon able to play some pretty great songs like Mary Had a Little Lamb and Row, Row, Row Your Boat. Eventually I was good enough to join the accordion band.

That’s right. Accordion band.

Every Sunday afternoon, I jammed with my fellow accordionists. That was fun for a while. Still, even in my 10-year-old mind I knew that there



really wasn't going to be a future for this sort of thing. I lost interest and stopped practicing. My accordion teacher told Dad that there was no point wasting his money on any more lessons. It was obvious that my heart just wasn't in it anymore.

Dad was disappointed, but I was secretly relieved as I packed my accordion into its case and slid it under my bed.

Occasionally, my dad would play his guitar and sing *You Are My Sunshine*.

One night I asked if I could try to play it. "Careful, it's not a toy," he said as he reluctantly passed it over.

I still had dreams of becoming a musician, even after my accordion playing days were over. I thought that maybe the guitar could be the instrument for me. I pressed down on the strings as hard as I could with my little fingers while I strummed with my other hand. As hard as I tried, I just

sounded awful. I was frustrated.

“Well, your fingers are just too short and your hand’s too small. You’ll never be a good guitar player,” Dad said with a shrug. He took back his guitar and turned away.

Pop!

What’s that sound, another balloon bursting?

Okay, let me see. Wrong body type to be a horse jockey, too boring to be a writer, and fingers too short to be a guitarist. What to do, what to do?

Got it! I could be an artist. Even with my small hand and short little fingers I could hold a pencil. I spent hours at school everyday, doodling in my notebooks as I listened to the teacher ramble on and on about some mundane geography fact. I watched the “John Nagy, Learn to Draw” television show every Monday night. I even bought some “Sketching for Beginners” books.

Well, turns out drawing is harder than you’d think. Forget drawing beautiful scenery or even bowls of fruit as illustrated on the covers of those books. Mostly, all I ever seemed to draw were cats and houses. Sometimes my cats looked like small horses. My sketch books and drawing pencils made their way to the bottom drawer in my desk and, once again, I heard the popping of yet another balloon as my dream of becoming a world-famous artist faded away.

Time marched on and soon I would be graduating from high school. I was no longer a child with foolish hopes of becoming this or that. I thought to myself: “I have to get serious.” I really need to set some realistic goals for my future life as an adult.

What DO I love doing? Dancing! For sure I want to be a dancer.

I knew I was good because when I was about 8 or 9 years old my brother Guy and I won a dance competition at the Peterborough Ex. We did

a dance called The Twist and people went crazy clapping the longest and loudest for us. Obviously, my dancing abilities were recognized by those who were lucky enough to be in the audience that afternoon. (Kudos to my partner also). The couple of years that I took tap and ballet classes had probably given me an edge over the other competitors. I decided to apply for the Fine Arts program at York University. The curriculum included many classes in dance.

I was very happy the day that I received my acceptance letter in the mail. All those dance lessons as a young child were finally going to pay off as I envisioned heading off to York come fall.

Just to cover my bases, I had also applied to the Journalism program at Ryerson Institute in Toronto. You can't imagine my surprise when they *also* accepted me. Wow! Could it be that I really did have some writing ability after all? Maybe my brother didn't know what he was talking about those many years ago.

Then again, throughout my childhood years I had many hopes and dreams about what I wanted to be in my life: a jockey, a writer, a musician, an artist, a dancer. In my heart of hearts, though, what I really wanted was to be a teacher.

I wanted to spend my days working with children. On the day that an acceptance letter from Teacher's College arrived I was ecstatic. Finally, my most important dream would come true.

I was going to be a teacher!

After reading over the descriptions of the mandatory first year courses I realized that I wasn't really that interested in them. They had nothing to do with teaching. I worried that maybe I didn't even have the ability to pass them. I decided not to go. Then I heard a loud noise in my head.

POP! Another burst balloon.

But this time it was me that had stuck the pin in it.

I was determined not to give up. If I couldn't be an elementary teacher then maybe I could be a pre-school teacher instead. I could work in daycare centres and nursery schools, as they were called back in the seventies. I could nurture young children and encourage their development in a play-to-learn environment. I enrolled in the Early Childhood Education program at Sir Sandford Fleming College in Peterborough and bingo! I was on my way to fulfilling my dream.

I spent over 30 years working professionally as an E.C.E. I can honestly say that I felt very lucky to be able to work at doing something that I so enjoyed, that being spending time with kids. When I retired, I felt very sad and empty. I did not know how I was going to fill up the many hours in a day.



Wearing my dance leotard and tap shoes. I loved going to dance class and was always practising.

What to do, what to do?

Maybe I could do some of the things that I enjoyed as a child. I bought a roll-up piano keyboard and challenged myself to learn how to play it. I bought some paints and canvasses and began drawing and painting pictures. Mind you, mostly cartoon-type paintings for the grandkids, but also some scenic ones and even some abstract paintings. Matt thinks that I should stick with the abstracts, LOL.

A couple of years ago I enrolled in a senior's memoir writing course offered through our public library. Every other week I connect with other aspiring writers, and we motivate and encourage each other to write down the memories and events of our lives, so that they can be shared with our children and grandchildren. I am happy to say that I am slowly achieving my goal of being a writer, one story at a time.

What about my dream of being a dancer? Well, even I know that ship has sailed.

Still... When an upbeat song comes on the radio, like Uptown Funk by Bruno Mars, I just can't help myself. I jump up off the chair and start dancing around the room. When I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror, I don't see a frumpy, overweight senior citizen. No, I see a teenager with long black hair and a curvy slim body doing the kind of moves that won her a prize in a dance contest those many years ago.

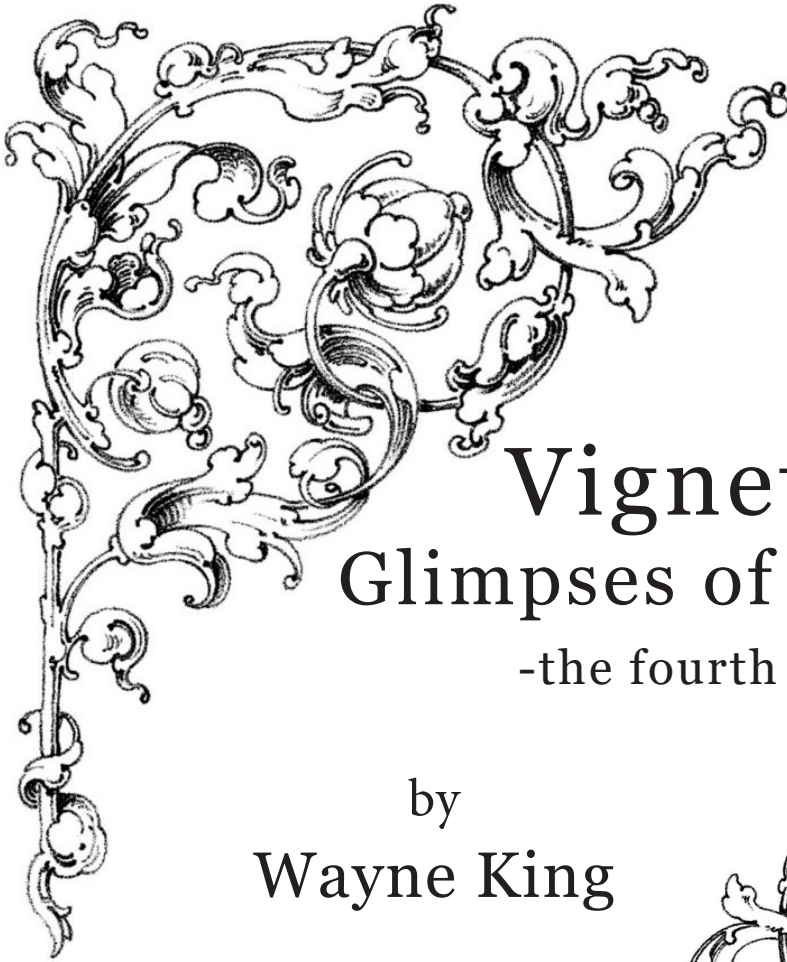
I think that it is good for people to have dreams and goals. Keeps life interesting. Just remember to try to keep them realistic. If you can't reach them, then maybe they just need to be modified.

Bye for now, and sweet dreams.

MEET MICHELLE

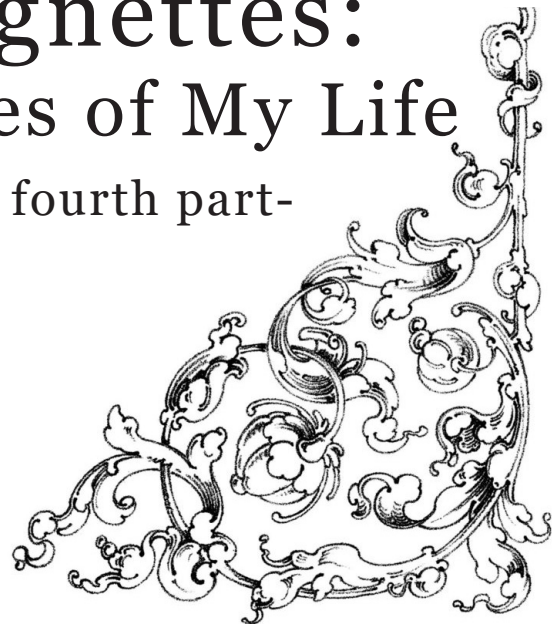
Michelle Reniers is a mother of seven sons and is a retired early childhood educator who has worked locally at the Brantford Little School and for the Lansdowne Children's Centre. Born and raised in Peterborough, Ontario, Michelle has been a resident of Brantford since 1990. Michelle enjoys pickleball, crafting, reading, writing, and spending time with family and friends and with her grandchildren. Writing her memoir provides the opportunity to reflect on her upbringing, the influence that her parents and grandparents and siblings have had on the person that she has become and to leave a legacy for her children and grandchildren.

VIGNETTES: GLIMPSES OF MY LIFE



Vignettes:
Glimpses of My Life
-the fourth part-

by
Wayne King



I have never been able to see life as
anything but a vast, complicated practical joke,
and it's better to laugh than cry.

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN¹

Dear Reader, This is the lucky thirteenth time I have contributed to the Lifescapes Anthology, and the fourth offering in my Vignettes series. I now boast a body of work consisting of twenty-one published stories.

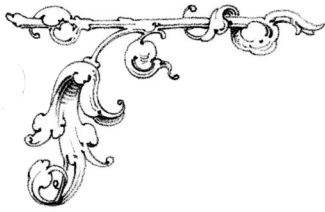
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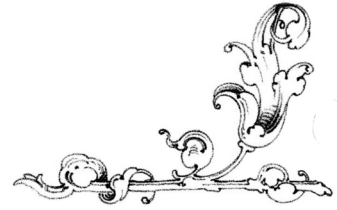
Two of my three stories in this year's anthology describe both embarrassing and dangerous episodes in my youth, which I somehow survived. Both incidents occurred within two months of each other in 1961. My third story unfolds thirty-three years later, where I am not the centre of attention, but merely an observer.

I hope you enjoy reading my memoirs as much as I enjoy writing them.

—Wayne King



DEATH OR GLORY



Waterworks Park spread out below me like a diorama. I knew the park well, but had never ridden my bike down this particular section of the surrounding hills.

A few kids played on the lawn near the marsh. *They're in for a shock.*

My plan? Swoop down the hill, blast by the kids at incredible speed—shock and awe them—then finish with a lightening stop just before I hit the marsh.

Death or glory!

The hill was steep. From where I stood it dropped off abruptly, then levelled off fifty feet (15 meters) below. A slight slope remained for the next hundred and fifty feet (45 meters) before reaching my destination: just before the marsh. I gambled that momentum would carry me across the gravel road and lawn below, allowing me to “yahoo!” the kids. I also gambled on having enough time to stop before actually entering the marsh.

The marsh was not a desirable place to end up, especially on a bike. It was pea-soup muddy. Some claimed quicksand lurked beneath the surface. Both above and below the surface the marsh wildlife thrived, thick with flora and fauna. Some of which could inflict physical harm.

My bike was what was termed a racing bike—three speeds, hand brakes, and narrow tires. The exciting part was that it boasted a unique feature: I had added big motorcycle type handlebars after removing the standard drop bars. Unfortunately, these big bars did not properly accommodate the rear hand brakes. I had run out of brake cable.

Therefore, my back brakes were lower down on the bar, making them difficult to reach under... challenging circumstances.

Nevertheless, I sat comfortably on my bike, left leg on the ground, right leg positioned on the pedal, ready to push forward.

I gave my plan a final review.

I launched myself forward, and down the slope I sped. I felt like I was riding a rollercoaster—except over bumpy lawn. I managed to hold the bike steady despite the speed and rough terrain. I quickly reached the bottom of the hill. Then I crossed the gravel road. I held on. Still at high speed ... faster than I had planned.

No cars on the road. Thank goodness.

The final leg of my journey loomed ahead. The kids looked startled as they finally noticed me. They scattered as I managed to careen out of their way. I was closing in fast on the marsh.

Much faster than I planned.

Here I was... Full speed, but still on the bike despite the uneven ground. The marsh reared its scary head, right in front of me.

Adrenaline kicked in, giving me precious thinking time.

I've got two choices—ride into the marsh or hit the brakes.

I chose the latter, but then realized there was a big problem. The speed and rough ground meant I could not safely reach my poorly installed rear brakes. I only had front brakes!

What happened next is predictable.

In front of staring kids and people watching from the other side of the marsh, I flew over the handlebars ass over tea kettle.

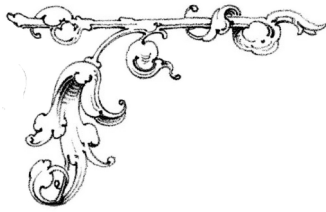
I ended up laid out on the lawn, but strangely enough, OK. Bike alright too. A miracle I survived without injury. Remember helmets were not available in 1961.

I gave my head a shake, got up, mounted my bike and exited the park, embarrassed, but unscathed.

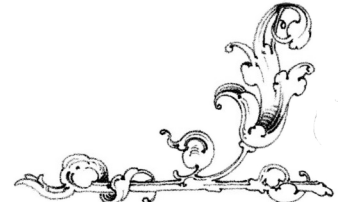
When it comes to death or glory, I much prefer glory.



The author sixty years later – with helmet.



GREGORIOUS AD LIBERANDUN



Spring 1994. Greg, Frank and I had spent the weekend camping. On our way back to Brantford we decided to take a break at Inglis Falls, a beautiful conservation area close to Owen Sound. We pulled into the parking lot little knowing what awaited us.

“Life couldn’t be better,” Frank sighed.

“Well, could be a bit better,” Greg replied. “I’ve still got a bit of a hangover.”

“Fear not. A fresh brewed coffee in the great outdoors will soon fix you up,” I assured him.”

We parked, alighted from the van, chose a table and put the kettle on.



*Inglis Falls, Spring. So beautiful. Rugged escarpment. Relax in the sunshine.
Relax on the grass. Let Mother Nature perform her wonders.²*

At that supreme moment of bliss, a black Labrador Retriever burst from the trees. He trotted toward us, but stopped at a safe distance. He sniffed the air, snorted, sat down and stared at us.

The three of us called out to him to join us, but to no avail. The Lab stayed put.

“His tails awaggin’. He’s friendly. No problemo.”

We resumed relaxing, while our new companion watched our every move.



Greg and Frank watch the river flow.

An occasional breeze ruffled the cedars. Birds sang. Water splashed over the falls. We sipped our coffee.

Greg became restless. He picked up a rock, bigger than a softball. He weighed it in his right hand, then his left. He picked up two more then attempted to juggle, but that didn’t work out. Curiosity satisfied, Greg nonchalantly threw one of the rocks toward the dam’s holding pond. It hit the water with a mighty splash and promptly sank out of sight.

VIGNETTES: GLIMPSES OF MY LIFE

The Lab reacted to the sudden movement, sight and sound. We watched in amazement as he ran to the pond and dove in.

“He wants the rock!”

“He thinks it’s a ball... Wants to play catch.”

“Crazy dog.” The three of us agreed.

Meanwhile, the Lab paddled around the pond in quest of his intended plaything.

“Labs love the water.” We all agreed.

But, we soon had second thoughts.

Labs do love the water, but as the minutes ticked by it became apparent. “He can’t get out. The cement perimeter of the pond’s too smooth and slippery. His claws can’t dig in. He just keeps sliding back! Gotta get him out, it’s up to us. No one else is around.”



Frank and Greg at the pond. Note the cement perimeter.

We ran to the edge of the pond. “Come on boy. Come over here,” we urged. The Lab ignored us.

But the Lab knew he was in trouble—big trouble. We watched, helpless, as he paddled around searching in vain for a suitable landing spot. All around, everywhere, the cement perimeter stymied him.

“The water’s too cold for us to go in. Get him over to this side, then pull him out,” Frank proposed.

“He could resist. Might be tricky,” I replied.

Greg added. “Yeah, gotta get him to come to us somehow. He’s just swimming in circles ignoring our calls. He’ll eventually run out of steam. We don’t want that.”

“Spread out around the pool. He has to come to one of us.”

I stayed on our side of the pond. Frank ran to a spot down the shore a ways. Greg strode toward the dam.

The next thing we knew— “Lab’s headin’ for the dam.”

“No not the dam. It’s a sheer wall. No way.” I yelled.

Of course, that’s just where the Lab headed. He swam to the dam and clawed at the cement wall in vain. Greg reached the dam at the same time and climbed onto the parapet a few feet above where the Lab floundered.

I shouted to Greg. “You can’t pull him up. He’s too heavy. Coax him toward me. Come on boy.”

Greg ignored my advice. Frank and I watched Greg kneel, reach down and put his hands under the Lab’s front arm pits. Somehow he hung on to the soaked dog. We watched in amazement as Greg slowly straightened up, pulling the Lab up the wall and onto the parapet. The Lab remained calm and accepting throughout the rescue. He knew he was saved.

A wet eighty to a hundred-pound lift for Greg – straight up. Frank and I reached the dam just when we were no longer needed.

We breathed a collective sigh of relief.

Safe at last the Lab jumped down from the parapet, gave a couple of

VIGNETTES: GLIMPSES OF MY LIFE

good shakes spraying water all over us, then ran off to find a safer place.

“Not even a thank you,” Frank observed.

Frank and I proclaimed Greg a hero. *Gregorious Ad Liberandum*.

I admire people who keep their heads and act quickly to deal appropriately in an emergency. Greg certainly filled that bill, this time.

“What would have happened if we hadn’t been here?” I wondered.

“Well for one thing the Lab wouldn’t have chased a rock into the pond,” Frank replied.

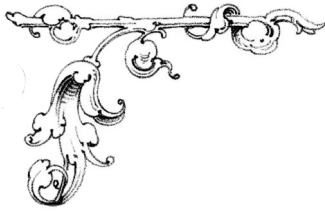
Greg’s last words on the subject: “Hangover’s gone.



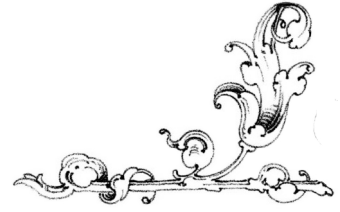
Gregorious Ad Liberandum.

1. This quote is from *I Will Fear No Evil* by Robert Heinlein, and can be found in chapter 25 on page 442 of the 1970 edition published by Putnam (New York).

2. Inglis Falls, Owen Sound, Ontario. Attribution: Peter K Burian, CC BY-SA 4.0, via Wikimedia Commons. Source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Inglis_falls,_Owen_Sound,_Ontario.jpg



FLASHBACK ...



The author, September 1961.

Shop.

Industrial Arts, or Shop, had been my nemesis since seventh grade. The reason? I was useless working with tools and therefore performed poorly on my projects. My grades reflected my lack of skill.

Now a “niner”, in my first year of high school, I looked forward to more years of embarrassment and frustration with Shop.

The situation at CECI (Central Elgin Collegiate Institute) was more challenging because there were two kinds of Shop, Metal and Wood, each much larger than at elementary school and filled with a wider variety of sophisticated equipment (to me, anyway).

At home I helped Dad with simple tasks, but, I was never comfortable around tools. I did service my bike with mixed results. (See previous story, “Death or Glory”).

Well-intentioned people assured me: “You’ll pass your Shop project as long as you hand in something, even if it’s not quite finished.”

Good advice, but didn’t work for me.

My projects were always poor quality and invariably handed in late. Sometimes my projects were unfinished. This was all because I could not use tools properly, nor with any confidence. Constant errors forced me to start over and over again. I tried to meet the expected standard, but usually failed. The result? Much more time spent per project than anyone else.

I needed a lot of help, but hesitated to ask either the instructor or a fellow student.

The quality of my projects was laughable. Embarrassing. I couldn’t even make a decent tin mug or a letter holder.

How was it that my peers seemed to glide through Shop when all I had to look forward to was more embarrassment, more frustration? Every one else seemed very handy—at least compared to me. Some already excelled in the outside world of cars and construction.

Mr. Barnstop, our Metal Shop instructor, supervised a class of fifteen guys scattered throughout the shop soldering, forging, shearing, etc.. Somehow, he kept an eye on all of us. Mr. B. was easy going, patient and knew what he was doing. Consequently, the class went smoothly for everyone...

Everyone but me.

All About Welding

Early in the first term Mr. Barnstop demonstrated the welding process.

Just the *thought* of welding scared me. Events would prove that I had good reason to be worried.

Imagine: oxygen and volatile acetylene. Each stored in its own highly pressurized tank. Valves open and the gases flow via hose until oxygen and acetylene mix at the nozzle. Apply a spark. *Voilà*, a *pop!* and an open flame signifies that a potentially lethal bomb is burning in Yours Truly's hands.

Mr. B. demonstrated the shut down procedure. "Shut off acetylene first, then the oxygen. The oxygen blows out any acetylene left in the nozzle, rendering it harmless."

He added a warning about flashback: "That's when the flame disappears and high-pitched whistling starts. It means the flame has backed up inside the nozzle and is burning back down the line toward the acetylene tank. If the flame reaches the interior of the acetylene tank, it will explode! Simply follow the turn off procedure: acetylene first, oxygen second."

The last thing I want to do is weld.

Then Came the Day

Time passed quickly. Most of my fellow students had already completed their welding project.

Maybe I've been forgotten. I hoped, without hope.

Then one fateful day came. "Wayne, we're going to weld decorative leaves to your flower pot holder."

I managed to control my fear with the thought that at least Mr. B. would see me through this challenge.

Mr. Barnstop watched me fire up the torch and begin welding. After a brief—too brief—moment of supervision, he left me to attend to other matters.

Crisis

Nervous, I carried on...

Suddenly the torch flame disappeared, followed by a shrill whistle.

Flashback! Oh no. Turn off the valves real quick. But which one first? Oxygen first—no? Acetylene? Didn't I turn that one off? Do I turn the valve clockwise or the other way?

The whistling made my confusion even worse.

I sensed everyone's eyes turn toward me.

The guys instantly realized what was going on and the danger we all faced. "Flashback! It's going to blow!" I heard a startled voice exclaim.

I continued to fumble, frozen with fear.

Acetylene? Oxygen? What do I turn off first?

My fellow students were now moving briskly toward the exit. "Let's get outta here!"

Just when things looked darkest, Mr. Barnstop sprang into action. From the far side of the shop he began running toward me. Well, not quite ran. Mr. B. was clubfooted and had a built-up shoe. He walked (and ran) with a limp.

Nevertheless, he covered the distance rapidly, tore the torch from my hand, and turned off the valves – correctly.

Afterword

Relieved, I apologized for almost blowing up the place. Mr. B. didn't reply.

The guys slowly filed back to their workstations.

I went on to another assignment and never welded again. Mr. Barnstop didn't object, but of course, incomplete work did affect my mark.

Unfortunately, I had to take Shop for most of my high school career. I never improved my skills. Fortunately, we spent half of our time in Wood Shop. It was just as much of a mystery to me as Metal Shop, though I didn't consider it as dangerous—except for all the electrical parts and sharp tools.

My display of gross incompetence only worsened my shame when it came to Shop, which remains to this day. Tools continue to baffle me. While many of my friends are quite talented handymen, I am still mostly dependent on others' expertise. After all, not only was I unable to do the work... I was dangerous!



Recent photo of Central Elgin Collegiate Institute. The facade of the school has changed somewhat from 1961.

MEET WAYNE

Born and raised in St. Thomas, Ontario, I have made my home in Brantford since nineteen eighty-one. I am married to Sharon and father of Amy, Aaron and Ian.

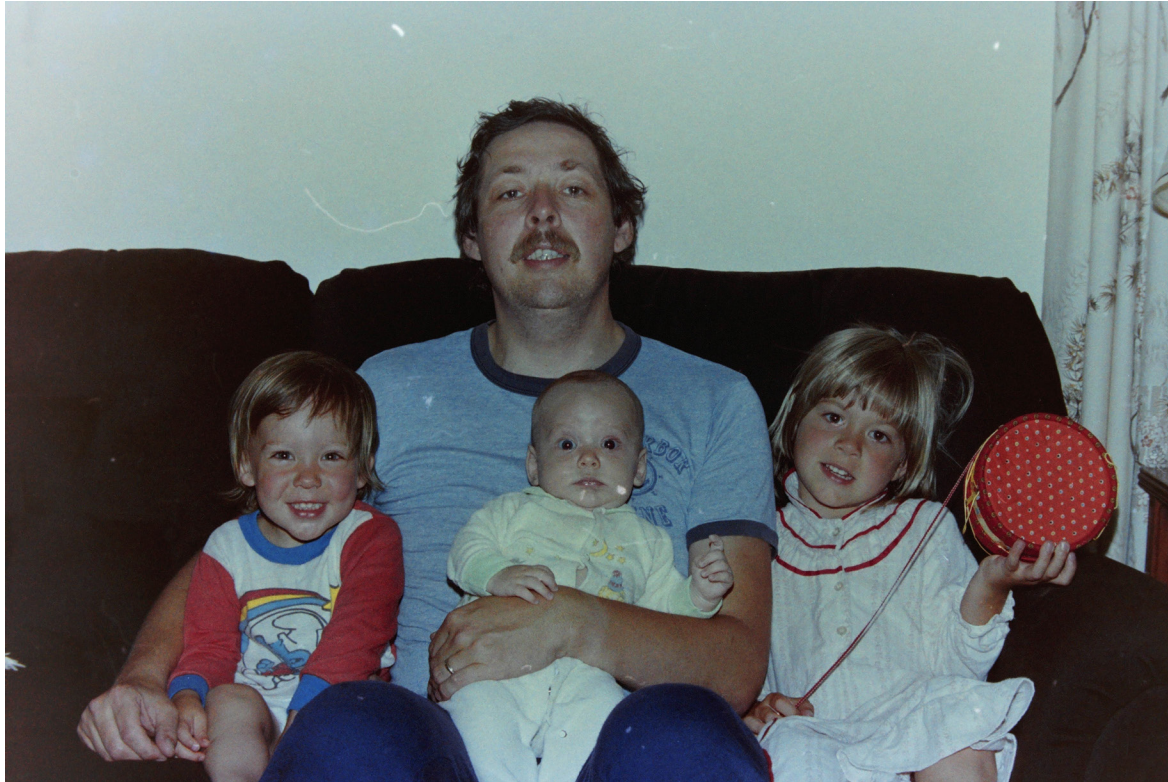
My work career focused on sales/marketing for a variety of businesses, both local and international. I have been happily retired for almost fifteen years.

Interests include gardening, history, cycling, photography, brewing, genealogy and walking/tai-chi/yoga.

I enjoy reading and writing my memoirs

Thank you Brantford Public library for supporting the Lifescapes program.

I look forward to sharing my future writings.



Me centre. From left Aaron, Ian and Amy (1984)

I know that when you read the line when

What are your cherished memories?

Lifescapes at Brantford Public Library is a memoir writing program designed to help aspiring writers think and write about their life experiences.

This anthology contains stories of discovery, childhood adventures, and lessons learned the hard way.

Imagine the wonder of feeding elephants in Thailand with your grandson, or the thrill of an early morning ice storm through a thin pane of glass. Consider the comfort of a pacifier dipped in buttermilk, and the enduring presence of a simple maple tree growing with you as your world expands beyond the front yard.

We hope that you will enjoy our stories, and feel inspired to share some of your own.

