



Reflections

Lifescapes Writing Group
2017
Milton Public Library





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

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Introduction

The members of Milton Public Library's Lifescapes writing program are pleased to present *Reflections*, the sixth annual anthology of memoirs produced by Milton Public Library.

The Lifescapes program provides beginner and experienced writers with encouragement and guidance in storytelling and writing. Milton Public Library's vision is to "inspire through discovery, collaboration, and creation." Lifescapes supports MPL's vision by providing participants with an opportunity to come together and share their personal histories with the community.

We would like to offer our sincere thanks to author and instructor, Larry Brown who visited the class to share his experience and expertise, and to Christine Marvell who assisted with editing.

Print copies of the anthologies are available for sale for a limited time. They may also be borrowed from MPL or viewed on the website, www.mpl.on.ca.

Joan Faehrmann
Adult Services Librarian
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Events at Our Apartment

By Ken Marvell

Hit the Floor (1960)

It was a hot, humid summer night. The four of us were sitting around the living room, talking when we saw in the distant horizon, the headlights of a jet soaring towards our apartment building. As the jet flew closer, the bright beams of its headlights lit up the entire inside of our third floor apartment. Within seconds all we could hear was the screeching, deafening roar of its engines and the loud vibration of the apartment windows.

Suddenly, Marjorie shouted, “Hit the floor, it’s going to crash into our apartment!”.....

The apartment which I shared with my sisters Peggy and Marjorie was located on Grenet Street in Ville St. Laurent, very close to Canadair Ltd., where they built and tested various types of jets and similar aircraft.

Often, especially on the hot summer evenings, as the jets flew directly over our apartment building, they caused the apartment windows to shake, and dishes and pictures hanging on the walls of the apartment to rattle. When the windows were open, the harsh roar of the engines was deafening, however, after living there for the better part of a year, we got used to this common occurrence.

Around 1960, Marjorie started dating a nice young fellow named Wayne. At that time, Wayne lived in Cornwall, Ontario, about an hour’s drive from Ville St. Laurent. One evening, early in their relationship, Wayne hopped into his purple Morris Minor and drove directly from his work place to our apartment so he could visit for a few hours with Marjorie.

That particular evening the weather was oppressively hot and humid. We had the windows wide open in hopes of getting a breeze through the apartment. Marjorie, Wayne, Peggy and I, having finished supper, were sitting in the living room talking about this and that, trying to get better acquainted. Marjorie and Wayne were sharing the couch while Peggy and I sat on chairs.

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All of a sudden, we heard the deafening sound of an approaching test jet and saw its headlights coming very low towards the apartment building. Immediately the windows and dishes started to rattle and shake. As mentioned, we were used to this occurrence however it was the first experience for Wayne.

That was when Marjorie suddenly shouted, "Hit the floor, it's going to crash into our apartment!"

Instantly, Wayne dove off the couch and landed face down, lying prostrate on the living room floor with his hands covering his head. As the jet flew away and the night became quiet once again, Wayne looked around and then slowly looked up at the three of us, still sitting where we were, laughing at him lying spread eagled on the floor.

With cheeks flushed from embarrassment, as he had only met us once or twice before, Wayne assembled himself and his dignity as he sat back on the couch beside Marjorie. He immediately knew Marjorie had played a good prank on him.

The three of us were still laughing hard when Marjorie said, "Welcome to the Marvell family."

To help Wayne relax after hitting the floor so fast and so hard, I asked him, "Would you like a beer?"

"Yes please," he replied.

I went into the kitchen, opened the freezer, and pulled out a frosty coated beer glass. It was ice cold and the foam on the top looked so appealing. Wayne must have thought that too, because as he took that glass from my hand and put it up to his lips, he almost chewed through the top of that joke beer glass, in an effort to get a drink.

To make matters worse, after tantalizing Wayne with an ice cold fake beer, I searched through the fridge for a real one, only to find I didn't have a beer to give him.

Oh, just so you know, Wayne and Marjorie did eventually get married.

How Many Eggs (4) (1960)

When living with Peggy and Marjorie in the apartment, we took turns making lunches at least three times each week. Those lunches usually consisted of some type of sandwich such as; Prem (a canned meat), ham and cheese, or the old reliable and our favourite, chopped egg and onion sandwiches.

One evening, Peggy left her workplace and went shopping for some new clothes. She returned home to the apartment about 9:30 p.m. and took her new clothes into her bedroom to hang them up in the closet.

Noticing the time, she rushed out to the kitchen saying, "I didn't realize how late it is. I better put some eggs on to boil so I can make chopped egg sandwiches for tomorrow's lunch."

Peggy pulled out a saucepan from the cupboard, poured some water into it and placed it on the burner. Then she added four eggs to the water and returned to her room to continue hanging up her new clothes.

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It was at that point that Marjorie and I decided to play a little joke on Peggy. We said to her, "Peggy, why don't you model your new clothes for us while the eggs come to a boil?"

Peggy agreed and went into her room. A few minutes later, she was standing by the kitchen door, turning around while we commented on how nice her outfit looked. As soon as Peggy returned to her room, we took an extra egg out of the fridge and put it into the saucepan of rapidly boiling water with the four eggs she had previously put on to boil. Our plan was to hand Peggy the newest egg and as she cracked it open the broken raw egg yolk would run down the side of the dish.

However, Peggy returned to the kitchen wearing a different newly purchased outfit which she proceeded to model for us. When she finished modeling that one and again returned to her room to hang it up, we took another new egg out of the fridge and added that to the saucepan of boiling eggs. We also added some more water to top up the eggs. This time we were ready for her, and to be sure we picked out the right egg, we marked it with a ball point pen to identify it.

Much to our surprise, we soon discovered that Peggy had purchased a half dozen outfits and she modeled each one for us. After each outfit was modeled, we added another egg to the saucepan.

Finally Peggy said, "That was my last outfit. I will come back out in a minute and make the egg sandwiches.

Quickly, we added one more egg to the ten eggs which had been boiling for different lengths of time from at least ten minutes to about an hour by that point.

When Peggy returned to the kitchen, Marjorie and I said, "We will help you make the sandwiches, after all, it's getting late now."

Peggy got out the mixing bowl, some small plates, mayo and onions. I reached for the bread and butter while Marjorie removed the most recently placed egg from the saucepan, ran it under some cold water for a moment, then she handed it to Peggy to start cracking.

We both watched as Peggy took that first egg from Marjorie and cracked it hard against the inside of the bowl. The eggshell broke into numerous sized pieces and along with the egg white and broken yolk, slowly slid down the inside of the bowl.

We snickered as we saw this, thinking how funny it was. Then looking at Peggy, we were surprised when she casually said, "Oh I guess the eggs need to be boiled a little longer. They aren't hard boiled yet."

At that point we laughed as we told Peggy about the joke we were playing on her with the eggs and how some of them had been boiling for the better part of an hour. As she was such a



Peggy, modelling one of her new outfits

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good sport, we washed out the bowl and helped her make the lunches while enjoying a cup of coffee and some cookies.

Lunches finally made and the kitchen tidied up, we went to bed.



I was born in Montreal, Quebec in 1942, the youngest of six children. The oldest was my brother Gordon, followed by four sisters, then me. When I was two years old, my family moved to a very small predominately French village, 20 miles east of Montreal, called St. Paul L'Ermitte, where I grew up and where my parents worked for Canadian Arsenals Ltd.

St Paul L'Ermitte was renamed Le Gardeur in 1978, which in turn has since become part of the town of Repentigny.

Retired from a career in sales, selling steels to industry, I continue to enjoy living in Milton, Ont., where I have been residing for 38 years.

I am married with three grown children and five grandchildren.



Echoes From the Past

By Sawsan Kondos

I was so happy on the airplane returning to my work in Kuwait in September 1991, after the Iraq-Kuwait War. The Iraqi invasion had started on August 2, 1990 resulting in a seven month long occupation of Kuwait which ended on February 24, 1991 after direct military intervention by US led forces in the Gulf War. Before the invasion, my daughter and I had left Kuwait to go to Cairo for summer vacation and to join my son who was studying at Cairo University. My husband had preferred to stay longer in Kuwait to finish some work before he joined us in Cairo to spend a nice summer with each other in our mother home, Egypt. We were dreaming of a wonderful summer with our relatives and friends after months of hard work.

When the war ended, and Kuwait started to breathe again, the Kuwait embassy in Cairo contacted us to return to our work. It was so hard to make a decision to return as my husband refused to go back because first, he suffered a lot during the first days of the war – for him it was a very bad nightmare – and second, he faced severe troubles during his escape from the city under war with crowds using their cars and leaving everything behind. Also, he had started his private work in Cairo, my son had left for Toronto to prepare for his PhD, and my daughter now attended the American University in Cairo. After days of thinking and confusion, we made a family decision for me to fly alone to Kuwait. It was so hard to make such a decision but it was necessary to see what had happened to my



My daughter at her graduation party from Fagr el Sabah School - Kuwait

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apartment and to all my photos and memories inside it, my car, and our savings in the bank there. My friend Raefa and her husband Salh, called and invited me to stay with them for a few days until I arranged my new life, as they had gone back to Kuwait before me. That made me more comfortable.

I was excited to get back to my well-kept apartment which faced the Gulf and to return to my work as a lecturer of statistics. We had a difficult time for more than a year, having lost our jobs, our money and our normal stable life. I had so many private memories. I remembered the smell of the famous Kuwaiti incense that filled the air and the sound of their music which reminded me of the many happy times we had there.

The view from the airplane was so scary. The city was so dark, so different from when I first arrived in Kuwait in 1976, fifteen years ago. At that time, I looked out the window to see a blaze of shining lights. When the plane landed, I found the city was not the same. I saw a different place, horrible, dirty and frightening. There were no lights and no traffic signals. The big tower near the Gulf looked sad, like a very old man. I had passed this tower on my way to classes. Then it was a symbol of pride. The city smelt different – like a hospital. The usual salty smell of the Gulf water with the scent of flowers in the breeze was gone. I was shocked. Even though I knew my beloved city had been in a war, I had not expected all this ruin.

The next morning, I longed to return to my office. Before the invasion happened, I had left my office all prepared for the new school year. I usually kept some money there so that I had cash on my first day back. When I entered the room, I was so upset. It was empty. No furniture, no air conditioner, no carpets. Everything was gone. They had stolen everything. I looked out the window to see my favourite garden. It was now full of smelly garbage. I was heartbroken and my eyes filled with tears for what had happened to my beloved city.

During the month, a lot of supplies came to the city and it started to recover from the shadows of death and ruin. As the classes started for the new school year, girls returned after a year without any studies. Their eyes were sad. Our classroom was very still and quiet. We had lost the joy and cheerful mood. There was no joking. Their smiles and happiness had vanished.

As I loved my work and my students, I felt heartsick. I could no longer sleep. My heart was full of sadness. I had one goal - to make my students happy. After the attack, every one of them had a sad story, either for herself or for her family. How could I help them? How could I make them smile? I thought so hard. I did my best and prayed for every one of my students to have peace and joy after their extraordinarily difficult time. When I knelt beside my bed to pray for them, I cried and begged my kind Lord to fill them with hope. By the end of the year, with much patience and prayer, the girls began to accept their new situation. Our class began to have fun. The girls started to talk, to study and to look forward to a better future for themselves and their precious country.

I asked one of my students, “Did you suffer a lot during the last year?”

“Do you know that almost 150,000 Iraqi troops occupied our quiet land and went everywhere destroying and stealing,” she replied.

“I hope that everyone in your family is okay,” I said.



My daughter's friend in her national dress with the famous incense of Kuwait

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“My brother and my twenty year old cousin were captured, as were a lot of our youth. We have no information about them,” she replied. “Also my young sister was raped by an Iraqi soldier. She had a baby boy last month,” she added sadly.

I gave her a hug. I held her cold hand but she ran away in tears.

As the end of the school year, I resigned. I couldn't stay in Kuwait alone without my family although we visited each other during the year. But it was not enough. My boss tried to make me another trial for my family to come to Kuwait, but everything had become different; the smell of the war was everywhere.

I am still in touch with my students after more than 25 years, although I never visited the place again. A new generation of their kids attend the same college. Some of my former students have very good careers. They always remind me of our classes. I feel the echoes of the sad and happy days from the past. During one last call, I told one of them, “Thank God Kuwait is so much better now.”

“Yes, our God healed our country, but the dark days are unforgettable”, she replied. There was a moment of silence on the line. Then she added, “Don't forget Kuwait in your prayers.” She declared, “The miracle happened because people prayed.”

My spirit still remains with that country. It gave me a career, friends, trust and respect. It was the place where I raised my kids with a unique education. We did lose a lot, but it was war. I pray that the world lives in peace and that there is no more war. Looking back, I feel that our kind Lord protected me and my family during those difficult days.



My friend Raefa and me in the backyard of our college 10 years before the war



Sawsan was born in 1944 in Egypt; graduated in Economic and Political Science, Cairo University, 1965; Married in 1968; Gifted by a son and daughter; finished her Masters degree in Statistics, 1974; With her husband, she transferred to Kuwait where she worked almost 15 years as a lecturer of Statistics. After her husband passed away, she immigrated to Canada, almost with the new century, to be near her kids, her four grandsons and her only granddaughter.

She enjoys spending time serving in her Coptic orthodox church in Milton, helping newcomers. Also, she likes to read historical books. She has participated many times in the Evergreen adult summer reading program at Milton Public Library.



The Caged Birds

By Sawsan Kondos

He was so worried and anxious. For two nights, he couldn't sleep. Every time I opened my eyes, I found myself alone in our queen-sized bed. Faded light and quiet music came into the bedroom from the living room.

I felt so heavy and too tired to get up and check on him. Finally at six in the morning, I got up to brush my teeth and went to him.

"What is the matter? Are you ill? Do you feel okay?" I asked.

"I am so anxious. Your due date was a week ago. I need to buy new furniture for the baby's room. This is our first baby and it will be expensive," he replied. "I don't want our baby to have the second hand furniture that your friend loaned you," he added.

Surprised, I replied, "But a baby won't know the difference."

"No, but one day, I will tell him exactly how we prepared for his arrival as our very own prince," he answered.

"So, what can we do? We haven't enough money to spend on baby furniture," I objected.

"Tomorrow, I will travel to my home town, Kom Asfahat, in Upper Egypt to collect the money owed by the farmers renting my land," he answered. Then he continued, "It's the end of October, the harvest time for many of their crops. I must go as they are too lazy to come here. Maybe they will spend the money I am owed."

"But I need you the most at this time," I cried.

"It is only for two nights and I will be back soon," he responded. The decision was made.

Alone, the first night, I tried to be happy, thinking about the coming arrival of my first baby. I killed time by reading a book about first-time mothers. Before I turned to the second page, I was in a deep sleep.

It was still dark, just before sunrise, when I heard the outside doorbell ring. At first, I thought I was dreaming, but it rang continuously. I thought it must be my husband. Of course, it was, he couldn't leave me alone at a time like this. It didn't make sense, why ring the bell when he had a key?

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Before I reached the door, I heard a strong knocking, like someone banging on a drum. **Boom, boom, boom.** I hurried to the door. Outside I heard sounds, a rooster crowing – cock a doodle doo – and someone coughing and men chatting. There was a smell of cigar smoke.

When I opened the door, to my incredible surprise, there was in front of me, a huge wooden cage full of live chickens, roosters, two turkeys and two male ducks. The front of my house smelt like a farm. There were two strange men, dressed like farmers, standing beside the cage. One of them asked, “Are you Mrs. Sawsan?”

“Yes, yes,” I replied sleepily, “But I think that you are looking for someone else.”

The man insisted, “No, you must take this cage. The emir, El Omda, of your husband’s town sent it to you as a gift for your first child. He and his family want you to have good food.”

Upset and almost in tears, I cried, “What can I do with them and where can I keep those birds?”

In a stern manner, the man answered, “It is not our business. Take the cage and sign for it. Don’t forget to give us our tip and some coffee to drink.”

Before I could reply, they pushed past me, asked to use the washroom and put aside the cage for the moment.

As they finally left my house, one of the men advised me, “Don’t forget to give the birds some water. They are so thirsty as they have been travelling on a train for almost six hours.” The other one added, “I wish you have a safe birth and a healthy baby.”

Then they disappeared and left me standing by the open door. I wanted to scream but couldn’t. I was so confused. I couldn’t think with the sound of the birds and the smell of them spreading throughout the apartment. Every second, I checked the new unwelcome guests. I felt that they wanted to break out of their cage and run all through the rooms.

I had an idea. I called my butcher, “Good morning, Mr. Abdalla. I have some live chickens, two turkeys and two ducks. Can you please help me to prepare them for cooking?” Happy with my idea, I added, “You have all the tools for the job.”

“What, what. Are you okay, Mrs. Kondos?” he replied. He continued, “Sorry, if you have a cow or a lamb, I can help, but...” The telephone line went dead. I started to cry.

The telephone rang. Crying, I answered, “Hello.”

My mother-in-law greeted me, “Oh dear, are you all right?” She continued, “Are you in pain? We can take you to the hospital.”

I replied, “No, I am fine, but I have a big problem.” I began to tell her the story. My mother-in-law said that she would come soon and help. She had spent her entire life in a small village and she knew exactly what to do. Within an hour, she and my sister-in-law arrived with a bag full of knives and white plastic bags. They gave their instructions. They needed lots of boiling water to remove the feather from the slain birds. They worked for almost two hours. Every time they opened the washroom door, I could see their reddened faces and exhausted eyes as they handed me a clean, white, plastic bag containing a bird ready for cooking.

For many years afterwards, I could still recall the smells of a farm with flocks of birds and boiled water mixed with feathers.

On the 11th of November 1969, I gave birth to my first son, Serag. His name means “shining light.” To celebrate his arrival, we had a big party. We cooked all the birds and had a delicious meal which everyone enjoyed. They did not know about my unique adventure with the birds.

As is our tradition, we placed Serag, our precious baby, on a sieve and gently shook him, singing “Birgalatak, Birgalatak.” What a handsome boy. God bless him. Up until now, I have asked everyone what Birgalatak means, but no-one knows.

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Now, at Thanksgiving time, when I go to buy a turkey, I remember that day. I always thank God that there are people who prepare turkeys for us to cook.



*My son (6 months old)
with his Dad,*



*My son at 6 yrs. with
his sister*



My son in Toronto



All the World and Half of Palmyra

By Bonnie Walsh

Growing up in the '50s and '60s, my father's word was the law. My two older brothers and I carried out his orders, shared his opinion, or laughed at his jokes, whatever the occasion demanded. Innocently, I never questioned his reasoning when the radio reported some monumental event and Dad would authoritatively remark that it was being talked about in, "all the world and half of Palmyra." Seemed to make perfect sense to me. Not everyone in our village of a hundred souls, give or take, gathered at the same church, laboured at the same job or lived in the same sort of house. Although we shared the unique claim of living in the only "Palmyra" in Canada, we were all individuals. To my young mind it stood to reason that only half of 'our' population might have simultaneous concerns about anything! The rest of the world was on its own to sort things out as best they could. We were getting along just fine in Palmyra.

Thanks to the foresight of my great grandfather, who purchased the lot on old Talbot Road halfway between London and Windsor, I was the fourth generation of my family to call Palmyra home. The fourth generation to wander the mile long lane past fields of beans, and corn, grains and tobacco, through grassy pastures, to the bottom acres of maple bush topping cliffs overlooking Lake Erie. The fourth generation to relax in the shade of the magnificent oak trees Great Grandpa planted. The fourth generation to incubate in this small protected world. I was secure and comfortable with my identity in our village.

Picture two dozen homes lining the long straight mile of Talbot Road from farm to school. They sheltered the majority of the folks who mattered in my world. Dispersed among them, along the gravel shoulders of our street, you'd find a cemetery, ball diamond, two churches, and the iconic corner store with rusting gas pumps anchoring the side road to the lake. We memorized those details to accurately draw maps calculating the most profitable route for Halloween. We knew who bestowed us with chocolatey homemade fudge, who double dipped their apples in

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caramel, and where the biggest baseball sized gooey popcorn balls were ours for the picking. We avoided Mrs. Bailey, never forgiving her for callously dispensing over-ripe bananas.

“Trick or treat” we yelled, humbly yet with authority, to encourage a generous shell out. It was crucial for us to race between houses, complete our harvest of treats and head to the school where all gathered in disguise, to continue the celebration. Our population being so small, it was nearly impossible to avoid identification, although my high school aged brother managed this feat when he returned in the intriguing persona of a buxom, blonde, bombshell nurse. An accomplishment worthy of mention in the Palmyra news column. Winning best costume was a yearlong triumph.

The weekly column, submitted by Mrs. Burgess, our colourful corner store owner, affectionately known as Mummy B, provided a thrilling insight into the crucial news of our lives. Out-of-town visitors were revealed, harvest conditions lamented, and horrors of farm accidents recounted. Engagements, weddings and births were all permanently etched in black and white. Vital information about my world. How could I, as a six year old, help but react in wonder upon spotting my picture accompanied by an account of my first and only modelling gig. No matter that it took place in a church basement, my name had actually appeared in print! I became a celebrity in my own mind, if only for a week, when I was replaced by a cow birthing twin calves.

A victim of a tornado in the '40s, the crooked, leaning store welcomed us like an aging relative in need of a cane. And just as the elderly slip coins into children's eager hands, the store provided our first introduction to shopping. We sauntered to school, searching the weedy overgrown ditches, eyes peeled for a discarded pop bottle worth the two pennies required to choose a sucker, black balls or Bazooka bubble gum. No parental supervision required! Tradition required a young man entering marriage treat each school aged child to a 25 cent credit - anything we wanted! Shaking with anticipation we printed our name in Mummy B's tattered black ledger and, abracadabra, purchasing power was ours! Who cared when Mr. Burgess, who failed to earn an affectionate nickname, threateningly growled, “Chocolate ice cream will make your hair curly.” We were young and brave, and willing to take the risk. My mother frequently tortured me with home perms in a futile attempt to give me a Shirley Temple head of curls, so I gambled on chocolate ice cream being a much more pleasant route to beauty! Never mind that my mom didn't buy her cold cuts at the store, due to a well-founded suspicion that the resident dog licked the meat slicer, we always gave them our valuable business!

Our only school, S.S. #2 Orford, welcomed all students in those days. A stately red brick building with huge bell tower, it housed a large square class room with high tin ceiling. In the middle of the worn wooden floor, a huge round heating vent blasted so much hot air students sitting closest were subject to swooning in winter. The pungent smell of roasting wet wool socks and mittens hung in the air. The single room held 25 to 30 students in grades one to eight, but one



Mummy B's Store

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September the last minute arrival of eight kids from a single family sent shock waves up and down the lone teacher's spine. But making do was the norm, so senior students helped the middles with math and English, middles ran off lessons on the Gestetner machine and dictated spelling, and the little ones eagerly cleaned blackboards and handed out papers. We all towed the line. After all, though seldom used, the strap was still a motivational tool in those days.

The community revolved around our school and its importance was never forgotten. With no phone to contact parents, the huge bell acted as the teacher's smoke signal and when it rang outside of the official start time the nearest parent dropped everything, raced to the school and provided whatever assistance was needed. Its value has been ingrained in my memory since the blustery autumn day when the heavy entrance door blew shut on my hand.

"Help!" I wailed, "My hand's stuck." From inside came a matching scream.

"Help!" my friend Joan wailed, "Her hand's stuck and so's the door! Get the teacher!"

I was outside, but my fingertips were inside! After an agonizing minute that felt like hours, Mrs. Spence determinedly shouldered the door open while the bell rang with urgency and volume, drowning out my screams. George Bieber arrived on his John Deere from the adjoining field, then drove at 'tractor' speed to Mummy B's store, and called my mom. My arthritic fingers frequently remind me of the traumatic slam, but the communal effort to ease the pain makes it a semi fond memory. Oh yes, I also got the day off!

The huge bell also offered exciting entertainment and exercise possibilities. Housed behind an oversized door in the small library, the bell room featured a rope as thick as our arms, hanging from the bell tower high above. If picked to ring the bell we pulled down with all our might and thrilled when the rope yanked us up off our feet, swinging wildly like Jane or Tarzan. With the door held securely shut by a fellow ringer, we climbed the forbidden ladder leading to the storage loft above, grabbed the rope, rode even higher on the 'up' trip and displayed our bravery by releasing and dropping to the floor below. No need of gymnastic lessons back then.

Euchre and crokinole tournaments, community bridal showers, funeral lunches, the Halloween party, and the pinnacle of community gatherings, the Christmas concert, took place in our school. November found the desks pushed to the back of the classroom crowding us together like sardines. No one complained, knowing the space would soon be filled with a three foot high wooden stage to showcase the concert. Weeks were spent practising and making costumes, decorating and constructing props. On opening night...which coincided with closing night...the somewhat luxurious red curtain framed our performances. We sang, we acted, we recited, all with the inner knowledge that we were above criticism from parents or the community.

As with modelling, my stage career was short lived, but oh so memorable. Every student was included in the group sing and perhaps a non-speaking part in some small skit, but to be chosen



S. S. No. 2 Orford

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to solo, or in my case as half of a duet was a major coup. Now, I understood it was supposed to a comedy, but in my mind there was no reason my fabulously unique singing voice could not rise above simple humour and carry the audience to heights of adoration even as they rolled in the aisles in laughter. So there I am, dressed in my little red plaid kilt complete with suspenders, a crisp white blouse and my shiny black patent shoes. The curtain parts and like the Angels on high I begin singing, “Twinkle, twinkle little star.”



Class of '57 – '58

But the spot light had to be shared with Wayne Rumble.

Standing beside me, looking somewhat nifty in his pressed pants, white shirt and plaid bow tie, his voice blended with mine in perfect harmony, but out of his mouth came “Baa baa black sheep.”

“Stop it!” I yell, stomping my patent clad foot for emphasis. “You’re singing the wrong song!”

“You stop it!” he retorted with the best smirk he could muster.

I changed my tactic. “We’re supposed to be singing Twinkle, twinkle.” I remind him with sweetness dripping like honey.

“Not me,” he shot back, “I’m doing the sheep song.”

Back and forth we argued, each convinced of our rightful stand, each milking the lack of exact written dialogue to our own advantage, and throwing in some pushing and shoving to great effect. After sufficient laughter, out came Mrs. Spence.

“All right you two, that’s enough! You’ve embarrassed us all and Santa is watching you!”

The ultimate threat! She dragged us off as we sobbed dramatically. Such a demanding performance drained my artistic juices and I have little memory of the rest of the concert. Yes, of course Santa did make an appearance, but the smiles and applause of the audience was the best present we could possibly receive.

In spring when the smelt run was announced across party phone lines, we bundled up beside blazing bonfires, buckets in hand and rubber boots on feet to scoop up the tiny silver fish freely offered by the bone chilling water. Later we drooled like dogs begging at the table, impatient for the impossible freshness of those butter fried little swimmers. With any luck the deep fat fryer was spitting hot and erupting with French fries to complete the feast.

By the time I was old enough to experience the joys of living on the shores of a Great Lake, the old fishery at the bottom of the side road had been destroyed by fire with only the hulking cement shell remaining. Even better from a child's point of view, since abandoned buildings are surely a necessary element of a charmed childhood. Just imagine that relic sitting right on the beach at the base of the 100 foot clay cliffs looming over us! No Hollywood extravaganza could equal such a setting in majesty.

Reflections

Summer was an endless trip to our lake playground. We ran the beaches, climbed the craggy cliffs, hid in the rubble of the ice house, and searched the endless sand for rare treasures. Bottles and driftwood were easy finds, but one summer an amazing treasure in the form of a faded wooden rowboat washed ashore in our kingdom. Adrift in our combination pirate ship, diving dock and private getaway we shared silly secrets and naughty laughter. The rowboat had slipped its mooring and we slipped from our mother's watchful eye at every opportunity. We felt as free as the waves that crashed ashore on windy days.

In the deep of winter we climbed huge ice chunks thrust ashore by winds roaring unimpeded across the vast flatness of the frozen lake. No Disney World castle could outshine the glistening ice crystals that reflected the sun in every direction, and no plastic slide could provide a more thrilling ride than sailing down a sharply angled 'ice berg' on our backsides. Back on the farm we burrowed like rabbits in snow banks and deep in ditches. We followed wherever the snow led us. With skates slung over our shoulders, and shovels dragging behind us we tromped through pastures and fields to find the smoothest ice surface for a game of shinny or to practice our Olympic routines.

But with age comes aching nostalgia. I recognize those decades are long behind me and the world grows smaller on a daily basis. Computers rapidly squawk out what's happening on the other side of the world before I can pull out my dusty atlas to pinpoint where yesterday's news took place! Our rapidly shrinking world leaves me worried that dad's 'half of Palmyra' is down to a 'quarter'. Back then it was my world and plenty big at that. What more could a kid ask for than home, school, the corner store, a lake, and friends, all within a short walk.

Our 'street' still stretches the same mile from my now empty childhood home to the school. The same fertile fields run down to the lake and through colour and texture reveal the changing season before the calendar page turns. Although the store is gone, giant maple and oak trees throw their shade over the remaining original homes, and the proud school still stands surrounded by the tall pines of my youth. The steep rough road leading down to the old ice house has washed away, as has the last of our abandoned hideaway, but the waves still wash ashore in their unending rhythm and the cliffs hold watch over the beach. "Ah," you might say if you drove by, "What a lovely rural setting, wouldn't it be wonderful to live here." And you'd be right of course, but you just wouldn't know the right reasons. It would take "all the world and half of Palmyra" to tell you the whole story.



Born and raised in southwestern Ontario, I still carry the imprint of family farms on flat acres unfolding to the shores of Lake Erie. I am a mother, grandmother, reader, gardener and wanderer. Somewhere deep inside I hope there is a writer pecking at my sometimes crusty exterior attempting to get out and say hello to the world.



The Great High Heels Caper

By Carolyn Skelly

Once upon a 1961 day, my sister, Margaret invited me to go with her on the bus from our home in Queensville, Ontario, to Toronto, the big city, to visit the Art Gallery of Ontario to view the amazing work of Vincent Van Gogh. She had missed a school trip to the event because she had been ill. Our mother allowed her to go when she recovered, with me as company. Margaret was fifteen and a half years old and I was eleven. I was an aspiring lady and she was an almost-woman. She was allowed to wear her beautiful and substantial navy-blue high heel shoes to church. I was enthralled with high heels and had been for some time. I loved how they looked, how they felt, how they smelled and how they sounded on various hard surfaces. I had practiced wearing high heels often. I could walk with elegance and grace in them. I could dance and spin and run like the wind in shoes that lifted me up and shaped my calves in an alluring silhouette. They felt like keys to a world of love and the splendour of womanhood I could not wait to taste.

In fact, some time before the AGO event, which had presented itself like a gift to me, I had had a special dream. I dreamed I had a pair of the most magnificent high heels I had ever seen. They were made of a flowered, silky material, had a softly pointed toe and a respectable, slender heel. I felt amazed after some prayerful nights, when my mother, returned from a flea market with those exact shoes and gave them to me to play “dress up” with.

Margaret and I hatched a delicious, almost-woman plan for our trip to the art gallery. She would wear her navy high heels and I would smuggle my play shoes out of the house on the morning of our departure for Toronto. Our mother was very observant and I failed to find the ways and means to do the necessary smuggling until, in the last moments before we were to walk out the door, I exclaimed, “I need to go to the washroom!” I tried to rush up the stairs with my brown paper shopping bag. Our mother intercepted me declaring, “You don’t need to take that bag!” She relieved me of my smuggling tool and all looked hopeless. I was cast into a sinking gloom as my

dream of being big ladies, with Margaret, in the big city was snatched from me. I trudged to the bus stop in my penny loafers and ankle socks. Margaret knew my disappointment as no-one else would ever understand. She sat quietly in respectful sympathy beside me on the Grey Coach bus as the engine churned on and we readied ourselves for the departure for Toronto. With grace and simplicity, Margaret clicked her medium size purse open and there in an impossible position, within its interior lay my beautiful shoes. I doubt that I screamed, but perhaps squealed softly or merely gasped my pleasure, because my wonderful sister, who understood my heart, had given me one of the best moments in my young life. I can't remember if I changed my shoes there on the bus or waited until we got to the Bay Street terminal, or to the Art Gallery before making my transformation. I changed from pubescent girl to woman of the world, attending my first art show with sister-woman, light years away from childhood and thwarted dreams.

I remember those beautiful shoes as I clicked across the ancient marble floors of the art gallery, under the spell of Sunflowers, Starry Nights and peasant women toiling in golden fields. I remember having coffee in the Blue Bird Cafe, which I believe was somewhere near St. Michael's Hospital where our father had died almost a decade before. I was confident that the stares I received as I walked down the streets of Toronto in my high heel shoes consisted of admiration. I drank it in like the strong and fragrant dark liquid in my coffee cup, which I had doctored with much sugar and cream.

I was filled with pride in my aspiring woman-self which I treasure to this day. I am also filled with pleasure for memories about dreams of high heels which came true and the power of love from a sister who is intimately connected to my own dreams and who elegantly granted an underling her secret wish, to be more like the almost-woman she, herself was becoming.

I remember loving high heel shoes even though that love itself is gone. I love the recalling and retelling of this memory as the intermittent occasions arise. I am grateful for all the blessed and magical elements of my life which made this story possible. Thank you for hearing me.



Heading off to the bus stop in my penny loafers and ankle socks.



Remembering the love of my older sister, Margaret

Reflections

P.S. Margaret and I exchanged our written recollections of this event as we visited the Art Gallery of Ontario, 47 years later. We both wore high heels.



I am the mother of one son, Kanja and grandmother to Isaac (11), Aaron (8) and Lilly (4).

I am a retired professor from George Brown College. I taught for 9 years in the Assaulted Women's and Children's Counsellor/Advocate Programme and the rest of my career teaching in two Mental Health programmes (teaching Expressive Arts, Stress Management, Goal Setting and Problem Solving etc.) In my retirement I am a practitioner of Reiki (Level III) and have designed and teach a course: Taming the Inner Critic



The Queensville Property

By Carolyn Skelly

Can a place be more than a place? A house, more than a home? Two and a half acres of land with a stone house, a garage with attached chicken coop, a barn and an apple, pear and plum tree orchard was the home of my formative years, age 5 to 12. It held me and my family: my widowed mother and her six children, known by many as “Tillie’s Kiddies”. The property formed us, shaped us: raised us up and laid us low.

Nestled along a tree-lined street which later was widened and known as Leslie Street, between Newmarket and Keswick, our house was a beautiful grey stone home with an L-shaped stone porch at the front and a roof shaped like a Dutch girl’s hat. There were two places where beautiful purple glass? Amethyst? was embedded: one on the second floor under a bedroom window and one on the first floor, both at the back of the house.

We moved from North Toronto where my father had built houses, including ours on Bedford Park Avenue. He died in December 1953. My mother decided to move us to the country, a village of 100, where her children could run free, where we could grow our own food and wear less expensive “country” clothes. It was a life



Our beautiful elm tree

my mother's own childhood had prepared her for.

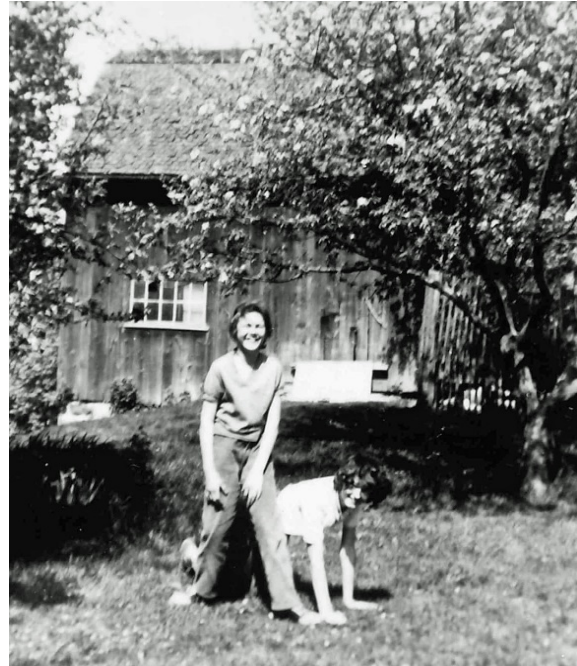
The house held our family life, the smells of baking bread, the hearty taste of hamburger stew we called hash cooked on the wood stove in the kitchen, the sound of music on the radio. It was the outdoors that held most of the magic of childhood for me. From the backdoor of the house along a cocoa soft dirt path to the barn was a lane bordered by apple trees. In spring it was a fragrant hallway of blossoms which would shower us with petals when the breezes were high. In winter these same trees were transformed to a crystal palace following an ice storm. This laneway was where I learned to ride a bike. It is where I would race from the ancient Elm tree (which was so large it could only be encircled by multiple children holding hands around it), down the laneway and up the slight incline to the majestic barn.

Our barn was a presence, a noble old woman watching over our diminutive farm. The large front door on a wheel system was rarely open, or when it was open, rarely closed. Open in the summer, closed in the winter. When closed we would enter by a much smaller door cut into the giant one. Once inside, it was the silence and cathedral space which inspired me with awe. The dark, cool interior was cut with shards of light through each barn board wall. The light was alive with swirling dust motes. The smells were of hay, burlap sacking and the faint odour of long gone livestock. I could hear the low "pock pock" of Bantam chickens in the adjacent coop.

Through the back door we would sit and enjoy the panorama of farm fields and woodland in the distance. It was out this back hay door where we experienced a very unusual event. One night some of my siblings and a couple of neighbour kids and I decided to sleep overnight in the barn. After a mostly sleepless night we got up to watch out the back hay door the sun rise. As the sun slowly appeared over the irregular horizon we noticed large pastel coloured circles of light, like huge balloons, in the morning sky. They were as large as the sun and we all saw the same thing. We tried to figure out what they were. Closing one eye and then the other, I tested my sight. They were still there. My oldest sister, Doreen decided, "We are having a mass hallucination."

We tested to see if we were seeing exactly the same thing. "Do you see the pink one right under the sun?" I asked. "Yes," everyone either said or nodded. "What colour is to the right of the pink one?" my brother Greg asked. "Blue," was the unanimous answer. "What is under the blue one?" someone asked. Yep, we all saw yellow. We spent a great deal of time trying to figure out what we were seeing. Was it the afterglow of staring at the rising sun? Was it an optical illusion created by the new born sun? We never figured it out but it was one of the unusual experiences we shared as children on this property, this time in that monumental barn.

The basement of the barn was an entirely different place. Built of fieldstone and cement, the low-ceilinged basement was divided into pens and stalls with a scent of a damp coolness, rock



My sisters Mary Catherine and Margaret playing in front of our magnificent barn

Reflections

and lye whitewash. Barn swallows dipped in and out of the top half of the Dutch doors. They swooped and glided with their spiked tails scratching the air.

It is where our dog, Susie, a Border Collie, had her litter of pups. Our mother laid bales of straw knee high in that cold barn basement and brought pans of steaming porridge to the fast growing and hearty pups. The smell of those puppies is the scent that has stayed with me the longest. It has haunted that space and my memories, so far forever.

To the north of our property was a cattle farm owned by a family called the Duragons. One of their fields bordered our own. I loved animals and found myself making friends with a calf. He was brown and white and I felt privileged to be able to pet him and spend time with him in his pasture. Over time he got bigger. We continued on friendly terms until one day. I was in his pasture, by the wooden fence that separated the Duragon's field from ours. I was petting the calf and talking to him when he lowered his head and pressed it against my stomach, pinning me against the fence. The power of that gesture filled me with fear. He pushed gently and then raised his head and looked at me. A moment later I found myself on our side of the fence (which was shoulder height for me).

I never went into that field with him again. It was at that moment that I fully realized that he was no longer a calf friend. He was a bull.

Sometime after that, I was in class at Queensville Public School (which bordered our property on the south side), when a child came and excitedly told me, "Your mom is being chased by a bull!" I ran to a window and saw the bull that was once my friend, moving with purpose around an apple tree in front of the barn where we had hung our Uncle Tom Skelly's Navy hammock. With each toss of his head the hammock became ripped and torn. My brother, Greg told me recently he had seen our mother and the bull on the driveway in front of our house and that the bull had indeed gone after her. She had had to run onto our front porch to escape from my one time friend.

There was a horse riding facility some miles away that my sister, Doreen had researched. We could not afford a horse of our own but this facility would board out their horses in the off-season to anyone who could care for and feed them. My sister made the arrangements and at the end of one season travelled to the horse-riding place to select the horse who would come to our little farm. I went with Doreen. I remember the excitement but also the torture of being hurried along a country road afterwards to get to the highway where we would get the bus back home. It was more than I could do and at times Doreen hoisted me up on her back and ran with me until she had to set me down and I had to try to run-walk again.

When Skip arrived, by horse trailer, soon after, we all loved her. She was a middle-size horse, a brown, black and white pinto. It completed our farm to have this wonderful animal share our space for the time we had her. Although, I did not see it happen, our mother once got on Skip's back and someone took her picture. Our Uncle Ed from Detroit also had a ride. We rode bareback.



Me and our dear dog, Susie

Reflections

We had no saddle. Our habit was to wander the countryside and climb on any horse we came across in the fields, always bareback, usually without a halter.

The ride that sticks in my mind is when I rode Skip to the bottom of our field and when she turned towards the barn she bolted for that half door that was thankfully fully open. The speed of her gallop and my shock and inexperience did not prepare me for her running right through those doors and into the basement of the barn. I barely ducked my head down in time as we exploded into the dark interior from the bright outside.

Our mother loved our Skip. She would come to the pasture behind our barn that had been fenced off, with a carrot in her apron pocket. She would call to Skip as she came down beside the barn and Skip would whinny her reply. Skip would walk up to mom and would gently nose into that wide apron pocket, deftly remove the carrot and happily munch her treat. I have both sweet and painful memories of Skip. I mostly feel the pangs which I believe Skip felt when she returned to the riding facility and we never saw her again. My hope is that my mother who has been gone for almost twenty years now has enjoyed some happy reunions in a corner of heaven which is an exact recreation of our little farm where a pinto friend, Skip greets her and they enjoy a summer day and a carrot together again.



Our mother on Skip



A Sister for all Seasons, a Friend for Life

By Eva Hegedus

I have written about my father and mother and their daring escape from Hungary with the three of us. I've written about Frank being my escort at my rather disastrous debutante ball. I've never talked about my sister Mary. She is 75 now but could pass for 50. Her perfect teeth enhance her beautiful smile. Since we were both in our twenties, people who saw us side by side took her to be the younger one. I'm actually six years younger than her.

She has been a babysitter, guardian, second mother, mentor, defender, supporter and best friend to me. I can't imagine who I would be without her. Mary is too modest to believe she did anything special. She's wrong about that. I'm here to tell the story of how a very needy, insecure girl named Eva attached herself to her kind, nurturing sister and never let go.

I tease Mary about the time she almost abandoned me. It was one time in Burlington when she was 10 and I was 4. She wanted to go to join Mom and Dad at the movies and was stuck babysitting me for the umpteenth time. She turned to me and said, "Stay here Eva, and play with your doll. I'll put the radio on for you. I'm going to the movies." Then she walked out of the house, got her bike and walked it past the bedroom window. She heard a pitiful sound coming from inside the house and glanced inside. There I was cross-legged on the bed. I was rocking back and forth with my arms wrapped around myself. Between sobs I called out, over and over again, "Mary, don't leave me, Mary, don't leave me!" Mary saw how terrified and I was. She came back and hugged me, stayed with me.

If, two years later, my Grade 1 teacher at Lakeshore Public School had asked each of us to speak about a family member that we admire, I would have picked Mary and said, "I'm Eva. I'm six. Mary's my big sister. She is twelve. She's is the best sister ever. She can draw Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck without even tracing from a coloring book. She can paint real paintings with artist brushes. When I draw our cat, she tells me 'that's excellent Eva' but I know my drawing's nothing like her drawings.

Reflections

When we're not drawing or painting, we go down to the creek at the bottom of our garden and sail paper boats or catch tadpoles in a jar. We keep the tadpoles for a week and watch them change. Then we put them back in the creek. We hear their "ribbit, ribbit" from the porch once they've changed into frogs.

Best of all, on Saturdays Mary and I go to the Roxy for the matinee. You get to see a western, a Disney movie or a song and dance movie. After that, they play a short episode from a serial. Lately the serial is Superman. At the end of his fight with a bad guy they don't show you if Superman is safe or if the bad guy got clobbered. You have to come back the next Saturday to find out.

We also play with the tabby kittens that the mommy cat left in the garage. We had to find a way to feed them so we taught them to drink milk from a doll's bottle. Now they know how to lie on their backs and hold the bottle in all four paws and drink from it. It's a riot to watch but we have to watch out for the Tom cat. He might kill them.

My big brother Frank is 14. He twists my arm or pinches me or calls me "sissy" until I start crying. If Mom and Dad are gone working, I run to Mary and she tells Frank, "Knock it off, Frank, Eva's half your size!"

Mary gets stuck babysitting me a lot. But she just puts me in the big wire basket on the front of her two-wheeler and off we go to her friend's house. The friend usually says, "Your baby sister is so cute."

Maybe she doesn't always think I'm cute but she still takes me with her. I know I make her laugh."

Once we moved from Burlington to Toronto in 1953, we didn't spend as much time as a family because Dad was very busy with his new job making films at the CBC. We didn't have as many picnics and barbecues in the yard. We didn't watch thunderstorms from our front porch. Dad didn't sing and play the piano like he used to. He had his larynx removed in Burlington after an operation for cancer. He could talk but he sounded like a motor boat.

Frank went off to high school when I started grade two at Balmy Beach Public School.

Then, on August 1, 1956, Dad died in the hospital of a heart attack. Mother had to go to work. She left the house early in the morning and came home after 6 p.m. I walked to school by myself and came home to an empty house.



Eva, age 4, is the little girl in the middle. Her sister Mary is directly behind her. They are in the lineup for a Saturday matinee at the Roxy cinema.

Reflections

I couldn't deal with not seeing Dad coming through the front door. As soon as he saw me he used to pick me up and give me a big kiss.

After his death, I felt like the sun had gone out of the sky.

To make things worse, I began to go through the first stages of puberty. I hated every single change to my body. My legs kept getting longer. My hair got frizzier; it looked like the tumbleweed you would see in the desert. I felt like I didn't fit in anywhere. I was this weird hybrid creature.

I wanted to hide any time a visitor came to our house. I didn't want to make up conversation because I had no idea what to say.

Then, when I was 11, I came across a box of sanitary pads in my mom's closet. I had no idea what they were. I brought a pad to mom and asked, "Do you use this for the boils under your arm?" She said, "No dear, they are for my monthly bleeding. When you're 12 or 13 you'll be using them too." I looked bewildered and my face turned red. She saw my discomfort and said, "I think you should speak to your sister. She knows the right English words."

I did as she suggested because I always found it much easier to talk with Mary.

She calmly suggested we go and look for a book at the public library. We found a book with drawings of partial torsos labeling different parts of the anatomy. I was never sure what I was looking at. Even with Mary's patient explanations, I was convinced, for at least another two years that a baby was 'born' through the mother's belly button. Mary saw I wasn't ready to hear all the details of how a man and woman started a baby in the first place.

From that time on, I recognized and accepted that I had two mothers who complimented each other. What 'Mother' gave us was order, discipline, food on the table, clothes on our back and a clean home. She was strong in a crisis; sized up what needed to be done and did it. Later, when I was married and couldn't pay for car repairs or my daughter needed braces, she would ask how much I needed and make out a cheque.

Mother lacked the tools to empathetically share feelings. She also lacked the patience to listen to me blab on about my day at school. She was not a "warm and fuzzy" person and she didn't hand out a lot of compliments.

So I would share my stories with Mary. She congratulated me when I got a good mark on a project. She comforted me if a boy said something mean and I cried. She understood why I hated to read in front of the class because she had always felt the same way. She also coached me to not get too upset if I asked to go somewhere and mother said no. She told me to be patient and mother would usually let me go.

She just accepted me as I was and sometimes gave suggestions.



Eva, 5 with Mary, 11 in the kitchen of their Burlington home.

Reflections

Through my high school years and beyond, she included me in her life in a many different ways. She invited me along on outings with friends. She took me to art shows, galleries, live theatre and movies. I was included on a trip to New York with friends.

Mary opened my eyes to all there is to experience in the way of art and music. She put on LP's of comedy teams like Nichols and May, Bob and Ray, and the wonderful songs of Flanders and Swann. Maybe that's why we have an almost identical sense of humor today and find the same jokes funny.

I loved my mother but realized as a teenager that she was not someone I could ever live with. Fortunately, I never had to live with her because I got married, moved to Milton and had my own family.

Mary got married but was not able to have children. She and Bill had their own apartment on the second floor of mother's house in the Beach. The rent they paid mother was reasonable. They took trips. They both painted and displayed their work at art shows.

Soon, however, mother and Mary were locking horns. Mother could be impatient, demanding, and critical. She constantly criticized Mary for not doing some task, like mowing the lawn, the exact way it 'should' be done. She would literally run out of the house like a banshee and go after Mary and say, "No, do it the way I showed you. You have to mow in straight line and then come back and overlap the first row!"

She was diagnosed with dementia in her late 70's or early 80's and was impossible to deal with after that. Mary took care of her for several years at home and I came and helped a little bit on the weekend when I wasn't working.

More than ten years have passed since mother's death in 2007. It's easier now to laugh at some of the strange things she did. One summer she took a pair of pinking shears and cut down the sunflowers in a neighbor's front garden. She never apologized to the neighbor except to say, "They are ugly and they multiply fast."

She sometimes substituted her own expression for an English word. Such was the case when Mary chose a prom dress that had sequins sewn into the fabric. The glittery sequins would fall off and mother would find them everywhere. She exclaimed to Mary, "Jitters, jitters everywhere."

Now, when Mary and I talk on the phone, we'll use a "motherism" like "stay foot" (instead of stay put) or "let's gets go" (instead of "let's get going").

Mary and I, for the past six decades, have had a few "jitters" and many, many "glitters".

Mary was my maid of honor in 1972. I was her maid of honor when she married Bill. Just three years ago, I was proud to be her maid of honor again. After Bill died in 2004, she began dating a man she knew from her art college days. I was thrilled that romance had come back into her life. But that was just one happy day among thousands of happy memories we share.

Our fears are what I'd call the "jitters" but it's just too depressing to go through that list. It's probably not too different from yours, especially if you're 70 or older.

Mary and I remind ourselves that getting too stressed will do nothing to change what's coming.



Mary, on the day of her second marriage in 2013. She is 72 years young.

Reflections

We try to appreciate the simple joys like a warm fall day in November or the sound of a sister's friendly and familiar 'hello' at the other end of the phone.



The Cserepy family came ashore at Pier 21 in Halifax in July of 1949, leaving war torn Hungary behind them. Of those five people, only Eva and Mary remain. Now in their seventies, Eva felt this was the right moment to write about the close bond that formed between them and has lasted to the present day.

Eva wishes to thank Joan for her excellent guidance and mentoring over the past five years in Lifescapes.



A Memoir of My Sister Loretta Stephanie Santone Vakalis

By Maryann Barrow

The phone was ringing! I remember it well. It was a Thursday afternoon. My husband Jim was golfing with his buddies. Debbie, our 15 month old, was down for a nap and I was racing to silence that talking machine before it woke her. I caught it on the third ring. “Hello,” I huffed.

“Hi Mare!” my younger sister Loretta exclaimed from her dorm at the School for Nursing in Sault Ste Marie. It was great to hear her voice so we chit chatted away for a few moments before she landed the bomb. I was stunned. My heart was pounding faster than a race horse. How are we going to explain this to my parents? My mind exploded with made up stories. How do we do this? My mother was a devout Catholic and my father was the Reeve of our small town of Crowland. So you can imagine how absolutely numb I was when Loretta shyly announced that she was pregnant and that the father of her unborn baby left town the moment he found out. She was devastated as she thought he was her one and only and besides that she hadn’t finished her nursing degree. Oh man they’re going to kill her, I thought. How can I save her? The only option I could come up with was abortion. So I told Loretta that as soon as Jim came home I would ask him if he could find anyone who would perform such an operation. Boy in that instant I realized how quickly I allowed myself to



*Loretta (left) & her favourite cousin,
Meta*

Reflections

give up all my apostolic beliefs in fear of disappointing my parents and avoiding their wrath. However, when Jim arrived home and I explained Loretta's predicament and my halfhearted solution he helped me to sort it all out.

"An abortion!" he retorted. "Do you really think you and Loretta could handle that guilt with the way you two were raised? How about we do this?" he suggested. "We'll drive to your parents' house in Welland and take Loretta with us. We'll be stronger in numbers. Then we can explain this whole thing to them. You won't have to worry. I'll be with you the entire time." I don't think I was ever so grateful and proud of Jim for realigning me with my beliefs and taking care of a situation that really threw me into great despair (Mind you Loretta and I were still very anxious. ...Loretta of course more so as her whole life was about to change.)

A week later, off we went. All three of us were still concerned. You see, cancer had stricken my older sister Donna and she had passed away only a little over a year ago. My Mom and Dad were still very fragile and hadn't actually recovered from the trauma as yet. If they ever would. Donna was their pride and joy. Losing her was unfathomable. We drove to Welland mostly in silence. Of course Mom and Dad were happy to see us, although they seemed to sense that something was up. The longer we tried to make small talk the more tense it got... so finally I just blurted it out and announced, "Loretta is pregnant."

"Oh Maryann, don't tease like that," exclaimed my mom. She thought I was joking but as she glanced over at my sister, Loretta assured her it was true. I can hardly remember what was said for the next while except for some crying and the struggle to make some sense of it all for my devastated parents. And all this time my poor sister was as quiet as a mouse. I couldn't tell what was going on in her head except that she looked like a lost soul. First of all, the man whom she thought truly loved her as she loved him picked up and left her in this predicament. Just weeks ago she truly believed they would marry, but now she would lose her baby as well. It was decided by my parents that Loretta would live with us during her pregnancy and the child would be put up for adoption. Then she would return to school the following year to complete her nursing degree. And just like that it was decided.

So that was that! And off we went to start a new life. I hadn't told Loretta or my parents yet that I too was pregnant. I had mixed feelings of guilt and excitement. This would be our second child Angela Stephanie. Days later Jim told me that my dad spoke to him in private and related a story to him. Dad said that one of his "Paisano's," Frank, had recently confided in him. He said Frank's daughter became pregnant and ran off with a married man. My father told him that he would rather have a pregnant daughter than a dead one. "Well," said my dad, "I guess it's time to honour those words and put my money where my mouth is." So Loretta came home with us and it was exciting for us to have her. However that didn't last very long. My mom called only days later to say she and my aunt were coming to pick up Loretta and take her to my cousin Mary-Jo's in Sarnia. It seemed that things were closing in. Oakville was too close to Welland. It was just too risky! Too many people from that area were acquainted with our town so off she would go to Sarnia. I was heartbroken but there was nothing I could do. I did see the advantages. Mary-Jo was a registered nurse and more likely able to help Loretta in her studies and Loretta would be a help to MJ as she had a 2-year old boy and a 3-month old of the same sex. Loretta loved children and



*Loretta (left) & siblings
Michael, Maryann &
Donna*

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she and Mary-Jo spent five of the most memorable months of their lives together. As it all happened Loretta gave birth to a baby girl on Dec 6, 1971. She named her Donna Marie after our deceased sister. She was not allowed to see her child but left the hospital after 2 days and was assured the baby was well.

I gave birth to Angela Stephanie on Jan 6, 1972. Cousins exactly a month apart. Loretta went on to finish her nursing degree and got a job at Toronto General in obstetrics. She met her husband Michael there and was married several years later. Sadly they couldn't have children. But as fate would have it they adopted a baby girl. (Strange isn't it ...give one child away and take one back.) They named this child Donna Marie as well. It was truly wonderful to see Loretta really happy at last. She and Michael exposed Donna to anything and everything they possibly could. Donna excelled at almost everything: academics, swimming, running, skateboarding, horseback riding and many others. Also with Michael being Greek he taught her about Greek Mythology and the pentathlon. So it was only natural that Donna decided to become a pentathlete. It was too bad that Loretta never got to witness her daughter's success.

Years went by and Loretta continued to work at Erin Mills Hospital as well as mother and wife. She also loved dogs, especially Candy, their Great Dane who was ready to deliver any minute. She called and asked if I wanted to watch the pups being born. By the time I got there two pups were already born but I got to witness Loretta helping Candy deliver six more. It was amazing to see how she handled that situation with such grace and ease. Yes, she was the medic in the family alright. I stuck with teaching.

Happy as she was, Loretta kept complaining about the pain in the back of her right leg. After many X-rays, ultra sounds and cat scans, they finally found the culprit that was aggravating her for the past while. It was a lump behind her knee. So they decided to operate with intentions of removing it. That happened in 1998. The Doctor said the operation was a success. We celebrated! However three weeks later Loretta called me at work. I was working part time at the Harrop Art Gallery and restaurant in Milton. I was told, by the owner and friend of mine, Hedi, that Loretta and Mike called but since I was busy Hedi told them to drop by on their way past to visit me. I should be free by then she told them. "Hedi," I said, "that was so thoughtful of you." Little did I know that Loretta, Mike and Hedi were keeping a secret from me. Hedi thought it best that we all go back to my house to chat...which is where Loretta dropped the second bomb on me. They told me that the doctor who performed the surgery on her leg called to apologize. He said that during the operation he removed what he thought to be a schwannoma. However since it was attached to the sciatic nerve he decided to cut the tumour and not disturb the nerve. Three weeks after the op he discovered that the lump was not a schwannoma. It was a sarcoma (a deadly cancer) which is not operable. So she was given one other option. They could amputate the left leg in hopes that the tumour hadn't metastasized to the other organs of her body. Loretta didn't have to think long before she made her decision. She wanted to live. It was a go for the amputation. No doubt in her mind. She was a pillar...I was a wreck. At least on the outside, I tried to show bravery. I just hoped she didn't see through me.



*Loretta's Nursing
graduation photo*

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The amputation was successful and she was home in five days. One day she said, ‘Mare, please scratch my foot. It's so itchy.’ So I scratched her right foot. “No not that one” she yelled, “the other one.” I couldn't find it. She laughed. She learned to get along with the help of crutches and a wheel chair. She was even able to go to a cousin's wedding in Toronto and be with the whole family. Alas, the good times slowed down. She was weakening and in so much more pain but I never saw anyone so positive. She needed more help...not only medically but physically and emotionally. Loretta had worked at Credit Valley Hospital for a good many years and her array of friends was numerous. Many of her cohorts pitched in and we drove her to appointment after appointment for the next year or so.

It wasn't until we spoke with the specialists at Toronto General that I realized how critical it was. I'll never forget the specialist asking to see Loretta's back as she sat gowned on a gurney. He examined the blue spots spread all over her skin then called in another specialist to confirm what he already knew. Not hiding anything he openly discussed with Loretta and I how this would progress in the next few months. Loretta was so strong, seeming to take it all in her stride. Her strength held up the rest of us. Believe me, I only kept going because of her strength.

Before you knew it she was in the cancer hospital in Hamilton. Her days were numbered. The doctor told her husband Michael to go out and buy a plot. It was all happening so quickly. But Loretta rallied. She told me her husband, “Mike the Greek” as we lovingly called him, had always wanted to have a “Greek Wedding” so from her hospital bed, she made the arrangements to have the Greek Priest come to marry them later the next evening, right there in the hospital chapel down the hall. She asked if I would stop by her house the next day to pick out a dress from her closet to wear for the wedding. I didn't tell her that Mike had already asked me to accompany him to the funeral parlour to make arrangements. He confessed he was not doing too well. I could see why! I was befuddled! I couldn't make heads nor tails of it. A wedding or a funeral? A wedding and a funeral? It was like an out of body experience. I knew I was on earth but my feet weren't really on the ground.

The next day when Mike and I finally got to the hospital, Loretta remarked, “Where were you guys? What took you so long to get my dress?” But before I could come up with an answer my brother Michael and his wife Donna appeared at her bedside (yes another Michael and another Donna in our family.) They had driven in from Virginia just in time to distract Loretta's questions. And before anyone knew it, there were twenty-five people in to visit her that evening. None of them realized they were coming to a wedding. But everybody pitched in. There was one to help do Loretta's



The Greek wedding in the hospital chapel

hair, another to make a wedding bouquet, another to help her put on her dress and makeup and

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someone to order pizza and pop for the after the wedding celebration. Loretta was enjoying every moment of all this attention. I couldn't help but feel pangs of hope... Maybe she will be OK after all. Her room was filling up so quickly we had to send everyone off to the chapel to fill it with chairs for the wedding service.

They couldn't believe what was happening. They came to see a dying lady and what happens, they're celebrating a Greek Wedding. There were twenty five people in all that night. None of them knew anything about the wedding. They just came to visit bearing gifts of flowers and blessings. No one could believe how well she looked. The nurses put her in a wheelchair and removed the oxygen tank and mask saying she could do without it till after the service. She looked adorable with a crown of pink roses on her head and a bouquet of the same in her hand that my sister-in-law Donna had made for her. She was beaming as Michael pushed her up the aisle. There wasn't a dry eye in the room. Everyone gathered in the visitor's room at the end of the hall for pizza and pop. Loretta opted to stay in her room. I guess the adrenaline was running low but she was a happy camper. Nothing could wipe the smile off her face. In fact, if she was feeling good enough, tomorrow she could go home. And so she did! For two days.

Then she was taken to St Jo's Hospital in Burlington where I spent every second or third day because now my mom was ill and I was traveling back and forth to Welland. Mom passed in October of 2000 and Loretta left us a month later in November of that same year. We stayed with her all evening and night until her soul left her body. I have never experienced a death like that before or since.

After she drew her last breath, the nurse asked us to leave so she could clean her up and only after 10 minutes we were allowed back in the room. I can't even describe how wonderful it was to sit in the same room as Loretta's body. The peace was overwhelming. One could almost see the winged spirits gracefully embracing her in their feathered arms. Even to this day that is how I picture my sister Loretta ... surrounded by her angels. I know she is now forever at peace.



After the wedding. Notice only one leg.



Maryann Barrow is a Welland native and primary school teacher by profession. She married Jim Barrow, a chiropractor and moved to Milton. Together, along with their four children, they owned and operated Barrow Orchards, a pick your own apple farm in Halton Hills.



My Life With Politics

By Jim Fergusson

I've always been fascinated by elections. The first one I was aware of was the Quebec provincial election on July 16, 1952. I was 10 years old and had just finished Grade 5. My parents didn't like the Union Nationale government of Premier Maurice Duplessis, so naturally I favoured the Liberal candidate in our riding, Miles Tillotson. My Dad had met him personally, so that helped too. But, the Union Nationale candidate, Alister Somerville, won. He was from our village, and advertised himself as "the man from the county."

The next election I followed was the US presidential election of 1952. General Eisenhower was running for the Republicans, and everyone had heard of him. He beat Senator Robert Taft in the primaries, and won the nomination at the convention. I found the conventions very exciting, as each state's presentation of its vote during the roll call would be something like, "The great state of --- casts x votes for ----." In the election campaign itself, Eisenhower promised, "I will go to Korea." The Korean War had already lasted for two years, and everyone in both Canada and the United States was eager for it to end. Eisenhower did win, he did go to Korea, and an armistice was signed in July 1953.

August 10, 1953 marked the first federal election I was aware of. The federal government was important to me because I had often heard of Prime Minister Mackenzie King on the news when I was little, and since then, the names of numerous federal cabinet ministers. The Liberals under Prime Minister St-Laurent, King's successor, were re-elected with a reduced majority. I pored over the results in the paper. There were 100 candidates for the Communist Party, led by Tim Buck. Although none were elected, that was scary! Even scarier were the names of the leaders of two parties who did have some candidates elected – M. J. Coldwell of the CCF, and Solon Low of the Social Credit. I was a stamp collector, and stamps from (communist) Russia – actually, the Soviet Union – had the initials "CCCP" on them. So I thought the CCF must be very close to Communists, and their leader must be a very cold man. "Social Credit" sounded like socialism, which I knew was like Communism, and anyone with the strange name "Solon" must be pretty scary. I was thankful these parties hadn't elected many members, and yet intrigued that

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they existed. I had no idea then how they started or what they really stood for, but I knew that Russia and Communism were bad and so these parties must be bad too!

The next exciting election for me was the federal election of 1957. John Diefenbaker had been chosen as leader of the Conservatives the year before, and his party was elected to form a minority government. This was all brand new in my experience – the Liberals had run Canada all my life, and I'd never even heard of a minority government before. During my Grade 10 class trip to Ottawa a few weeks before the election call, I had seen Diefenbaker when we visited the House of Commons. He was a fiery orator, and everyone was talking about him. So this election promised a lot of change in Canada, until the next election in 1958 when he led the Conservatives to the largest majority ever in Canadian federal politics up to that time. He never seemed to accomplish very much after that, was reduced to a minority in the 1962 election, and was finally defeated in 1963.

I didn't follow politics very closely after 1958 for a number of years. The defeat of the Union Nationale in 1960 was gratifying. The Cuban missile crisis, the subsequent assassination of President Kennedy, and then the ousting of Krushchev in the Soviet Union were all dramatic world events that fanned the desire for change in me and many young people. But I was busy going to university, working to find a satisfying career while earning and spending money after I graduated, and then getting married. My Dad had emphasized the importance of voting when I was growing up, though – he impressed on me that many people had died in wars and conflicts so we could have the right to vote. I cast my first vote on April 8, 1963 -15 days after my 21st birthday. I came off a night shift at work, went to vote, and then went home to bed. In those days you had to be 21 to vote, and I voted for the Liberal who was a first-time candidate in the riding where I lived in Montreal - John Turner. The Liberals won a minority government under their leader, Lester Pearson.

My wife Joan and I were married on June 5, 1965, and in September we went to Vancouver for the weekend. We flew standby, since I worked for Air Canada and had a free pass that was only good on standby. Joan worked for Canadian Pacific, which allowed us to switch in Calgary to the train through the Rockies, on half-fare. As soon as we got off the train in Vancouver, we took a cab to the airport to wait for a flight out. We found they had rooms you could rent by the hour, so we settled into one when we found there was no flight for several hours. Only public washrooms were available, so I headed down the hall in my sock feet with my shirt-tail hanging out. On the way, I passed a man who looked familiar. I looked at him, and he looked at me, both with curiosity. Only then did I realize – he was John Diefenbaker!

In 1967, centennial year, my interest in politics began to widen. Diefenbaker had been ousted as leader of his party, which held a leadership convention that fall. He was one of the candidates, so interest was high – including mine. Robert Stanfield was chosen to replace him after a number of dramatic ballots. At the time, we were driving from a visit with Joan's family in Nova Scotia to our new home in Cleveland Ohio, where I was going to start in a doctoral program. In December, Prime Minister Pearson announced he'd be stepping down, and a leadership convention was held in April 1968. A rookie Montreal cabinet minister, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, soon became the favourite because of his strong and dramatic stances on Canadian unity. He won the convention and immediately called an election for the end of June, which he won handily.

Meanwhile, I was being thrust into the conflicts American students were precipitating concerning the Vietnam War. I had regarded this war as simply one more valid step in the struggle to defeat worldwide Communism. But with so many students risking and opposing being drafted

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while I as a Canadian was Scot-free, I began to reconsider my views. Then came President Johnson's dramatic announcement at the end of March 1968 that he wouldn't run for re-election, but would instead work toward ending the war. Martin Luther King was assassinated a few days later, and Bobby Kennedy a couple of months after that. The riots at the Democratic convention in August were spellbinding. The election of Richard Nixon, whom I knew of from the Eisenhower years, capped off that dramatic year and left me focused on what might happen next.

The events of the Nixon years gradually led me into considering a career in government and politics. Nixon widened the war into Cambodia in 1970, and in the protests that followed 4 students were shot and killed by the National Guard at a nearby university. That turned me decisively against both Nixon and the war, and I drove to Ottawa to register my protest with our own government. I met with the MP from my home town, and through former classmates I also got to meet with a man in the Privy Council Office who was an associate of the Prime Minister. The environment was also becoming a key issue in those days, and we now had a little girl for whom I wanted to help make the world safe. In 1972 I had a number of interviews, including some in Ottawa. I met with the Deputy Minister of the new Department of the Environment, and sought the advice of the man I had met in 1970 in the Privy Council Office. The result was I started a one-year research contract with the Ministry of State for Urban Affairs at the beginning of August 1973, and passed the final exam for my doctorate on August 9, 1974 – the day President Nixon left office.

I had gradually started developing a grudging respect for Richard Nixon, even though I hated most of what he had done. He had risen from nothing to the height of world politics, and had changed the world through his openings to China and Russia. Maybe I could do the same, but properly? Maybe I would learn about government, go into politics, and try to become the prime minister of Canada. I needed to help save the world from the environmental disaster which increasingly seemed to be looming in the future.

There were delays in the renewing of my research contract, so I took a job in a management consulting bureau within the federal public service which advised on internal government operations. I needed to feed my family, which now included two daughters, and couldn't afford the risk of further delay. The next few years were tough. I didn't see much progress toward saving the world, either personally or politically, and the more I learned about government, the less idealistic I became. I resisted going back to see the man in the Privy Council Office – I wanted to make it on my own. I began to wonder if I'd thrown away my opportunity to become a professor for a pipe dream.

A funny thing happened to me in 1978. I began to believe in God again. I had rejected the idea of His existence in university, after trying to be a "real Christian" and failing. I experienced a dramatic overnight turnaround, and began to feel better. I decided that since politics was why I had come to Ottawa, I might as well go for it. I resigned from my government job and joined a small consulting company, with the aim of making enough money that I could then go into politics without being controlled by my party.

The consulting company didn't work out. At the end of 1978 my wife and I both joined a small firm providing computer software services to the government. My aim was to open a branch office for them in Montreal and become a partner. That didn't work out either, but they asked me to stay on and provide computer consulting services to their clients. All my other job opportunities mysteriously dried up then, just after I had become a member of a church congregation, so I accepted their offer.

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The Trudeau government had been defeated by Joe Clark's Conservatives in the 1979 election, and Trudeau resigned from the Liberal leadership that summer. I saw that change as an opportunity to become involved as a Liberal party worker in a new era, so I contacted my local MP and discussed my interest with him. I joined the party, and went to their Christmas gathering on Parliament Hill. I found it a cold and unidealistic event, though there was excitement because the minority Clark government had just been defeated in Parliament. A new election was called for February 1980. Who would lead the Liberals? My MP called and asked my opinion, and I said I thought Mr. Trudeau should stick by his decision to resign. However, he came back, and the campaign was on.

I went to an all-candidates meeting in my riding, and wanted to prove myself by posing a challenging question to the opposition candidate. But I couldn't think of one – I realized I didn't have enough knowledge about the issues under discussion. So I asked a “puffball” question of my MP – one I thought he could easily answer and look good. He looked at me as if to ask, “Why are you doing this?” I realized I had blown my opportunity to rise quickly in the party, and ended up just doing some door-to-door canvassing in another riding through a friend there. The Liberals won the election, and once again Mr. Trudeau was prime minister.

About the same time, our local school board was trying to close one of the two schools in our village. It had been a high school, but was demoted to a junior high after a big regional high school was built in the early 70s. Other school districts were complaining ours was getting more services with two schools than they were with only one. I was chosen at a parents' meeting to present our case for keeping the school open. Out of that emerged a small pressure group from several districts to back candidates in the fall school-board election who would keep small schools open.

I was chosen as their leader, and was encouraged to run against our local school board member. He had been a star high-school student at the school I was trying to keep open, but chose to stay on the family farm afterward. He had never married, and the school board was his life. I wasn't going to run and try to take away his life – that was something Nixon might have done. Besides, he had been supportive of my presentation to keep the school open.

We backed him and some other candidates, including but not limited to some other current members. I was even interviewed by the local radio station. In the end, all current members were re-elected. The people in our group wouldn't back my plan to widen the organization and deal with other issues too, so I resigned.

That began a dramatic change for me. That spring of 1981, the firm secured a consulting contract for me with the PMO – the Prime Minister's Office. My job was to design a new computerized system for managing all the correspondence the prime minister received from the public. I was given an office on a mezzanine overlooking the PMO library. I would browse there during my lunch hour, and came across a book called “Born Again” by Charles Colson. Colson had been a top aide to President Nixon, and had been sent to jail for several illegal activities during the Watergate period that had led to Nixon's leaving office. I hated Colson, but became interested in his book because it dealt with Christianity.

Colson describes how he left the Nixon administration when the president's first term ended at the beginning of 1973, and then experienced a strange emptiness. He was encouraged by a business colleague who had personally committed his life to Jesus. Being a lawyer, he embarked on a thorough investigation of Christianity, and ended up taking that same step. He went on to voluntarily confess a crime he had committed, and served seven months in jail. He describes how

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he was accepted and helped during that time by a small group of Christian believers, including one of his strongest political opponents. That struck me as being what real Christianity was all about.

A month or two earlier, I had also read another book which impacted me even more – “There’s a New World Coming” by Hal Lindsey. It’s a verse-by-verse interpretation of Revelation – the final book of the Bible. Revelation is commonly thought of in many circles as being about the end of the world. I had read parts of it in university as a spiritual allegory implying the dominance of evil in this world with hope and joy to be found only in the afterlife in heaven. Distaste for that view had been one of the factors behind my eventual rejection of God at that time. But Lindsey presented a different and quite political slant – that the whole world will eventually fall under the political and spiritual domination of a very attractive but ultimately completely evil leader, which has never happened before in history, and that Jesus will then return to earth to defeat him and run the world as it should be run. I realized that seeing the world run properly was what I had been seeking but found no way to accomplish.

In part, my interest in Lindsey’s book had been sparked by the election of Ronald Reagan as U.S. president in 1980. I saw Reagan as an unrelenting “hawk” who would undo the progress toward peace that Nixon had initiated, and would eventually start a nuclear war. Lindsey’s analysis really blew my mind. It seemed to fit the world situation better than anything I’d ever encountered, and connected up various strands of Christian thought I’d heard of as well as some I never had.

That July, I was offered a job in the Systems Division of BNR - Bell Northern Research, the R&D subsidiary of Northern Telecom (later Nortel) and Bell Canada. A few days later, my firm asked me to start up a new division in Ottawa. That was an opportunity to keep pursuing my same old dream, of making money and then going into politics. BNR offered a fresh start. When I told my family about these opportunities, my older daughter asked me, “How much overtime would you have to work if you started the new division?” “Well, not much,” I lied. “How much overtime would you have to work if you went to BNR?” “None,” I said – I had checked that out in my interview.” “We want you to go to BNR!” she said. That’s when I made my decision.

Later that night, I took the same step as Colson and his friend had. I then decided that if there wasn’t a group at BNR like Colson had described, I would start one. Thankfully, there was. I joined it, and remained part of it until my retirement twenty years later.

To this day, I remain a follower of politics and current events. Politics is an important part of our world, with the potential for both good and evil. But I came to understand its limitations. In the years since, I’ve often thought of how God has a sense of humour. He had allowed me to reach the prime minister’s office, but not in the way I’d expected



Jim Fergusson and his wife Joan have lived in Milton since the spring of 2010, with their younger daughter Laurie and her family. Their older daughter Diana and her family have lived in the Milton area since 1994. Previously Jim and Joan lived in Maxville east of Ottawa, where they raised their daughters on a hobby farm. Following their retirements, they helped develop a youth ministry there which operated a youth centre. They are now members of Milton Bible Church. Jim is currently working toward writing a book about his experiences with Christianity.



From City Mice to Country Mice

By Gillian Reynolds

“I wonder where everyone is?” I ask, knocking on the front door of the white bungalow. No response. I knock again. Finally, the door is opened by a lovely young girl with auburn hair, wearing a nightgown and slippers. Her bleary eyes blink with the sunlight. It's obvious we have woken her up.

“Hi, I'm Lynn,” she says, trying to stifle a yawn. “Sorry, we're not quite ready for you to move in. They had a surprise farewell party for us here last night and it went on a bit late. We'll be as quick as we can.”

This was our introduction to the laid back country way of life, so different to Toronto's fast pace. Over the next thirty years we would experience many more differences, moving from a bachelor one-bedroom apartment in Toronto's east end to the Sixth line of Nassagaweya in rural Milton.

Bryan and I walked back down the path to relay the bad news to our friends, Chris, Bill, Harry and Carol, who were waiting patiently next to the Hertz rental truck. “What shall we do?” asked Chris.

“What **can** we do?” I replied. “We're stuck out here in the middle of nowhere. We'll just have to wait around.” And so we waited.....and waited.

At least the sun was shining down on us as we sat on the lawn and chatted idly. I looked around at the place we were to call home until we could move into the bungalow we were building half a mile up the road. Horses grazed lazily in a nearby field. The faint smell of manure wafted in on a gentle breeze - a smell I would become all too familiar with over the next few years. Little did I know then that horses were to become a big part of our lives.

Our truck was parked right outside another small house on the Barrett's property: a wooden cabin, which had been a city dweller's country retreat at one time. Eventually, a young woman

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came out to greet us. She had long black hair and a warm smile. “Hi, I’m Andrea. John’s gone into Acton to get a part for the tractor.” We introduced ourselves. “Are you hungry?” she asked.

“Starving,” said Harry, stroking the Golden Retriever that had run up to him wagging its tail.

“Well, there’s some leftover chip and dip, and there’s lots of coffee in the urn. I’ll set it all up outside.”

We devoured the chips like a pack of hungry wolves. The coffee tasted bitter, but it was enough to keep us going until finally Lynn emerged from the white house. “You can move in now,” she said, smiling.

That was in May, 1972, when our daughter Tamra was just three months old. We rented the Barrett’s house for two years until our bungalow was habitable, which was in June 1974, just before our son Shawn was born.

Every weekend Chris and Bill stayed with us. They were building on the 15-acre lot next to ours. We paid \$1,000 an acre for the land. Their son Ross was only twelve days older than Tamra. Chris and I took it in turns to look after the babies and cook dinner while the other one would help Bill and Bryan on the building sites. I loved it when it was my day to work on the site.

We got on very well with John and Andrea because we had a lot in common. They had immigrated to Canada from England just a few years before us and had been living in the cabin for about a year. They introduced us to the neighbors - well, those that liked to have fun, like us.

Sometimes In the winter, after an evening of eating and drinking with friends, John would light the sauna at the Barrett’s property. We sat sweating on the wooden benches until we could stand the heat no longer and then dove into the snow, spread-eagle fashion to make snow angels. Afterwards, we stumbled home in the dark. One night Bryan fell into an open drainage ditch from the septic tank. He was not amused!

Over the thirty years, we made many friends, and memories that will stay in our hearts and minds forever. We found a sense of community and sharing that we never experienced in the city. People were always willing to lend a



Tamra and Shawn 1977



Hay Ride 1975

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helping hand, especially when it was haymaking time. This was when young and old pitched in. My favourite job was helping to load and unload the wagon. At the end of the day, tired, hungry and dirty, we gathered around the hay wagon and drank a beer. No beer ever tasted so good. Haymaking was just one of the ways that we connected as a community.

There was the time that our basement footings were to be poured. The cement truck didn't arrive until 4 o'clock. Speed, of course, is of the essence when it comes to cement. Bryan and Bill had to shovel it all the way round the wooden formwork before it set. Chris and I were no use because we were looking after Tamra and Ross. The men worked as fast as they could, panting and sweating like race horses, but they were starting to worry that they wouldn't get it done in time. Just then our neighbour John arrived - not in shining armour, but all dressed up to go - where, we never found out.

He wound down the window of his Volkswagen van and said, "Need any help?"

"We could use a hand to get this cement in place before it sets," said Bill.

"Thanks a lot, John," added Bryan, "We really appreciate it." John took off his jacket, jumped out of the van, rolled up his sleeves, grabbed a shovel and starting to heave the cement around. It was getting heavier as it began to solidify. I just don't know what we would have done if he hadn't showed up.

There was always something going on: bowling, hay rides, barbeques, costume parties, dinner parties (remember fondues?), skating parties and New Year's Eve parties. We took turns to host. It was mostly pot luck and B.Y.O.B. Some evenings the "country folk" rounded out the evening playing euchre. We had never heard of the game.

We used to go to fund raising dances at the Curling Club in Acton and at Brookville Community Hall. Whenever I hear, "Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Old Oak Tree," and "Knock Three Times" I think of those dances. Later in the seventies came disco songs like "Play That Funky Music White Boy." I loved wearing my mile wide bell bottoms and wedge sandals that made me feel tall.

The New Year's Eve dance had been held at Brookville Community Hall for as long as anyone could remember. Even people who had moved away came back for this special event. We joked that the only way you could get invited was to wait for people to die. Well eventually, after fourteen years, Chris and Bill, Bryan and myself were invited. How excited we were - and then how disappointed when the band played only fast waltzes and polkas. Some old-timer played Auld Lang Syne on a hand saw! We never went again.

It was at one of the Saturday night parties that Muff the farmer asked: "Who wants to go to a rock party tomorrow?"

"Sounds like fun," I said. The "party" turned out to be picking up rocks from his field and putting them on a large metal platform being dragged by a tractor. The Niagara Escarpment spews up rocks like dandelions every spring.

My philosophy is that city folk are less friendly than country folk because they are less trusting. Their close proximity to each other makes them protective of what little privacy they have. However, there are pros and cons to country life: I miss the friendliness of the neighbors, the privacy and the peace of being surrounded by nature. I miss my therapeutic walk - over the stream, around the pond, up the ridge, across the farmer's field and through the woods. Before I left, I took photos of every section to remind me of the calm and peaceful solitude that I felt on that walk. I miss the smell of new mown hay and lilac bushes, the fresh scent of sheets when they came in from the washing line and, yes, even the smell of horse manure.

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What I do not miss are the black flies and mosquitoes, the maintenance of the house and gardens, the driving back and forth to the shops and appointments and to the kids' various activities. Bryan doesn't miss winter driving, clearing snow off the 450 foot driveway, mowing grass for five hours, fixing fences, chopping and splitting wood for the stove and cleaning the swimming pool.

It was a great place to bring up children. They had lots of playmates nearby. Shawn and his friends built tree forts and when they were older they rode dirt bikes. Tamra had her horses. She joined a pony club and did eventing. In the winter we could toboggan, cross country ski and ice skate on the pond. The stream and woods provided endless opportunities for exploration and adventure. In the summer, we enjoyed the swimming pool.

The kids grew up with animals. At one time we had three horses, two cats, a dog and a rabbit. The rabbit escaped and ran away. The cats were killed by coyotes, the dog died of old age and the horses were sold. And so eventually there were none, but by then both children had left home.

It was a pain having to share our telephone line with neighbors (called a party line). Each household had a different ring - ours was long, short, long. Apart from the fact that anyone could listen into your conversation, it was annoying when someone else was using the line, which became a real problem when the kids became teenagers and spent hours on the phone. Sometimes we would get the operator to ask them to get off the line.

In all the thirty years, we only ever had two mailmen - actually one was a woman. It was job that was handed down through the family. Our address was R.R 1, Acton. Cal McIntyre and his sister Eleador knew everyone living in Rural Route 1. Now "12223 6th line, Nassagaweya" is added to the "RR 1." Nothing stays the same.

We had very few regrets about our decision to move from our country property when we did. Recently we had the opportunity to look round the old homestead to see how it had changed, because it was up for sale and we went to the open house. In spite of all the improvements, we were surprised and pleased how much of Bryan's handiwork had not been touched. I felt quite nostalgic as we walked from room to room reliving the memories. It was a blast from the past.



October 1979



*Shawn, Gill, Ross, Tamra & Skippy
1976*

Reflections

The transition from city mice to country mice was a life changing experience, for which I am eternally grateful. In 2002, we moved into the town of Milton, where we have the best of both worlds, because being opposite a pond, woodlot and a trail, we still feel close to nature. As the saying goes: “You can take the boy out of the country, but not the country out of the boy.”



Close-up of the ridge and Bryan, June, 1973



Born in Birmingham, England, during the war; married her childhood sweetheart and lived in a bungalow (which they helped build) near Coventry; divorced; married Bryan; immigrated to Canada in 1969; lived for thirty years in a bungalow (which they helped build) on the Niagara Escarpment, where they owned horses and grew fruits and vegetables; raised two children, one of whom lives in Guelph and the other in Whitehorse, Yukon; worked mostly as a legal secretary; moved to an Adult Community in Milton in 2002; enjoys yoga and aerobics at the Leisure Centre, hiking, biking and just being outdoors, and of course writing.



One of My Nine Lives

By Gillian Reynolds

I could hardly wait to get home on that fateful night of March 2nd, 1997, as I drove home along the Sixth line of Nassagaweya in rural Milton. Exhaustion was starting to creep up on me. It had been a long day: attending an all-day workshop in Toronto, shopping and then playing badminton for a couple of hours. We had just returned from a week-long, fun-filled but hectic cruise the previous day.

Approaching the brow of the hill, I do what I've done thousands of times before: stop, look for oncoming lights, indicate left and then start making the turn into our long driveway.

I am looking forward to relaxing in front of the fire and drinking a cup of tea. Suddenly I am jerked into a moment of shocking reality. Everything is happening at once: a blaze of light, the loud thud of metal fighting metal, and shattering glass. I have crashed into an oncoming car, which had been just out of my view on the other side of the hill. My Ford Bronco flips over and starts to skim along the ground on the ski rack. Fortunately, the rack prevents the car from rolling over and over. I thank God that I hadn't got round to removing it. The sound of the metal rack grating along the gravel road fills me with terror. It's as if I am in a dream, watching a movie in slow motion. I am unaware of my emotions, utterly powerless, awaiting my fate. "Is this how I'm going to die," I ask. There is no answer and no flashbacks, which I take to be a good sign. I have an intense desire to survive.

Finally, the car grinds to a halt. It takes me a few minutes to assess the situation and decide what to do. *Thank God I'm alive.* I discover the car has ended up in the middle of the road just over the top of the hill. *Could be worse.* My thoughts go back to all the stories I've read in Readers Digest about car accidents: "The first thing you do is turn off the ignition." *But then no one would see or hear me,* I reason. I decide to leave the engine running to keep the lights and radio on, even though I have a full tank of gas. I try desperately to undo my seatbelt, but I am upside down and I can't reach the buckle. Then I remember the knife someone gave me for cutting the seatbelt when you are trapped. *Where is it? In the glove compartment - I can't reach it. Am I hurt? I'm feeling no pain - yet.* I feel helpless and alone. I hear the other driver shouting, "Help! Help!" I want to shout back to him, but I don't know what to say.

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After what seems like eternity, a light goes on in a distant house. A neighbour has opened his front door to let the dog out. It starts barking. The man hears the cries for help and my radio and sees the car all lit up. He assesses the situation and goes back in the house to fetch a flashlight and a blanket. A few moments later, he runs over and opens my door. "Are you OK?" he asks, undoing my seatbelt and carefully helping me out of the car. I check myself over and am amazed I seem to be intact and unscathed.

The Bronco unfortunately didn't fare so well. It was twisted and the passenger side was smashed in. I knew it was a write off. In a dream-like state, I removed the bags of groceries from the car and lined them up on the grass verge, and then proceeded to methodically empty everything from the car. I was vaguely aware of the neighbour attending to the other driver and an ambulance taking him off. I found out later he had a broken leg.

I started to walk down the long driveway. "What are you doing?" someone said.

"I just want to go home," I replied.

"But you have to wait for the ambulance."

"I don't need an ambulance. I'm fine."

"Well, for a start you have blood running down your face." I touched my face and saw the blood on my fingers. It was about that time that I went into shock and started to shake.

At the hospital, X-rays showed that I had several broken ribs, internal injuries, plus a cut above my eye, which required stitching.

Several hours later, they let me go home and so eventually I got my cup of tea. My son came home, walked into the kitchen, took one look at my swollen and bruised face and cried, "What on earth happened to you?" I'll never forget that look of shock on his face.



Arf Arf, Woof Woof, Grrrr....

By Trevor Trower

The sound of a barking dog can eventually drive a man mad. Like the Chinese water torture or being forced to sleep with your eyes open. Systematic and continuous noise for one, is often unheard by the dog-fancier. How is it that the owner of the barking dog doesn't hear the grating, abrasive noise when the neighbors suffer lack of sleep waiting for the tuneless noise to stop? Ray needed his sleep, but for several nights in a row the neighbor across the park had let the dog out before she went to bed for the night. The persistent calling for re-entry to his home had met with no welcoming opened door. The continual barking for some reason was not heard by her, the closest to its source.

The kindest gentlest man, can eventually reach the point of saturation, when there is no more space for further torment. The most sensitive animal lover can reach the end of the road when the cord will snap. Ray had tried closing his windows. Putting his head under the pillow. He had tried extra drinks and ear-plugs. Nothing worked for my friend to keep at bay the grinding, cursed sounds, Arf Woof Woof Arf. How can any creature keep it up for so many hours at a time? How can the dog's owner ignore the penetrating, blasphemous cacophony?

This was my first night's loss of sleep. I was tired when I arrived yesterday from up north and my hope for a refreshing sleep had been frustrated by the barking dog. From Ray I had learned that the dog being let out at night was a recent happening, and it was the fifth night in a row that Ray had had his sleep ruined by the dog. I was sitting watching the early sunrise, having a cup of tea, watching the morning news broadcast on the television when suddenly there was the sound of my friend slamming his front door. I looked out through the sheers covering the window and I could see Ray marching across our front lawn, he looked angry and I could hear him calling for quiet, "I'll kill the bastard," he shouted. Ray was dressed in a pair of shorts and a thick sweater stretched tight across his enormous belly. He was a very big man in his mid-seventies. A nice

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man, a gentle man despite his military background. He wore a toque and slippers. As he crossed the lawn I could hear him shout to Tom, the other neighbor, "Tom, hey Tom, are you there Tom? That blasted dog, I've had enough. Have you got your gun? I'll shoot the bastard."

There was silence for a minute or two, "Thanks Tom, is it loaded? With ten shells you say, that should do it, now I can get some peace and quiet." All this conversation was expressed at high volume and, as was intended, overheard by the owner of the dog.

The strident scream of an upset older lady rent the air. "Don't you come over here and hurt my dog, he's done nothing wrong, dogs bark, it's only natural."

Getting into the spirit of things Ray called out "I'll be right over, don't take the dog into the house now, it's too late for that, I'll go in after him, I'll get the bastard."

The voice came back, "I know who you are now, you're Ray Barnett and I've called the police, they will be here in a minute and they'll stop you hurting Bruno."

With that we heard a police cruiser squealing his wheels round the corner and come skidding to a halt on our front driveway. The young, huge policeman jumped out of the car and drawing his revolver called out, "You, drop your gun and raise your arms, you're under arrest."

Tom did not have a gun to lend Ray, the gun talk had been a ruse and meant to scare the dog owner. As far as the officer was concerned, a gun had been part of the transaction and he had no intension of getting hurt. Threats of armed violence had been made and this was a crime, even in St. Petersburg. The officer called again, "You are under arrest, lie on the ground with your hands behind your back."

Ray is a heavy man, a retired military officer and engineer. He had heard the policeman in total disbelief. As it seemed to the cop that he was resisting arrest, he called on his radio for back-up. In less than two minutes another squad-car hurtled onto the scene. All the while I was watching this drama unfold, right in our front yard.

The second officer joined his colleague and together they tried to subdue our friend. Ray weighed maybe two hundred and fifty pounds with legs like tree-trunks. He just stood there passively resisting and the two young cops were unable to throw Ray to the ground. He didn't fight back, he just stood there rigid and refused to fall. After a few minutes, in desperation the first cop called for further back-up and within a couple of minutes a third cruiser with a sergeant and a constable squealed onto the scene. And between them they were able to cart my friend off to jail. For some reason the dog had ceased barking and in a few minutes the dust had settled and the neighborhood assumed its usual Sunday morning tranquility.

We spent an uneasy morning. Tom came over from next door and suggested we go down to the police station and come to Ray's assistance. But really, what could we do? Everyone in our area, with the exception of Bruno's mother, felt sorry for dear old Ray, always so generous with his citrus and bananas. Kids making a short-cut through his yard were never reported, a growl and a yell would scare them off for a while. Seventy-five years old and being taken away by four policemen for shouting at the old biddy's dog to stop barking. Of course the police having a complaint from a citizen that a neighbor had threatened with a weapon, were obliged to take the action they did. The only thing we could do for Ray was to have some cash ready in case he might need bail money.

It was around 2:00 PM when a chastened Ray was driven to his house in a cab. He quietly entered his little bungalow and shut the door and remained unseen for most of the rest of the day. It seemed a bit odd in a way, it was a glorious sunny spring day. The sun was shining from a beautiful Florida sky, the temperature drew most outdoors to the beach or other outdoor activities. But that was one Sunday that Ray did not feel up to his usual self. While I was gathering some

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grapefruit from our garden, I did see Ray for a few minutes while he was picking some tomatoes from his garden for his supper. I waved to him and he acknowledged my greeting and waved back but bid not stop to chat.

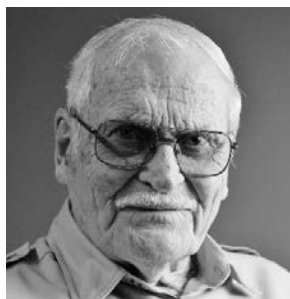
The next day, Monday, he was up early and waiting outside for a cab. I had never seen Ray dressed like that: blazer, white shirt and a tie, grey slacks and shiny black shoes. At first I wondered who it was. I was up and about and stepped out of our front door. “Good morning Ray,” I called, “Have you got time for a coffee?”

“Later Trev,” he replied. “Right now I’ve got to see a man about a dog.” A taxi arrived and whisked him away.

Well, it was late that afternoon when Ray came over to our place for coffee. Back into his shorts and T-shirt and sandals. We sat in the Florida room out of the hot sun drinking our coffee while I encouraged Ray to tell us about his morning.

“Yes, I was told to be at the magistrate’s office at nine this morning, it’s always a good idea to dress properly for that kind of meeting.” He took a long drink from his coffee and settled back in his chair. “I had to answer a charge of threatening bodily harm with a weapon. There were other charges too such as resisting arrest and disturbing the peace. But hell Trev, I’m 75 years old, I am a law-abiding citizen and a proud American veteran with medals to prove it. I don’t owe a dime in this world. There was no gun, and there never was. I then explained that it was the blasted dog who was disturbing the peace, not me. We chatted a while about a number of things and it turned out that he didn’t like barking dogs either. He gave me a warning to keep the peace, and that was that.”

It was after five o’clock and the sun was beginning to cool down. Time to invite our neighbor Tom to join us and get out a fresh bottle of vodka. We three sat and watched the sun go down and enjoyed our drinks with our own fresh-squeezed limes and as we mellowed we began to see aspects of the case which caused us merriment, especially the part about it taking four young strong men, St Petersburg’s finest, to arrest our elderly pal.....



Trevor Trower was born in Southampton, England. After a 35 year career with Air Canada In-Flight Service, Trevor retired and pursued various hobbies such as model trains, model radio-controlled boats, woodwork and archaeology. He trained in photography and became quite skilled with a camera. In the last few years, his passion for writing short stories and particularly poetry resulted in the publishing of three collections of his work. A number of short stories and poems have been published in magazines and on the web at BBC North Wales. He currently lives in Georgetown, Ontario with his wife of 60 years, Kay Thompson. They have 5 children



Bailey, R.I.P.

By Trevor Trower, January 8, 2011

How sad it is when a loved one dies,
If there's a heaven, that's where he lies.
Our Bailey, friends these last nine years,
So hard to hold back our grieving tears.
More than a friend, one of the family,
Coming home, fondly welcoming me.
The last twelve months he's been not well,
Maybe longer, if he could only tell.
So many Doctor visits, and pills and such
And all the care didn't help that much.
Suffering quietly, yet happy to greet,
The home-bound sound of my nearing feet.
Protecting us bravely from the rustling breeze,
And the squirrels playing in the tall pine trees,
And the mailman bringing the daily mail,
A friendly bark to those on the passing trail.
Not one complaint in all that time,
His constant attention a joy sublime.
We have memories of our loving pet,
There by the door, we can see him yet,
With his youthful games and playing ball,
You wouldn't think of him as a dog at all.
Just another member of the family,
And me as proud of him as he was proud of me.
Goodbye Bailey, there'll be no more pain,
And the very best of luck 'till we meet again.....Grandad Trower



Crawford Lake Provincial Park, Ontario

By Trevor Trower

I was part of a small team of budding archeologists who spent two exciting summers in the early eighties digging at the Crawford Lake Indian Village site. There were twelve of us and our leader was William Finlayson PhD, who was at that time also the curator of the Museum of Indian Archeology in London, Ontario. This particular site was identified as having been populated several hundred years ago by a group of people of the Iroquoian Nation who lived and farmed nearby. Core samples of the lake bottom had been taken and subsequent study found a variety of pollens in the core samples, these were dated to have been deposited during the sixteenth century. The corn, squash and bean pollens which were identified are known to be carried away from source by air movements and deposited in a natural way within half a mile distance. It was decided that as a result of this information a project would be created under the auspices of the University of Toronto department of Archeology and Doctor Williamson would be its leader. Just to the north of Crawford Lake a fairly level area was seen as the probable site of a village and tests were made which confirmed this. Topsoil was removed and “Post Molds” were discovered which indicated human activity. Dating of the post molds and the pollens confirmed the period of occupation. Our job entailed excavating and recording any artifacts we were able to discover.

I first met Dr. Finlayson at the site where he, along with his wife and the rest of our group, walked over the property to decide where exactly he would establish the reference point. We all, in a friendly and relaxed way, walked the site together. We introduced ourselves and after a little while we seemed to gravitate to those who seemed to be the most compatible. Small informal groups were formed which would soon become working friends. I remember at the time that our group included one young woman who was an Aboriginal person from a northern community who was earning her degree at the University of Toronto. It struck me at the time how seldom we see native Canadians involved in Indian studies, this being the first and only “First Nation” person I had met in my three years involved in this work. The Datum Point was decided upon and registered and grids were laid out. These grids were five meter squares and divided into twenty five sections

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of one meter. Each student was assigned two sections and instructed how to excavate. Our tools were simple, following the removal of any brush and sod, the rest of the work was done using a five inch trowel and a two gallon bucket to carry away the detritus.

It was hard work and though it was a beautiful late spring day with a pleasant breeze, the work made us tired and sweaty and about one o' clock we decided to drive to the nearby village of Campbellville for lunch. Several of our group found a comfortable spot in the shade and decided to rest for their lunch hour. We returned about 2pm and spent an enjoyable afternoon on our knees in our square, only resting our tired backs while Doctor Finlayson gave a lecture on the hows and where-fores of "Post Molds", a subject of which he is an authority. Briefly, when a long-house is being constructed, the builder selects suitable slender flexible trees to form the skeleton of the house. Cuts down, trims and inserts the pole into a prepared hole two or three feet deep. The poles are placed to form the perimeter of the building about three feet apart. The tops of the poles are bent over and attached to their opposite member which forms the roof. Smaller branches interlace this foundation. Spaces are left in the roof to allow smoke from the fires to escape. Birch bark covers the longhouse to keep it weatherproof and skins at the doors allow entry for up to forty occupants. After ten to twenty years the house poles rot at their base and the house being no longer habitable is re-built on fresh ground. Eventually the base of the poles rot away and becomes the mold which later enquirers find of use in their studies. The post molds are easily discernable as the process stains the earth in its immediate vicinity.

We novices, under the supervision of Doctor Bill Finlayson, soon became adept at the digging technique. In our assigned squares we were to scrape away the soil in shallow layers using the sides of our trowels. We were shown how to identify the shards of pottery and each fragment was put in a plastic envelope with its exact location and depth recorded. Sometimes we would dig for hours before something of interest was found, we would holler out our joy as we boasted of our discovery. Often our enthusiasm would be dampened when the gem we found turned out to be a small stone. But sufficient interesting items were found and identified to maintain our enthusiasm.

An excited scream came from Marian in the next square to mine when she un-earthed something very special, it was a complete pot. Dr Finlayson took over the responsibility of this important find and removed the entire piece of ground to his lab for more careful study. Later he told us that the pot may have contained the remains of what was being prepared for a meal and the molecules of the remains would be more accurately identified under the more controlled atmosphere. I thought the few bits and pieces we found were hardly worth the effort, but it is surprising how the experienced scholar can read such detail from so little evidence. A few shards of pottery, a few broken tools, some bones and some preserved organic remains and there you might have a whole history of a people long since gone. I found a small piece of a clay pipe and you would have thought I had found a gold watch judging by the excitement that discovery caused.

Today the Indian village has been re-constructed in much its' original form and is open to the public, for a few dollars entrance fee we can walk that space and see how the earlier inhabitants passed their days in work or play. The fortunate can use their imagination and add more to the unspoken story of those long-gone folk, human beings very much like us, whose main interest, like ourselves, was to do their daily work to wrest a living from their environment.

I was the oldest of the students and found myself paired with the youngest on several assignments. My team-mate's name was Harold and he was nineteen at that time. We were sent to the village to purchase the materials to make a sieve to filter our diggings so as we would not let anything escape our notice. Harold mentioned to me that the other young male student was derisive

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of our enthusiasm and he was attending the course to pick up an easy credit. He was studying to be a medical doctor and this course was a breeze for him. Most of us had to study and work hard at the course to get a satisfactory mark and the superior attitude of our friend we found quite disconcerting. Harold thought it might be a good idea to slip into the Kresge's Store and have a look around. We purchased the wire and wood for our sieve and Harold disappeared for a few minutes, we paid for our supplies and Harold paid the 35 cents for his purchase. Later he explained that he had bought some glass beads and at the end of the day he would spike our future doctor's square with those beads for a gag to get a laugh and to take our friend down a peg or two when the beads were found in the pit. Well the following morning, shortly after we started digging, our friend gave a loud excited yell as he came across the first of the "artifacts," we gathered around with our congratulation and our friend was preening himself for his cleverness, Harold and I chuckling quietly to ourselves all the while. This performance repeated itself several times as more beads were un-earthed and we had a few laughs at his expense. Mind you, when the truth was out he took it all very well and we all enjoyed the trick we played, including our instructor.

We got to know another person who was a T.A. in the department of Archeology, Deborah Berg, a very pleasant young woman who was working on her PhD. Debbie's unusual specialty was preparing the skeletons of dead animals and she gave us a lecture on the subject. She would receive dead small animals from all over the world and seal the bodies in a glass container with selected insects until only the bones remained. None of our group were interested in that sort of career and after a while Debbie stopped her visits to our site. If you go to this site on the Guelph Line, you will find the re-established Indian village, a diorama depicting the life and style of the people who lived there before Europeans arrived.



Rabbit Ears

By Trevor Trower

I was at the Walmart store yesterday. The big one on Winston Churchill just south of the 401. I was so tired of paying the Bell Telephone Company \$139 a month for our phone and TV service and now they have increased the charges to \$ 142.75 for no apparent reason. I want to follow my neighbor's lead and get my own antenna. I remember when the whole business of television started, we had an indoor antenna, a small wire aerial which picked up local stations. I figured with all the improvements in technology the reception will have improved and what we used to call "rabbit ears" would save me a great deal of money.

Well I had made my regular purchases and approached the reluctant sales clerk at the TV department. She smiled at me and said, "What can I do for you?" She was a nice looking young woman wearing a headdress which covered most of her head.

"Hello," I said, "are you the TV salesperson?"

"Yes, what can I help you with sir?" she said.

Well, I began to explain that I wanted to know if a set of rabbit ears would work on a new TV.

She stared at me for a moment, then she looked about the store. For a moment I thought she was about to call the other assistant for help. She backed away just a short pace. Then in a quiet voice muttered, "How could rabbit ears possibly help with a television signal?"

I began to explain how in the old days we could put the rabbit ears on the top of the TV and connect them to the TV with an electric cord, then we could twist them about until we got a signal. Sometimes it would be necessary to pull out the ears and stretch them as far as they would go. We could bend a coat hanger and sometimes that would serve the purpose when the regular rabbit ears fell apart. While I was telling her this history, her smile had disappeared and she had backed away from me several feet. I smiled at her and said in a conversational way that my present system was able to provide me with about 200 channels but none of them were worth watching.

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Then I noticed that the other employee who had been in the area had been watching this transaction and had moved closer and I could see that she had a slight smile on her face. She seemed to be enjoying the consternation of the younger woman, and in a cheerful voice added, “Oh yes, we used to do the same thing, in fact we all used rabbit ears back then.”

Then the clerk explained to the younger assistant that they weren’t real rabbit ears but that they were a device which we called rabbit ears as most of us didn’t know what the real name was.

It was sort of funny to see how the young woman’s facial expression relaxed as she realized I was not some cruel pervert with an unusual proclivity. And now she had a better idea what I was after, she told me they didn’t carry them in stock.

I must ask Ken for his advice.....maybe Dave knows about that sort of thing.....



Metamorphosis

By Diane Bandura Miller

Sashaying into the classroom with the confidence of a Hollywood starlet on the red carpet, she looks around and stops at my desk. Looking down at me she says, “What’s it like to be ugly?” She then snickers while surveying the classroom for approval. As I slump down in my seat, I am oblivious as to whether anyone is joining in her laughter. My essence is crushed; my life is over... or has it just begun?

In June of ‘58, I graduated from St. David’s Roman Catholic School in Toronto and by September, my family was moving to a new bungalow in the suburbs, near the Cloverdale Mall. This means I will be starting high school at Burnhamthorpe Collegiate in Etobicoke, miles from Toronto and the neighbourhood where I grew up. I am 13 years of age and cannot fully comprehend the adjustment from a Roman Catholic “separate” school system, where girls and boys are taught in separate areas, to a public school system which is co-ed.



St. David's grade eight graduates

It is a warm September day as I walk almost four miles to school. I report to the office and they point me to a registration desk where my name is crossed off a list and I am handed a class schedule, a map of the school, a locker number, a combination lock, and directed as to where I can pay for and pick up my books.

Finding my locker along a maze of hallways, while juggling my newly acquired books, is disconcerting. Fumbling with the combination lock I finally manage to make it work. I quickly try to sort out the books in accordance with my schedule and put the rest in my locker. I hurry down

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hallway after hallway, searching for my homeroom class... this is where I am told that students gather, sing the national anthem, listen to the principal's announcements, and receive special instructions for the day. Things blur as I try to focus on the map and timetable, my heart is pounding for fear I will not get there before the bell! Finally, there it is, Room 9A. The teacher has not yet arrived and the class is full of unfamiliar faces. I promptly sit at a desk by the door, my heart still pounding, my face flushed when Lorraine Morin sashays into the classroom and changes my life forever by asking, "What's it like to be ugly?"

Her words are intimidating but motivate me to begin reading beauty magazines and to experiment with makeup, hairstyles and colour. I already have some understanding of fashion thanks to my mother who is a seamstress and designs beautiful dresses. After all, I did read Katy Keene comic books while growing up. Katy was a fashion model, actress and singer, marketed by the publisher as "America's Queen of Fashion."

After my first awkward year at high school, I am fortunate to meet Penny Wiggins; we like similar things and eventually become good friends. During our lunch period, Penny says, "I know this guy who has a fabulous hot rod and he said that we can go along for a ride and sit in the rumble seat!" I have an awful feeling about this but go anyway. The boys have absolutely no interest in us, or getting us back to school on time. This results in our being summoned to the principal's office, given a lecture about riding in cars with boys, and a week of detentions! Life lessons are learned.

Penny and I try many colourful things, including starting up an all-girl band. We never do make it out of basement rehearsals and the only song I learn to beat out on the drums is "Big Town Boy." Eventually, we give up on our illusion of becoming rock & roll stars.

An exotic opportunity comes our way when a hairdresser asks us to model at a convention, which is to take place at the prestigious Royal York Hotel in Toronto.

Arriving at this opulent hotel, we check in with our hairdresser who grants me the title "Miss Austria." My friend Penny is bestowed the title "Miss America." Our hairdresser gives us a quick rundown outlining where to go and what to do. Penny and I are very excited to sign in and have our makeup done by a professional makeup artist! This has to be stardom! Regrettably, they are running out of time and the male model's makeup artist is asked to apply our makeup. Our eyebrows end up looking like twin bushy, black caterpillars parading across our forehead. We laugh until streaking mascara is rolling down our cheeks, then quickly run into a hotel restroom, wash it all off, and reapply it ourselves.

Our next assignment is to have our hair washed, set and styled. This is a lengthy process, but something we must do to be glamorous. My hairdo resembles a Dairy Queen, soft serve, ice cream cone, with a big curl on top. Penny's is done up in a popular beehive, swirling around and around her head, finishing up with a hole, high above her head. Penny points out that "...this is a place for the bees to enter."

A dresser comes in and we are fitted with swanky gowns. Mine is a glistening black satin with an emerald green satin train, overlaid in black lace. Ill-fitting, spike heeled shoes are given to me to wear.

The elegant stage at the Royal York is set with a model of a full airplane door where we are to appear, pose for a moment, and then descend the stairs. An "airline pilot" stands by to take our hand and escort us onto the runway. A "flight-attendant" is on the other side.

Hearing my introduction as "Miss Austria" I nervously approach the stairs to make my grand entrance. Taking the first step down, the spike heel of my other shoe gets caught in the train of my dress, causing me to hop down a couple of stairs on one foot! The airline pilot notices and

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quickly takes my hand while the flight-attendant, unhooks my shoe. This is not the grand entrance I envisioned! Penny is cued next, she sees me trip, takes a fit of laughing and cannot make her entrance. Quick shuffling takes place. Eventually Penny calms down enough to make her entrance while still trying not to laugh, making it hard for me not to burst out laughing!

We stand on stage for hours while hairdressers describe how they created our hairdos. I am feeling very tired and hungry, my stomach growls and sends Penny into unrequited laughter. A model faints and falls backwards off the stage! Fortunately, she is caught and not hurt. Finally, the judges vote and the awards are presented. This is my first experience with modeling and in spite of my not so grand entrance, I enjoy it.

After leaving high school, my mother encourages me to apply to IBM for a course to be a keypunch operator. After passing the IQ test and completing the course, IBM offers me three job choices in data processing: Columbia Records, an insurance company and the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, at King and University in Toronto. My parents decide that the bank offer is the most reliable. I apply, interview, and am hired.

While working at the bank I am introduced to a guitar playing Elvis singer, and my soon to be husband Jim. By October 5 of 1963, we are married, put a down payment on property in rural Milton, and begin clearing land to build our home. After a few years, we have two beautiful daughters, Dawn and Shari. The modeling bug has not left me and I decide to attend finishing school. I enroll at Jennifer Parkington's Finishing School in the Kingsway.

Learning how to apply makeup, enter a room, sit properly, walk a runway, coordinate my wardrobe and find a suitable hairstyle gives me confidence. Graduating at the top of my class, Jennifer offers me a position teaching modeling and self-improvement.

Entering a classroom filled with young women, anxiously waiting to hear my every word makes me very nervous. Jennifer assures me that she has complete confidence in my knowledge and ability to teach.

We celebrate our first graduating class with a dinner and fashion show at The Plantation Bowl on Dundas Street in



*Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce
keypunch operators*



*Jennifer Parkington's Finishing School Graduation
Class*

Reflections

Etobicoke. Our graduates receive diplomas and go on to be employed as TV personalities, catalogue models, fashion models, or just enjoy the self-confidence they have achieved.

Jennifer announces that she has accepted a marriage proposal and plans to close the school and move to the Caribbean Islands. Not wanting to leave me in the lurch, she asks if I would like to work for the Ontario Jockey Club. They are looking for a hostess and model in the public relations and promotions department.

The popularity of Standardbred Racing was booming in the early '60s. The Ontario Jockey Club announced plans to build a new harness racing facility on four hundred acres of land in Campbellville, Ontario. On April 26, 1963, Mohawk Racetrack opened with a crowd of 4,338 in attendance. Garden City Racetrack in St. Catharines opened soon after, in 1964. The Ontario Jockey Club "A" tracks also include Woodbine, Fort Erie and Greenwood.

Just prior to Mohawk opening for its eighth season, Jennifer schedules a meeting at the Mohawk Inn with The Jockey Club's Director of Publicity for Standardbred racing, Mr. Jim Lampman. We arrive at the inn and are just seated when a distinguished man appears in the doorway. Walking toward us, he adjusts his tie and trips over a chair. He looks at me and says, "Look, I have fallen for you already." This puts me right at ease. Mr. Lampman sits down and we discuss the position, he hires me on the spot. I am to report to the Publicity office the next day! My title is Pamper Girl, which has nothing to do with diapers, by the way, I am to pamper VIPs, take them on tours of the racetrack, and out to the Winners Circle for pictures and trophy presentations.

The Pamper Girl uniform I am given is a short sleeveless jumpsuit in turquoise with a wide white belt, a large brimmed pink hat, and inflexible, platform soled shoes lacing up to my knee. I mention to Mr. Lampman that I do not care for the uniform. He immediately calls Toronto and makes an appointment with The Jockey Club suppliers and I pick another outfit. My choice is a pink mini dress with shorts, trimmed in white, and a matching pink blazer with gold buttons. My shoes are white platform, high heel sandals. Jim Lampman is a gracious man to work with; he does not like me saying, "work for." His favourite words of wisdom to me when I leave his office are "Hang on to your pantyhose!" Jim also hosts a harness racing radio show.

Eventually, Mr. Lampman hires two more Pamper Girls, Sam, a brunette, and Nancy, a redhead. Their home tracks are Greenwood and Garden City. Because the new girls need uniforms, I ask if I could design new outfits for all the "Pamper Girls". My idea is approved; I pick out a pattern, the fabric, and find a local seamstress. Our new uniforms are purple mini dresses with shorts and a cape, trimmed in a white Spanish looking scroll design. While shopping at Sherway Gardens, I



*My protection: Security, me,
Chief Bill Taylor*



Sharon, Del, Diane

Reflections

find white Spanish looking hats and long white boots for us to wear, thus affording us the look of a matador... Olé!

The Jockey Club is host to business groups wishing to attend a "Night at the Races" which includes a delicious buffet, a welcome to the group in lights on the scoreboard, and recognition in the racing program. Group reps are escorted to the winners circle, by a Pamper Girl and make a presentation of a trophy gift of their choice to the winner of "their" race, and receive a photograph in the winner's circle as a remembrance. The Pamper Girls look after welcoming, organizing and seating these special groups in the Terrace Dining Room. We explain how to read the program and how to wager. Collecting and balancing the group payment, and taking it to Mrs. Charlotte Toletka, in accounting for approval are also our responsibilities.

Besides all this, I am photographed for newspaper pictures and magazine ads with horses, horsemen, Governors, Prime Ministers, and other well know personalities, such as E.P Taylor and Elgin Armstrong.

In 1972, I am asked to escort Ontario Premier Bill Davis out to the winners circle at Mohawk to make a trophy presentation. I notice a crowd forming at the gate, while security officers stand on guard. I am certain they are lining up to meet our Premier; it turns out they are waiting to get my autograph. Feeling a little embarrassed, I remember Premier Davis laughing and saying, "What am I, chopped liver?" Mr. Doug Elliott, Director of Operations, and I enjoy many laughs reviewing my night at the races.

On their way to training camp in Toronto, Team Canada hockey stars, Guy LaPointe and Yvan Cournoyer stop in for dinner at Mohawk Racetrack. They are playing against Russia and win the 1972 World Cup. TV and radio personalities also frequent the races. Wally Crowder, Earl Warren and Bill Stephenson of CFRB Radio are regulars at the track, as are sports newspaper columnists. TV appearances with Fergie Oliver and Pat Marsden for CFTO TV sports are always exciting.

The Jockey Club also hosts golf tournaments, which include many big names in television and radio. During Grand Circuit Week, in Toronto, I am given a fancy red convertible to deliver pictures and tapes to TV, radio stations, and the press.

Don Valliere, Publicity Director for thoroughbred racing calls and I am invited to work with him at Woodbine Racetrack. At the grand opening of the Queen's Plate in 1973, I ride in a carriage, smiling and waving alongside the President of the Jockey Club, Mr. John Mooney, following Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth and His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh.

During the Royal Week of Racing, I also host a program at Sherway Gardens, in Etobicoke. While running a movie of the previous year's Queen's Plate I talk to people and answer their questions about racing. Scheduling and interviewing jockey Sandy Hawley offers me yet another aspect and understanding of the horse racing industry.

Don Valliere and I make trips to Toronto, to interview and hire personalities such as Paul Anka, to perform at a thoroughbred events. Don also includes me in TV commercials for the horseracing industry... they call me their star!

Every evening after being a "star" I do make a quick return to "earth", coming home to work on the building of our house, wash floors, dishes, do laundry and change diapers. Not to mention the many hours it takes to perfect my hair, nails, makeup, apply false eyelashes and achieve "the look", while raising two young daughters.

I work at the track about three or four evenings/days a week for special events, and photo shoots. When my husband Jim arrives home from teaching, he looks after our girls. Our car does not get a chance to cool down before I am heading off to work.

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Attending Finishing School and Working for the Jockey Club helped me to grow socially. The bullying I experienced during my high school days propelled me into a career that otherwise may not have happened.

“What the caterpillar calls the end of the world, the master calls a butterfly.”

~Richard Bach

“The caterpillar does all the work but the butterfly gets all the publicity.”

~Attributed to George Carlin

“Metamorphosis has always been the greatest symbol of change for poets and artists. Imagine that you could be a caterpillar one moment and a butterfly the next.”

-Louie Schwartzberg



Diane Bandura Miller was born at the old Mount Sinai Hospital on Yorkville Avenue. Attended elementary school in Toronto. Then as many families did in the 60's, moved to the suburbs. She attended Burnhamthorpe Collegiate in Etobicoke, worked as a keypunch operator for the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, married, then along with her husband Jim, built a home and hobby farm in Nassagaweya.

Diane then went on to work for the Ontario Jockey Club. She later studied computer while attending Guelph University, in order to accept a job she was offered as editor/publisher/writer/photographer for the “Canadian Camper”.

Diane now enjoys spending time with her husband, family and four grandchildren, volunteer work, photography, art and theatre.



Royal Flush

By Diane Bandura Miller

“Royal Flush” was a comedy review and Guelph Little Theatre’s gift to the city to celebrate Guelph Ontario’s sesquicentennial. It was a blend of comedy and drama, music and dance. The revue took a humorous look at the city of Guelph and Guelph Little Theatre’s history. Offering something for everyone – a barbershop quartet, a chorus line – it highlighted the changes over the past 150 years, including transportation and dance.

The summer of 1977 was a sad and depressing time for me, having lost some close family members. When my cousin Lynda called me and asked if I would like to go to an audition at the Guelph Little Theatre, I wasn’t at all interested. She insisted and said we could just watch. We picked up Colette, who was a neighbour and friend of Lynda’s, on our way to Guelph.

Arriving at the theatre located on 107 Dublin Street at Paisley in Guelph, we were directed to sit in the Green Room. Colette went into another room to register for an audition and then came back out to sit with us. I had never been to an audition before and found it interesting. Every now and then someone would enter the Green Room and call out the name of people auditioning. To my amazement he called Colette MacDonald, Lynda Phillips and Diane Miller! It turned out that Colette signed us all up without asking. My refusal to audition didn’t seem to make an impression on anyone, and I was coaxed to go downstairs and audition for the show’s director Terry Doyle!

The director showed us a few dance steps and asked that we repeat them, which we managed to do in unison. Then he asked us to sing a few lines from a song. I told him that I didn’t sing well and he said, “Sing anyway.” That did it! All three of us were signed up as chorus line dancers along with several others. Fifty people would be included in different parts for the show.

We rehearsed every week from July, 1977 through August, and then every evening in September, until the show opened.

Emcees for the show were Director Terry Doyle, John Snowdon and Key Noakes, publicity director. This was to be an exciting sesquicentennial salute presented to the city at the Guelph Little Theatre on September 10. It was so well received and reviewed that the theatre was asked to continue it much longer.

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The chorus line girls wore scant little costumes, designed by the efforts of the chorus line girls. In the production, myself and Liz Poulton a lovely “sister,” who matched my height and look, were given stand out parts in a couple of comedy acts. One included a very thin Tarzan, who came on stage to the tune of Rocky, dressed in a leopard, fur like, loin cloth covering vital parts and one shoulder. This was such fun and the many dance rehearsals got me in terrific shape at the age of thirty three. We sang, danced and marched carrying flags from all countries to “This Land is Your Land.” Not only did this song bring tears to everyone’s eyes but so did the very funny skits performed by the cast. The show was to close after a week but went on longer, because of the great reviews and people requesting tickets.

The Guelph Mercury covered the story and one evening after taking many pictures during our rehearsal, I was called out to have a picture taken of me alone for the Lifestyle page. The caption under my picture read, “Diane Miller will be a chorus line girl in Royal Flush. Now tell us you don’t want to buy tickets.” I was told the picture was sent to someone in England and even they wanted to buy tickets! HA

...For a few years after this I continued to volunteer at Guelph Little Theatre in lighting and other positions.

In 1978, Guelph Little Theatre got a call from Toronto asking for extras for the movie “I Miss You Hugs and Kisses” starring Elke Sommer and Don Pilon. I got a part as an extra, along with my sister who I convinced to go with me. We sat in the front row during taping of the courtroom scene, next to Don Pilon/Peter Demeter’s would be girlfriend. I asked my husband to see the movie with me, there were only 6 people in the entire theatre. It was not a successful movie, and very gruesome. This drama was based on a true story and showed different ways a well-known realtor may have had his wife brutally murdered.

On November 16, 1993, Guelph Little Theatre was completely destroyed by a fire which left people devastated. The play “Blood Relations” was in production at the time but, due to the commitment of all those involved, “the show went on.” A place to perform was found and the play opened on time just 10 days later. The set, which was totally lost, was completely rebuilt, painted and decorated in just 3 days. New costumes and props were found, some costumes rescued and cleaned and sound and lighting equipment borrowed.

The 1994 - 1995 seasons offered four productions, two at Guelph Collegiate and two at War Memorial Hall at the University of Guelph. During the 1995 - 1996 season it was reduced to three productions which meant a financial loss but it was important to continue a presence in the community while another theatre was scouted out.

During the 1996 - 1997 season GLT featured only three shows because the members and volunteers were preparing the new theatre at 176 Morris Street.

After moving to the new location Guelph Little Theatre continued to reach new levels of achievement artistically and financially. It had recovered from difficult times.



Merin, Diane, Mac & Peter

Reflections

Guelph Little Theatre continues to produce shows of a very high calibre which include dramas, excellent comedies, musicals and more. GLT has won many awards at the Western Ontario Drama League and Theatre Ontario Festivals.

My husband and I continue to attend plays at the theatre now, over forty years later.



Shacked Up in Milton

By Diane Bandura Miller

Have you ever wondered why we do the things we do? In writing this story I am thinking that there may be something greater than ourselves that directs us when we don't have a clue as to what we are doing. Nobody seemed to understand why two people, born and raised in downtown Toronto, would chose to do things in this unconventional way... neither did we!

Jim and I were married October 5, 1963, one month prior to my 19th birthday. Jim was twenty-two. We rented a one bedroom apartment on Lakeshore Road in Port Credit for ninety dollars a month. I was working at The Bank of Commerce in Toronto as an IBM key punch operator. Jim was an auto mechanic at Hawley Motors in Mississauga. Every weekday morning on his way to work, Jim would drop me off at the train station in Port Credit and pick me up on his way home. Jim also sang and played guitar in a band.

At my bridal shower and at our wedding, friends and relatives gave us many gifts, and money. Wondering what to do with the money, we asked our family for suggestions. Both our fathers offered their best advice, "Buy land, they are not making any more of it."

After touring many properties in the Georgetown and Milton area we were shown ten acres that seemed affordable in what is now North Milton or Nassagaweya.

Jim's band manager Murray Cranston, who also sold real estate, showed us the property in December of 1963. It looked beautiful covered in snow, cedar trees and rocks. We used the money received as wedding gifts to make a down payment and continued to pay off our property over the next year. Jim's salary paid



Our wedding

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for our apartment and living expenses in Port Credit, while my earnings paid the balance owing on our property.

In the spring, when the ground thawed, we realized what we bought was a lot of work. There were cedar trees and rocks completely covering the property. Not a single clearing on which to build a house.

My grandmother drove out with my parents one day to see our country property and thought that we had lost our minds. Shaking her head in disbelief she said, "Only Indians live out here!" and asked, "Is there electricity out here?" and "What if you decide to have a family, are there schools in the area?" We didn't know and had not even thought that far ahead. The optimism of youth!

Over the next five years Jim and I worked all week in Toronto, then drove out to our property and cut down trees all weekend long. Staying in an old truck body that Jim's father, who was in the trucking business, gifted us to make our weekends a little more comfortable.

One night I awoke at midnight feeling very sick to my stomach, this continued over the next few nights. I decided to see a doctor, he did some tests and when the results were in he called me to his office and told me that I was pregnant! I drove directly to see Jim at work to let him know. We were very excited and at the same time relieved that I didn't have the flu or something worse!

As a precaution in my second trimester my gynecologist advised that I stop taking the train to work. In my third trimester my doctor advised me to quit working altogether. There was not any maternity leave back then. We decided to give up our apartment and move in with Jim's parents. Our daughter Dawn was born February 12, 1965. When things settled down a little, we decided to move out on our own again. We managed to find an apartment in Streetsville, near Applewood Motors, where Jim was now working.

While living in Streetsville, we looked around at different types of houses to build on our land and discovered a Pan Abode red cedar log home, manufactured in British Columbia. It would cost us sixteen thousand dollars to buy the logs, windows and roof to build our home.

We then had to convince a bank to loan us the money, offering our paid property as collateral. This proved to be much more difficult than we could have guessed. The Toronto Dominion bank manager in Streetsville, where we lived and banked, told us that we could never afford to pay it back and declined our loan.

Finally, we found a lawyer who was willing to take a gamble on two young dreamers. He offered us the sixteen thousand dollar loan at a nine and a half percent interest rate. We accepted and my parents co-signed the loan. We ordered our house and agreed to take delivery the summer of 1968. At this point, I was staying at home most of the time, looking after our daughter Dawn.

Jim was offered a job teaching Automotive Technology at Port Credit Secondary School. In order to fulfill the requirements for this job he had to attend Teacher's College for a year. We decided to move back in with his parents.

Friends and family offered to help cut down trees. It seemed everyone wanted to be a lumberjack! Weekends were like camping out. We cooked pancakes for breakfast and hot dogs for lunch on an old wood stove we dragged in from somewhere. Jim constructed an outhouse, we found later that only thin people could use because it was so narrow. Our larger friends had to get ready and back in. We used a shower curtain for a door.

Occasionally we would stay overnight, sleeping in the old truck body with an attached, poorly constructed, guest quarters. This was quite an adventure for a city girl. One day upon

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arriving at our shack we found a five foot long snake had taken up residence. Jim was not a fan of snakes but managed to drive him out... my hero!

Our team of lumberjacks enjoyed every minute of the outdoor life. Some of Jim's students at Port Credit Secondary School found out about our adventure and asked to get into the act. Jim taught them how to use axes and chainsaws. Trees were falling every which way. Thank goodness nobody was hurt! We did not even consider the liability.

We cut down only enough trees to make room for a house and small barn, leaving a twenty foot border of cedars around the front and sides for privacy. The rest of the acreage was left to nature. Jim built a boom truck to pull out the stumps.

We hired Nellis Construction to come level the land of stumps and rocks. One day as we were driving toward our property we noticed signs posted along our road stating "CAUTION, HEAVY TRUCKS TURNING." I commented, "WOW, someone is having a big project done around here! Much to our surprise the dump trucks were turning onto our property! Could we afford this?...Yipes! It turned out that Nellis Construction was doing road work for the Town of Milton and needed somewhere to dump fill...we paid only three dollars a load.

Now it was time to think about building our house. Jim's father knew someone, from his Legion who could put in the foundation for our home and my father knew a man, who was qualified by Pan Abode, to assemble our log home.

In the spring of 1968 we began digging a foundation. Every time the front end loader dug into the ground it hit a spring. We were advised to dig only a shallow hole and build mostly above ground, which we did.

After the footings were poured our foundation kept filling with water. Every weekend we pumped it out and it would fill in again during the week, we eventually installed a sump pump which ran continuously. All was approved by the Town and we continued our optimistic quest.

In July of 1968, our Pan Abode red cedar logs arrived from British Columbia via Canadian Pacific Railway. Jim's father and a friend, Ed Wood, came to our rescue with tractor trailers. Friends and family lifted each log off the train, loaded it onto the trucks and hauled it to our building site in Nassagaweya.

Things were finally taking shape. Jim traded his automotive shop skills with his fellow teachers at Port Credit High School. The building construction teacher, Jack Irwin constructed our



The shack and guest house



Logs arrive by train from BC

Reflections

kitchen cupboards, in his shop at home. The metal shop teacher, Carl Ingles, made us wrought iron doors. Our brother-in-law Claude Stevens, who was also a shop teacher designed our heating system. We hired an electrician to drill through each log as they were being installed for light switches, lights and plug wiring. Mrs. Sproul witched our property to find water and her husband drilled our well. The sewing skills my grandmother and mother taught me came in handy to make curtains and bedspreads. We could not afford carpets or proper flooring so I painted our sub floors with big flowers. We moved into our home just in time for our daughter Shari's birth, November 27, 1968.

Jim's next project was to build a makeshift barn to house horses and fulfill his dream of being a cowboy. His father bought a couple of draft horses to keep in our barn, and a friend, Cliff Tunney, boarded his horse here as well. We bought a few chickens, cat and a dog. We also planted a garden, which did not grow very well, what did grow was quickly claimed by raccoons and other wildlife. We found out later that in order to grow vegetables we had to add lime to the soil to make it more alkaline, the cedar trees had made the soil too acidic.

Much to my Grandmother's surprise we were not attacked by Indians, electricity was available and there was a school for our daughters to attend. They traveled by bus to Brookville Elementary School, and later attended Holy Rosary in Milton. We even had telephones... but with a multi-party line.

A few years later, while raising our daughters I convinced Jim that it was a good idea for us to buy another seventeen and a half acres of land which adjoined our ten acre property and start a tree farm for lumber.

The Ministry of Natural Resources planted nine thousand native white pine and white spruce trees on a clear ten acres toward the back of our property in 1979. I put that ten acres and another twelve under agreement with the MNR. Agreeing never to clear cut, and to submit a professional "plan" every few years. Much of the land is environmentally sensitive. It contains, swampland, a peat moss bog, a natural spring, and many rare species of flora and fauna.

The Ministry of Natural Resources suggested ways to maintain our tree farm and contacted Guelph Correctional Institute to set up a plan and bring inmates to work on our property harvesting some of the cedar trees. The Ministry marked certain trees and the inmates cut them down, taking trees of a certain circumference back to prison where they made picnic tables.

Three inmates escaped while working here. The guards did not carry guns because they told me it would make things more dangerous, they did not even have cell phones back then. When the first inmate escaped the guard knocked on our door and asked to use the phone. He had the



Diane and Dawn taking a break

Reflections

police and helicopters surrounding the area in no time at all. The inmate turned himself in, he did not go far. The other two escapees were also quickly apprehended.

We entertained often having corn roasts, snowmobile parties, horse drawn sleigh rides and dances on our outside deck. Jim's band performed. It was a busy life, with Jim teaching high school and me teaching modeling and self-improvement at Finishing School. I later worked for the Ontario Jockey Club as their official hostess, model, and in Publicity, looking after groups. Jim would arrive home from work and look after our daughters and I would be ready to leave for work, evenings and weekends.

Over the years we added a two story barn, built a three car garage, drive shed, a garden house and two additions to the main house. We also did a lot of landscaping.

Continuing to reside on our property in Nassagaweya we maintain our tree farm but no longer have animals. Our daughters are married and own their own homes nearby. We enjoy having our family nearby and have four wonderful grandchildren.

Jim now teaches guitar and has a guitar club at the Milton Seniors' Centre. He also sings in a band called "Late Harvest." I do some writing, art work, and volunteer work for the Town of Milton and for The Chet Atkins Society in Nashville TN.

...and so the story goes.



Three Room Flat

By Barry De Gruchy

I was born in Montreal in 1947. We lived in a three room flat that consisted of a kitchen, one bedroom, and a living room. We lived on the second floor. Our family was made up of my mom and dad and my older sister and older brother and me. Here is how we worked our sleeping arrangement: my mom and dad slept in the only bedroom. My sister and brother and I slept in bunk beds in the living room. My sister being older slept on the top while my brother and I slept head to feet in the lower bed. As you can imagine, my brother and I would put our feet up and push up my sister from underneath. The result of continuing to do that, I was relegated to the hallway on a fold out bed.

I was not impressed with this arrangement. But something happened that worked to my advantage. My mom and dad would watch TV in their bed room. There was a large mirror on the bureau and I could watch TV through the mirror but it made everything backwards. One night I was pretty relaxed watching a show when my father suddenly appeared in the hall as he was going to the kitchen. He looked at me and then at the mirror and I knew the gig was up. He quietly went back into the bedroom producing a blanket. He then covered the mirror without saying a word.

Living in such a small space created several problems. There was absolutely no privacy and there was no place to do our homework. When I did my homework I would say to my mom, "How do you spell a certain word?"

Her response was, "Look it up in the dictionary."

My response was, "It's easier to ask you." My mother would usually give in and help me.

In the summer my mom would not let us stay in the house. She said, "You guys need to go out and blow the stink off." My brother and I played outside until it was lunch or supper time. After supper we played outside until it was becoming dark. After that we each took turns having a bath. Come winter we only took a bath on Saturday night, which is hard to believe today. We had a clothes hamper in the bathroom. It had an imitation pearl top lid. After a while my mom noticed a hole in the lid. She asked us, "Who has done this thing?" None of us would confess so my Mom said, "I guess Mr. nobody lives here." After 50 years my brother finally admitted it.

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As we got older, my mom would send my brother and I in July and August to my Grandfather and Grandmother's house in Chambly which was in the country. After living in the three room flat for 13 years of my life, we finally moved to an eight room flat and we soon discovered that we did not have enough furniture to fill the flat. I was so glad to have my own bedroom at last but I still did not do my homework.



Our three room flat at 5647 St. Andre St., Montreal



I was born in Montreal. I have been married for 47 years. We have two daughters and five grandchildren. I worked for Univar Canada, a chemical distributor for 38 years as a customs and traffic co-ordinator. My hobbies are woodworking, making small furniture. Reading history and murder mysteries is one of my pleasures in life. I have been retired now for 9 years and I am enjoying this part of my life.



The Move

By Barry De Gruchy

There was an air of excitement in the office when I arrived on a morning in January, 1974 at my office in Montreal. I could hear pens scribbling something down and I could hear voices whispering all around me. Then people were going into the boss's office and closing the door behind them. I finally asked the question to one of my friends, "What the heck is happening this morning that I am not aware of?"

He replied, "They are asking everyone if they would be interested moving to the Toronto office."

After going outside in the cold air to buy a coffee off the coffee truck, I went back into the office, immediately heading to the boss's office. As I walked in, I was determined to find out what the fuss was about. I asked the question, "Why haven't you asked me?"

His response was, "You have a family."

I then said to him, "Ask me, ask me."

On the drive home I was wondering how my wife would react to my request to move. When I arrived home her reaction was pretty much what I would have expected.

"What do you mean transferring to Toronto!!"

After much discussion I finally said to her, "You're never behind me when I make decisions." She wouldn't talk to me for a while and I just knew then I had crossed the line. Finally after some time we talked a little more. She told me to look into it a bit further.

So the next day I went into the office to gather more information on what the move entailed. The employees who had previously written down their salary expectations were rejected because those figures were too high. It became obvious to the managers that these employees wanted to get rich on the company through this transfer. I definitely wanted this transfer so I put down a lower offer. To my surprise they accepted it.

Again on the drive home I wasn't sure if my wife would be happy with my news. She told me that she was willing to give it a try.

In March of that year we flew to Toronto and were sick with the flu on the plane. We stayed in our room for a day until we were feeling a little better.

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The next two days we travelled all over Toronto's west end looking for an apartment to no avail. I put over 300 miles on the company car. I figured half of that was backing up and turning around in people's driveways. On the Sunday, we went to a townhouse complex in Etobicoke and spoke to the land lady, a Mrs. Gerry. She said, "There are no vacancies so I will take down your number and call you if anything comes up."

On the return flight my wife said to me, "Well we won't be able to move because we can't find a place to live." I said to her, "That's not how it works, we have to make it happen." We would have to stay in a hotel until we find something.

On the Monday I received a call from Mrs. Gerry. She told me that a couple had bought a house over the week-end. They were willing to sublet to us. Mrs. Gerry kept calling me Mr. De Grunchy. After living there she would constantly bellow across the parking lot, "Mr. De Grunchy, Mr. De Grunchy." I tried desperately to pretend I hadn't heard her voice. I felt I couldn't have people saying my name incorrectly at the townhouse complex. Often times I would try to hide from her but she would catch up with me, much to my chagrin. I had corrected her several times and it didn't seem to faze her. After living there for 6 years she still called me by that name. She was a very kind lady and helped us a lot.

In 1980 we moved to a new house in Milton. I had to commute by car to Toronto for the next 29 years. We enjoyed our new home and it was worth the trip to Milton.

Leaving our family and friends was quite dramatic for us. We had two daughters ages 4 and 2 and we were responsible for their wellbeing in our new home. We had no immediate family in Toronto so it was hard to make new friends. It was especially hard on my wife as she was stay at home mom to our children in their early years. I worked in the office and it was so much easier for me. We returned to Montreal 9 times in the first year. We had very dominant parents when we lived in Montreal. They demanded that we have Sunday dinner with them. Double meals at Christmas were in order not to offend them.

Once we became settled in Toronto I had to be a real dad to my children and a husband to my wonderful wife. I had to be the leader in our family. I used to ask my dad or father-in-law to repair things. I was very dependent on them. Now I had to do my own repairs and I learned a lot.

Decisions in life have a great bearing on our future. If we hadn't moved would things have developed differently? It sure would have. We would ask ourselves the what if's for the rest of our lives. I knew we could always move back for my wife's sake. Now looking back it was good for my job, family, and the friends we met in our lives here.

Later on the company asked if I would consider a transfer to the Calgary office. When I mentioned this to my wife she responded, "I hope you will have a good trip."



His Will, Our Prayers

By Nargis Naqvi

18th March 1996... I remember it like I can see it happening now. My brother and I are sitting in the living room, waiting for Abbu to come home from work. He isn't usually this late, and it's pretty dark now. Mustafa goes over to the balcony and slides open its double doors – hot humid air blasts its way into our air-conditioned space. He glances down into the street below, and sees the blue Cadillac.

“He's home,” he announces, returning to join our card game. Fifteen minutes pass by, but no Abbu. The twins, sprawled on the floor, look up at the clock and Sara, the youngest, goes into the balcony to see what the hold-up is. Mustafa walks out of the apartment wordlessly, having clearly decided to go down and see what is taking Abbu so long.

The minutes tick by. Ammi asks the twins to set the table for dinner. It feels like eternity, but twenty minutes later, Mustafa hobbles in, holding Abbu by the shoulders and balancing his weight on himself as Abbu leans dangerously to one side. Abbu looks at us with his usual cheerful smile, but only the right side of his face smiles. The left side is lopsided, dragging downward. He must have seen the shock on our faces, because he says, “Hey, what's wrong? Never seen a tired ol' man before?” His speech is slurred.

I have no idea how Mustafa brought Abbu up three flights of stairs, because it takes all three of us — me, Mustafa and Sara — just to get him to his room, to his bed.

When the twins see Abbu, they immediately shout for Ammi. One look at him and she calls her brother, and his wife who is a doctor. They live nearby, and come straight away.

“What are you all so worried about?” Abbu tries to make light of the situation as he stumbles into bed. “I am just tired. All I need is a good night's sleep.”

I quickly take off his shoes and socks, and try to ease his legs onto the bed. Sara, just fourteen at the time and very attached to him, is unable to grasp what is happening and keeps trying to make him comfortable. We have never seen anyone whose facial muscles don't respond, where only one side works and the other doesn't.

It is all a mad rush after that. The moment my aunt sees Abbu, she calls for an ambulance. My uncle accompanies him to the hospital, coming back a few hours later to inform us that he has

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had a stroke, and is in the ICU. “The doctor was saying it’s a good thing he didn’t fall asleep otherwise he would have gone into a coma.”

This is how easily worlds fall apart.

I’m sure you can imagine what happened after that. Ammi broke down and started crying. None of us could imagine our Abbu, the tall, strong man full of energy and vitality, lying in a hospital bed, fighting for his life. As we calmed her down, I tried to figure out how to manage the hospital visits, and break the news to our close friends and family.

Needing to share my grief, I picked up the phone and called my husband, who was working in Los Angeles, and unloaded some of the pain I was feeling.

“I don’t think I will be coming home as planned. I need to be here until Abbu gets better,” I said, feeling torn.

“I am sure you’re all under stress. Just be there for your family and keep me posted on how he’s doing.”

The next day, after sending my sister Sara and my youngest brother Yusuf — still only four years old — to school, Ammi and I took a taxi to the hospital. What we found there brought a lump to our throats and made our vision hazy.

Abbu, hooked up to tubes and machines, lay in a bed in the ICU, looking frail and old. Dr. Siddiqui, the surgeon taking care of him, came for his round and spoke to us, informing us that the clot on the right side of his brain was the size of a lemon. He had driven home from work that way, but hadn’t been able to get out of the car. The doctor didn’t have much hope.

“Pray for him,” he said reluctantly, looking down, as if he didn’t want us to see what he really thought.

I couldn’t believe that my father could be in such a state. Were we going to lose him? No. I couldn’t accept that. But as I stood next to his bed, he looked beyond me towards the door trying to summon my sister, who was not even there, to come inside and join us. He was hallucinating. I walked out before I made a fool of myself and went to look for my mother, who had gone to the bathroom.

Still holding strong, I paced the corridor outside the ICU until I met my neighbours who had just arrived to visit. As they embraced me in a warm hug, I broke down and finally let the pain and stress release on their shoulders. It hadn’t dawned on me that I had been holding it in until then.

After a few agonizing days, Abbu was finally released from the ICU and wheeled into a private room, but he would not let anyone treat him like an invalid. He wanted to get up and go to the bathroom on his own, much to the dismay of the nurses who had a hard time trying to balance his tall six-foot frame. Overnight he became the opposite of the calm rational man we had always known.

Everyone loves his or her father; most people hold their fathers in high esteem as well. But it is no exaggeration when I say that Abbu was and is a unique man. Apart from inheriting his mother’s gentle nature, love for all of God’s creations and having immense mercy in his heart, his love for God and all His prophets ranks very high. He has taught us to love all human beings and find good in them while overlooking anything negative. He showed us how a loving husband, a devoted father and a conscientious human being could exist in one person. He loved to forgive. He loved to make others happy and his love for science and religion taught us how to find balance in this world and the next.

Everyone who met Abbu loved him and respected him. His love for poetry and travel, and his excitement over new inventions was almost childlike. He had a PhD in physics from the

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Imperial College in London, but loved knowledge and would acquire it in all forms wherever he went, while also loving to share it with others.

In the early years of our lives when we lived in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, he was teaching at the university, but later on as I left for the USA for higher education, he joined a company in the coastal city of Jeddah to do more research rather than teach. This man, who came home from work every day and wanted to entertain his children, play carom board, take them out for a drive and help his wife with the housework, was now lying in a hospital bed getting angry with everyone and demanding things from colleagues and family. He had become a different man.

“He’s becoming like his father used to be,” my mother reflected as he got all red in the face when something was not done instantly. “I knew he had it hidden somewhere.” She shook her head remembering the harsh nature of her father-in-law.

After about a month, Abbu was transferred to a rehabilitation center. His colleagues were constantly by his side, trying to cheer him up, coming over to ask for his advice; and the owner of the company - a very important and busy man - kept coming to see him as well. I saw the struggle between his willpower to get up and get better, and the fear of leaving this world with a four-year old, and other unmarried children, behind. He was desperate on one hand to be walking and working again, and on the other making plans to bring my husband to Saudi Arabia so I could be around for my family and not have to leave again.

“I have talked to my manager. Send your husband’s CV to him and make sure you keep following up,” he demanded of me. All I could do was nod and agree. My husband was not going to come. We had just graduated from university and I knew he wanted to get more work experience in the U.S.

When the rehab center gave us permission to take him home for the weekends, the watchman, along with some men from the street, had to carry him in a wheelchair all the way to the third floor. It was then we all realized the importance of getting a building with an elevator.

A few weekend visits later, he did the impossible: announcing that he was going to drive around Jeddah, looking for an apartment in a building with an elevator, he took his car keys, made the twins help him go down to the car, and drove off with them!

The more we panicked and tried to make him stop, the more his ego kicked in, trying to prove to everyone he was not handicapped. My mother and I were in a state of panic, so she called my uncle who rushed over, and then drove out looking for him. We were sure there’d be an accident in the busy and crazy streets of Jeddah.

A few hours later Abbu returned with a satisfied look on his face, looking at me with disappointment that I did not have any faith in him. My heart sank as I realized that I had let him down.

That night I lay awake for quite some time, thinking of the days when, worried about my wild teenage habits, he would come to my bed every night to tuck me in, with a few gentle reminders of how God loved us and was watching us and how He wants us to be mindful of His existence in whatever we did. I thought of all the countries he took us to; the joy in exploring the world with him; the scientific way he explained the Quran, finding balance in God’s word; reading the Bible and the Torah to tell us about past prophets and their greatness; and buying me all the art supplies I could ever ask for - indulging me in my hobbies. I remember the guitar I found in my closet as a surprise, the piano I got as a five year old and the music teacher he hired for me. I missed those years terribly, and let tears run down my cheeks, aching for my father.

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I thought back to the last few hours, and realized that his willpower would certainly make him better. I prayed with deliberation that night, begging God to bring my father back. And He did.

Despite the limp he still carries, the left side of his leg and arm stiff with curled fingers and toes, the pain he never complains about and yet tries to conquer with various devices – despite it all, he is back, walking without a cane, driving us all wherever we want to go. He has written a book called *Physics, Psychology and Religion* and is back to his positive, gentle self again. Yes, there is a change in him. From super-sensitive and soft, his illness took him to harsh and angry and then settled him into a practical yet kind human being.

May God keep him by our side for a long, long time, as he continues to educate and inspire his children and his grandchildren with his ever-growing knowledge, and his love for all God's creatures.



Nargis Naqvi lives in Milton with her husband and 3 teenagers. She was born in Ireland, raised in Saudi Arabia and is of Pakistani ethnicity. Nargis got her degree in Business from the U.S In 2013 she founded a non-profit organization, MY Voice Canada, that empowers Muslim youth to have a voice through every creative channel they possess. Now she is a mentor to the youth and loves to write and paint in her available time. Her message to humanity: Learn to love, understand and forgive, it will give you happiness all around.



No Smoke Without Fire

By Nargis Naqvi

The children left for school, and a long day stretched ahead of me; the need to just crawl back into bed took over. Like it did every day.

Snuggling into my freshly washed comforter – the fresh scent of fabric softener still lingering in its creases – I closed my eyes and tried to rest. Then I heard it. Again.

The creaking of the floorboards as footsteps approached my bed. The sudden chill in the air as I felt a draft on my face. The feeling of a shadow as someone hovered on top of me. Squeezing my eyes shut I started reciting all the relevant prayers from the Quran, whispering them feverishly, trying to shut out everything else. I finally sneaked a look, knowing even as I did that no one would be there. No one at all. Just like every other time.

The first time it had happened after moving to my new home in Milton, I thought my husband had come back for something he must have left behind. Especially when the heady scent of musk entered my nostrils. The next time, I was sure my son came to give me one last kiss before he left for school. I heard someone like him, and yet not like him at all, jumping on the bed and screeching. Each and every time, it was just sounds. Footsteps one day, the bed creaking another day.

When did it all start? When I think back, there are so many different versions of this that I seem to go back and forth in time trying to remember them all.

It was the year 2001. We had just moved into a brand new house in Mississauga. The land in front of ours was still barren, and as we sipped tea on the porch in the evenings, we could smell the hot breads baking in the bakery across the road. New homeowners getting ready to settle in inhabited the houses next door. My husband's job required extensive travel so it was just me and my little girls at home during the week. A green and white baby monitor ensured I heard not only the girls in bed while I was in the kitchen downstairs, but also any sound while we were alone upstairs at night.

The house was so new that the smell of fresh paint and concrete hung in the air. The chill of cold autumn entered through the windows as I tucked the girls into bed with me and lay down

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beside them with my Jeffrey Archer novel, ready for a good story. My husband was gone for the week on one of his business trips and the house felt still and silent.

Then I heard the sounds. Someone walking up a flight of stairs. The thumping of the boots was so loud it felt like it was emanating from our own room. Then a door creaked open. For a moment I thought someone had gotten in and my heart leapt to my throat. Then, a rattling of bottles indicated a refrigerator, and then the door shut and the same boots walked back down again. Hearing the door creaking and the bottles rattling, I breathed a sigh of relief, realizing that the monitor had caught some sounds from the house next door. I settled back into bed and didn't give it much thought, smiling to myself at what other sounds I was going to hear from next door.

The next day, I was cooking in the kitchen while the girls played in the room next door. The baby monitor crackled to life, and I could hear a man and a woman as they talked animatedly. I strained my ears to listen, thinking it was a radio channel coming from one of the neighbour's homes, but the language was not at all something I could comprehend. I am very good at international dialects, but this sounded like nothing I could even remotely make out. Ignoring it once again I continued cooking, realizing that others might be able to hear our sounds as well on their devices.

But then, that night and every night after that, the same sounds repeated in the same pattern. Fifteen flights of stairs, door opening, bottles rattling, footsteps going down again. During the day, the same man and woman, speaking gibberish, laughing, talking in the same crazy tones, gave me the shivers every day. There was nothing human about those sounds.

Fear settled in my stomach as realization dawned that this was unreal. I unhooked the monitor and put it away in the basement. A few days later my body started to feel extremely fatigued. My brain started to fog up. I could barely move, and I would be in and out of an unconscious state all day long. The slightest crying from the girls would rile me into a state of agitation. I couldn't remember whether or not I had fed them, or changed their diapers.

Panic started to pulse inside me. With my husband away I could only rely on an aunt living nearby. She didn't think much of my angry outbursts, even though I told her it was scaring me.

"What if I hurt the children?" I expressed serious concern.

"Nargis, all mothers go through this. It's not a big deal. Go to a doctor and see if you have a hormonal imbalance."

So I did. Several tests later there was nothing. On paper I was very healthy and my doctor thought it was postpartum-depression. I knew I wasn't depressed. On the contrary, I had so far been calm and managed the children with ease, as they were no trouble at all.

My father's sister (who was deeply religious) called me when she heard of my state, and told me to read specific surahs (chapters) from the Quran that the Prophet had read when someone had done black magic on him. I was to read them after every prayer.

And then a miracle happened. I recited the last two surahs of the Quran, blowing on my hands and wiping them over my body, and I felt a veil coming off my head, sliding down my body until it came out of my feet! I had never felt anything so powerful and strong. All of a sudden, I felt that my mind was back in my control. I could think clearly. I put the incident behind me and continued with life as usual, occasionally thinking about it in amazement.

A few years after my third child turned four, we moved overseas to Dubai. I was happy. It felt wonderful to be in a warm climate, closer to my parents who lived in Saudi Arabia. I could see them several times a year this way, without the expanse of the ocean and the expense of exorbitant ticket prices limiting me. I hadn't felt this happy in years!

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They say that happiness should not be broadcast to everyone. Something always goes wrong. I wasn't thinking of that as I let the world know how awesome I felt, what wonderful schools I had found for the children and what a great job I had managed to land at the American Institute, teaching English to adults. I also discovered some old friends from high school living in the area and the reunion was refreshing.

Then one day I fainted, hitting my head on a cobblestone path. A series of health issues started after the concussions were over. And then, out of the blue, while I was at home resting and recovering, I felt the presence.

It was in the girls' bedroom. The sun was stronger in my room so I would try to nap in theirs. As I lay down, I felt someone rustling paper beside my ear. Trying to shake off the sounds, I tried to get up but my body wouldn't move. A shadow was circling the bed and I felt a weight on my throat. I could not scream. I could not move. I only saw shadows. By now, I had gotten so good at my recitations of the surahs from the Quran that I started to recite them over and over again, until the pressure subsided and I could open my eyes and sit up.

My school friend Tanya heard of this and came to visit me. She had always been very sensitive to things of this nature, almost a psychic.

"There is definitely some negative energy here," she walked around the house, remarking as she went from room to room. "I feel it on my skin. You need to make sure you read the second surah of the Quran for three days in this house."

"That's so long! It will take me two hours every day to read," I whined.

"Nargis! This is serious. You don't want to leave this negativity lingering," she looked at me disapprovingly. So I recited for three days and things went back to normal and I started enjoying life again.

A year later we moved to Islamabad. My husband was on a mission to gain as much career experience possible, and I didn't give it much thought. The children would learn about a few different cultures, and with that positive outlook I moved with him, leaving behind the amazing Middle Eastern life I had become so attached to.

That is where I met Fatima. She was an American Indian Muslim who had moved to Islamabad at the same time as we had. Her children became friends with mine and we found a lot in common. But my shadows that had started in Canada, and had followed me to Dubai, also didn't leave me alone in Islamabad.

Here again it was in the girls' bedroom. The same suffocation if I ever lay down there. The same shadows circling me. The same sounds. I did not feel scared anymore as God's words gave me solace, but fear for my children's safety stayed in my mind. My body started to get weaker. I would faint time and again. Random symptoms began manifesting in my body, and doctors did every test possible. There was nothing they could do. One doctor told me to go see a psychiatrist, suggesting that I had imagined my fainting spells, the boils on my body and eyes, and all the other symptoms.

Fatima heard all this and said she was sure someone had done black magic on me.

"This is not normal. I have never seen anyone look so sick all the time. I have an aunt in India and she is very good at finding out such things. I am going to call her." Fatima was determined despite my objections to her reasoning.

"I have no enemies Fatima. No one would do magic on me, as if it were that easy anyway!" I rolled my eyes at her theories. "Plus how can your aunt 'find' anything out? Does she have djinns in her circle of friends?" I joked about it.

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In Islam, there are two supernatural beings mentioned in the Quran: angels and djinns. Angels are made of light and worship God continuously without having any say in the matter, such as the arch angel Gabriel; but djinns are made from smokeless fire and, like humans, have been given the freedom of choice: to be good, or evil, like Satan. People who do black magic use the evil djinns as accomplices by various acts of voodoo, using skulls and blood and other disgusting things.

A few days later, Fatima called me. “I have good news and bad news.” Her playful personality couldn’t help creating a mystery around the matter. “It looks like no one has done magic on you,” she confirmed.

“I told you! You are such a drama queen. So what’s the bad news?” I said nonchalantly.

“Well, it seems you did things as a teenager that you shouldn’t have. Did you ever experiment with djinns?”

I thought back to my teenage years in Riyadh. I was seventeen, and my friends were all calling spirits using the Ouija board. Out of curiosity and fascination, I too joined in. When the board started to answer my questions, I naturally wanted to use it for everything. Eventually when things started to fall off shelves on their own, and lights would turn off and on, my aunt who witnessed this scolded me and told me to lay off, and I promised her I would not do it again. I had never really taken it seriously because my father, who is not only religious but a hard core scientist as well, told me that the reason the cup moves under my hand is my inner subconscious moving it. He never thought any spirits were answering the questions. Even when I started seeing shadows by my bedside, he said that all the head injuries had impacted my hypothalamus, which can cause heightened sensitivity to one’s environment, enabling a stronger sixth sense. I accepted that theory as well. But now I came back to the present and answered Fatima’s question.

“Yes, as a child I did call djinns or spirits or I don’t know what it was. Everyone does the Ouija board and so did I!” I defended my actions.

“Well, my aunt said that you messed with them and now a whole family of djinns lives around you all the time. They use you as their source of energy, and if you want to ward them off, you must constantly read the various recitations from the Quran — but you’ll have to be consistent! They won’t go away for good but will stay away as often as you are reading the surahs.”

I closed my eyes and sighed. A whole family of them around me? My God! That was too much to take in. A collection of other past episodes started to play like a movie in my head: my arm that would burn all night as if it were going to fall off; the cats that followed me everywhere until my friend read a few surahs on them; and so much more that I could write a book!

I guess it’s true what they say: Don’t play with fire. I had played with them and they were now my companions. My own past was now haunting me. Literally.



An Affair to Remember

By Terri-Lynne Rade

Our shiny red Euro car hugged the curves and mountainous terrain better than we had expected. We could hardly believe it, after several months of planning, hoarding our nickels, and spending countless hours poured over top ten travel books, we were finally on our dream holiday.

Our journey to several of the most beautiful villages in Provence in the Côte D'Azur region of southern France was the only thing that we had thought about for months on end. A region that was rich in history and pretty villages with stone and terra cotta houses. Villages that were nestled amongst an extraordinary landscape of 4th century ruins of an emperor's palace that was once opulent and grandiose in nature. Vaulted cobbled stone streets with tiny village squares and tiled roofs divided amongst streams and fields of lavender, rows of vineyards and succulent olive groves.

And then there were the cafes under red umbrellas with baskets of flowers hanging within the stone arched entrances facing a backdrop of countryside that was so picturesque with a terrace overlooking scattered farms that were magnificently manicured. Little did we realize as our compact coupe drove up the bumpy hill to our rented chateau in Roussillon that we would experience the most spectacular vacation of a lifetime.

I recalled thinking at the exact moment just after booking our getaway through the holiday website, that perhaps the pictures would look nothing like the real place when we arrived. I then reflected on how bizarre it was to come to this conclusion only after clicking the PayPal button on the website knowing that there was no going back. Suddenly I snapped back to reality as the female British voice on our GPS stated, "You have arrived...You have arrived."

My husband Paul turned off the ignition as we looked at each other and clamoured out of the car. The blistering heat beat down on our faces as we scoured the immediate area and noticed stone houses surrounded by wooden fences and wrought iron gates. The roofs of the houses were tiled in rich red ochre that blended into the sculpted cliffs of the nearby rugged mountains.

"This is it," he said looking rather disheveled and unconstructed after our arduous travels that had started at 4:00 am, noticing that it was now 5:30 pm, never mind the time change.

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“I think so,” I replied as I peered over the coloured diagram which my computer had spit out.

“Yes,” said Paul, “and let’s cross our fingers and hope it’s as good as it looks on the website.”

Just then a car drove up right beside us and a man in his mid-50s with gray hair looking almost distinguished stepped out of his little car and greeted us with, “Bonjour Mademoiselle Rade welcome.”

“Hello,” said Paul and I in unison while we exchanged tightly gripped handshakes.

“Come in,” indicated the man as he introduced himself as the owner of the chateau while he unlocked the black gate that was too hot to touch because of the burning sun of the September day.

He led us through the garden that was almost as quaint as the photographs only looking a little more worn. It was funny, I thought to myself, that the swimming pool looked so much larger and more inviting on the website. With our eyes adjusting to the inside light of the house as the wooden double doors were opened, we stepped down into what we quickly noticed was the rustic kitchen. The walls were made of concrete and ochre – nature’s clay embedded in the hills surrounding Roussillon.

The stone kitchen had modest amenities, a tiny fridge, and a gas cooker. The living room was filled with eclectic furnishings that seemed to fit and add charm to our rustic French country hide away. On our way to see the large bedrooms, we passed a quaint Juliet balcony that presented the most breath taking view of our town, Roussillon.

With the house tour complete, we went over our checklist of do’s and don’ts and quickly we were left to settle on our own. With our suitcases soon unpacked and feeling way too over-tired to sleep, we decided to get something to eat and drove off to the local supermarket after being guided by the British lady on our GPS.

“Look at all this cheese,” said Paul. “There must be over a hundred different varieties here and cheap. Let’s get some, you know how I love cheese,” he said without hesitation while vigorously sniffing two creamy white square cut packages. “Oh and let’s get some olives and baguettes too.” Before long we were carrying out two brown paper bags brimming over with our delicious charcuterie supplies soon to be paired with a bodacious bottle of red nectar from the nearby vineyard.

With our stomachs now filled and our eyes getting tired, the jet lag was finally starting to set in and before long we both settled into our strangely uncomfortable bed for the night.

The start to our first morning in Roussillon began with freshly brewed coffee that can only be described as smooth with a “kick.” Alongside for the ride were two of the flakiest croissants I had ever tasted accompanied by a jar of plum preserve and a plate of salty meats and of course, the creamiest of cheeses. We felt like two children on Christmas morning who were about to embark on the greatest adventure ever after we again stuffed ourselves with our continental feast.

Afterwards, each morning, we drove to the most splendid villages filled with history and charm all rolled into one. Each rolling hill led us to a new hidden gem amongst an oasis of olive trees, farmland and historical stone walls.

Then there were the magnificent rows of vineyards. “Let’s stop,” I said to Paul, “and try a grape.”

“We can’t do that,” he said, “We’ll get arrested.”

“Well that is a chance I am willing to take.” Within half a second I had plucked and sampled the most succulent grape I had ever tasted. The flavour burst out of my mouth as I bit it so quickly.

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“Oh my goodness, you have to try this,” I said to Paul as I popped the fruit into his mouth before he had a chance to say no.

“You are right, that is really sweet.” We looked at each other suddenly feeling very guilty because we had just eaten the forbidden fruit and decided that we had better get moving on our journey before someone spotted us in their vineyard.

It didn't take us long before we came across a wine cave that was only a few miles down the road. In we went, ready to sample and shortly afterwards we had bottles in our arms while at the same time feeling a little giddy and slightly warmer.

Our journey over the course of the next two weeks led us to the delight of many more stone villages, beautiful scenery, and cafes with views that could only be described as breath taking and spectacular. We continued to sip wine with the locals and sample the plat de jour from each chef that day.

We hiked up the hill of Fontaine de Vaucluse and visited the most wonderful miniature village at the bottom. We also had the best roulade in Roussillon for dinner one night as we sat and admired the red ochre cliffs.

On a beautiful sunny day we stumbled upon the most magnificent village called Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. And here is where in I fell madly in love with the south of France. After I saw Saint Rémy, I knew she was mine and would be embedded in my memory bank forever. We were greeted by soft flowing trees that cascaded in an arch into this magnificent quaint village so remarkably hidden. Followed by a monumental figure in the centre of town that had a circular sidewalk with steps where people could sit and eat ice cream or take a magical ride on the nostalgic carousel. The beauty of Saint Rémy surrounded by small hills was so magnificent that we decided to park the car and rent electric bicycles that did the peddling for us. As we cycled around town, we admired the Roman ruin of Les Antiques of Glanum and The Triumphal Arch. We took photographs that are still mounted on our walls at home to this day.



The Triumphal Arch in Saint-Remy-de-Provence

Terri-Lynne with her electric bike

But the pièce de résistance was the monastery and the adjoining Saint-Paul-de-Mausole asylum and hospital where Vincent

Van Gogh stayed for one year of his life. A very intriguing place from the outside with its stone walls and gardens full of wild flowers which caught our eye as we locked up our electric bikes and bought two tickets to go inside.

We walked into the square courtyard which had surrounding pillars and was the focal point of our entrance. We took a very narrow and winding staircase which led to the treatment rooms, and common areas where patients stayed while in St. Paul suffering from epilepsy, depression, schizophrenia and other mental health illnesses.

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Then we came upon the room with Vincent Van Gogh's name on the door. It was no bigger than 240 square feet with cream coloured concrete walls and black wrought iron bars on a small window that over looked the lavender fields. It was the place where Van Gogh was voluntarily confined for a year before his psychological downturn. A place where solace and peace could only be found if one was allowed to wander the gardens and sit on the benches outside to reflect and inhale its beauty. It was the place where he would end up painting and producing 100 pieces of his best work. Paintings like "Le Cafe La Nuit," "Le Jardin l'hotel Dieu," and "La Maison Jaune."

Van Gogh was a tortured genius and the most famous post-impressionist Dutch painter of his time. This was the place where he was taken after abruptly being removed from his home town Arles at the height of his madness. It was also rumoured that his brother came from London England arriving with paints and easel for Van Gogh to turn to in his darkest hour.

His room was modestly furnished with a small wrought iron head and foot board with mattress and a little chair in the left hand corner of the room. And as I slowly walked toward the window which was very low for my height, I bent down and starred outside trying to imagine what it would have been like to paint with a view that was so restricted and limiting. Noticing the wheat fields were replaced with lavender fields, and wild flowers instead of irises. And stone cobbled pathways surrounded the gardens where small stone benches sat empty for those who wanted to reflect deep in thought.

Eventually we walked out to the garden and noticed along the fence were hanging replicas of Van Gogh's work all of which were completed while in the asylum. Each painting was more spectacular and beautifully creative than the next one.

And as our tour concluded and we left the infamous place we got back on our electric bicycles and rode away from one of the most intriguing sites we had ever stumbled upon. Our day finished in the town square eating a slice of pizza of all things as we smiled together thinking how great our excursion had turned out.

It was a few short days later after Saint Remy that our two week holiday in Provence was over. How quickly time had flown. We felt our journey had just begun as we packed our suitcases and bid farewell to the south of France, vowing to return someday soon.



The asylum at Saint-Paul-de-Mausole where Vincent Van Gogh spent one year of his life



Looking out the window of Van Gogh's room

Reflections

And while it only seems like a distant memory in our minds today, we often stop and stare at the photographs in our hallway by the door as we recall the best trip of our lifetime together. Remembering all the history, cafe's, and villages, and oh don't forget the cheese.



Terri-Lynne lived in Mississauga for most of her adult life, although for the last 13 years, she has resided in Milton Ontario. Her natural desire to write began in her early high school years, where as a teenager she would often stay up late without her parents knowing as she scribbled her creative thoughts and ideas into the wee hours of the night. Her dream at the time was to become a journalist and travel the world. However on a very courageous day she decided to ask her grade 12 English teacher if she was good enough to be a writer so that she could pursue the field of journalism as it was all she had ever thought about being. To her disappointment he told her she was only average and would probably not make it in the industry. Sadly, after being told this news she decided never to write again. She even changed high schools and her major as her dream to become a writer was no longer in the cards.

In her spare time she also enjoys photography, cooking and gardening. And she is an entrepreneur who runs her own business as she later became a nurse. However she has since retired from the field of nursing but still uses her skill set when it comes to managing her home care business which she and her husband have owned and managed for the past 8 years.

Now after 30 plus years she has decided to ease her way back into the world of writing as her love of travelling has inspired her to write about her various adventures around the globe.



The Party That Wasn't

By Tanya Ingleton

“Where were the four of you coming from?” asked my Dad with a look of disbelief and concern, through the window of his 1978 powder-blue, Granada. His car had been patiently waiting for my arrival, right in front of “The Woodlands School.”

“Our friend Ricky was having a house party, so we decided to leave the dance and check it out for a little while because the dance was becoming so boring,” I honestly responded to my Dad, with a look of guilt. Of course, that did not change the scowl that was already on his face.

I was thinking to myself, “Life was great and dandy for our friends, Tony and Jim, because all they had to do was walk for a few more minutes, and they would be home.” I had asked my Dad if he could drop my good friend, Gabrielle, home because she did not live far from our school, either. Of course, taking any of my friends home would never be an issue.

Now, did you notice the trend? All of my friends lived within a short walking distance from the school. On that night, that would have been a blessing for me, to simply walk to my house after the party. Unfortunately, that was not the case. We lived fifteen minutes away, at the border line of the Streetsville area; I was granted special permission of flexible boundaries from the Peel District School Board to attend school within the central part of Mississauga.

My fear was that I was going to be in trouble! Well, that was what being a teenager...fourteen, soon to be fifteen years old, was all about! Taking risks, and testing, not only yourself, but others, as well.

After we had taken Gabrielle to her attractive, detached house, and had driven out of the parking spot, in front of the garage, the air in my Dad's car was suddenly filled with an awkward, but loud silence.

In a stern voice, deep, with a slight Jamaican accent, my Dad began his interrogation with me, again, “Why did you go to the party? You had asked your Mom and I if you could go to the dance at the school! You didn't mention anything about going to a friend's party,” snapped my Dad, like an army drill sergeant.

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“We wanted to check out our friend, Ricky’s party, for a little while, and then walk back to the dance,” I repeated to my Dad, with my heart pounding so hard against my chest. My eyes were getting ready to shed some huge tears. In other words, I was busted!

My Dad just quickly shook his head, continued to drive, firmly holding the skinny, dark blue steering wheel and then loudly blurted out, “Huh! You wait until your Mommy hears about this!”

After my Dad made that exclamation, all I could do was quietly ponder about our crazy adventure to Ricky’s house party, and dread having to face my Mom. The warm, breezy autumn night could only get better, I had figured to myself, sarcastically.

It would not have been that bad, if it was only my Dad and I in the car, but guess who was also silently absorbing my night-time drama? None other than my brother, Astor, who had a record of hardly getting into any trouble, which was just great! I just knew that Astor must have been thinking to himself, “Man, it really sucked to be Tanya, right now! Did she really believe that she and her friend could get away with their tricks?” Meanwhile, Astor, who was the only son in the family and was known for “getting away with blue murder,” just sat in his seat, as cool as a cucumber.

Earlier that night, as Gabrielle, myself, and a few others walked towards Ricky’s house, we could not help but notice the houses that were festively decorated for Halloween. We saw huge, orange, nearly toothless jack-o-lanterns, creepy-looking and ugly witches; also, there was one house that had a mummy that was decked out in off-white cloth, with bloodstains on its long arms and legs, that looked as if it was ready to reach out and grab us, while lazily sitting on its porch. That’s when we decided, for our own good, to sprint towards Ricky’s house. We only had to dash past two or three more houses, until we finally arrived there.

Including the few of us, who had joined the party, at the last minute, there were about fifteen to twenty guests. We thought we were going to be head-bopping, or dancing to hits, such as, Janet Jackson’s “Rhythm Nation,” Soul to Soul’s, “Keep on Movin’,” or even Red-Head Kingpin’s, “Do the Right Thing,” but instead, the so-called “party,” was only a casual gathering. That is, there was not a dee-jay spinning any hit records, whatsoever. It was not anything to write home about. How disappointing!

Ricky shared the house with his mom, who was a single-parent. As you entered through the front door, a brown, medium-sized, rug read, “WELCOME,” in black, bold letters, trimmed with a black lace pattern. The walls in the hallway were beige, with collages of their gorgeous family photos. The family room, which was medium-sized, consisted of a large, plush, green sofa, along with matching love seats on either side. Yes, their house was warm and cozy, but Gabrielle and I decided that it was time to head back to the dance at the school because it was getting late.



*Gabrielle and I with a former
Toronto Raptors player*

At about 10:30 p.m., Gabrielle and I walked to the front door, to mention to Ricky that we had to head back to the dance. We noticed that Ricky was outside on his porch, about to argue with a group of teenaged boys, who were all in the park, across from the house. These boys were dressed in short, white t-shirts, closely fit black jeans that were rolled up, to show off their Doc Marten boots. All of their heads were clean-shaven. As soon as the two of us were about to head out, Ricky glared at us and yelled,

“Everybody get in the house! I am about to call the police to report this group of young teenage skinheads, who are disturbing the neighbourhood by screaming out racist and disturbing language to all of us!”

One thing that Ricky was known for was speaking his mind and cussing those who needed it. Ricky was never afraid of anybody, which was a quality that I had always highly respected him for.

Gabrielle and I had exchanged worrisome looks at each other because we both knew that we had to leave the party, soon. Fortunately, for us, that troublesome group finally decided to depart the premises; Ricky did not have to call the police, after all.

It was about a quarter to ten when Gabrielle, Tony, Jim and myself, finally walked back to our school, hoping that perhaps we could experience, and listen to the finale of the dance. We were all talking about the incident that took place in front of Ricky’s house. We all believed that the whole group of troublemakers was crazy, and they were all just attention-seekers. They had nothing else better to do with their time, apparently.

To my dismay, as the four of us were about to cross the intersection, at Ellengale Crescent (where Ricky lived) and Erindale Station Road (the street of our school), what and who did I see, parked in front of “The Woodlands School?” My Dad’s 1978 powder-blue, Granada, whose headlights and grill were making an evil grimace at me!



Gabrielle and I at Boston Pizza



Enjoying treats at the dessert parlour



I have lived with the condition, Multiple Sclerosis, for over 25 years. I have had the rewarding experience of being an English tutor for several years. For me, writing has always been both therapeutic and gratifying. Lifescapes has given me the opportunity to further implement those qualities.



My Spiritual Journey

By Linda Marie Wallace

I was leaning on the counter in front of the sink and sipping my third mug of tea of that day. I stared out the window marveling at the large old tree that had been struck by lightning a few years ago. I had lived in the house in Milton just over two and a half years. The property was like living in the country, but just at the edge of the fast growing town. I thanked God for another day and for this sanctuary I called home. When the phone rang, I was startled. I turned to answer and picked up the receiver as I leaned back on the counter for support. It was the pastor from the church where I had become a member a few years back.

I was an active member in this church. I participated in the weekly Tuesday morning woman's coffee break and sang in all the Christmas and Easter pageants. I was also one of the members who was paid to clean the church three times a week. I found it interesting when I started to clean this building. The long-time members thanked me with such joy and with hugs. I recall the awe on some of the woman's faces as they left the ladies' washroom. They had never seen the church so clean since it had been built. Well, of course, it was immaculate. The bathroom faucets gleamed so that you could see your reflection looking back. I literally clean - using a fine tooth brush. I was cleaning for God.

"Marie," the pastor said on the phone, "I want you to attend a meeting at 6:00 this evening with me and some other board members. I would like to discuss a prayer e-mail which you recently sent to a church member and its content. There are also a few other things that have come up that we would like to discuss with you." The sound of this chauvinistic, demanding voice caused me to escape into prayer. I was holding the phone while still staring out the window, sipping my tea and watching Rocky my Rottweiler trying to move his chain up and off the lighting rod with his nose. Smiling to myself, I repeatedly said "God Bless" in my mind.

The pastor's voice continued to drum in my ears as I prayed in my secret place. "Marie, Marie, are you there?"

I replied. "Ya, I was listening."

He repeated, "I want you to attend a meeting early this evening with me and some of the other board members."

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I asked, "Will your wife [the children's pastor] or the assistant/choir pastor be present?"

"No, just some board members," he answered.

I scoffed. "They are all men. You are aware of my history with men, being sexually, physically and verbally abused by controlling men. Under the circumstances, I have a legal right to have a woman there."

He coldly stated, "No other woman will be present."

Looking back I don't know why I hesitantly agreed to attend the meeting that evening.

For me, the short notice did not seem to matter. I knew in my heart and soul that I was not showing up to this meeting alone. Father God, my brother Jesus, the Holy Spirit, my Guardian Angels, Archangels, Spirit Guides, Loved Ones and Ascended Masters who work in unison with the Creator would accompany me. I had never gone anywhere without them since my oldest brother Rick took his own life, over 22 years ago in December.

I got off the phone with the pastor. I was guided to phone a dear friend, another woman who I met at the same church. She was more than aware of what was going on behind the scenes within the church. I asked if she would come with me, just for support. She didn't have to say or do much other than pray for God's truth to come through and to continue to ask for protection. There was no way I would allow myself to ever be attacked again by men at some meeting without a witness. After I pleaded, she agreed to come with me.

Before the meeting, I spent time in prayer and just as much time in meditation. I have learned that prayer is asking God for help while meditation is the quieting of one's mind to hear God's answer.

My friend and I prayed in the comfort of my 2004 black Dodge Caravan on our way to the meeting which was to take place in the old church building.

I turned into the church parking lot and parked the van in one of the parking spots several feet from the front of the old church's double door entrance. A sense of pure peace washed over me. I can't say the same for my friend for she was still a little anxious about this whole ordeal. We spent some time before going into the building, just sitting in my van, praying for protection. We asked to be surrounded in God's white light and for a thousand angels to go before us and encompass us. We prayed for protection against the controlling, negative spirits and the evil energies that we knew would be encountered, once we entered the church.

I recall that as my friend and I walked into the building, I felt a darkness trying to engulf me. The pastor approached us and demanded, "What is she doing here? You were the only one asked to attend this meeting."

With a calmness and confidence that only God could have bestowed on me, I responded, "I asked for a female to be present and if you recall you denied my request and blatantly said no. So I brought my own witness." The well-used biblical phrase came to mind. "Where two or more are gathered in my name, I will be a living presence."

I had gathered up some books from home and brought them with me. These were books that I had been guided by the Holy Spirit to buy. Some even actually fell off the shelf at my feet, as I asked for guidance as to what I needed to read. They were mostly books written by Christians and one written on the different angels and the duties bestowed on them by God.

We followed the pastor as he grudgingly guided us into the room where this meeting would take place. I was almost a little shocked and found it interesting and amusing to see who was present and how I was going to be addressed by a total of six male members of this church in Milton. I was to sit in a chair across from these holier-than-thou men and be addressed about the

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contents of a prayer e-mail. Something was unsettling about the entire situation. Who actually was the charlatan?

There, sitting across from five males at a table, was this one lonely chair, all by itself. Wow. This looked more like a group ambush than a meeting of members to discuss an e-mail. The pastor walked over, grabbed another chair and placed it a couple of feet beside the lone one and gestured with his left hand, steering my friend and I to take our seats. I was sure this was how a lamb would feel, just before being sacrificed and slaughtered on the altar. He, then proceeded to take his seat directly across from my chair.

Right away the bullying began. I could feel my friend vibrating in fear beside me. I am sensitive. I have always been able to feel other people's energy, the good, the bad and the ugly, so to say. I am sure you have heard that saying "you could cut the tension in the room with a knife." I have been able to discern energies like this since I was very young. This gift has saved me many times by warning me to run and find a place to hide. My fight and flight mode! Other times the gift filled me with awe and intrigued me to investigate it further.

The meeting, or should I say the condemning, judging trial began. First I was questioned about the angels I had mentioned in the prayer e-mail. I am very certain that I had mentioned in the e-mail that I would send healing and that I would invoke the Archangels Michael, Raphael, Uriel and Gabriel to send their healing energy to that person and that situation. I know for a fact that I had also mentioned, invoking and asking Archangels Metatron and Sandalphon to assist this fellow Christian. Of course whenever I pray or send healing, my Father God, my Brother Jesus and the Holy Spirit are a given.

The Archangels, Metatron and Sandalphon that work in unison with my Father God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit were introduced to me when I started laying healing hands and became an active vessel as a healer and mediator for God

I explained to these so-called men of God, "They are Archangels. They were two men in the Old Testament who, on two separate occasions, were taken up to heaven by God, while they were still in their living breathing bodies. These men did not die nor did just their spirit and soul rise up into the heavens. Their entire whole being rose." While I explained this to the members sitting across from me, they seemed to stare me down, shooting daggers from their eyes.

All of a sudden, the slim, younger guy of the six, shoved a paper that was in his hand across the table and up into my face and said, "I searched on the internet for this Metatron that you are talking about." The paper was a printed picture of Metatron with coloured energy all around him. I presumed he had printed it from the internet. I was being told, as far as they were concerned they all were saying in unison and barking out at me, "He is the devil, evil. You are worshipping the Devil."

I exclaimed, "I am not. I am invoking an Archangel's help. They are God's angels. I always command, when invoking help, that only if they work in Unison with God the Father."

The pastor rudely enquired, "Who are these men in the Old Testament?" I have never heard of them! I don't know who you are talking about."

I replied, "They are Enoch and Elijah from the Old Testament." Their angelic names are Metatron and Sandalphon. I was becoming very curious to the fact, that here sits a pastor for the last several years that between him and his assistant pastor, he/she said on several occasions over the years, promised they would do a bible study with me. They would go through the verses I was always quoting. They never did find the time to dispute the verses I quoted. They would have had to dispute the Bible, which the church believes in its entirety. They did not know who these godly

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men were? I wasn't scared nor did I feel any fear or uneasiness from the energy being hurled at me. God's white light continued to protect me.

I was still being enveloped in a powerful calmness that kept washing over me as I sat being bombarded by these men, if you could call them men, at that very moment and time. I believe it irked them to their core, as they were not able to manipulate me or get under my skin. Using the spirits of control and of fear, as well as their religious spirit, did not budge me from God's truth and my integrity.

Out of the blue, one of the men barked, "You listen to ACDC *Hells Bells!*"

The pastor piped in, "They are not Christian."

I exclaimed, "We don't know if they're Christian or not. I often change the words to heaven's bells. I like listening to loud rock and heavy metal, the louder the better." In my mind, I could hear God saying, "And who do they think gave these men their talent! I will always love them, even though they may go a little astray."

I pulled out the book on angels and the other books I had brought as a reference. I had opened the book about angels and turned to the chapter on archangels and their duties. Then I turned to the page with information on the Archangel, Metatron. I was being guided and tried to refer to this book while I was being spiritually attacked. I had just finished reading a book on spiritual warfare. It was one of those books that fell from the shelf when I was at the used book store downtown behind the Ivy Arms. The book lay open, unread. They never did give me the opportunity to refer to it and to explain how I had come to invoke these archangels in the e-mail. I could feel that dark energy coming from these males, trying to engulf me again. It was much stronger this time, more than what I encountered when I entered the church early that evening. I was starting to feel unsettled and I could feel my hands starting to shake.

I took a deep breath, lowered my eyes and started to pray in my secret place for help to calm the overwhelming fear and breathed through the darkness that rushed at me. I prayed, "Please Father God, Brother Jesus and the Power of the Holy Spirit, Archangels, my Guardian Angels, Spirit Guides, Loved Ones and Ascended Masters who work in unison with God the Father, the Creator of the heavens and earth, everything above and below, and in-between, the seen and unseen world, help, guide me through this torture. So be it, it shall be done. Amen from a woman." You can never tell me that God does not have a sense of humour and a way of reminding me, who was truly the child of God in this situation.

After invoking my prayer, I looked up slowly at the men across from me and felt a gentle warm breeze and then a cool calmness wash over me. I was grateful for the coolness because I felt like I was starting to have one of those mid-life hot flashes. All due to the dark static billowing in the room. It also felt like the room was getting smaller and that these men were getting bigger. Picture me as a shrinking Alice in Wonderland!

These charlatans, who were becoming larger than life, attacking the true core of my being, slandering God and trying to crucify one of his very own children, were no longer sitting across from me. Instead I was looking at six grotesque, comical-looking animals. God gave me the sight or should I say insight to see these men in their true colours. Or would it be more fitting to say their true animal instinct.

The pastor took on the appearance of a scruffy, matted haired jackal, foaming at his mouth. The, dark haired man beside him suddenly looked like a mud caked wart hog with sharp tusks and red eyes. God had his reasons, for doing things his way. Looking back, who am I to judge! The youngest guy of the six looked like a scraggly, snarling, toothy rat with bulging red eyes. The tall dark haired man took on the appearance of a cobra in its full stance, his black tongue slithering

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and a grin like the Joker in Batman. I was sitting with the bad apples in the jungle book, a clumsy, flea-infested gorilla and a droopy-eared ass.

As I said, God's sense of humour had me feeling a little more at ease as I knew what I was dealing with. This meeting had nothing to do with God's will or truth. Sitting across from me was what God truly wanted me to see through the eyes of a child, what I need not fear – evil. These men were not godly men at that very moment and time. They were vicious wolves in sheep's clothing.

During the verbal assault by a few of these grotesque hilarious looking men, "You are no longer welcome to attend the church," was hurled at me.

I said with conviction, "I am a child of God. Who are you to condemn me? Jesus has already been crucified." I wasn't getting any points for being bold or outspoken. These cowards were so used to women who did as they were told and did not speak up either for themselves or for the truth of our Creator. They were used to women who followed and did their bidding. I only follow God. God was larger than life within me that day. It was apparent to all present at this meeting, I was not alone. My Father was speaking through me. My brother Jesus was standing beside me and the Holy Ghost had descended and surrounded me and my witness.

With confidence that I had no idea I had, I stated, "I am a member of this church and I was baptized in this very building in the sanctuary downstairs – by you, "Pastor". Do not any of you recall, it was in front of the entire congregation? You all were present when I emerged from the water." They all were looking at me like, shit she has grown a set of balls.

I continued, "Do not any of you recall that the pastor had addressed me in front of the entire congregation and asked, "What gift do you want the Holy Spirit to bestow on you?" He swept his hand across the sanctuary and gestured from his stance on the vast stage and said, "The congregation and I will pray." I stated to him and the congregation, "You can pray that the Holy Spirit continues to bless me with the gifts already bestowed on me, healing and a messenger."

Again the pastor and one of the males bluntly stated, "We do not have a membership. There is no membership in this church, we just have board members." With his arms spread out, he said, "The ones available are sitting right here."

I demanded that they bring this before the entire congregation. I argued that the other members had a right to hear this and to make the final decision. I wanted the opportunity to stand up in front of all the members and see them exclude me as a member of their very own church. Cowards!

My friend, who, at this time, was sitting closer to my side, looked like a deer caught in headlights. I presumed her spirit had already escaped the darkness that was trying to suffocate us. I do believe it left the entire building and property, seeking solace elsewhere, in the arms of her Savior.

They continued, "You are not a member of this church. There is no such thing as membership. We do not have membership."

I argued, "Yes you do pastor. One Sunday morning after service, you gave Bobby and me membership pamphlets from the shelf in the front lobby just outside the first double doors into the sanctuary. I dusted that same shelf every week. You advised us, "Read it through, answer the questions and fill out the forms at the back and sign." This was long before you baptized me. You even said that you and the assistant/choir pastor would then schedule a meeting and go over the statements of fundamental truths of the church.

They insisted, "You are no longer a member of the church. You are no longer allowed or welcome on the property."

Reflections

I was being excommunicated! Little old me. They accused me of worshipping the devil, a witch, and witchcraft. Did they not realize that this was 2009 and not the 17th or 18th century? God... I was not in Salem anymore - just like Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*.

I will never forget that just about a month before, on one Sunday, I was sitting in one of the back rows in sanctuary, in the very church that dumped me and said I was worthless. I was singing my heart and soul out to God. There was a time when you would only find me sitting in the third or fourth row of seats up at the front of the sanctuary. At the end of this service, a woman who I didn't know and hadn't even seen before, was sitting to my left, in the row of chairs in front of me. She turned around, leaned over and commented "You have such a lovely voice dear. You know you have the spirit of God within you. Your soul is definitely on fire with the Holy Spirit."

Once, my middle daughter was living with me in Milton. She was, and still is, a gorgeous, bubbly, ginger-haired petite young woman who just turned 21. She attended a service at this church with me several months before my spiritual hanging. She stood up in the church when the pastor asked if anyone was ready to accept Jesus as their personal Saviour. In this church, when a person in the congregation stands to accept Christ as their personal Saviour, one or two of the pastoral church members comes and prays with the person standing. They talk with the newbie about their decision and what it means to welcome Jesus as your personal Saviour. I had been praying, along with other members of this church, that my daughter would accept Jesus. Not one, and I mean, not one, even acknowledged her nor even approached her during or after the service. The look on my daughter's face was heart-wrenching for me. I grumbled under my breath to God about how this could happen. How could God allow her to be so humiliated and shattered by such ignorance? She is a child of God.

On the evening of my excommunication by the medieval attitude of six males, Gerry one of the board members, was absent from my trial. He passed into our father God's arms; he lost his battle with cancer that same evening.

I had helped to paint Gerry's house several weeks before his passing. He commented over lunch one day that he would like to have everything in order in case of his passing. He did not want his wife or children to deal with more than they had to, if he lost the battle. I painted with the hand of God with every precise brush stroke and sang, as my spirit was on fire. I was guided by God the evening of Gerry's passing to give his wife my beautiful rosary and a white lace hanky. The rosary was given to me by Barb, a real estate agent for RE/MAX. The lace hanky was also a gift from another client. I was still a little cautious about this spiritual message.

I contacted another couple who were also members of the same church which had just excommunicated me. I went to their home, spoke with her and her husband and shared my heart-wrenching feelings about our church. I asked them, "What should I do about this message from spirit? Should I give this rosary and lace handkerchief, that spirit was urging me to gift to Elsa, Gerry's wife?" They both agreed that I needed to follow Spirit's guidance. We prayed before I left to journey to Gerry's house that late afternoon.

I prayed all the way to Gerry and Elsa's home and continued praying as I walked up the walkway to their front door. I knocked gently, then rang the doorbell. I was praying in my secret place, "God's will, not mine. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Gerry's widow answered the door and I related my condolences. She welcomed me into the front foyer of her home. We hugged. She commented that the children and her parents were all in the kitchen. Gerry's parents had left and gone back to Italy just before his passing. I apologized for the intrusion and said that I wouldn't impose on her for too long. I explained that I would probably not be able to attend the funeral. I handed her the handkerchief with the rosary

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folded within the delicate white lace. I explained that I was guided by God to give her this gift. We hugged again as I shared, "I do not know why Spirit has been very persistent that I give you these."

She opened the hanky and tears began to roll down her cheeks and she hugged me again, saying, "I know why, I understand the meaning completely." I started to tear up and said that last night I had been excommunicated at a meeting with the pastor and five other board members from the church and that I would not be allowed to attend Jerry's funeral.

She said with a gentle voice of conviction, "You are a child of God and Gerry would want you there. The children and I want you to attend." I still recall her children standing in the back ground in the hall outside the kitchen nodding in agreement.

I asked, "Are you sure? I don't want to be causing a commotion at the church at such a time." Just then the phone started to ring. She went into Gerry's office to answer it, gestured for me to follow and sit at one of the two chairs across from the desk where she had taken her seat.

Gee, the devil doesn't rest! Gerry's wife repeated the pastor's name as she spoke into the receiver. I started to rise. Once again she nodded and gently gestured that I stay seated. She was on the phone for some time, talking about the arrangements for the funeral. After a while I got up, left the office and walked into the laundry room which was next to the office. I was inspecting how the painting had come along. I left Gerry's widow's home with the understanding I was to still attend the funeral.

Later on that week I phoned my landlord's wife Cindy at their home. She is an Italian Catholic. I asked her if I had done the right thing in giving Gerry's widow the rosary with the white lace handkerchief. I was still questioning God. After all, I had just gone through hell with the church. She explained to me that when an Italian Catholic woman's son passes away, you give his mother a rosary with a white lace handkerchief. I don't recall what she said was the reason behind this tradition. I am just glad she gave me confirmation as to why the Holy Spirit was so pushy in me gifting it. Oh, Gerry's parents are Italian Catholics. While I was painting their home, I spent quality time with Gerry's parents during lunch time, while eating one of Gerry's fantastic Italian sandwiches.

I did attend the funeral on Saturday. It was a very interesting battle of wills and spirits. One of the board members came scampering across the painted cement floor in the new building. He darted straight towards me with a determination that would have frightened a moose. I was praying and asking God, Jesus and the Holy Ghost to protect me and give me the strength to persevere through the funeral, if only for the sake of Gerry and his family. This board member literally got into my face and said, "What do you think you're doing? You are not allowed to be here or on the property. You were kicked out and off this property."

With as much oomph I could muster, I looked up and straight into his cold evil eyes and said, "I was personally invited by Gerry's immediate family! Excuse me, I am here showing respect and celebrating Gerry's life. This is the wrong place to cause a scene, so put your personal feelings aside." I walked away and stood in the long line waiting to find a seat in the new sanctuary. There was a lot of people and many uniformed police officers. Gerry's daughter had just graduated from the top of her class from the academy. It was the most uncomfortable funeral I have ever attended, but I kept reminding myself that it wasn't about me.

As the line moved and I got closer to the sanctuary to find a seat, I was praying for guidance in how to ward off this heavy darkness I felt approaching from behind. I felt his darkened energy long before, I even saw, the slithering, tall, dark haired, heavy set board member. I felt his cold breath make my hair stand up on the back of my neck and even smelt his death breath in my face,

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before I saw him. This dark haired board member with his full stance puffed out, leaned down and around right into my face. With such contempt, he bellowed, "What are you doing here? You are not welcome, so why don't you just leave. You got your nerve showing up here".

Out of my mouth, sliding like melted butter, came, "Satan get behind me." There was such power behind these words. I know only God could have given me such courage.

As I am writing this memoir, this is the only part where I had a single tear trickle down my left cheek. Such a sad situation. The feeling of a little child, being severely punished for something they didn't even do, overwhelms me at this very moment as it did that same day at Gerry's funeral.

Afterwards, I was in a tug of war with what my spirit knows as truth. Battling within spiritual warfare, with those so-called Christian males and their dark spiritual attacks. I was also struggling with my faith and my gifts. Should I follow God's guidance or ignore all the little signs and synchronicity happening at every corner I turned. Was I supposed to ignore my intuition?

Everything at the time just kept leading me back, to find some Joe, Joseph in Quebec. I assumed everyone thought I was insane at this time. What would it have mattered if I followed what spirit was trying to have me seek and open my eyes to. I found out later from a friend that my landlord's nephew went missing somewhere in Quebec. This was another confirmation, I was doing Gods will.

Today I realize, I was not going insane. I was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder triggered by the meeting with the male members from this church and the entire congregation treating me like I had leprosy, at the funeral.

When I do man's will, I am existing, suffocating, living in fear and running on fight or flight mode. When I chose my loving, forgiving God, I am at peace. I feel safe, happy and content.

Those sadistic, controlling, demonic men can keep their version of a medieval, punishing, controlling God in the Old Testament. I will continue to embrace my God in this lifetime and far into the next.

The Truth has set me free
Megwich

Some of the beliefs of this church as quoted from their 2016 web site:

Divine Healing: "We believe in divine healing as an integral part of the Gospel, through prayer, the anointing with oil and the laying of hands."

The believer and demons: "Demons attempt to thwart God's purposes; however, in Christ, the believer may have complete liberty from the influence of demons. The believer cannot be possessed by them because the believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit in which Christ dwells as Lord."

What the church believes about angels: "We believe in the existence of the angels created all pure, intelligent and powerful beings. We believe that Satan, is the author of all sin, he fell for his own pride and was followed by those angels who rebelled against God. These fallen angels will be punished eternally with Satan in the lake of fire."

Membership: "Membership gives believers a stronger voice in the affairs of the church. It restricts important decisions to people who are saved and are walking with God and who are sound doctrinally. Good organization greatly increase the church's opportunity to influence the world for good."

"Church membership evidences loving surrender to God. Individuals who want the freedom to go where they want, give where they want - when they want will end up rootless and undisciplined. Church membership allows individuals to develop according to God's plan, to establish spiritual roots and to grow towards spiritual maturity. It evidences loving surrender to God."

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The church's mission statement: “[the] Church is committed to reaching people within the Regional Municipality of Halton with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, to discipling and caring for all those who have chosen to make [this church] their church home, to mobilizing God's people into works of service through the power of the Holy Spirit and to participating in missions across Canada and around the world.”

Notes:

1. Two Men in the Old Testament – Enoch was a wise scribe and virtuous man of God. Elijah was a prophet and also a very wise virtuous man of God
2. The book of Genesis (5:24) is often cited as evidence of Enoch's bodily ascension into heaven: “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.”



Linda Marie has been blessed with three beautiful daughters, four gorgeous granddaughters & one handsome grandson. Her middle daughter Christina and hubby Brian are blessing her with their first child another granddaughter, due to arrive someday in February 2017 bringing the total of her grand-babies to six.

She has resided in Milton for the last 10 years. The last eight years she has shared her love and compassion with her best friends and companions, Pepper and Paprika, two Mini Dachshunds who are brother and sisters from the same litter.

She has had several jobs, during her half century plus three years. One being the owner and operator of B & L Packing and Moving Services in Guelph for 6 years.

What she loves most to do, and brings her such soul-deep joy and great happiness is using the gifts God blessed her with: the gift of being a natural spiritual healer and mediator (messenger) and spiritual guidance. She is also a certified Reiki Master Teacher.