

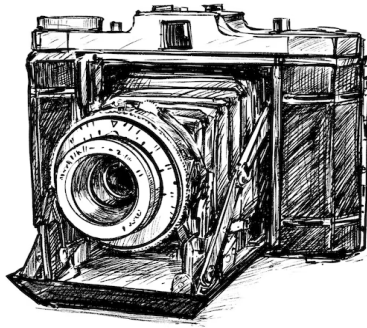
DAYS GONE BY

LIFESCAPES WRITING GROUP 2023



16th Edition

DAYS GONE BY



Brantford Public Library
Lifescapes Writing Group
2023

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

Editorial Team: Alyssa Smania and Margo Karolyi

Cover and Book Design: Alyssa Smania

Cover Photo Editor: Evangeline Major

Camera Drawing Image: Freepik.com

Corner Baroque Ornament: AcantStudio

Decorative Divider: 'The Bushranger's Secret', Amy Key, 1892.

Copyright © by the authors
ISBN: 978-1-7751146-5-9

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

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| <i>A Note From the Program Leader</i> Margo Karolyi | i |
| <i>Message From the Editor</i> Alyssa Smania | iii |
| <i>Vignettes Five - Wild Tales from Wayne's World</i> Wayne King | 1 |
| <i>The Trials and Joys of Life</i> Christine Crossley | 23 |
| <i>Help! - My First Date</i> Margo Karolyi | 33 |
| <i>My Personal Hit Parade</i> Brian Bosnell | 49 |
| <i>A Christmas Tradition</i> Kathy Roberts | 59 |
| <i>My Childhood Accomplishments & Cocksackie Virus and an Unexpected Fond Memory</i> Gillian Holden | 75 |
| <i>My World Travels</i> Lois Oliver | 87 |
| <i>The Black Beret</i> Bertha Joseph | 101 |
| <i>Remembering Alice & Maarten Keyer</i> Herbert Sormin | 115 |

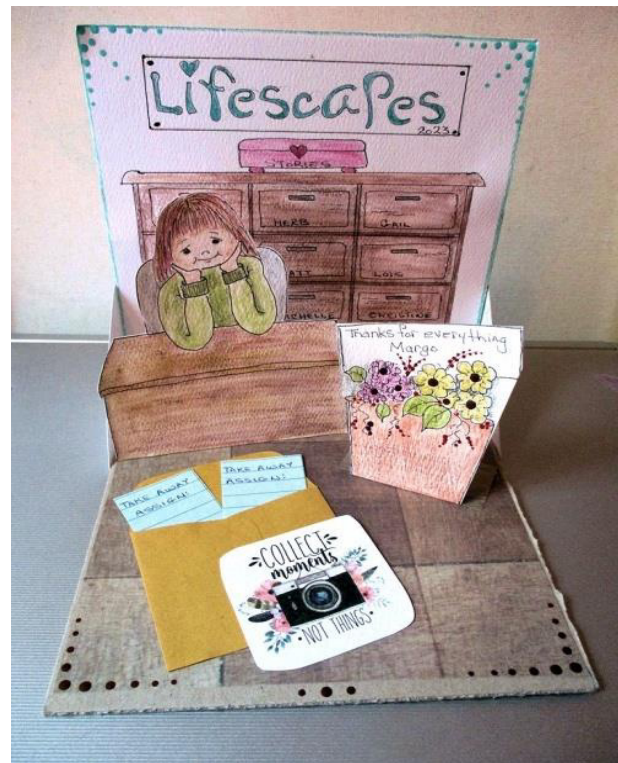
A Note From the Program Leader

I joined Lifescapes as a participant in late 2019. Unfortunately, after I'd taken part in only five sessions, face-to-face meetings were shut down by COVID. Thankfully, however, the group persevered for two years over Zoom, and I increased my involvement by presenting several online sessions.

When I was offered the role of program leader when in-person involvement resumed in the fall of 2022, I immediately accepted. I was thrilled to be asked to bring two of my life's passions – teaching and writing – together, in order to offer up advice, instruction, and mentorship to a group of individuals I'd come to see not only as fellow writers, but also as friends.

The past nine months has been exceptionally enjoyable for me. This group brings a unique blend of talent and enthusiasm to the Lifescapes program, and to their writing. Their stories are distinctive and diverse, inspiring and entertaining. They are keen learners, committed writers, and just generally nice people! Working with them has been one of the highlights of my thirty-plus years of teaching.

Individually and as a group, Bertha, Gillian, Brian, Herb, Kathy, Wayne, Christine, and Lois exhibit camaraderie, generosity of spirit, and a true passion for writing that is second to none.



Original artwork and diorama created by Gillian Holden.

It has been an absolute joy and a pleasure to inspire and encourage them, to read and comment on their stories, and to help them reach their goals. I can't wait to see what they'll achieve in the years to come.

Congratulations everyone!

Margo Karolyi

Lifescapes Program Leader

2022-2023

Message From the Editor

I would like to begin by congratulating each and every one of this year's Lifescapes anthology memoir authors. I am incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to read about each of these talented writers' rich lived experiences. Wayne, Kathy, and Christine's adventures had me chuckling, with their vibrant personalities and cheeky jokes. Margo and Brian's stories whisked me away to their cherished teenage years, reminding me of my own, angst and all. Gillian's stories left me astounded by her achievements and insights, while Lois' travels filled me with awe. Bertha and Herb's recollections served as a poignant reminder to cherish our loved ones and treasure every moment we have with them.

As someone who has shared my own personal experiences throughout my university degree, editing these stories offered me a fresh perspective on story-telling through memoir writing. It allowed me to step into the worlds of these authors, if only momentarily, and experience life through their eyes. I sincerely hope that you find as much joy in reading these memoirs as I did, and that you appreciate the dedication and hard work each author has poured into sharing their life stories.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for making this an unforgettable experience for me.

Thank you!

Alyssa Smania

Literacy Projects Assistant

2023

Vignettes Five: Wild Tales from Wayne's World

This year (2023) marks the 14th time I have published stories in the Lifescapes Anthology - more than 20 stories in all. Here are three new stories for your enjoyment.

For my first story, I pulled out a memoir (previously published elsewhere) and rewrote it with a fresh outlook. "My Personal Triathlon" describes a one-of-a-kind, fluke event that couldn't be undertaken today.

"What's in a Name" discusses my name and how it came to be. I have often told parts of it to others, but, until now, have never pulled it all together in written form. The result represents my interest in history and genealogy.

Finally, my third offering describes a recent event that inspired me to write yet another story about my name. Remember the Dick Van Dyke Show? It was the impetus for this one.

Thank you, Brantford Public Library, for supporting the Lifescapes program.

I look forward to sharing my future writings. I hope you enjoy reading my memoirs as much as I enjoy writing them.

- Wayne Frederick King



Vignettes Five:

Wild Tales
from Wayne's
World

by
Wayne F. King



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

- Robert A. Heinlein¹

My Triathlon



Late August, 1968 found me living at the corner of Maitland and Horton, in London, Ontario, with my friend Campbell (never call him Cam).



The Author, 1972

This particular day found us hosting our buddy, Long John, to a drinks party, to welcome him back to town after a few months of living in Montreal. We played records, sipped a number of Labatt 50s, and puffed too many cigarettes,

“I’m goin’ out for smokes. Anyone want anything?” I queried.

“Not me.” Campbell replied.

Followed by John’s, “Naaaaw.”

“Ok. Be back in a bit.”

Little did I know that “a bit” would turn out to be an understatement.

I strolled over to Wellington Road and crossed to the far side, where Sparkie's Variety Store awaited my custom. I bought two packs of Rothman's cigarettes and exited Sparkie's just as the crossing light turned red.

Traffic sped by. A thought crossed my mind. *Why not hitchhike to T-O (Toronto) - just for the heck of it. I know a couple of people I could phone. It'd be an adventure. Let's see what happens.*

I didn't think at all about how, or when, I would return. Campbell and John would not be too surprised if I didn't show up for a while. They knew I was capable of pulling a disappearing act when I wanted to. (Remember, there were no cell phones in the 1960s; no instant, personal communication wherever you may be. Campbell and I didn't have a landline at the time either. I was on my own.)

A quick inventory showed I possessed nine bucks, two packs of smokes, and a Kit Kat chocolate bar. *What more did I need?*

I glanced at my wristwatch. *Hmmm almost seven in the evening. It won't be dark until nearly nine o'clock. It's at least a two-hour car ride, if I get good rides fast! Otherwise, I might be stuck for the night on the 401. It's happened before.*

Wellington Road is a busy street/highway, running from downtown London to Highway 401, and on to my hometown of St. Thomas. I had hitchhiked from this very spot many times, to many places.

Yes, a good spot to thumb. Gotta do it!

I struggled briefly with the idea, but I couldn't fight the feeling of adventure. The thought of hitching to Toronto lured me like the singing of the sirens in Ulysses' story.

1. My Journey Begins

OK, I'm goin'. Damn the torpedoes! Full speed ahead!



My right thumb in a familiar pose.

Things happened fast after that. Quicker than you could say “Jack Robinson”, I was standing on the curb with my right thumb extended, the classic hitchhiker pose. Within minutes I had a ride heading for the 401. The driver (it was always a he) dropped me off at the Wellington Road/ Hwy 401 interchange.

My next ride came quick. Unbelievably, this driver’s destination turned out to be Eglinton and Yonge - right in the middle of Toronto. Everything was going my way!

2. Change of Plan

It was about 9 p.m. when I arrived at Eglinton and Yonge, one of my fastest hitchhiking endeavours ever. I found a phone booth, looked up my friend Sue’s parents’ number, popped a dime into the slot, and dialed.

Sue had attended Alma College in St. Thomas (a now defunct private school for girls), graduated, returned home, and landed a job. Campbell and I had both dated her, but we were now just friends.

“Hi Sue,” I said when she answered. “It’s Wayne.”

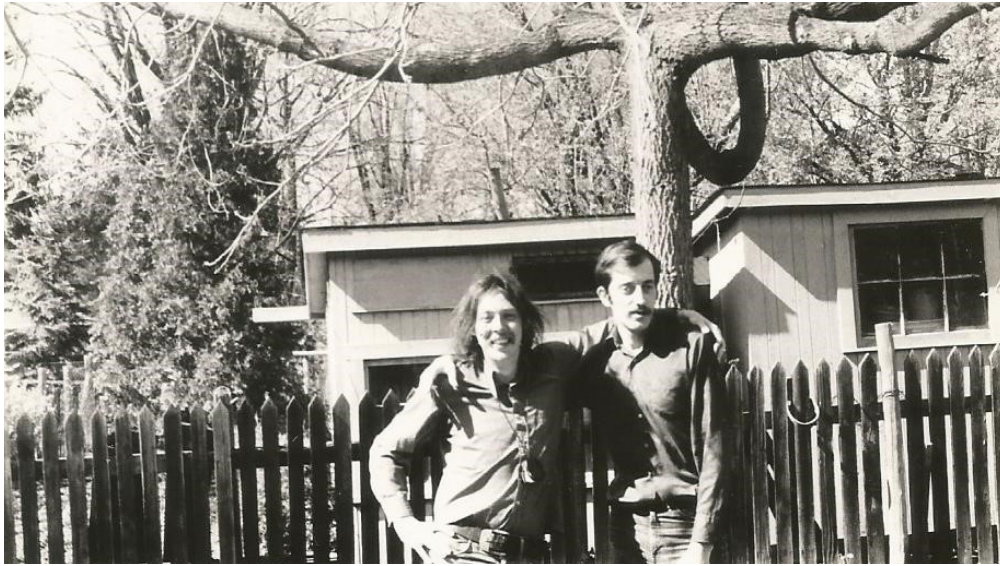
“Wayne! Where are you? What are you doing?”

“I’m in town. Yonge and Eglinton. Can we meet somewhere?”

“Tonight? Can’t. We have visitors. I’m stuck here. No room to put you up. Call me in the morning.”

Well, what could I do? "Ok. I'll see you in the morning."

Let's see what Pete has to say.



Professor Pete and the author, 1973.

Professor Pete was a high school buddy, living in T-O. I could reach him via his neighbour Bob's phone. I had his number in my wallet.

I rang Bob's. No answer. I'll have to call him later. Gotta catch Pete before he leaves for work in the morning – if he's still on days.

Pete and Bob lived way up in Don Mills. Should I take a chance and just show up at Pete's, or phone Bob again?

Either way, it looked like nothing would happen until the next day. I wanted action now! My enthusiasm started to wane. After all, I only had a few bucks on me, and my smokes needed to be replenished soon. I didn't have a jacket or a toothbrush with me.

I reviewed my options. Should I spend the night on the streets and see Sue in the morning? Take a chance with Pete and Bob? Or go home now?

I made up my mind. Go home. But how? Hitchhiking via the 401 out of Toronto was an ordeal by day, never mind at night. I could hitch on the busy on-ramps in T-O, but not on the highway itself (like you could outside of the city). That left only two choices - bus or train. Fortunately, I had enough cash to buy a ticket either way.

I phoned Union Station (way down on Front Street) and checked their schedule. There was a train to London leaving at 11:30 p.m.

I can make it to the station - if I walk fast!

I did walk fast, but it still took almost two hours to get there. I entered the station, purchased a ticket, and reached the gate where London-bound passengers were just starting to board. Without breaking stride, I boarded and glided to a seat.

After a long two and a half hour ride, I arrived back in London around 2 a.m., and walked the 15 minutes home.

3. Home Sweet Home

Campbell and John were still up. They didn't look particularly shocked when I strolled in.

“Where were you?” asked Campbell.

“Toronto!” I replied, grinning.

“No way,” John said.

“I can prove it. Here's my ticket. And here's a couple of match books from the Toronto restaurant where I made my phone calls.”



Long John (1947 – 1968) and the author. Rest in peace old buddy.

4. My Triathlon

As I look back on it, I realize my adventure was a kind of unique triathlon. After all, there were three gruelling means of movement in a limited time span.

In just eight hours:

I hitchhiked 200 kilometres;

Walked for 10 km;

Experienced a pleasant 200 km train ride;

Capped it off with a bonus 15-minute, 1 km cool-down hike home.

That's a total distance of 411 km at an average speed of 51.375 km per hour.

NOTE: A few years ago, I watched a friend complete a Triathlon at Lake Placid, in order to become an Iron Man. He inspired me to think about my accomplishment, and label this adventure, "My Triathlon." I would never claim to be an athlete like an Iron Man, but I think my results in distance and timing to be worthy of mention. (Oh, to be 21 again with all the vigour of youth!)

Whenever I recount my adventure, people ask me why I would undertake such a useless trip.

I reply, "Why do people climb Mount Everest? Because it's there. It's the thrill of the unknown."

My triathlon **was** unique. It could not be repeated today, for many reasons. First, hitchhiking is dangerous with so many cars on the road, and it's not a practical way to travel anymore.

Second, if someone **did** try to copy it, I doubt they could match my time, due to congestion on the roads and more restrictive speed controls.

Third, everyone is in contact with everyone else on their cell phones, so someone would know someone you could always connect with.

And finally, it likely wouldn't be seen as something to do just for the heck of it.

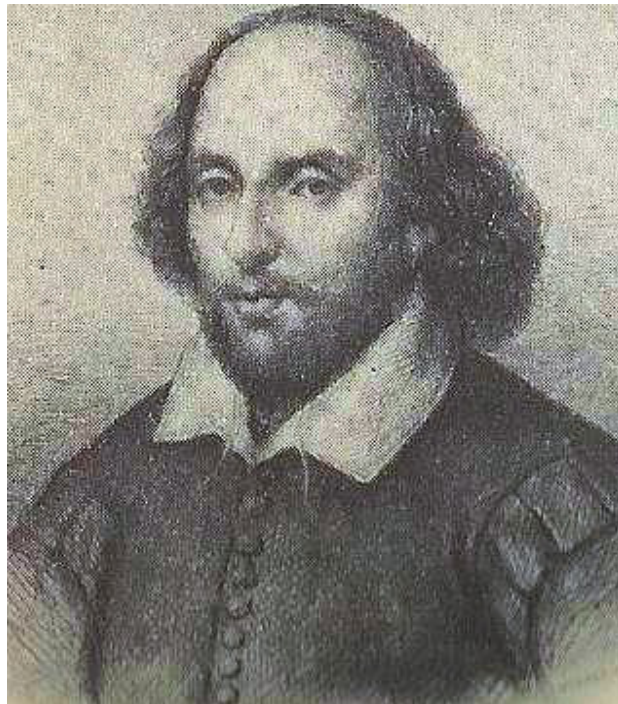
But I'm glad I did it just the same.

What's in a Name



“What’s in a name? A rose by any other name smells as sweet.”

- William Shakespeare¹



*“The Bard”, William
Shakespeare (1564 – 1616)²*

Shakespeare claimed that names are not important. While I’m not inclined to disagree with The Bard, I feel names are **very** important, because there’s a unique story behind each and every one. Here’s mine.

1. King Surname

King is from the Old English Cyng, meaning Tribal Leader. King was spelled with a 'y' vowel until modern times, because the old English alphabet lacked an 'i'. Sometimes an 'e' was added at the end.

During the 14th century, my direct King ancestor would have been legally bound to take a surname if he did not already possess one. Why was it important? It allowed better government records, primarily for taxation purposes.

We can't know why my ancestor chose King, but we can guess.

Some might say, "That's easy. Your ancestor was **the** King."

Well, yes and no.

The King had his own family surname. For instance, England's Royal Family during the 16th century was surnamed Tudor, **not** King. Still, chances are I **am** descended from English royalty.

That's not a big deal as one might think. I've heard **all** English people - over forty generations - are descended from Alfred the Great (reigned 871-899). Alfred fathered an estimated five children. His daughters married into continental nobility, so many Europeans are also his descendants. The prolific Edward III (reigned 1330-1377) is considered to be the last monarch to be related to all English people. It is estimated that he fathered fourteen children. You don't have to be really good at math to calculate the probabilities.

The surname King does not imply my ancestor **was** royalty, but rather he had some connection to the monarch – no matter how remote.

OK! So, where was the connection between my ancient ancestor and his King that made him choose King as a surname? Here are some theories:

The first familial King we know of, John King, had his birth recorded in Whiteparish, Wiltshire in 1560, during the reign of Elizabeth I (reigned 1558-1603). Over the next three hundred years, most of my direct King ancestors continued to live in Whiteparish, but most chose to live in the nearby village of Landford.

Both villages are located close to the boundary with the New Forest. The Forest is an ancient and extensive hunting ground expanded by King William I (The Conqueror, reigned 1066-1087). Ironically, his son, William II (Rufus, reigned 1087-1100) was killed in the Forest, a victim of a hunting “accident”. When the King visited the Forest to hunt, locals would be employed in servicing the needs of the King, his entourage, and his guests. Perhaps one of my ancestors stood out in this regard and adopted the surname King as recognition of long and loyal service.



All Saints' School Landford, Wiltshire, England – My paternal grandfather, Frederick Cecil Browning King (1870 - 1958), and his siblings attended in the later nineteenth century. My Dad, Ralph Waldo King (1919 - 1998), took this photo in 1943 while serving with the Canadian Army.

The King also employed permanent servants who travelled with him. They too might have chosen, or have had bestowed on them, a surname such as King, to recognize the attachment.

On the other hand, my ancestor may have chosen, or have chosen for him, King as his surname if he possessed the bearing and pride of a King, or if he headed up a pageant, or was known as a player of Kings in a stage play.

If he had the popular support of his neighbours, he may have been elected King of the May. May Day was traditionally held on May 1st to celebrate the resurrection of nature after a long, cold winter. It was named for Maia, the Greek goddess of fertility. Flowers and Morris dances around a colourful, beribboned May Pole were major features of the holiday. Celebrations included the crowning of a May King and/or Queen after a vote of approval. King of the May was the prestigious position of presiding over the festivities.

SPECIAL NOTE: The English are noted for playing word games. My ancestor, who first used the surname King, may have been called King by his neighbours because his bearing was the opposite of what the surname King implied. Just as my Uncle George, a large man, was nicknamed Tiny.

2. Wayne Frederick: My Given Names

Wayne is derived from the Old English for wagon maker, while Frederick comes from the German for peaceful ruler. (I am neither a wagon maker nor a peaceful ruler.) Both names have lost their popularity in recent years.

If Dad would have had his way, my first name would have been Frederick, after his father (my grandfather Frederick Cecil Browning King). Mum wasn't having that.

"Wayne King sounds better," claimed Mum. Mum was absolutely influenced by a famous bandleader of the day, Wayne King, dubbed The Waltz King. He was the first of a number of other Wayne Kings that I became aware of in my lifetime.

My parents compromised, and I became Wayne Frederick King.

However, never one to give up easily, Dad hinted years later that I could style myself W. Frederick King! Fortunately, by that time in my life, I was old enough to ignore Dad's suggestion.



Frederick Cecil Browning King, my paternal grandfather, born in London, England, grew up in Landford, immigrated to Canada in 1890.

3. Enter ‘The Waltz King’

I remember the first time my name was questioned. I was in Grade One. The school’s visiting nurse asked me, “What’s your name?”

“Wayne King” I replied.

“Are you **The** Waltz King?” she queried.

I didn’t know what she meant.

I mentioned the incident to Mum, and later learned that this other Wayne King (1901-1985) was an extremely popular American orchestra leader who had his own early radio and TV shows. In fact, he boasts a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in the radio category. Popular in the 1940s and 1950s, he inspired many Kings to name their early boomer sons Wayne. I possess a double Long Play record by the maestro. His music style is similar to that of his best friend, Lawrence Welk, who was much better known.



Wayne King (1901 - 1985), “The Waltz King”. An album cover designed to hold eight 78 rpm/speed records.³

The older generation continued to question if I was The Waltz King for the next 20 years.

4. Changing of the Guard

In the 1970's, a new generation (dubbed the baby boomers) dominated our culture. My parents' generation faded away, as did the questions about me being The Waltz King, although the name Wayne King lived on as a popular name. So in the 1970s, it became common for me to meet someone for the first time, and have them comment, "I know another Wayne King."

There were so many Wayne Kings that I seriously contemplated establishing a Wayne King Society. (I believe there is such an organization for the Harry James', of this world.)

5. A Letter to Myself

In 1978, I was stationed in Owen Sound working as a Marketing Rep. for the company Goodyear. One of our customers was Gates Rubber in Brantford. My new contact's name there? "Wayne King."

One day, I dictated a letter to Mr. King, confirming a recent conversation. Within minutes our Marketing Secretary confronted me, asking, "Is this a mistake?"

I assured her that I was indeed writing to another Wayne King. Shortly thereafter, I quit Goodyear and my contact with Mr. King ended. Or did it? I moved to Brantford a couple of years later and discovered even more Wayne Kings.



1978 Goodyear photo of the author.

6. Another Musical Wayne King

Meanwhile, while I was still at Goodyear, one of my coworkers presented me with an LP (long play record) they had found by musician called Wayne King. However, this wasn't The Waltz King, but a young, long-haired individual (good looking too). From the photo on the cover, he looked about my age at the time. He played the piano, and hailed from Australia. I found his music boring (but I still have the LP).



Wayne King (ca. 1954 – 2000); Australian musician's album cover.

7. The Brantford Years

I moved to Brantford in 1981. The phone rang regularly with requests to speak to Wayne King, but it wasn't for me. I soon found out that there were at least two, if not three, other Wayne Kings in town. I did not know their phone numbers or addresses and never did find out whether Wayne King from Gates Rubber was one of them. (We did not have call display in the 1980s!)

8. A Bowling Story

One especially busy soul was a Wayne King from Brantford, whom I nicknamed The Bowler. If I didn't recognize a telephone caller, I'd ask, "Is this about bowling?" It certainly cleared things up fast. (Through the 1980s and 1990s I fielded a ship load of callers looking for The Bowler.)

One day in the early 2000s, I made a personal sales call to a local law office, and introduced myself to the receptionist. She looked a bit confused until she blurted out, "That's my father's name."

"Is he a bowler?" I asked.

"Yes he is," she replied.

I told her my story and we shared a laugh about the coincidence.

9. The Legion

I was one of two Wayne Kings who belonged to the same Royal Canadian Legion branch in Brantford. In the early days, the staff would get our addresses mixed up, even though we didn't have the same middle initial.

10 years ago, I visited the branch to pay my annual dues, as usual, at the bar. When I introduced myself, the steward exclaimed, "There's the other Wayne King," and pointed at a friendly group sitting at a nearby table, that included the other Wayne King. I introduced myself, and we had a laugh all the way round, then shook hands and chatted for a short time.

I forgot to ask him, "Do you bowl?"

Sadly, that Mr. King passed away shortly thereafter.

10. A Twist to the Name

In July of 2022, I read with sadness that a Wayne King had passed away. (Note the second 'n' - not sure how to pronounce that.)

11. Nicknames

Waynes are subject to the infamous nickname, Weiner. Usually, I'd get the more inoffensive Wayno or Wayner.

Then there's Kinger or Kingee, or even Kink for King.

King Wayne amuses some people when they see it in writing or on call display on their phone.

I was known as Enyaw to my high school gang, which is Wayne backwards. My full nickname is Enyaw Gnik.

Wine and Vayne are Wayne with an accent.

In my neighbourhood, I am called by some, King of Stanley Heights (not **the** King).

I cannot remember ever being offended when someone called me by a nickname.

Summary

Despite what The Bard says, names **are** important. Just ask any celebrity, who assumes a stage name, if their name is important to their image.

I like the name Wayne King. It's short and to the point. No one has ever spelled it wrong. I use Frederick when I have to. I wasn't comfortable with Frederick when I was younger because it was so seldom used and I've always considered Frederick to be old-fashioned (of course, so is Wayne).

Names say something about who we are. They are part of our personal story. If I was gifted with a different name, my life story would have been different. Wayne Frederick King defines me and my life story. It is who I am.

Another Wayne King Story!



“Wayne King” certainly gets around!

One quiet evening, a few months ago, I sat in front of the TV, streaming an episode of the old *Dick Van Dyke Show* (“The Two Faces of Rob”; Season 2, Episode 2 - approximately five to six minutes in), when an amazing coincidence occurred.

Those of us of a certain age will recall the *Dick Van Dyke Show*. It ran for five years (1961 – 1966), and was a top quality comedy show with a great cast and truly funny plots. (The show won 14 Emmy Awards in various categories.)



Photo of the introduction to an episode of The Dick Van Dyke Show.

Little did I know that what I was about to hear would tie into a recent memoir story I had written (“What’s in a Name” - see the previous story in this anthology).

In order to win a bet, Rob (Dick Van Dyke) phones his wife, Laura (Mary Tyler Moore), from the office, pretending to be an Italian doctor by disguising his voice. Rob praises Laura poetically with his fake Italian accent, while in the background, Rob's fellow writers and partners in crime, Sally (Rose Marie) and Buddy (Morey Amsterdam), suppress their laughter. Then Rob asks Laura if she would like to hear "How Do I Love Thee" (a very romantic poem by Elizabeth Barrett Browning).

Before Laura can answer, quick witted Buddy interjects, "By Wayne King!" just loud enough so that Laura cannot hear the remark on her phone, (audience laughter ensues).

The point, of course, that Wayne King's big band music would be an unsuitable accompaniment for such a delicate poem. But for me, it was fun to hear my name mentioned on the TV.



Another photo of the introduction to an episode of The Dick Van Dyke Show.

FINAL NOTE: Did you know there was an episode of *The Dick Van Dyke Show* called "What's in a Middle Name". (Season 2, Episode 7), in which Rob and Laura's son, Ritchie (Larry Matthews), discovers his middle name is "Rosebud". Coincidence?

About the Author

Born and raised in St. Thomas, Ontario, Wayne King has made his home in Brantford since 1981. He is married to Sharon, and is the father of Amy, Aaron, and Ian. Wayne's work career focused on sales/marketing for a variety of businesses, both local and international. He has been happily retired for fifteen years.

Wayne's interests include gardening, history, cycling, photography, genealogy, walking/ tai-chi/ safety zone. He particularly enjoys reading, and writing his memoirs. The stories here represent the 14th time Wayne has had stories published in the annual Lifescapes anthology.



The author with some of his favourite music.



-
1. "I Will Fear No Evil" by Robert A. Heinlein, Ace Books, (p. 442), 1987.
 2. Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Edited by Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine, Folger Shakespeare Library, Simon & Schuster, 2003.
 3. Scanned by the author from his personal book, "Looking at History" by R. J. Unstead, A&C Black, London, England.



The Trials
and
Joys of Life

by
Christine Crossley



Locked Out



**This story takes place in a town in Northern England; the year is 1955*

“*Lift Up Your Hearts* is on!” That was the voice of my sister, Joyce. It was her way of saying “Get up.” The radio program started at ten minutes to eight. It was time to get up for school.

It was a cold morning. The water was cold as I quickly washed and dressed for school. Downstairs in the kitchen, there was porridge in the oven that Mam had made before she went to work. The oven was on, so the kitchen was warm too. We had porridge with treacle and milk. I used a big spoon of treacle and wrote my name with it as it dripped slowly into the porridge.

“Hurry up and eat it,” my other sister, Edith, said. “We’re going to be late.”

Edith had further to go than me because her school was further away from home than mine. She went to the senior school, and I went to the junior school.

“You go,” I said. “I’ll lock the back door.”

We had to bolt the back door and leave by the front. I did everything before we left for school.

But when we got home from school that afternoon, we were locked out of the house. Edith had forgotten her key **again**. We looked through the window. There it was on the table, so near and yet so far away.

So now the plan was to go to the back of the house, get the dustbin and climb on top of it, break the small window at the top of the door, put a hand through, reach for the bolt at the top of the door and pull it. And – hey, presto – we’d be in.

So that’s what we did. But because I was the smallest, I had bolted the bottom bolt and not the top one. I was afraid to tell Edith what I had done – but she soon found out for herself. She turned and gave me a furious look. I started to cry.

“You hooked the bottom, instead of the top,” she shouted at me. “You stupid sod!”

“I couldn’t reach the top,” I cried.

“You know we always lock the top one, just in case we are locked out. Mam is going to be so mad at us.”

“I know. What are we going to do?” I wailed. “I’m so sorry, Edith.”

As usual, Edith finally relented and calmed down. “I shouldn’t have forgotten the key,” she said as we put the dustbin back and wondered what to do now.

“What are you girls doing?” It was the voice of our next-door neighbour, Mrs. Brooks.

We explained that we were locked out again.

“Well, it’s a good job I have this, then,” she said as she held up a key in her hand. “Your Mam gave it to me in case you locked yourselves out again. She was fed up paying for broken windows.”

She handed Edith the key. “Bring it right back to me when you’ve opened the door, so I’ll have it for the next time you forget your key.”

We did as she asked.

It was a relief to be back in the house!

What a Performance



One of the most memorable nights of my life happened when I was a teenager. This is how I remember it, in my own words - the words of a young girl who had a love of music.

It was a time of innocence. No drugs or alcohol, I didn't even smoke. But music was my passion, and I was lucky to live at a time when the most wonderful music was being made.

This is the story of four lads who brought some of the most incredible music to the world. Their legacy lives on to this day.

“The Beatles are coming to town” was on all the teenagers' lips in town.

They were coming to the Astoria, my local dance hall, on the 12th of February, a Tuesday night in the year 1963. The town was Oldham, where I lived, in the Northwest of England. I knew I had to go and see them.

I worked at Woolworths, and on Tuesday, it was early closing day. All the shops closed at noon, so I had lots of time to get ready.

I took a long relaxing bath and put my hair in rollers. Then I helped Mam to get the tea prepared. After I had my tea, I started to get ready. Back comb, add hair spray with lacquer, back comb and lacquer again. Lots of eye makeup. Get dressed. Two or three underskirts made of stiff net material so the dress would stand out like a crinoline. Nylon stockings and high-heeled shoes.

Don't forget the broly. Away I went to catch the bus.

My interests at 16 were music, dancing, clothes, makeup, and boys - in that order. This was the 1960s, but I had no interest in politics. Not for me going on protest marches! Most of my friends didn't know what was going on in the world either. And, to be truthful, we didn't care.

My friend Pauline and I had arranged to meet earlier than usual, because we knew there would be a lot of people waiting to get in to see The Beatles. We went dancing at the Astoria dance hall three times a week. Sometimes they had live bands, sometimes just records and a disc jockey.

It took us about 10 minutes to walk from the bus terminal to the Astoria. As we got closer, the noise levels grew. It sounded like a football match - a slow, low murmur of hundreds of voices. We turned the corner and got the shock of our lives. There must have been a thousand teenagers waiting to get in. They were pushing, shoving, yelling, shouting, and crying. Some were laughing. The traffic barrier had been broken and was lying on the ground.

“We’ll never get in”, we both said at once. The disappointment was like a punch in the stomach.

“What shall we do?” Pauline asked. “Should we wait or go ’ome?”

“No, I’m not bloody going ’ome. We’ve come too far to give up now,” I replied.

Then, out of the blue, I heard my name called, “Christine over ‘ere. We’ve saved you a place.”

Bless them; it was Allen and Brian, two lads we knew from the dance hall.

“Oh thanks a lot. ‘ow long you been waitin’?” I asked as we moved in to stand next to them. They were much closer to the front of the line, so we might have a chance of getting in.

Brian said, “Since about four-o-clock.”

“Four-o-clock. Bloody ‘ell,” I yelled, “You’ve been standin’ ere all this time?”

“Yea. Well we knew there would be loads of kids ‘ere.” Allen said. “So we came early.”

“Good job we did an’ all,” he added. “I mean, just look, the barriers are down!”

Looking around, Pauline said, “Who would ‘ave thought? All this for a bunch of lads from Liverpool!”

“Well they must be good, otherwise why are we all ‘ere eh?” Brian replied.

The noise got so loud at that point we couldn't hear what was being said, so we stood silently, waiting patiently to get in, while all around us, the yelling and shouting continued.

Suddenly a voice yelled, "They're opening the doors. They're letting us in."

A great cheer went up as we surged forward towards the doors. They didn't open them wide. Oh, no. We were pulled in by the surging crowd. My bag got stuck in the door and one of the bouncers got hold of my arm and literally dragged me in.

I made it. I was in. The bouncers were not happy, though. What a job they had that night, sorting out so many crazed teenagers.

Pauline and I lost track of Brian and Allen in the crush. In fact, we didn't see them again the rest of the night.

We went into the cloakroom and left our coats there, then headed into the toilets to check our hair and makeup. Everything was okay.

The dance hall was packed when we walked in. Never in all the times we'd been coming here had we seen so many kids (800, we heard later). They were shoulder to shoulder. It was hot, noisy, sweaty, and moving - endlessly utter chaos. And yet it was controlled somehow.

There was screaming that never seemed to stop, people whistling and shouting so they could hear each other over the noise. Smoky too - there was a fine mist of smoke hanging over everything and everyone. The room smelled of perfume, hair lacquer, and sweaty clothes, but it was the smell of smoke that was most prevalent.

Being some of the last to arrive, we were near the back. We couldn't see a thing - not the stage anyway. People were standing on chairs to try to see over the crowd. We did one better and stood on a table. Now we could see the stage!

The bouncers were arranged around the stage, as a kind of shield to keep the people off. Tony, the D.J., was checking the mics and the equipment. He was wearing a white suit - very fancy.

I looked at my watch. It was almost half-past-eight. Just then, the moment we were all waiting for arrived. Tony stepped up to the mic. I held my breath as he spoke these five words: "Boys and girls - The Beatles!"

The Beatles ran on the stage: John, George, Paul, and Ringo.

They wore dark suits, white shirts, and dark ties. With their signature, new floppy hairdos, they looked great!

The place went wild. We shouted, some cried, some laughed. We were so noisy, we couldn't hear them singing. Many tried to get up on the stage, but the bouncers held them back, and not too gently either. We were enthralled (well, I was anyway). My favourite was John. I loved the way he stood up straight, and sang his songs. I was transfixed watching his gentle movements.

The Beatles performed several songs. They were oblivious to us. John sang, and George would harmonize, then Paul sang with John. Ringo played his drums with a smile on his face, as if he was in his own little world. He played a drum solo later in the night. It was great.

About half an hour into the show, Pauline and I got down from the table and slowly made our way closer to the stage. The crowd was moving, clapping their hands, waving their arms about, and stamping their feet. Then, like a magic wand had passed over us, everything became quiet. Paul was singing a slow song, about a boy meeting a girl, and how they fall in love, and how it lasts forever.

That's what we all believed at the time. We were young and innocent. It was a different time. Music was all-important, and The Beatles were wonderful.

All too soon, it was over. Their last song was "Please Please Me", and we joined in the chorus.

Then they said, "Goodnight Oldham", and like that, they were gone. We clapped and shouted for more, but they didn't come back. I checked the time. It was 10 o'clock. The performance had lasted an hour and a half. But it was over.

Tony came back on stage and said, "Goodnight, boys and girls. We are closing early tonight" (they usually closed at half-past-ten). "Take it easy going home."

Pauline and I slowly made our way to the cloakroom to collect our coats, and then walked out into the clean fresh air. I raised my head and gazed at the dark sky, felt the soft gentle rain on my face. It was cool and pleasant after the hot and stuffy atmosphere of the dance hall.

We linked arms as I opened the broolly, and we began to walk up George Street toward the bus terminal.

“So what did you think of them?” I asked Pauline. “Do you think they will be famous?”

“What, like really famous all over the world? Well we did act daft,” Pauline said. “We’ve never acted like that before.”

“And so many people,” she added. “I’ve never seen that many have you?”

“No and the way everybody acted...” I said. We began to giggle. “There is certainly something different about them. They are fab. Absolutely. Fantastic. Yeah – fantastic,” I said. “And I loved THE SONG.”

“What song?” she asked.

I started to sing. And she soon joined in. It was the song The Beatles had performed earlier, “Love Me Do”.

We got to the bus terminal and said our goodbyes. “Tarah” I shouted. “See you Thursday. Great night.”

“Yea,” Pauline replied. “Great night.”

We went to get on our buses, and headed home, dreaming about the Beatles.



Years later I heard The Beatle’s song, “Love Me Do”, and I remembered the night that they’d come to my little corner of the world, and the profound effect they’d had on us. I smiled and thought, *Yes, we were there. There at the beginning of Beatlemania.*

Oh, how the world has changed since those days! However, the songs of The Beatles stay the same. They live on forever. Loved by many generations around the world.

To this very day.

About the Author

Christine Crossley was born and raised in the town of Oldham, in the north of England, near Manchester. She got married in 1966, had two boys, John (1968) and David (1972), and immigrated to Canada in 1974. After her divorce in 1985, Christine remained in Canada, becoming a citizen after nearly 40 years, in January of 2014; it was one of the happiest days of her life.

Christine enjoys reading, and singing in her local church choir. These stories are the first memoirs she's had published.





Help!

- My
First Date

by
Margo Karolyi



**This story takes place in October 1966, in Oakville Ontario*

“All my clothes are lame,” I whined to my sister as I pulled pants and tops out of my dresser and tossed them on the floor.

“Boring. Boring. Ugly. Stupid. Boring,” I complained as the pile grew bigger. Dresses, blouses and skirts lay on the bottom, sweaters and pants on top. “I have nothing decent to wear!” I wailed.

“You wear those clothes to school every day,” Sharon commented without taking her eyes off her book. She always had her nose in a book. I liked reading too, but I wasn’t obsessed with it. Maybe it was because she was 15, in her second year of high school, and didn’t have a boyfriend to give her something else to think about.



Me and Sharon, early 1967

Unlike me - who, at nearly 13 and in Grade 8, almost did.

“I should have bought something new,” I muttered. “I have some babysitting money saved up.”

“New clothes won’t disguise the fact that you’re built like a beanpole,” Sharon said. “Besides, if you wore something new just to go to the show with Sheila MacDougall, Mom would be suspicious.”

She was right. I was as tall as most of the teenage girls in my class, but I wasn’t nearly as well endowed as some of them. And Mom didn’t miss much, even when we thought she wasn’t paying attention. Like when Sharon and I tried to sneak a baby bunny into the house last spring. We’d barely gotten in the door when we heard Mom calling out from somewhere deep in the house, “I smell rabbit!” She didn’t only have eyes in the back of her head, she had extra senses everywhere!

“You don’t want her to know what’s really going on,” Sharon chided, giving me a sly look over the top of her latest *Nancy Drew Mystery*. “And you couldn’t lie if you did get caught. You don’t know how!”

I dropped down on the end of my bed with a sigh. Sharon was right again. I had to make this look like a normal Friday-night-at-the-movies with my best friend. Nothing more. Nothing special. Nothing secret. Nothing that would get me grounded for the rest of my life if Mom found out.

I pulled my favourite white turtleneck sweater out of the pile, and grabbed my not-really-blue-jeans from the end of the bed. I plucked clean white socks, underpants, and my training bra from the top drawer. I scooted down the hall to the bathroom to get dressed. It was bad enough I had to share a room with my older sister - I didn’t need her offering me advice while she watched me get changed! I was nervous enough as it was!

I pulled the hairbrush through my shoulder-length dark hair a hundred times, tucked a tube of pale pink lipstick, a comb, and my hideous tortoise-shell glasses into my purse. I would only put the glasses on if I absolutely had to. After one last assessing look in the mirror, I slung the long purse strap over my shoulder and tiptoed towards the front door.

Mom was sitting in her rocking chair in the corner of the living room, waiting for me to pass by on my way out.



Mom in her rocking chair, circa 1965

“Don’t be late,” she said. “And if you need a ride home after the movie, call and your Dad will pick you up.”

As if.

“Yes, ma’am,” I replied, slipping out as fast as I could. I was sure she knew something was up. I didn’t like lying – not to Mom, not to my teachers, not to anyone. But sometimes, a girl’s gotta do what a girl’s gotta do.

This was definitely one of those times.

I race-walked down the street, through George's Square, and across to Dunn Street. I'd made the short journey to Sheila's house a thousand times in the last year, but I'd never been as excited as I was tonight. I slowed my pace, willing myself to *just calm down!*

I took a couple of slow, deep breaths. The air was cool, and full of the smell of decaying leaves and damp earth. It was mid-October, and the sun was slipping gradually behind clouds to the west. It would be completely gone by the time the movie let out. It somehow seemed more daring to be sneaking around in the dark than in broad daylight.

Not that I was sneaking exactly, but I wasn't going to the movies with just Sheila this week. We were going with two boys from our class. On a double date! My first date ever!

Sheila, of course, was going with Paul G., the tall, dark, and handsome model and wannabe-actor she'd been secretly dating since the end of Grade 7. I was going with Brian F. – the cutest boy in the entirety of Grade 8 at our school. He was tall and blonde, with brilliant blue eyes, and the most adorable pair of dimples in his cheeks when he smiled. I'd had a crush on him for ages!

I couldn't believe he'd asked me out! It had happened on Tuesday, at the end of gym class. Usually the boys and girls had different gym classes with different teachers (Mr. Forster for the boys, Miss Clark for the girls), but this fall we were learning folk dancing, so they'd combined them.

Miss Clark made the boys line up on one side of the gym, and the girls on the other. We were supposed to pair off differently every class, but the couples who were dating would slip up or down the lines to make sure they danced together.



Paul, Brian, Sheila, Me; from our Grade 8 Graduation photo, June 1967

I don't know if Miss Clark knew what was going on, or just chose to ignore it. Anyway, on Tuesday, Brian had moved up the boys' line to stand behind Paul, who'd slipped down to be across from Sheila. Since I was next to her in the girls' line, I ended up dancing with Brian. It didn't occur to me to wonder why he'd orchestrated our match-up. I was just thrilled to be holding hands and cross-stepping with him for the next forty minutes, praying I wouldn't falter and step on his toes or do something else to embarrass myself in his oh-so-close presence.

Then, as the final strains of *dada-da-dada-dada* faded away, Brian leaned in and whispered, "Do you want to go the movies with me on Friday night? We could double date with Paul and Sheila."

I didn't even need to think about my answer! "Yes, I'd love to!" I replied (probably with a little too much enthusiasm, but maybe he didn't notice).

Meeting-up arrangements were made in the following days during clandestine back-of-the-playground get-togethers at recess. We agreed to keep things on the down low when it came to our double date, because in 1966 most parents were pretty strict about no dating before high school. My parents, and Sheila's, were no exception (although most of the kids in Grade 8 at our school had at least dabbled their toes in the dating pool, and some – like Kerry C. and Dawn A. - had been coupled up for as much as a full year!).

Since I was (according to my mother) "far too young to even think about seeing boys", I knew I was on thin ice by agreeing to the date. I'd have to be just a little bit devious if I was going to get away with it. I'd told Sharon, of course (I had to tell someone), but I avoided Mom as much as I could for the next three days, doing my chores, and sitting quietly at the table for meals, but not engaging in chit chat at all.

I was a pitiful liar, and being deceitful didn't come naturally to me. I wasn't going to take the chance of blurting out something stupid I'd later regret. I wasn't about to let anything stop me from going to see the Beatles in *Help!* with the boy of my dreams. It was worth the risk, no matter what.

Besides, (I theorized, as I slowed down around the curve from Sheila's house to swipe on some lipstick and run the comb through my fly-away hair) I would be 13 in exactly one month, so what was the big deal anyway?

No one talked about their age at school. The girls I'd been friends with most of my life knew I'd accelerated through Grades 3 and 4 back at Brantwood Public School, and that I had a November birthday. But I don't think they realized that made me as much as a year-and-a-half younger than most of them. I doubted Brian knew I was still only 12 (he'd turned 14 the previous March; I knew that because he was the first boy in Grade 7 to reach that milestone and everyone had been talking about it).

Besides, I was as tall as all the teenage girls at New Central School, and I dressed and talked and acted like just like them. Age was just a number. One that didn't matter all that much, as far as I was concerned.

I took a couple more deep breaths before rounding the curve and strolling past Sheila's house. I knew she would have left already, but I still cast an envious glance at her house. Her father was a chiropractor (my Dad's, as a matter of fact), whose practice was on the main floor of a three-storey red brick building with a turret on one side. Sheila's sister, Janet, had her bedroom at the top of it. It was like a real princess's room. What I wouldn't give for a space like that!



Sheila's house (circa 2007, but basically unchanged from 1966)

I turned my gaze away from the house and spotted Sheila – tiny and blonde, and perfectly put together in white jeans and a frilly pink blouse – across the street. She was standing in the shadowed alcove next to the front steps of St. John's United Church. Paul was next to her, his arm slung possessively around her shoulders. Brian stood a little ways apart, his hands in his pockets, looking maybe as nervous as I was. *Surely I wasn't his first date!*

He was dressed in dark pants and a white shirt with a black and white striped cardigan over top. Nothing special, but not shabby. I wondered if he'd fretted over what to wear as much as I had!

I tried to appear casual as I glanced both ways before crossing over to join them.

“Hey, you made it,” Brian said, stepping forward as I approached the group. He smiled, and I nearly swooned over his dimples.

My throat was dry and my tongue felt twice its size. “Yup,” was all I could manage. Brian didn’t seem bothered by the brevity of my reply.

“We better get going,” Paul said, dropping his arm and grabbing Sheila’s hand.

“The movie starts at 6:45,” he added as he pulled her towards the street. “I want to get a good seat.”

Brian and I fell in behind Paul and Sheila, walking side by side, but not holding hands. The other couple carried on some kind of private conversation – Paul doing most of the talking and Sheila giggling in response. Brian and I remained awkwardly silent.

What do you even say to a boy you’ve crushed on for ages but never actually spoken more than a few words to? How do you start a conversation without sounding like a babbling idiot? I had no idea, so I kept my mouth shut. He must have felt the same way, because he remained quiet, too.

We covered the two short blocks down Dunn Street in no time, before turning left onto Lakeshore Road. The theatre was only a block and a half away, but Paul didn’t slow down, and Sheila, Brian, and I kept pace with him. That suited me fine. Any slower and my nervousness – wobbly knees, shaking hands, racing heart - would probably have been obvious.

The main street wasn’t busy, so we didn’t have to avoid a lot of people as we approached the theatre. Then Paul stopped suddenly and said, “Man, look at that line up. I wonder if we’ll be able to get in.”

I peeked around him and felt my heart drop. There had to be a hundred people standing in front of the theatre, and another hundred snaking around the corner onto Reynolds Street. How many more were up the street that we couldn’t see?

Oh, man! Was this the humiliating end of my very first date?

“I’m not worried,” Brian declared, taking my hand and tugging on it as he moved past Paul and Sheila. “Come on, let’s get in line.”



The Odeon Theatre in downtown Oakville; it went independent in the early 1970s (when this picture was taken) and was renamed The Playhouse.

I don't remember anything about the next 20 minutes, as we joined the queue and made our way slowly towards entrance to the theatre. All I kept thinking was, "Brian F. is holding my hand. Oh. My. God."

When we finally reached the ticket booth, the boys paid the admission fee (\$1.00 each), and we pushed our way into the tightly packed lobby. The smell of freshly popped popcorn and melted butter saturated the air. Sheila and I stood against the back wall while Brian and Paul bought four boxes of popcorn and four colas.

An usher positioned at the back of the lobby directed us to the entry doors on the right. Another usher led us half way down the aisle, the beam of his flashlight moving back and forth across the threadbare carpet at his feet. He stopped and pointed his light at four empty seats on the far side.

Brian scooted in past the two couples who were already seated by the aisle, and I followed. Sheila came in behind me, then Paul. The soles of my Keds made tiny sucking noises as they stuck to the spilled pop and who-knows-what-else on the floor.

I leaned on the edge of the flipped-up seat and wiggled my bum until it flopped forward so I could sit down. It was hardly graceful, but my hands were full of pop and popcorn, so what choice did I have? The others sat down the same way, and we spent a minute or two settling in, placing our pops between our feet and tucking the boxes of popcorn next to our hips, within easy reach. I squinted at my watch (no way was I putting on my stupid glasses, even if it meant the movie might look a little fuzzy). It was twenty to seven - only five minutes till start time.

The din of hundreds of totally incomprehensible conversations swirled around us, making it nearly impossible to talk amongst ourselves. So, we simply sat and waited, nibbling on the warm, salty popcorn, and sipping at our sickly sweet colas.

My left hand got greasy from the butter drizzled over top of the popcorn, and I dug a tissue out of my purse to wipe it off. *The concession stand girl really should have given the boys some napkins!*

I could hardly wait for the lights to dim. *Would Brian try to put his arm around me when they did? Hold my hand again?* I'd never been so on edge in all my life!

After what seemed like eons, but was actually only a few minutes, the lights went down, the washed-out red velvet curtains slid apart with a squeal, and the crowd quieted. There would be at least two cartoons, and probably a short documentary before the movie began, but we were getting oh-so-close.

I fidgeted in anticipation. Brian took my hand again (fortunately it wasn't the one I'd been eating popcorn with) and squeezed gently! I forgot to breathe. By the time the creepy opening scene of the movie ended and the first chords of The Beatles singing "Help!" came over the loudspeakers, every person in the room was holding their breath as well.



My "Help!" Soundtrack LP (58 years later)

The movie itself was a bit of a disappointment. It was a slapstick caper about a ceremonial ring that comes into Ringo's possession, a cult of some kind, and a couple of mad scientists who want to get their hands on it, and efforts to keep the boys (John, Paul, George, and Ringo) safe from harm as they travel to various exotic locations. The best parts were when The Beatles stopped frolicking about long enough to sing one of several new songs (my favourite was "Norwegian Wood"). The soundtrack LP was released shortly afterwards, and I played it so often in the following months that Sharon threatened to smash it into a million pieces if I didn't stop!

The final credits rolled around 8:30, and the theatre quickly emptied. I'd never been inside the Odeon when it was full before. Every seat – lower level and balcony – had been taken, and it had been stifling inside (all the girls sighing loudly over The Beatles might have had something to do with that as well). It was a relief to get outside into the clean, fresh air. The crowd quickly broke up into groups that mixed and mingled, talking excitedly about the movie, while the line-up for the 9:00 p.m. show inched along behind them and into the theatre.

Paul, Sheila, Brian, and I waited until the crowds thinned before walking back the way we'd come earlier. I figured we'd head to where the evening had begun – the steps of St. John's Church – and part ways. I tried to prepare myself for the ultimate disappointment of Brian letting go of my hand, saying goodnight, and walking away. Since neither Sheila or I were supposed to be dating, I knew he wouldn't risk offering to walk me home. I would have to make the rest of the journey by myself. I did wonder if he'd kiss me goodnight before he left, though. I was surprised when we reached the corner of Dunn and Church Streets (a block south of St. John's) and Paul suggested, "Why don't we go across to the Cosy Corner and have some fries?"

The Cosy Corner was a family-style restaurant popular with the downtown area's teenage crowd. A platter of French fries (large enough to share) and a pop cost around 50 cents.



What was once the Cosy Corner (now the Queen's Head); corner of Dunn and Church St., Oakville.

I'd been there a couple of times after school with Sheila and some of the other girls in our class (even though I'd told Mom I was going to the Library to work on a school project - which we did talk about, so it wasn't totally a lie!) but I'd never been there at night, or with a boy.

I squinted at my watch again. 8:45. I had a 10 o'clock curfew, and my parents would roast me alive if I was late. I'd broken curfew a couple of times recently (from not paying attention while hanging out at Sheila's, watching TV, and reading *Tiger Beat* magazine), and I couldn't afford to do it again. If we were in the restaurant more than an hour, I was doomed.

*Should I take the chance? Tell them I could only go along if we left before ten?
Or just say "No" and be on the safe side?*

When Sheila and Brian both said, "Great idea," at the same time, I realized it was out of my hands. I wasn't going to throw a wet blanket on this party. I'd just pray we'd leave in plenty of time for me to make the five-minute trek home and get in before 10.

Silly me!

The restaurant was packed with the after-movie crowd and there was at least a dozen kids we knew from school in the booths along the far side. We joined them and soon everyone was talking about the movie, The Beatles, and the songs. I totally lost track of the time.

It was 10:15 when Paul and Brian split the bill and we left the restaurant. I felt a little sick to my stomach as the boy's said goodnight to us in front of the church (no kisses!) and headed off together (they both lived the opposite direction from Sheila and me).

We crossed Randall Street and Sheila slipped through the hedge towards the back of her house while I took off at a run towards home. Maybe my parents were asleep and wouldn't hear me coming in.

Fat chance!

Mom's voice came out of the dark the moment I stepped through the front door. "You're late. I've been sitting here imagining you lying dead in a ditch somewhere. Where have you been?"

I grimaced as I locked the door behind me. *Tell the truth or lie?*

"We stopped at the Cosy Corner for fries and a drink after the movie," I said, knowing a lie is easier to stick to when it's filtered through the truth. "With some friends from school." Also true. So long as she didn't ask for details, I was safe.

"I don't want to hear it. This is the third time this month you've broken your curfew. It's in place for your own safety. You're still only twelve."

I rolled my eyes. *As if I didn't know that.*

“I’m sorry. I promise it won’t happen again.”

“Not for the next two weeks, it won’t,” Mom said, emerging from the darkened living room into the hall. “You’re grounded. Other than going to school and babysitting, you cannot go anywhere or see anyone. Is that understood?”

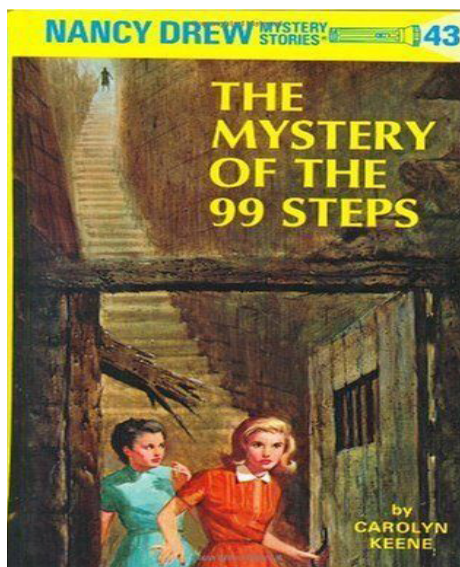
“Yes ma’am,” I answered, keeping my head down so she wouldn’t use her mom powers to figure out I was hiding something from her.

I slunk down the hall to our bedroom. The door was closed, but Sharon was still awake, her bedside light on and another *Nancy Drew Mystery* open in front of her (big surprise!).

“How did it go?” she asked.

I wasn’t sure if she meant the date, the movie, or Mom’s reaction to me getting in late, so I answered, “The date was great. The movie was so-so. Mom grounded me for two weeks.”

She smirked, but didn’t respond. We’d both been grounded before, so she knew how it went. You suffered through it and moved on. There was no point in complaining about it.



1966 Nancy Drew Mystery (from my sister’s collection)

I threw myself down on my bed and stared up at the ceiling. I should have been upset and angry about being grounded, but I was still on a high from the night. It had been magical. From start to finish. I didn’t care if I couldn’t go out for the next two weeks. I’d still see Brian at school, talk to him at recess, maybe even hold his hand again. I sighed deeply. Sharon responded with a snort.

“Go to sleep,” she commanded. “You’re making me sick!”

I rolled off the bed, changed into my nightgown, and scuttled off to the bathroom to brush my teeth and wash my face. I was smiling the whole time. I had passed a major milestone in my life. My very first date with my very first boyfriend. There was no going back now.

There'd probably be more boyfriends in my future, more first dates with them. But none would be a special as this one. How could they possibly be?

And maybe someday I'd marry one of those boys (or even Brian – who knew, right?) and have a family and live in a house with a turret on one end (a girl can dream, can't she?).

But for now, I thought, as I snuggled down into bed and pulled the covers up to my chin, I'd just relive this night over and over again every time I listened to "Help!" by The Beatles!

(And I still do!)



Grade 8 Graduation, New Central Public School, Oakville. June 1967.

About the Author

Margo Karolyi is a former educator who retired to rural Scotland, Ontario in 2010, where she resides on four forested acres with her husband, cat, and two rabbits. She spends her days writing, reading, gardening, and spending time with her two precious granddaughters.

Several of Margo's stories have received acclaim in various writing contests over the years, and she has had work published in a number of anthologies. Her blog, *The Other Side of 55* (<https://theothersideof55.wordpress.com/>), features nearly 200 examples of her writing, including personal experience, short fiction, memoir, and poetry. Margo combined her two passions – writing and teaching – as the leader of the 2022-2023 Lifescapes program. This is the fourth year she has contributed a memoir to the annual anthology.



*Portrait of the author by Madeleine S. K. Martin,
age 8.*



My world shifted forever in the few short hours between bedtime on October 15th, 1962, and the dawn of the next day. I did not sleep as the Soviets placed long-range missiles on the island of Cuba. I clenched my pillow and cried as I begged, “Don’t let me go up in a mushroom cloud!”

That fearful night set the most important musical theme in my life - the protest song. Songs like Creedence Clearwater Revival’s, “Fortunate Son”, Bob Dylan’s, “Blowin’ in the Wind”, Barry McGuire’s, “Eve of Destruction”, and Buffalo Springfield’s, “For What It’s Worth.”

I remain in the protest phase to this day. It is the core that all my musical listening is wrapped around.



My Personal Hit Parade

by
Brian Bosnell



1. Radio

“Brian! Stop! Turn the volume down please!”

That was one of the few times I heard my grandmother raise her voice. I was groovin’ in her living room to Roy Orbison and Bill Dees’ “Oh, Pretty Woman”. The date: August of 1964. The device: gram’s old vacuum tube radio.

The halcyon days of the chart-climbing rock songs were just beginning. My father’s 1958 Pontiac (that he loaned to me only after extended requests) did not have a radio, but once I began cruising as a passenger in my friends’ fathers’ vehicles, the top forty countdown was all we listened to.

If school was in session, we would crash a Friday night high school, or wend our way up and down the two main thoroughfares of town with the top forty blasting from the screechy radio speaker. It may have been Led Zeppelin’s “Whole Lotta Love”, or The Doors’ “Light My Fire”, over and over. It didn’t matter. We were happenin’!

I can still smell the smoke from the back seat of Jim’s father’s 1967 Ford LTD hardtop (we all smoked then). “Hey Jude” blasted every half-hour from the car stereo. It stayed at number one for eight weeks. When I hear the song now, or watch the video on YouTube, I can picture that car exactly as it was 55 years ago. In the “Hey Jude” YouTube video, the audience climbs up on the stage and fills every available inch on Paul McCartney’s piano. I am right there as I watch it and the refrain washes over me. The Beatles were innovative, and fresh. Every song resonated. The songs kept coming and coming!

In 1972 there was a dead end (with just enough space to turn around) at Turkey Point that still exists to this day. It’s perched on a bank over-looking Lake Erie. Another best friend of mine and I would sit in his pickup truck’s cab, smoke a joint (or two) and let the roll of the waves transfix us. Once a thunderstorm blew in while “Riders on the Storm” by The Doors played. The song ends with a deep thunderclap roll. My friend’s life ended some years later. Now, many years later, when that song plays, I’ll stop, and remember his thunder.

In what seemed like the blink of an eye, a confluence of electronic technologies collided in the 1960s and 1970s that changed the world. FM radio exploded, the transistor radio made the portability of the medium ubiquitous, the 8-Track came and went (to be replaced by the cassette), and hi-fidelity all-in-one entertainment centers became component stereo systems.

I used the ever-changing technology to athletic advantage over the years. I created a heart-pounding workout song list that I can play through my headphones on the racquetball court during the warmup for a match. My bone conduction headphones allow me to play Foreigner's "Urgent", leaving Junior Walker's sax solo vibrating in my head. Talk about "getting pumped." Many songs accomplished that for me.

In 1975 I worked a night shift in the timekeeping department of a local manufacturer. The FM station (that remains a favourite to this day) was never turned off for the entire eight hours. I took the DJ's recommendations and went downtown almost every weekend to purchase one or two albums. I did this for a couple of years, amassing an impressive collection.

If I ventured out of town on a weekend for a camping/drinking excursion to nearby Lake Erie, the radio would be locked onto a few influential U.S. stations, like Buffalo or Cleveland. If I went down London way (to Grand Bend's Pinery Provincial Park) it might be Windsor or Detroit, whatever station had the latest hits.

Also, during those years, I would party with my friends in spots along the Grand River and Whiteman's Creek. If I was in transit, my nucleus of songs would take over. I would sing along to them if they played on the radio. These extraordinary tunes remain etched in memory, and I still stop everything to sing them, even if I don't quite get the lyrics correct - i.e., "I think it's time to stop/ Everybody, what's that sound?/ Look what's comin' down." *

Such is the hold that my group of protest songs has over me.

It's bitterly ironic to me that Barry McGuire's song ("Eve of Destruction") was banned in the early 1960s, and yet we face the same existential threats 60 years later. As I write this, the Doomsday Clock has been moved six seconds closer to midnight. (It now rests at 90 seconds to oblivion.) Around the time "Eve of Destruction" was released, the clock read six minutes to midnight.

Recent studies have shown that our musical tastes are cemented by the end of puberty and remain throughout our lives. The implication is that we never really leave middle school and high school. Therefore, those early songs of protest will be in my brain forever.

2. 8-Track to Cassette

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, musical technology continued to race forward. I saved some cash and purchased a dual cassette, AM/FM portable recorder. Now I could record from the radio, or from another cassette. It was tricky to do, but I managed. In my early teens, I would still go on a few summertime day trips with my parents and recall blasting the drum solo on Chicago's "I'm a Man" on a picnic table a safe distance away. I could even cue to the spot if I wanted to. Most of the time, I played the entire song repeatedly.

I remember ordering the player through Eaton's mail catalogue and picking it up at a downtown distribution centre. When I had the chance to drive my father's 1958 Pontiac, I carried the player with me.

My first car (a 1967 Volvo) was equipped with a monologue AM/FM radio. Stereo was on the horizon. I changed that with one of the newest innovations in the early 1970s.

My grandmother sold the car to me at an incredible discount. Within days of its arrival, I purchased an 8-Track stereo with four speakers and installed it. The short-lived era of the 8-Track began. Over and over, I played music by Iron Maiden, The Monkees, and Creedence Clearwater Revival. The last year for the 8-Track was 1978. My Volvo was long gone by then, sold to finance a trip to Europe.

Next came the personal stereo radio cassette player, the first in a long line of *Walkmans*.

There certainly was no shortage of high-octane creative talent during the cassette reign. I listened to The Eagles, AC/CD, John Mellencamp, Foreigner, and Boston. Each group or artist seemed to me to be thematically separated. The Eagles had their concept albums (Cowboys, for one), AC/CD used their frontman's high-pitched voice and pounding beats, Foreigner lamented failed love, and Boston extolled the virtues of new love. All the while Bob Dylan stuck with his protest phase.



My First Player with Headphones
I still have this player and it still works! Notice the tape to keep the foam on the earpiece.

3. - 78s, 45s, 33 RPM

Records came in three formats: 78, 45, and 33 revolutions per minute (rpm). The numbers refer to the playback speed; i.e., 78 rpm versus 45. In general, the faster the speed, the higher the quality of the sound, and the slower the speed, the more music the record could hold. My collection of these records remains in playable condition to this day.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, “singles” were all the rage (45 rpm discs). Each 45 had two sides, called side A and side B. As time passed, collections of songs were included on long-playing records (LPs) or “albums”. Fewer and fewer singles were sold.



In 1964, beside that tube radio in my grandma's living room, was a phonograph/gramophone collection of 78s like this one.

My collection now sits in my time-worn box, to serve nostalgic purposes only. I can YouTube search any one of them and stream the selection in perfect stereo, often with a video of the artist performing it. Everything changes!



Here is a sample of my remaining 45s collection. I had them packed in a special carrying case.

As 1969 crashed into the 1970s, there was an activity that relied on high-intensity rock and roll to great advantage. That activity was roller skating, and for several summers my social group and I would careen our way around the concrete floor of the Brantford civic center to the likes of “Mony Mony” by Tommy James. A brand-new venue, Rollertown, opened in Brantford with great fanfare to crowds approaching five hundred. Rollertown disappeared within three years. The wheelspinning ended with a shrug.

My LP collection grew once I moved away from home and purchased a component system (an all-in-one system broken down into its component parts). With my favourite FM station’s recommendations, and a fancy new component system, I would finish my 11 to 7 on Thursday nights, sleep for a couple of hours, and then head downtown to the record store at noon sharp to buy the latest releases. I did this for several years, amassing a large collection of LPs in the process.

My system is long gone, and my collection is too, but I hung on to a favourite few.

4. CD, Vinyl, and Digital

LPs were soon replaced by CDs (Compact Discs), but I didn’t buy many. My life was changing. I was growing up.

The 1980s stormed in! A secure job vanished, forcing me (I am grateful) to pursue my true vocational path (teaching). I married and, in quick succession, two children were born. There were lifestyle changes and financial setbacks. Most of my music collection was gifted to my younger siblings. Music wasn’t just changing anymore - it was changing at an exponential rate.



This album is 45 years old. It was the fourth bestselling album of 2022. That's correct! In the early 2000s it was still selling hundreds of albums per day. It's appearance in 2022 on the best-seller list is probably related to the passing of Christine McVie. She was the glue that held Fleetwood Mac together during those turbulent times.



Styx hit the top in popularity in the late 1970s. For me, they represented the so-called concept album. They addressed some of the pressing issues of the time (like unemployment or loneliness) with songs grouped on a single record.



A memory grabs me: It is 1974 on a steaming August night. We are stuck in traffic on the Don Valley Parkway as a Toronto FM station plays "Dreamer" from Supertramp's "Crime of the Century." As I sweat in the back of Rick's shaggin' wagon, I make the solemn promise to buy the album. And I did.

5. The Future is Now

I am now three decades removed from the 1990s. Where did the music of the 1990s go? I checked out one top ten list and only recognized three songs. The demands of family life must have blocked the emergence of music-sharing and digital services from my consciousness. I remained only vaguely aware of this sea of change until I retired.

In the year 2023, now seven years retired, I listen to classic rock on Stingray (one of those digital services) provided through my cable provider and stream music videos through YouTube (another digital service). I can develop audio playlists from either one and play those lists through wireless headphones as I ride my bike. Music is everywhere, all the time, on demand.

There's a song right now on the contemporary playlist by Wheezer titled "Records in My Head". It alludes to records constantly spinning in the background of your brain, waiting to be retrieved at any moment (like a free internal juke box!). That's me! I carry around a personal hit parade in my head.



No cords, no wires, no tape. Connects seamlessly to my smartphone in my gym bag.

The most innocuous of phrases, like "holding hands", will trigger a flashback to my first clumsy dances at a grade seven house party. Daily, I'll hear something and exclaim: "That's from a song, isn't it?" Then, I must concentrate and come up with the artist and song title. Most times I get it.

Even after 60 years, my central musical theme has never wavered; however, I am still in protest mode. Those lines, those verses, those songs will never fade.

"Look what's comin' down!"

About the Author

Brian Bosnell is a retired elementary school teacher. Day by day, he is learning and improving the craft of writing. At all other times, he's a pathological reader.

This year (2023) marks the seventh time Brian's work has appeared in the Lifescapes anthology.





A Christmas Tradition

by
Kathy Roberts



We've never been this far up north before – not in bush country anyway. There're lots more trees here and they all look like Christmas trees. *But these trees can't be any different than the ones around the house – can they?*

It was the last Sunday before Christmas, 1966. I was so excited I could barely hold myself still. I knew I was smiling like the Cheshire Cat, but I couldn't help it. I just wanted to get going. Let the adventure begin!!!

I burst out the back door like bucking bronco, elbowing past my three brothers, Bo, George, and Crockett, and one of my little sisters, Bubble-Puss. Piggy Tails, my other little sister, was only four years old. Mom was still helping her.

“Move!” I shouted. *I was born first, I should get to do everything first.*

Crockett jumped off the top step sideways and raced toward the wagon station.

Why does that kid have to be first at everything?

Bo shoved past George on the second last step. Bubble-Puss was right behind them.

I squeezed my eyes shut for a sec and remembered I was the oldest. “I sit behind Dad!” I yelled.

Bo groaned. “You always sit there,” he complained.

I flared my nostrils, inhaled loudly and puffed out my chest. “I'm twelve.” I glared at him, trying to look fierce, “You're only ten.”

“So?” he asked.

“So,” I said. “I'm the oldest. What I say goes. You can sit by the other window.”

Bo faced me, crossed his eyes, hooked his fingers in the corners of his mouth and pulled down.

Then he turned to the dog and pointed to the floor. “Bingo,” he snarled. “Sit!”

Mom came out the door holding Piggy-Tails's hand. They got in the front seat.

“Okay,” Dad said. “Settle down,”

When the constant bickering died down, he turned the key and backed out the driveway. He drove up the street, through our subdivision, and onto the highway. Instead of turning left towards Sudbury like he usually did, he turned right, and headed north.

Houses started to thin out. Soon all I could see was trees, and more bush. Half an hour later, I started to see a few houses, then more, and the beginning of a town.

Oh good. We're finally getting somewhere or to something. Maybe this time he'll stop. Maybe we can have hot chocolate.

My hopes soon faded as we just kept going and going. Houses started to get fewer and fewer again. Until all I saw was trees, trees, and more trees.

Sometimes, when we've been driving for a long time, I get bored and pretend to sleep. I closed my eyes. But I could still hear the impatience in Crockett's voice as he asked, "Are we there yet?"

He's getting bored too.

"Almost," Mom said. "Just a bit further."

"Who sees a sign on a tree?" Dad asked.

"I do, I do!" Crockett yelled.

There he goes again with that 'need to be first' thing!

"Good," Dad said. "Tell me when you don't see any more. That'll mean we've reached Crown land."

"What's 'Crown land'?" Crockett asked. "Are there lots of crowns there? Is there a king or a queen? Do they live in a snow castle?"

"No," Dad said with a laugh. "Crown land is land that's owned by the government. That's where we'll find a **real** tree. Just the way it grows in nature."

We pressed our noses to the windows, willing the signs to disappear. Instead, it was just sign after sign. At least it wasn't just green trees. The signs seemed to go on forever! Even after we reported no more signs, Dad kept driving for another ten minutes. At last, he pulled over.

“Look kids,” Mom gushed, pointing to the right, out the front window. “A moose.” All six of our heads turned together, and we let out a collective gasp.

It was huge! Twice as high as the car. Tall skinny legs, boney hips, knobby knees.

Boy, I thought my knees were knobby, but these are way worse.

The head looked too big for the body.

*Kinda’ ugly, really. But still, **very** impressive.*

“It’s a lady moose,” Dad said.

“How can you tell?” I asked.

“Look at her long eyelashes,” he chuckled. “And no antlers.”

The lady moose didn’t seem at all concerned that we’d just driven up. She lifted her head, a mouthful of grass still hanging out (*What a slob!*). She turned slowly and walked back into the bush.

*She was **so big!***

We sat there watching for a few minutes, maybe hoping she’d come back. But she didn’t.

Really though, we were here to get a tree. The moose was bonus.

Ok, enough!

I opened my car door and jumped out. **Freedom!**

The rest of the kids got out too. We charged around, playing in the snow, churning up white powder where the crust broke. Our dog Bingo ran in big circles around us all.

“Hey,” I said. “Watch this.” I scooped up a big armful of fluffy snow and threw it in the air. Crockett copied me, but he flung it straight at me – right in my face! *Cheeky beggar!*

I threw some back. He threw more. Bo joined in, and the others followed. Soon everybody was laughing and tossing snow – a shower of cold, white dust.

Dad tightened his lips, curled his tongue and let out a commanding “round-up whistle”. We all stopped.

“Let’s go find ourselves a tree,” he said.

Being the oldest, I naturally started following the moose tracks into the bush. The rest of the kids followed, single-file. I’d just got past the first tree when Dad shouted. “OK. That’s far enough. Wait there ‘til your mother and I catch up.”

We all stopped - all except Bingo. He gulped big mouthfuls of snow and shook his head sideways so hard, his ears flapped. He snuffled under low branches, snorting and stirring up snow. He barked loudly and raced between trees, scaring off any possible wildlife for miles.

I pulled the collar of my heavy sweater-jacket up over my nose. *It’s colder back here, and a bit darker – kinda’ creepy. Glad I’m not alone. A bit spooky. Too many trees. The sun can’t get in between them all. Snow’s patchy too. A hard crust in some places but soft and deep in other places. Not like at home at all.*

But I wasn’t alone. The whole gang was here - all us kids, Mom and Dad, even Bingo. I was safe.

It only took a few minutes for Mom and Dad to catch up. When they did, Crockett started complaining again.

“All it is, is trees,” he said. He usually grinned about everything, but his face was in a definite frown this time. “And pretty skinny”, he said.

“That’s your job,” Dad said. “Look for the best one. We’ll go in pairs - oldest with youngest.”

Piggy-Tails was squirming. Mom had wrapped herself around her, trying to keep her warm.

“Piggy-Tails is already cold,” Mom said. “She and I will wait by the car.” She took her hand and they turned and walked away.

Dad shrugged his shoulders and said to me, “Tass. You’re on your own.” *Good, sometimes I like being on my own.*

“Bo,” Dad continued. “You’re with Bubble-Puss. Crocket, you’re with George.”

“I don’t wanna be with George,” Crocket wailed. “I wanna be with Bo.”

Dad sighed. “Alright, alright,” he continued patiently. “Crockett, you’re with Bo. George, you’re with Bubble-Puss.”

“Spread out,” I said. “Each group go their own way.”

Two minutes later, Crockett yelled, “I found the perfect one.”

I groaned. *First again? We only just got here! How could he have found the perfect tree already?*

I turned and moved in his direction. I chose my footsteps carefully so I’d stay on top of the crusty snow.

I was making my way over to where Crockett and Bo were when I heard George call from behind some trees on my right, “I need some help over here Bubble-Puss is stuck in a hole.”

It’s hard to walk carefully when you know somebody needs you. I rushed over.

Not far in, I found them. One of Bubble-Puss’ legs was thigh-deep in the snow. George was trying to pull her out. “I can’t do it,” he cried.

I worked my way closer, wrapped my arms around her bulky snowsuit, and pulled. On the second yank, she came unstuck and we both fell backwards. Her boot was still in the hole; I had to retrieve it separately. I shook it out and handed it back. She pulled it on.

The three of us worked our way over to Bo and Crockett. As we got closer, we could hear them arguing.

“I told you,” Bo sneered, pointing at the top of the tree. “It’s too short.”

“It’s perfect,” Crockett said.

Dad arrived. “Humph,” he said. “It IS a bit short. I think we can find something better. Let’s keep exploring.”

“My boots are wet,” Bubble-Puss whined. “I wanna go home.”

The rest of us wanted to find that perfect tree. Bubble-Puss did too; she just didn’t want to be directly involved.

The sky was starting to cloud over, looking like snow. *I don't want to look for a tree when it's snowing.*

“Hurry-up,” I said. “Keep looking.”

Every tree we found was either too tall or too short or too bare or too something. I wanted to be the winner, but I was afraid that whatever I picked wouldn't be good enough. **Somebody'd** think there was **something** wrong with it. I worried about that for a bit. Then, 10 minutes later, a little yawn squeezed past my lips.

I'm tired but I'm not going to give up.

I saw one that looked okay. But when I got closer I could see that it was really two trees growing close together. Off to their left was another clump of three. The two in the front were pretty thin but the one in the back looked good. I could see Bo and Crockett walking fairly close-by off to my right. I hesitated, then said, “Come look at this one.”

They turned and came over. Bo was choosey about where he stepped but Crockett just plowed through the deep snow, leaving a messy trail behind him.

“This one in the back here,” I said. They walked around it, inspecting it.

“Nope,” Bo said frowning. “There's a big bare patch on the side.”

They did a half-turn and went off in the other direction. I winced. *I just knew it wouldn't be good enough.* I went closer to check. There **was** a bare patch, but we could turn it to face the corner. *Nobody would know.*

“Hey kids,” Dad called from somewhere further in the direction Bo and Crockett had gone, “Come look at this.”

I turned and slowly dragged my feet through the deep snow. George and Bubble-Puss followed behind in my footsteps (like in the Christmas carol, “Good King Wenceslas”). When we got to Dad, Bo and Crockett were already there.

“What do you think?” Dad asked, pointing to a tree.

“Yeah,” Bo said.

Yeah, that'll do. One branch sticks way out, but I bet Dad won't cut it.

A Christmas Tradition

The tree trunk was pretty skinny so Dad took the branch cutter out of his pocket and cut through it. Then he moved to the top of the tree and cut off some of the spindly bits.



*Left to Right – Dad, George, Bubble-Puss, Crockett,
Bo, Tass*

Like a successful hunting party, we dragged our catch back to the car.

When we got there, Mom was leaning against the hood of the car, holding Piggy-Tails on her lap. Bubble-Puss walked over to join them, and the three of them got in front seat together, pretending they were getting warm. The car has to be started for the heater to work. Nobody even **thought** about wasting gas like that.

Crockett tripped over a stick on the ground. He picked it up. Bingo came running over, eager to play. Crockett threw it for him. Soon they were lost in the world of fetch.

The rest of us dragged the tree to the side of the car.

“OK Tass,” Dad said. “Let’s get this thing up there. Bo, hold the top.” George stood there quietly, just watching.

Dad took a bundle of rope out of the trunk and tied the tree to the roof of the car. Bo, George, and I helped. When we were done it looked like the tree was pinned under a giant cat’s cradle of rope.

I opened the rear car door behind Mom and climbed in. The others crowded behind me. Bingo pushed his way through our legs. Once we were all piled into the back seat, Dad double-checked the ropes. As he reached for the door handle, George, Crockett, and Bingo jumped over the rear seat into the far back of the car. Bubble-Puss climbed over the front seat to sit between Bo and I. We settled in, and Dad got in and started the car.

Cold, wet, and tired, there wasn’t much kerfuffle on the long drive home.

When we finally got home, Mom and us girls headed straight in to get supper going. We left Dad and the boys outside to take care of the tree.

“Mmm,” I said as I opened the door and stepped inside. “Smells great!” The spaghetti sauce had been simmering all afternoon. Tomato, basil and lots of oregano. My most favourite smell in the whole wide world.

Bubble-Puss and Piggy-Tails pushed past me, through the kitchen and dining room and into the living room. They flopped on the Chesterfield, exhausted. The house wasn’t real big, but it was comfy. And it was **home**.

I came back into the kitchen a bit later wearing my spaghetti shirt - a maroon paisley design that I always wear when we have spaghetti. If sauce splatters down my front, it won’t show. This is probably the last time I’ll wear it – it’s way too small. The collar won’t do up, the sleeves are too short, and there’s holes at my elbows. I’m 12, nearly grown up now.

I went to the pine cupboard, counted out eight placemats and put them around the table. It was Piggy-Tails’ job to put salt and pepper shakers on, but this was a special meal so she added “real butter” and the proper butter knife, too.



Me at 12

Bubble-Puss threaded flowered napkins through the silver napkin rings. She handed them to Piggy-Tails, who put them at each place around the table. Mom took the warm bread out of the oven and set it on the bread board. She handed it to me, and I put it on the table. Dad and the boys came in and washed up for supper.

We sat down, waiting patiently for Mom. Under the table, I bounced my knees. Mom's always last! Everybody knows I don't have much patience. I **hate** waiting. For anything. Ever.

Hurry up!

Dad cut the bread in thick slices and passed them around. Mom doled out spaghetti. I stood up and poured fresh, cold wholemilk into tall glasses for us kids. Dad poured wine into fancy glasses for him and Mom. Mom sat down. Finally, we could dig in.

I twirled a huge load of spaghetti around my fork. With my knife in the other hand, I wrapped any long dangling noodles around my fork. Some sauce splattered on my shirt. *I was afraid of that! Good thing I have my spaghetti shirt on!*

The bread was crispy and flakey on the outside but soft and fluffy on the inside.
Yummy!

I stuffed another huge scoop of spaghetti into my mouth. Mom's spaghetti was one of my favourite meals. We all loved it. That, and her blueberry pie.

While we ate, we talked about the tree hunt, and the moose, and how good supper was.

When we were done, the girls cleared the table. Dad and the boys went back outside to get the tree and bring it in.

Bo and Crocket wrestled the tree through the kitchen and into the living room, leaving a thin trail of water behind them.

Great! Another mess for me to clean up.

George brought an empty bucket in and put a bit of water in it. Dad checked the height of the tree.

"Too tall," he said. "We need to cut some more off the bottom." When that was done, he put the tree in the bucket and held it straight while George added some big rocks to keep it standing straight.

Dad called out, "Hurry up girls. We're ready to start decorating."

Piggy-Tail, Bubble-Puss, and I put the last dishes in the rack to dry, and hurried into the living room. Mom was right behind us.

I opened a box of ornaments. It was sectioned off in three rows of three ornaments, each one separated by another piece of cardboard, and each ornament wrapped carefully in tissue paper. I picked one up and unwrapped it. My whole body slumped. A tissue full of shattered painted-glass.

"A-a-w-w," Mom said. "It disintegrated."

I felt like crying. We'd had these ornaments for years. The others had broken, or faded, or just fallen apart over the years. This was the last one.

Gone was the peacock with the silk tail.

A Christmas Tradition

Gone were the dew-drop shaped jewels painted in diagonal swirls of red and green, and separated by a thin line of frosty white glitter.

Gone were the antique bulbs inset with a fancy star that were once painted sparkly silver. Over the years they had faded to a light cream colour. (What had made them even more interesting was that the first star was inset with another star, which was inset with a deeper star.)

I looked deeper into the box. When I was a baby, Grandma Bowling (Mom's Mum) had crocheted stars out of pale, pink cotton that had faded to dusty beige over the years. She'd starched them with sugar-water and sprinkled them with a bit of glitter. Bo had sucked the sugar-water off them. *Yuck!* We kept the stars anyway. They lay at the bottom of the box like limp rags. They never got hung on the tree.

Grandma also made six felt hobby-horse heads one year, to go on top of candy canes. She'd used white wool to make a fringe for the mane, and gold rick-rack for the reins. She sewed on a mother-of-pearl button for each eye.

It was a special honour to be the first to put a candy-cane in one and hang it on the tree.

"Can I do the candy-canes?"
Crockett asked.

I pushed my foot hard into the carpet.
We each get to do one – he knows that! Of all the nerve! Sometimes that kid makes me soooooo angry!

"May I," I corrected. "And you only get to do one."

Crockett turned to Mom and asked,
"Mom?"

"You may do the first one," she said.



*Grandma Bowling's felt hobby horse
candy-cane holders.*

Hey, what about me? I should've been first – like every other year. I'm the oldest.

Crockett slid a fresh candy-cane into a head and hung it on the tree.

“Who's next?” Mom asked. “George,” Mom said. “Your turn.”

What? Why is she choosing everybody else before me? I finally got my turn.

A few days after Christmas, we'd each be allowed to take one candy-cane off the tree and eat it. That was a special honour too. *I'd make sure I was first!*

Finally, it was time to put the tinsel on.



A Few Years Later

Back row, left to right: Crockett, Tass, George.

Front row, left to right: Piggy-Tails, Bubble-Puss, Bo.

Note the tinsel hanging perfectly straight, like icicles, on the tree.

When Bo and I were toddlers, we thought tinsel was pretty and shiny – like glitter. We wanted to fling it all over the tree.

“Don’t do that” Dad had said. “Hang each strand separately – so it looks like icicles.”

Hanging them on separately took way too long. We did a few how Dad said. After that, we bunched a couple on together and hoped he wouldn’t notice.

Now that I was almost a teenager, I felt it was my duty to correct my siblings about everything - even how to hang tinsel. As they were passing it around, I told them the right way to hang it all over again. Bo, George, Crockett, Bubble-Puss, and Piggy-Tails always called me bossy.

*So what? I am. I’m supposed to be. Aren’t I? I **am** the oldest.*

“Where’s that star Mom made?” Bo asked. “The one she made when Crockett was born?”

“Here it is,” George said. “The aluminum foil has worn off one corner and you can see the cardboard underneath, but it’s still good.”

He handed it to Dad. Dad reached up and wiggled it in between the four green sprigs at the very top of the tree. It sat in front of a blue Christmas tree light, looking like a beloved dog, sleeping in a basket.

We stepped back to inspect our work.

“**Now** it’s perfect,” Crockett said.

For once, I thought he was right. It **was** perfect.

A perfect day, a perfect meal, and a perfect tree.

My favourite Christmas tradition.

About the Author

Kathy Roberts is the oldest of six children. She has two daughters, a late son, and a son-in-law, as well as two beautiful granddaughters. Kathy writes memoir, poetry, and short fiction; her story "The Purging" received an honourable mention from Writers Playground LLC. Kathy currently lives in Brantford, Ontario with her cat Porscha.



My cousin, who is also writing memoirs, sent me one of the questions from the program she is taking: *“What were your accomplishments as a child?”*

“Maybe you can come up with a story,” she said. “I sure can’t.”

I could think of many accomplishments. Just the fact that I took that first step from the safety of home was an accomplishment!

Anything for which you receive credit, any new skills you learn, and any practice in which you have excelled, is an accomplishment. I was fortunate that my mother always gave me little nudges, and allowed me to expand my horizons.

“When I stopped seeing my mother with the eyes of a child; I saw the woman who helped me give birth to myself.”¹

- Nancy Friday



My Childhood
Accomplishments
&
Coxsackie Virus
and an
Unexpected Fond
Memory

by
Gillian Holden



My Childhood Accomplishments



At age four, my mother signed me up for skating lessons at the Arctic Arena on West St. in Brantford, Ontario. Sheets of plywood covered the frozen, muddy ground that led to the plywood vestibule, which led us inside. The arena smelled of urine, sweat, and frigid air.



We kids, in saggy, baggy, knitted stockings, stumbled around on the ice, trying to keep our little legs warm. We did not have our skating legs yet. All our mothers sat up in the bleachers with blankets over their knees, sipping tea from their thermoses.

Mrs. Muriel Sheere was our skating instructor. She was tall, slim, and graceful. Most of all, she was kind and patient. Once we gained our skating legs, she had us skate around and around the rink to music. Then we moved on to skating along red lines that were painted on the ice. I am sure we were a comical sight, wobbling about on unsteady legs with our arms stuck straight out, trying to keep our balance.

After much perseverance, I learned a few skating techniques. There was the cherry flip, shooting the duck, and a spiral. Each time you passed a test, Mrs. Sheere would tie a coloured ribbon to your skate laces.



It was all worthwhile. My group was in our first show of the Flashing Blades. We were candy canes. We wore red and white striped costumes. The mothers who helped in the dressing rooms dyed our legs with tea and rouged our cheeks to a glossy shine. It was all very exciting.

Sometimes I would become frustrated and say to my mother, “I can’t do that figure eight!” and my mother would reply, “There’s no such word as can’t.”

One thing I wanted so much was a knitted circular skating dress like some of the other girls had. My mother, who was an experienced knitter, said, “Let’s see how you get on first, Lass.”

I did earn more ribbons, and I did receive a skating dress made by my mother.

It was an accomplishment.

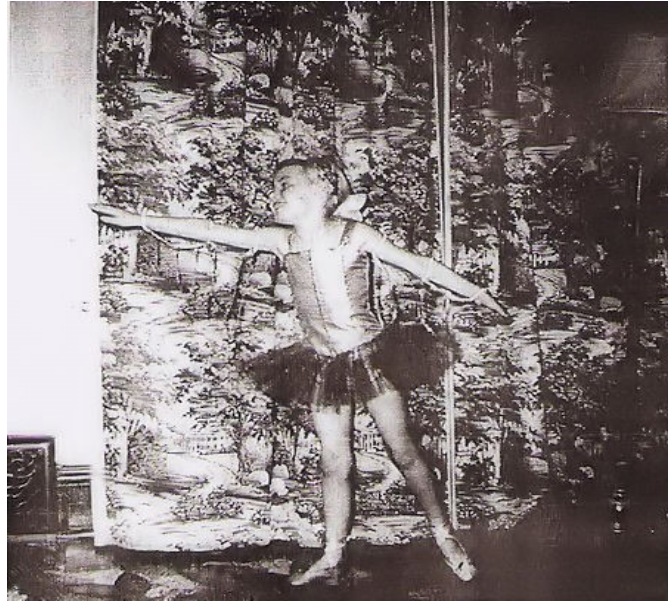


“It doesn’t matter whether you’re a novice or an expert, it’s important to keep in mind that someday somebody younger than you will come along and be inspired by what you have done.”²

- Gail Jacobson,
“Prose and Poetry Adventures”

My Childhood Accomplishments

During the same time as skating lessons, my mother signed me up for ballet lessons at June Morrison's Dance Studio on Dalhousie Street, across from the Brantford Expositor building. My mother's friend, Jean, took me on Saturday mornings, and I can remember wailing all the way up the stairs. I wanted to learn to tap dance, not do ballet. Mom compromised. After one year of ballet, she would let me have tap lessons.



I worked very hard and was in three shows at Brantford Collegiate on Brant Ave. I was a mouse the first year. My mother sewed the costume. It was grey flannelette with long sleeves. The ears on the hat were big and floppy and lined with green calico. The next year I was a raindrop. My costume was made from stiff silver fabric and was very uncomfortable. Three lengths of silver sequins dangled from each arm.

My best dance accomplishment was the next year, when I tapped my heart out as an Irish Washerwoman. Ballet was not my favourite, but I did it.

I quit ballet at age eight. I think my mom was disappointed, but she never pushed it. I kept dancing off and on for quite a few years, but moved on to jazz and tap.

“It doesn't matter if you are icing a cake, painting a painting, knitting a sweater or altering a book. It's all the same process.”³

-Gail Jacobson

At age eight, my mother asked me what I would like to do. She gave me choices now. I picked Brownies and swimming lessons.

Brownies was held in the church hall at St. James Church on Grand St. After school I walked to my Aunt Dorothy's house, had supper with them, changed into my Brownie uniform, and my Uncle Stan would walk me to the church.

Being a Brownie was one of my favourite things to attend. I was a pixie - a pixie is a whimsical scamp. There were also Sprites, Elves, Fairies, and other woodland creatures. Brown Owl, our leader, sat on a large wooden toadstool. All the Brownies sat on little mushroom seats.

Our motto was:

“I promise to do my best.
To love god.
To serve my Queen and country.
And a Brownie thinks of others before herself and does a good turn every
day.”



With my parents' help, I accomplished the tasks Brown Owl gave us to do each week. Did we help anyone? Did we learn a new craft? Maybe learn a new song? I earned many badges; sewing, cooking, crafting, and some outdoor activities. I loved all of it - the mushrooms, the toadstool, the games, and the sing-songs.

I was content with what I accomplished in Brownies.

Why stay we on earth unless to grow.”⁴

-Robert Browning

Swimming lessons were not my favourite activity, but I had chosen them, so I had to carry on with them. Because my parents could not swim, my father suggested, “At least keep going until you learn to swim, and earn your life-saving badge.” Fair enough.

Mrs. Paal, the swimming instructor, was nice, but Mr. Yem scared me to death. He was also an instructor. He was so gruff, and I always thought he might throw me into the pool. I did learn to swim, managed to swim lengths and dive off the diving board. I did not earn my swimming badge though until later in Girl Guides.

Still, small but valuable accomplishments.

When I was eleven, I joined the Canadian Girls in Training. Sue Fox, our leader, worked as a nurse for the Victorian Order of Nurses. Our meetings were held at Brant Ave. United Church.

Our motto was:

“Seek truth.
Know god.
Serve others.”

We wore white middie blouses with a navy-blue scarf that had to be tied in a square knot. Tying it was an accomplishment in itself (that and many other knots). The church was quite a distance from my home, but I did walk there by myself. It was evening when our meeting ended, so my dad would walk to the corner of St. Paul Ave. and Brant Ave. and be waiting for me. I did not stay in CGIT for long, as we moved even further away from the church, but I did earn my Red Cross pin.

Another small but important accomplishment.



Me in my CGIT middie, top left.



It is all these small accomplishments that led me to be a Cub leader in 1982 at St. Stephen's church on Queensway Drive, Brantford. Cubs were part of the Boy Scout movement started by Lord Baden Powell. Cubs were the younger boys, the novices. All the leaders had names taken from Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. I was Bagheera, the black panther.

We had three boys from the Ross Macdonald School for the blind in our group. Our meetings were challenging. We took turns going from the church to the Ross Macdonald School. Our boys got a taste of what it was like to be blind, and the three other boys were able to function as part of our group.

All these small but important accomplishments led me to later becoming a Girl Guide leader, volunteering, meeting new people, joining many groups, and taking many courses.

My mother was right. There is no such word as can't.

Coxsackie Virus and an Unexpected Fond Memory



While rummaging through my scrapbook of Brantford Expositor news clippings, I came across one titled, “Did Grandma Have Brantford Fever?”

My mother, known as Grandma Dorothy, contracted Brantford Fever in 1952. I was four years old.

My mother was in the darkened front bedroom, and my dad kept cold compresses on her forehead. Dr. J. A. D. Marquis came to the house for regular visits.

Coxsackie Virus was a mystery illness, according to the Brant County Health Unit. It was questioned as to whether it might be related to polio. At the same time my mother was ill, the little boy next door contracted polio. His name was Bruce Turner. He, too, was four years old. We played together regularly, and since I was in contact with him, there was concern about me getting sick too.

LOCAL HISTORY

Did Grandma have Brantford fever?

A mystery illness dubbed Brantford Fever struck city and county residents in the summer of 1952.

It began with a sudden and excruciating frontal headache that no regular pain medication could conquer. The unremitting ache was accompanied by stabbing pains behind the eyes, neck stiffness, back pain, and a fever of between 101 and 103 F that sent patients to their sickbeds in darkened rooms for two to five days.

The ailment was said to have symptoms similar to those of polio, but without any paralysis. Neither were there any respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms.

No one died but at least 2,000 city and area residents were temporarily bedridden by the illness during the outbreak from the end of June to mid-September.

Although about one of every 20 residents was laid low, the Brant County Health Unit said nothing about the epidemic for six months, until a review of the sickness was published in the Canadian Public Health Journal in January 1953.

The medical community was stymied. The journal paper stated: “We have not yet found in the literature a record of an epidemic exactly similar to that which occurred in the city



Heather Ibbotson
DID YOU KNOW...?

of Brantford, in the summer of 1952, when about one in 20 of the population became sick.”

In late June 1952, doctors started to see an increasing number of patients suffering from a combination of symptoms not previously encountered.

Children aged four and older were affected, but the majority of patients were adults between 20 and 40.

The illness spread rapidly within families and workplaces, indicating it was infectious.

A typical case history was that of a 29-year-old woman who presented on Aug. 4, 1952, with a severe burst-

ing frontal headache. She experienced pain behind the eyeballs that was made worse with movement. The next day, she had the same symptoms and a temperature of 100 degrees. On Aug. 6, her headache had eased somewhat but she suffered back pain. The patient recovered completely after an illness of four days.

Local patient numbers peaked in mid-July and then began to taper off. Patients who got sick in the later stages of the epidemic had milder symptoms than those who had been ill early on. The outbreak came to an end in early September.

Although the health unit did not publicize the outbreak while it was underway, medical authorities collected specimens from patients and sent samples to a Toronto lab for analysis.

What was the mystery illness? A study of the epidemic conducted at the University of Toronto, in conjunction with the local health unit, suggested

that the possible culprit was a type of Coxsackie virus.

Coxsackie virus was first isolated in 1947 from two children in the village of Coxsackie, N.Y., who, at the time, were at first thought to be suffering from polio. From 1947 to 1952, Coxsackie viruses were found elsewhere in Canada, the U.S., Europe, Israel and Australia.

The virus spreads through fecal-oral contamination and its non-paralytic symptoms can sometimes mimic those of polio.

It is not clear whether Coxsackie virus was ever officially proven to be the cause of the local outbreak, but the 1952 Brantford Fever did put the city on the medical mystery map.

Heather Ibbotson is an Expositor reporter, history buff and genealogical researcher.

hibbotson@theexpositor.com

*Did Grandma have Brantford fever?*⁵



Bruce's mother pulled us in a wagon to the Brantford General Hospital to the physio department, where we had to do exercises. I remember picking up marbles and crayons with my toes. The physiotherapists would rotate my head I guess to check my muscles. When I spoke to Bruce years later, he reminded me that the names of the physiotherapists were Miss Scott and Mrs. Tedder.

While recalling this little memory, I wondered what had happened to Bruce and his family. They moved away around 1953 or 1954, to Pembroke, Ontario. I also knew that Bruce became a funeral director, because my mother and his mother kept in touch for a few years.

So, first I checked to see if his parents were still alive. I knew they had to be elderly. I found the obituary for Sheila Turner, so I e-mailed the funeral home, asking if maybe they could put me in touch with Bruce Turner. Sure enough, Bruce called me that same evening.

We reminisced for about an hour. It was really good to hear his voice, and after 70 years I was surprised that he remembered me.

We talked about the cookies his mother baked which she called "white mice". I reminded him of the two huge teddy bears he had - we were the same size as they were. We remembered our neighbour, Ina Loudon, who owned Loudon's Bakery in downtown Brantford. Ina was always generous with cookies. We reminisced about the Disher family who lived a few doors down. Don, Phyllis, Paul, and Janice. I recalled the bunny I had named Snookie, and how Bruce and I fed her.



One fond memory I have about Bruce and me is dancing around our living room. I had the record “The Bobbsey Twins at the County Fair”, and we played it over and over.

Bruce’s dad, Mel, grew tulips and he took a lot of pride in them. I picked them and took them home to my mother. Mel wasn’t far behind. For want of a harsher name, he called me Tillyflop. I just had to write a poem about that incident.

Tillyflop-the tulip picker

Mom was arranging tulips in a white vase.
There was a RAP_RAP_RAP at the door.
She answered, still holding the secateurs.
It was Mel, our neighbour from next door.

He was quite distraught, red in the face.
I knew why he was there.
“ Dorothy. My prized tulips have been picked.”
I moved behind the chair.

Would their arms never stop flailing?
Would the yelling ever stop?
And I guess for want of a better name.
Mel just grimaced, and called me Tillyflop.

I still keep in touch with Bruce, and have let him know I would like to write a short story for my writing class about our relationship. He agreed. These are fond little memories of a time long ago and I am glad I took the time to find Bruce and keep in touch.

1. Friday, Nancy. “When I stopped seeing my mother with the eyes of a child; I saw the woman who helped me give birth to myself.” *My Mother/My Self: The Daughter’s Search for Identity*, 1977.

2. Jacobson, Gail. “Prose and Poetry Adventures.”

3. Jacobson, Gail. “Prose and Poetry Adventures.”

4. Browning, Robert. “Paracelsus.” *The Complete Works of Robert Browning*, edited by Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke, vol. 1, Houghton Mifflin, 1898, pp. 71-121.

5. Ibbotson, Heather. “Did Grandma have Brantford fever?” *Brantford Expositor*, 19 May 2011.

About the Author

Gillian Holden was born in Bolton, Lancashire, England, and raised in Brantford, Ontario. She enjoys writing short stories, memoirs, and poetry, along with creating unique artwork, which is her forte. Gillian's art consists of scenes from today's society and happenings. She also enjoys doing illustrations for her stories, and those of her friends. Her art is much sought-after.

Gillian is an avid reader, a quilter, and enjoys doing scrapbooking of her grandchildren. She has volunteered at the John Noble House for 18 years.

Gillian has had several memoirs published in the annual Lifescapes anthologies (2014-2023), and received an Award of Excellence for her short story, "Oh! How I Love to Be Beside the Seaside", which was published in *Fires of Autumn* by The Poetry Institute of Canada. She has also had, "Memories – Looking Through the Viewfinder" published in the literary folk magazine, *Canadian Stories*. Gillian's favourite poems are "Desiderata" by Max Ehrmann, and "If" by Rudyard Kipling; her favourite song is "My Way" by Frank Sinatra.



As I look back on my life, I realize how fortunate I have been to travel to so many places all over the world, with so many wonderful people.



My World Travels

by
Lois Oliver



1. Travels With My Husband

In 1968, my husband Bob was hired as the Canadian representative for a company named Charterhouse based in Derby, England. During the 1970s, we travelled several times to London, Derby, and Tonbridge Wells, England. While there, we also took the opportunity to go to Scotland, where we both had relatives.

Worldwide, there were meetings in Portugal, Paris, and Stratford-upon-Avon, and conventions in Hawaii, San Francisco, Florida, New Orleans, Kentucky, New York, Washington, San Diego, and Las Vegas.

In Canada, we travelled to Victoria, Vancouver, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Prince Edward Island.

In March of 1970, we were so excited about our first trip to England that our neighbours had a going-away party for us.

When we arrived in London on March 4th, we checked into the new Inn on the Park, overlooking Hyde Park. At that time, it was \$50.00 a night, very luxurious, and beautifully decorated.

When I went into the bathroom, I called to Bob, “Come and see this little sink and faucet! Is it for a child?” At that time, we had no idea it was a bidet!

The next day we wandered around the famous Piccadilly Circus in the West End of London, where we saw some very unusual characters. That night we dined at the well-known Weavers Seafood Restaurant. The Cream of Crab soup and fresh Dover Sole were like no other seafood we had ever tasted. As it was early in March, a dessert of fresh strawberries and clotted cream was a pleasant surprise.

Being typical tourists, we were excited to see Buckingham Palace and the Changing of the Guard. A friendly older man came along and said to us, “Stand over here to see it better.” He also provided a vivid description along with it, which we appreciated.

We also went to see St. James Palace, where the Queen was in residence. Unfortunately, we didn't have the pleasure of actually seeing her.

A very impressive sight that caught our attention was the cabbies driving along Pall Mall and lining up in formation waiting for customers. The decor and the colour of the cabs were all the same, which augmented an air of elegance.

While walking along Pall Mall, we were overwhelmed by the hundreds of pigeons in the square, as well as the numerous street vendors and performers in Covent Gardens.

The General Manager of the company, Derek Shemmings, picked us at our hotel that evening and took us to Tunbridge Wells, where he and his family lived. We drove through winding country lanes where we saw many oast-houses, which were once used to dry hops. He told us they had been turned into homes. Derek and his wife, Pam, took us to dinner at a 13th-century pub, which had original markings on the fireplace where soldiers had once sharpened their swords. We were in awe of such a lovely place with so much old-world charm.

The next night, Derek and Pam hosted a party in our honour, where we met the President and Directors of the firm, and their wives. We enjoyed their company. These English people knew how to party! It lasted until 4:00 a.m.

Returning to London, we visited The Tower of London, where we had our picture taken with the Beefeaters who stood guard. The next stop was to see the Crown Jewels, which were breathtaking! A guard told us that the biggest diamond in the world, called the Star of Africa, is the main stone. It was cut from the Cullinan diamond that is in the scepter. The Queen's crown also has 2,868 diamonds, 17 sapphires, 11 emeralds, 269 pearls, and four rubies. It was also amazing to see the Queen's solid gold serving pieces, and her coronation robes.



The architecture and craftsmanship of the buildings in London were very impressive, especially considering the fact that they were built hundreds of years ago.

Roaming through Covent Gardens, we enjoyed watching the merchants selling their wares before proceeding with a walk across London Bridge to St. Paul's Cathedral.

We took a double-decker bus to the Parliament Buildings and Houses of Parliament. It was interesting to sit in on a session of The House of Lords. At Westminster, we saw the tombs of both the Unknown Soldier and Shakespeare, and a memorial to Winston Churchill.

I couldn't resist stopping into Harrods, the famous London department store, just to say I'd been there. It was a very upscale store, selling beautiful clothing that I certainly couldn't afford. I did buy a tin of candies so that we would have a souvenir from there, though.

Later that day, Derek and Pam took us to a charming inn in the town of Pinehurst, where Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton stayed while he was filming *Anne of a Thousand Days*.

The main office of Charterhouse was in Derby, where we had tea, and were then invited to another Director's home for dinner. It was a beautiful old house, also down a country lane, and exactly like one would picture an old English home. An elegant meal was served in the dining room, enhanced by the ambience of a crackling fireplace. We had Dover Sole stuffed with shrimp, followed by coffee mousse for dessert.

We left the next day by train for Scotland and were picked up by a cousin of Bob's. He took us to the neighbouring towns of Bathgate, Whitburn, and Armadale, where his relatives lived.

They put on a lovely party for us, including much singing and dancing. Everyone took a turn singing. We now understood why Scotland has such a reputation as being a happy, friendly country.

We took a nostalgic trip to Loch Lomond and Glasgow, to see where my father was born. Unfortunately, none of his relatives still live there.

We flew back to the London Airport the next day, where we said goodbye to Derek, and flew home.

Two years later Derek and his family came to visit us. During that time, we had moved to a farm in Brantford, where we grew sweet corn. We hosted a barbecue featuring steak and corn on the cob for Derek. He was so taken with the barbecue that he had one sent over to England!

2. Travels With Friends and My Sister

My life changed after my husband passed away, my three children got married, and I was on my own. Then, thanks to three dear friends, I started travelling again. Our first adventure together was in April 2011, along with four ladies from London, Ontario who owned a beautiful chateau in Provence, France, called Maison Beaufort. As they hosted eight women at a time, we stayed in three different houses on the chateau ground. The four of us stayed in a home that had all the amenities - although the most outstanding feature was that its position on a hill overlooking fields of lavender. It was so beautiful to see, and to wake up in the morning and take in the scent drifting in our windows.



Our hosts took us, in two SUVs, every day to the most interesting places in the area, and restaurants for lunch. Our first outing was to Marseilles. Then we travelled to Languedoc, where we spent two nights in a restored monastery in the Luberon. We visited wineries, a restored Abbey, markets, Michelin starred restaurants, and the largest walled city in Europe: the Carcassonne.

Jill, a woman who owned a kitchen supply store in London, Ontario, was our chef during our holiday. She took us to local markets to buy ingredients for the breakfasts and dinners we would have at the chateau. We enjoyed assisting Jill, and picking up tips on French cooking while sipping on a glass of wine. We dined in a beautiful, large dining room, exchanging stories with the other women from Western Ontario, and our hostesses. By the end of the trip, we were all good friends.



Three years later, in April 2014, I went on another adventure with the same hosts, to Italy. It was called “Tuscany in the Spring”. Unfortunately, it was just Barb and myself this time, as our other two friends had prior commitments.

We were picked up at Florence Airport, then taken to Villa di Moriano, on top of a hill at the end of a winding road. Large iron gates stood at the entrance to the Villa, which was in the heart of the Florentine Hills. It had 20 rooms and 11 bathrooms. Our only complaint was that the heat had been turned off. We used our hair dryer to heat the sheets before we crawled into bed.

After a tour of Florence, we went to the hill town of San Gimignano. The day in Florence included tours of the markets with Jill, and lunch at a Mozzarella Bar.

The next day took us to Cortona, and lunch at a nearby Michelin-starred restaurant. Very nice.

Sienna and Lucca, the centre of Contemporary Art, were our next stops, followed by a fun day exploring the market at Montevarchi. We made our own pizzas at Aldo’s Tavern, up in the hills nearby. I still have the apron given to me as a souvenir.

When our trip with the ladies was over, Barb and I decided to take a train into Rome. It was such a wonderful experience travelling through the countryside, and seeing all the villages along the way. When we arrived in Rome, we found a lovely bed and breakfast with a roof garden, decorated with flowers and greenery, which was close to the shopping district.

As we strolled around the business area, we were very impressed with the elegance of the men dressed in shirts and ties, and women wearing outfits that were the height of fashion.

It was fun taking a hop-on, hop-off panoramic open-decker tour bus so that we could see all that beautiful city had to offer!

The highlight of our trip was visiting the Vatican and the Trevi Fountain. As we lined up to go into the Vatican, there were many interesting vendors and musicians entertaining throngs of people in the square. Entering the Vatican was, once again, like witnessing history. The galleries of paintings, sculptures, and massive library were so impressive, and well worth taking the time to tour.



We enjoyed watching people tossing their coins into the fountain, making a wish. Of course, we had fun taking our turns, and were reminded of the motion picture, *Three Coins in the Fountain!*

In 2015, my sister Joyce and I realized that we had never taken a trip together, so we chose to take the Mediterranean Sea Cruise on the luxurious Oceania Cruise Ship.



Postcard

We flew from Toronto to Heathrow in London, before heading to Barcelona, Spain, where we would embark on our journey. When we arrived in Barcelona, we were taken to our stateroom, which had all the amenities we could possibly desire, including an outside verandah overlooking the sea. During the cruise, the meals, the service, the nightly entertainment, and the crew were all that we could possibly ask for. There were six dining venues - from a casual sandwich bar to an elegant dining room. Walking down the magnificent Lalique staircase into the dining room, featuring crystal lighting in the ceiling, was like walking on to a movie set.

Leaving the ship temporarily, we wandered around the park near the harbour, captivated by the beautiful gardens all along the avenue, and the modern architecture of the buildings.

The next day we cruised to Florence, Pisa, and Tuscany. Later, when we arrived at St. Tropez, France, we took the tour offered by the cruise line, and learned that, in the 1920s, St. Tropez attracted such famous figures as Coco Chanel and Elsa Schiaparelli (from the fashion world). In the 1950s, thanks partly to Brigitte Bardot, St. Tropez became renowned internationally and very popular. It was dubbed the playground of the jet setters, fashion models, and millionaires. It also played a role in the history of modern art, inspiring painters like Matisse.

The whole trip was more exceptional than we imagined, and spending time with my sister made it even more special.

The last trip I took overseas was in 2019, with my three friends again, on the Emerald Waterways Cruise Ship on the Danube River.

Before leaving on the cruise, we spent three days in Prague, where we discovered a bustling city that seamlessly combined the old with the new. Our first excursion was a walking tour of Prague Castle, which sits high on a hill overlooking the city. It was a steep walk up, but it was worth it to see the centuries-old castle, which has been beautifully maintained. The inside rooms were decorated to suit the historical time the castle was built. Browsing around the Old Town Square, we found several modern restaurants, souvenir shops, women's fashion stores, and a department store similar to what we have in North America.

The next day we left for Nuremberg by coach to board our cruise ship. We cruised along the Danube, stopping in Regensburg, Germany, Vienna (where we attended an opera), Austria, Bratislava, and Budapest in Hungary. As in Prague, we had time to explore and shop in each of the cities. The stores were as contemporary as what we have in North America. After our daily excursions, we returned to the ship, where the dinners and entertainment were outstanding. We had a lot of fun with the other passengers and dancing with the crew.

It was like a different world seeing the castles and old buildings as we cruised along the River.

3. Travels With My Children

As well as travelling with my husband and friends, I have also had the privilege of travelling with my children. In 1982, I went with my daughter, Leanne (who was, and still is, a precision figure skater) to many locations to see her perform. Leanne skated on a team called Rhapsody on Ice, and we went to Buffalo, Detroit, San Francisco, California, as well as the most interesting trip - to Hong Kong. My best friend and I accompanied the team as chaperones, and we had a wonderful time with the girls, taking in the sights of China. That trip was very enlightening, as it was such a different lifestyle than we were accustomed to.

Spending time in China proper was certainly an eye-opening experience! We went into homes which were like tents with sand floors, with toilet and bathing facilities that were certainly not what we were used to! The teenage girls were overwhelmed to say the least, especially with the way the food was served in a restaurant (such as a whole chicken sitting in the middle of the table with the eyes still in!).

Shopping was a real experience, as well. We would be stopped on the streets by people selling watches and jewellery. Several of us came home with leather pantsuits that were tailor-made, and inexpensive, while we were there.



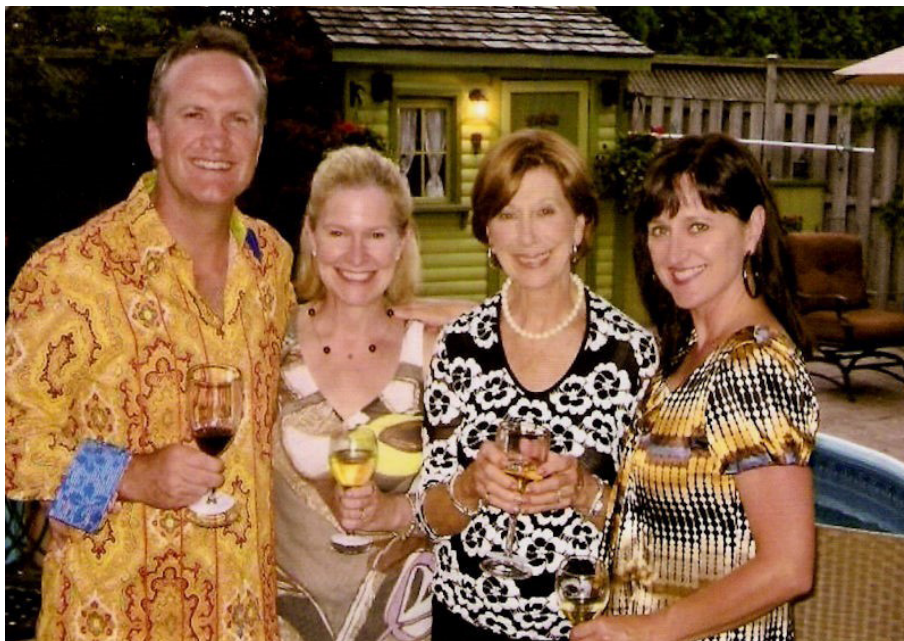
The girls (above) put on a wonderful performance in a large two-storey shopping mall in the centre of the city. The crowd went wild, applauding the Canadian skaters! We were so proud of them.

I also went on a holiday to Cuba with Leanne when she graduated from university, and on several business trips with her to New York, Chicago, and Montreal.

One item on my bucket list was to see the Christmas tree in Rockefeller Centre, and take in a performance of The Rockettes at Christmastime. That wish came true when my two daughters and my daughter-in-law took me to New York City just before Christmas 2018. What fun.

The last travelling I did was here in Canada, on a bus trip with another friend to the Agawa Canyon in Northern Ontario. We were enraptured with the scenery! It was far more beautiful than what I expected. The changing colours of the leaves in autumn was breathtaking.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention all my other trips in Canada with my children. I have had so many wonderful times with my daughter Vicki (who lives in Calgary), especially at the Calgary Stampede, when my grandson performed with The Young Canadians at the grandstand show. Vicki also took me to Ucluelet, Tofino and Victoria, B.C. one year. One of the highlights of our trip to Tofino was when we were enjoying the view from a tour boat, and we spied a family of black bears resting on the shore. We also saw whales cavorting in the ocean off Victoria.



4. Coming Home

Although I have been privileged to see all these beautiful places on my travels, it was always a happy feeling coming home to Canada. From coast to coast - from the Rocky Mountains to the Atlantic provinces - we have tourist attractions like Niagara Falls, the CN Tower in Toronto, the Laurentians in Quebec, and remote places like Nahanni National Park up north, Great Slave Lake, Whitehorse and Yellowknife. So much to see and do.

However, I am always happy to return to Southern Ontario. My corner of the world is my very favourite place to be.

About the Author

Lois Wood Oliver grew up in Toronto, where she married and had three wonderful children – Vicki, Brian, and Leanne. In 1970, the family settled on a farm in Brantford, Ontario. Lois has been blessed with seven grandchildren, who are the light of her life!

Lois worked for 26 years in a ladies' fashion store in Brantford before retiring. As well as being an avid reader, Lois is an active participant in the Lifescapes program at the Brantford Public Library, which has brought her a great deal of pleasure. Her memoirs have appeared in several past anthologies.



*Some moments in life remain with you forever.
Such is the case with a special autumn in 1987.*



The Black Beret

by
Bertha Joseph



It had been a sweltering summer. My husband, Peter, and I were looking forward to the cool breezes of September and the coming fall. Plans were in place for our annual visit to Nova Scotia. I had made my own plans though - to spend the month of August with my family. Peter had different thoughts. He wanted me to spend the last weekend in August with him in Camp Aldershot, Nova Scotia.

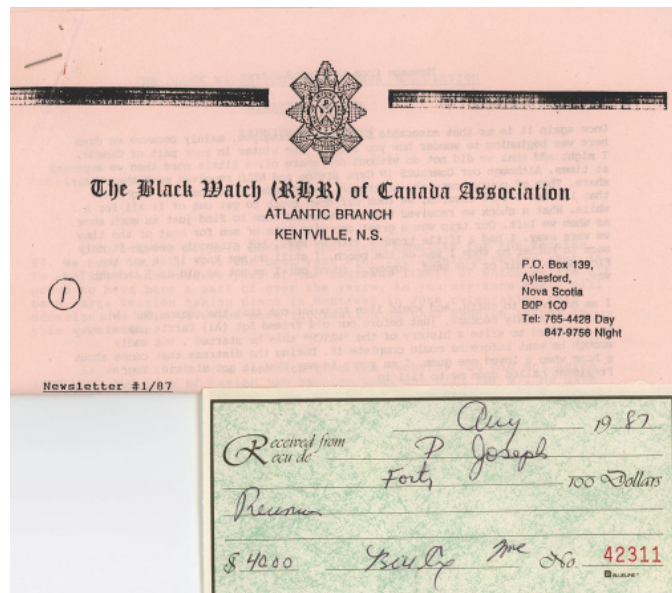
In the month of July, we had received the bi-annual notice of the Black Watch (Atlantic) Association Re-Union. The Association formed in 1979, and Members celebrated with a re-union every two years at Camp Aldershot. Peter, having served in the Black Watch Regiment, was a Member of the Association. That year, 1987, was the 125th Anniversary of the Black Watch Regiment, adding pride and enjoyment to the celebrations.

Peter accepted my refusal to go to Aldershot, saying he would not go either, but would stay on with me, visiting with family on the last days of our vacation. That evening, I lay awake for a long time, remembering Peter's excitement about spending the weekend with his old comrades in Camp Aldershot. He was always saying, "The other guys' wives all go. Why won't you go?"

I spent a restless night thinking of my selfishness. In the morning when I came to the kitchen for tea, Peter was his usual joyful self. Over tea and coffee, I surprised him with these words, "Peter, I will go to Kentville and the Re-Union with you."



The Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) of Canada¹



Re-Union Registration

He smiled and said, “I have so many things to show and tell you about in the Valley. The guys all want to see you and meet you. I promise you will have a great weekend.”

On August 1st we were on our way from Brantford to Nova Scotia. Although we had made this trip every year since 1964, my stomach still filled up with butterflies. I counted the hours until I would be in my mother’s arms, feeling that wonderful warm hug and that kiss of deep love she always placed on my right cheek.

The days that followed were fun-loving, with so much going on amid our large families that it passed quickly. When the day came for us to leave for the Annapolis Valley, I was hesitant, but Peter was exuberant.

It was 186 miles, a three-hour drive, to Kentville over the Rawdon Hills, in East Hants County. When Peter was in the army and stationed at Camp Aldershot, so this was the route he travelled going to home and back to Camp on the weekends.

Peter always told me, “One day, in the fall of the year when the leaves have turned colour, I will take you for a drive over the Rawdon Hills. It is beautiful. I know you will love it.”

Peter and I stopped at Wolfville and Grand Pre. My mind wandered back to school days when we studied about the Acadians in history class. The French had settled here, built dykes and a happy comfortable village, until the tragic expulsion of the Acadians by the British in 1755. I thought of my mother’s favourite poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, the heartbreaking love story, “Evangeline.” I felt a twinge of sadness and a selfish thought. *I should have stayed with my family, why did I come?*

I stood looking at the Evangeline statue, remembering Evangeline’s sorrow, and her story of love. Evangeline was torn apart from Gabriel on their wedding day. She never stopped searching for him. When she found him and they came together, it was too late. Gabriel died.

I turned and looked at Peter. He was joyous and filled with anticipation for the moment he would meet up with his comrades. The sadness I felt moments before taught me a lesson about love. At that minute, I felt peaceful and thankful. I was with Peter to enjoy his re-union. He was not selfish. He gave me all the time I needed to observe this beautiful Valley.

About five miles from Camp, we arrived at Greenwich and registered at the Old Orchard Inn. After resting and freshening up, we were on our way to Camp Aldershot. We stopped at the entrance gate. I was feeling a bit nervous, but Peter was calm, knowing the protocol. The Guard questioned, “What is your mission?”

“Pte. Joseph, P., Black Watch Regiment, attending the Black Watch Re-union, Sir.” Peter replied.

After checking the issued PASS on the windshield, the gate lifted. We were officially at Camp Aldershot.

We took part in the Meet and Greet at the Corporal’s Club. There was great excitement as the old soldiers came together once again. Their eyes filled with moisture as they hugged and shook hands. This was camaraderie; a true, close friendship, bonded in their service days.



Guard at Gate



Old Orchard Inn

Old soldiers shared past service experiences and the rooms filled with the voices and laughter of the soldiers, as they told and re-told their stories. While the men were reminiscing about old times, the wives and girlfriends were catching up on news of our families and our lives.

After the Meet and Greet, we enjoyed a social evening held in the Corporals Club. Disco music filled the air, and couples soon crowded onto the dance floor to “Only You”, “In the Still of the Night”, and other favourites. The night ended and we danced to the old familiar song, “Save the Last Dance for Me.”

On Saturday morning, Peter took me on a tour of Camp Aldershot. My first, and most important, lesson was about the Parade Square. Peter filled me in on the rules of NOT walking on the Parade Square. I learned all about the kitchen, serving on kitchen duty, the Drill Hall, the dining area, and the Range. Last, but not the least, he showed me his living quarters.



Peter's Bunkhouse

Saturday was a mix of business and pleasure. General Meetings took place in the morning. The retired Black Watch soldiers were on the Parade Square for the March Past. It was customary for the old soldiers to march through the streets of Kentville. As they were preparing for this event, I, along with other wives and girlfriends, went to Kentville. We located a good viewing spot to watch our men march. Others went shopping and to see various places of interest. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police Musical Ride was also in Kentville, adding pleasure to the event. The Bagpipers lead the Parade, playing Ceolbeag (soft music). With pride, we watched our men as they marched through the streets.



The Parade

Saturday evening was an enjoyable time with the Re-Union '87 Dinner and cocktails. Speeches and laughter filled the makeshift dining room in the Drill Hall. We heard bagpipes playing far in the distance. I was curious, wondering what other event was going on at Camp Aldershot. The bagpipes became louder and louder. Closer and closer. Then everyone stood, clapping their hands. Everyone's eyes were on the Piper, piping in the Haggis, which rested on a silver tray, carried atop a brier on the shoulders of Black Watch soldiers. It was an emotional moment when the Chef presented the Haggis to the head table. Honouring the Haggis, silence filled the room as a Scotsman recited Robert Burns' famous poem, "*Address to the Haggis.*" The Haggis was traditionally stabbed and served.

Everyone rated the dinner as second to none. Servers cleared and re-arranged the tables. Music filled the air. What followed was an evening of socializing, stories galore, and dancing. The night again ended to the old familiar song, "Save the Last Dance for Me." I shall always remember the warmth of Peter's hand on mine, with the other on my back, holding me close, as we waltzed the night away.

Sunday brought an end to the wonderful hours of the Re-union with Sick Parade. The Padre held a Church Service at the Cairn before farewells between old soldiers and friends took place. We left Camp Aldershot that afternoon.

Having earlier booked out of the Inn, we decided to do a little tour of the beautiful Annapolis Valley.



Farewells



Peter and Bertha



Sunday Service



Peter enjoying a lobster feast.



Lobster Traps

Looking forward to a feed of lobster, we made our way to Hall's Harbour Lobster Pound. Entering through a swinging wooden screen door, we received a royal welcome. We chose our lobsters, and sat at a bare wooden table, waiting for them to be cooked. Lobsters cooked, and we enjoyed the feast. There is no flavour like eating freshly cooked lobster.

Our treat eaten, and feeling stuffed to the gills, we went for a walk to Hall's Harbour. Under a blue sky, the harbour was a glorious scene, where colourful boats sat at anchor. It being Sunday, no fishermen were in sight, so we walked on. Lobster traps tiered one upon the other in long rows made us hungry for lobster All over again. We laughed and walked on.



Hall's Harbour



Our guides, Paul and Annie

Stopping now and then to take photographs, a young couple paused to talk with us. We had lots of questions, and Paul and Annie had all the answers. They asked, "Have you been to the LOOKOFF?"

"No, I cannot say we have. What is it anyway?"

"Would you like us to take you there? You will find it interesting."

"Yes," was our reply.

We hiked upland, and after a long walk, Annie said, "Here we are, this is the LOOKOFF!"





Views from The LOOKOFF

We hiked upland, and after a long walk, Annie said, “Here we are, this is the LOOKOFF!”

It was then I recalled reading on our schedule: The number one place to visit was LOOKOFF-Panoramic View of Annapolis Valley.

I stood in awe at the LOOKOFF in the beautiful Annapolis Valley, in Nova Scotia, scanning the vastness of the land, sky, and water that lay before me. I could not imagine seeing that much of the earth all at one time.

Here I was, on the East side of the Bay of Fundy, looking to the West side of the Bay. I have always been fascinated by the stories of the Bay of Fundy. As the tide moves in from the Atlantic Ocean, making its way up to the narrowing into the Chignecto Bay, the Bay of Fundy is full of wonder as an unpredictable force causes the highest tides in the world (reaching heights of up to 53 feet).

Peter came by my side. “Isn’t this something, Bertha?”

“Yes, it certainly is!”

“Are you glad you came with me?”

“Oh yes, Peter, I have had a wonderful time.”

On the way back to our families in Springhill, we once again drove over the Rawdon Hills. The leaves were already turning colours. It was beautiful, and I loved it. As far as I could see, a brilliant tapestry of colours covered the mountain sides. My heart swelled in my bosom, and I spoke aloud: “I will go to the west side of the Bay of Fundy. I will look to the East side of the Bay to where I stood at the LOOKOFF today.”

One question came to my mind, “*What wonders await me?*”

(To be continued.)

Epilogue



It is now, 36 years later. As I tread through my journal, I think of my weekend with Peter in Camp Aldershot, and I honour him with these few lines:

The Black Beret

A Black Beret and a Remembrance Day Poppy² wrapped in tissue,
tenderly placed in a drawer.

I pick up the Beret. I close my eyes. I hold it in the palms of my hands.

I bring it close and feel the lonely beat of my heart.

The Red Heckle on the Beret rubs softly against my face.

I feel my Soldier's touch, so long gone now.

In my memory he is back, standing at attention,
a proud Soldier in The Black Watch Regiment of Canada,

wearing his Uniform and Beret with the
Red Heckle, with dignity, pride, and honour.



Pte. Joseph, P.

1. Defence, National. "Government of Canada." Canada.Ca, 20 Nov. 2018, www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/military-history/history-heritage/official-military-history-lineages/lineages/infantry-regiments/black-watch.html.

2. The Poppy, when used as a symbol of Remembrance in Canada, is a registered trademark of Dominion Command of The Royal Canadian Legion and is used with the kind permission of Dominion Command.

About the Author

Bertha M. Joseph was born in Oxford, schooled in Amherst, and studied business in Halifax, Nova Scotia. A retired secretary with over 45 years of service, Bertha started the practice of writing by way of corresponding with pen pals in different countries, telling stories to her little sisters, and penning children's stories.

Bertha has had several works published, including a short story, "A Late Rose", and two poems, "Our Cottage" and "Home", published by *The Poetry Institute of Canada*. "Home" won a fourth-place honour (in 2017), earning Bertha a medallion and a commemorative certificate. Bertha's memoirs have been published in the Lifescapes anthology annually from 2014 to 2023.

As well as writing, Bertha enjoys drawing, photography, extensive genealogy research, and reading the writings of ancient writers.





Remembering
Alice &
Maarten Keyer

by
Herbert Sormin



1. Surprise!

I'm sitting on the bamboo floor of our home in Ayer Manis, Malaysia, looking under the guava tree as birds fly by chirping, when suddenly I see ladies rushing by me into Mama's bedroom. As a five-year-old, I wonder, "What's happening?" I stand up. "Should I go into Mama's room?" I hear women screaming. Auntie Maulie has a bundle in her hands.

"Auntie! Is May okay?"

Alice, my older sister, smiles and says, "Baby May is okay. You've got a baby brother!"

That year was 1946, shortly after World War II ended, so he was named Edwin Victor.

A few months later, our family moved back to the campus of Sunny Hill School in Kuching, Sarawak, in British Borneo. Mama taught at the school and Papa was Treasurer of the Sarawak Adventist Mission. We lived above the library. There was no electricity then, so our home was lit by little oil lamps. Every time we walked up the wooden stairs, Alice would clear the cobwebs with the oil lamps. One night, as I was about to go to bed, I saw this huge cobweb above me. I walked over to the table, picked up the lamp, and cleared the cobweb. A huge fire engulfed the bedroom. I screamed, "Fire! Fire!"

Alice rushed up into the bedroom, grabbed a broom and smacked the flaming mosquito net onto the floor! We were saved by Alice.

One of the chores that Alice and I did was picking veggies and fruits around the campus. We'd grab a basket and harvest fresh bamboo shoots, and then I'd climb up the cheeku tree with Alice picking up whatever I threw down. Once, when the basket was filled with cheeku, Alice called, "Come down, Bert. We've got enough for the day."

I saw another branch loaded with cheeku and stepped onto the next branch when suddenly, *crack, bang, bang!* The branch broke as I tumbled down. Alice reached up to me and I fell into her arms! Yes, I was saved once more Alice.

2. Musical Time

In 1948, Papa was called to be the Treasurer of his alma mater, Southeast Asia Union College. Mama worked at the Youngberg Memorial Hospital in Singapore. We lived in one of the Staff homes under the Girls' Dormitory. Alice took music lessons and soon earned a certificate from the London Royal School of Music Academy as a piano teacher and performer. Soon our afternoon naps were interrupted by piano lessons in the living room.

I'd put on my sandals, swab my face with cool water, and walk to the library. I would catch up on the sports section of the Singapore Straits Times, to see how my favorite soccer team, Manchester United, was doing.



Alice singing with sister Florence

Every evening we'd enjoy singing hymns, with Alice at the piano. She'd play at youth services, church services, and accompanied the College Choir. One very memorable event was the Voice of Prophecy Evangelistic Series held at the Victoria Theatre - hearing evangelist H.M.S. Richards of the Voice of Prophecy Ministry, the soloist Del Decker, the King's Herald Quartet, and Alice accompanying the College Choir and other singers.

Music was family time together. Papa played the piano, guitar, ukulele, saxophone, and other music instruments. One Friday evening, an Australian doctor serving at the Penang Adventist Hospital, Malaysia came to our home and asked Alice to accompany him, as he was to sing a solo at the church service. After the practice, he spoke about the Nursing program at Sydney Sanitarium & Hospital. That led Alice doing her Nursing program at Sydney Sanitarium. Irene trained at Balmain Hospital, just an hour from Sydney San, and I attended Avondale College, close to Newcastle, but a three hour train ride to Sydney. For lack of money, I'd hitchhike three hours to the San to visit Alice. Every time, she would hand me Aussie pounds so I could enjoy spending time at Sydney Harbour Bridge, Bondi Beach, and the Opera House.

Alice's musical mentorship led me to join the Avondale Symphonic Choir and enjoy tours across Australia. We travelled to Newcastle, Sydney, Canberra, Melbourne, and Adelaide.



Maarten, Alice & Herb Visiting Papa & Mama

Alice was born with a cleft lip, and it was painful to see friends making fun of her. Ed reminded me once about dinner time, when Alice would be drinking her cup of milk and milk would be trickling down her lips on to her cheek. Because we loved her, we sometimes got into fights with guys who teased her. The doctor who recommended her to Nursing School contacted a colleague who was a plastic surgeon, and he did a great job on fixing it. Alice's smile has brought us great joy every day!

3. Building Family Time

After completing her Nursing program, Alice returned to Singapore and served at the Youngberg Memorial Hospital. She immigrated to Canada in 1967, working at the North York Branson Hospital in Toronto where she met Maarten Keyer, a veteran of the Dutch Army who grew up in Bandung, Java. Maarten was a third-generation Dutch-Indonesian descent. Shortly after Indonesia gained its independence, Maarten stopped over in Singapore and my family invited him to our home for dinner. After a short return stay in the Netherlands, he immigrated to Canada.



Celebrating Maarten's 90th Birthday



Enjoying Marten's Delicious Cooking

Remembering Alice & Maarten Keyer

After completing his chef course in Hamilton, Maarten worked at Branson North York Hospital. He met Alice there, and love bloomed. There were wedding bells on Sunday, August 5th, 1969, with my Papa joining Alice and Maarten's hands at their wedding at the Willowdale Adventist Church in Toronto. That was just one week before Sunipa and I were married in Bangkok.

Besides nursing, Alice was involved in community work, serving as church pianist and leading church musical programs.

In 1979 Maarten, Alice, and their children, Alicia and Marty, moved to Surrey, British Columbia. Alice worked at the Surrey Memorial Hospital until she retired, but continued in serving her community, and the Surrey Adventist Church. Alicia, their oldest child, attended high school in Toronto, and then completed her studies at Newbold College, UK. She now teaches at the International Language Schools of Canada in B.C.



Keyer Family: Alice, Maarten, Alicia, Marty

Marty, their son, followed in his father's footsteps and now owns Beach Avenue Bar & Grill in Vancouver. He is happily married to Aaby.

Sadly, Maarten passed away in 2021.

While in Toronto, Alice's family attended the Richmond Hill Church, where she continued serving the Lord through church music and community work. Their move to Surrey, British Columbia led to many wonderful family reunions. We enjoyed time in restaurants across Vancouver, celebrating the most fantastic fireworks at the waterfront during Chinese New Year, and viewing the beautiful floral works at Stanley Park. In 2017, we had a good time basking at the gorgeous Sunshine Coast with all our siblings and family!



Family Reunion at Sunshine Coast, B.C.

I spoke over Zoom with Alice only two days before she passed away, on February 15th, 2023. I will always miss her.

4. Testimonials

Alice's Funeral Service was held at Surrey Seventh-day Adventist Church and led by Pastor Mellas. Here are some of the Testimonials from *Celebrating the Life of Alice Lauraine Keyer*:

Irene Galloway, younger sister: "I loved spending weekends with Alice in Australia during our nursing training. When Winston and I moved to Toronto from England we lived with Alice and Maarten for a few months before we got our own place. When I was gravely ill during my pregnancy, Alice was my main support. We enjoyed watching our children growing together. Our musical journey of playing piano and singing together here on earth is put on hold until that glorious day when we will reunite to sing once again. Love you, Akang!"

Abby Dy, Daughter-In-Law: "Alice welcomed me into her family the day Martin brought me home to meet his family. She immediately showed me love. Alice is proof that the act of love is unlimited. Mom, a kind and gentle soul and will be forever missed by everyone that knew her."

Don-Don & Kai Lloyd, Great Nephews: “Ompung Alice always made us feel at home when would visit her and Ompung Maarten. She would turn on the TV to watch funny shows and give us treats, like fudge popsicles, before we went to the park. After we returned, she would feed us even more delicious food. We will miss her and look forward to seeing her when Jesus returns.”

Carmen Jackson, Close Friend/Bridesmaid: “Alice and I met at Branson North York Hospital. We were both new to the country. We just gravitated to each other and became such close friends. I had her sing at my wedding of course. Her love and counsel has remained true. As I’m saying this, I’m looking at my dresser where I have a framed picture of Maarten and Alice. I love her so much and will miss her.”

Alicia, Alice’s Daughter: “I see Mom as a woman who embodied unconditional love: full, genuine, unequivocal, unlimited, unrestricted love. This is evident by the warm messages of love you’ve sent to my family and me. When I read them a week after Mom’s passing, I was overcome with sadness, laughter, and comfort. Seeing Mom through your eyes was such a joy... It makes my heart ache less and yearn more for Jesus’ soon return.”

5. Rest in Peace

My sister, Alice, was truly my bright and morning star!

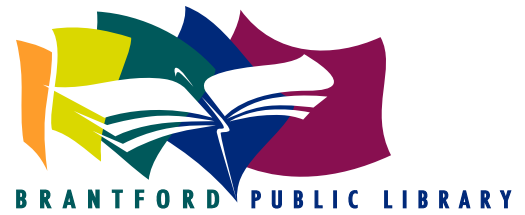
Rest in peace, by God’s grace we will meet again when Jesus comes.

About the Author

Herbert Sormin and his wife Su have lived in Brantford since 2004. In 1961, Herbert was called as a young missionary to teach at the Christian Training Centre (Ekamai International School), Bangkok, where he met and later married Su. The couple immigrated to Canada in 1977 with their children, Linda and Clarence. Herb is now retired, and he and Su continue to live and serve in their community of Brantford, Ontario.



In a world that is constantly evolving, the question arises: How do we share our stories? Through the art of oral tradition, digital platforms, or the written word, we create profound connections and deepen our understanding of one another.



For 16 remarkable years, Lifescapes, the memoir writing program at Brantford Public Library, has ignited inspiration among writers. It has encouraged them to reflect, give voice to their experiences, and generously share their wisdom. As we commemorate the program's final year, we celebrate the enduring power of memory and the personal growth it has nurtured in each and every participant.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the courageous and dedicated writers, whose commitment has brought these stories to life. We also extend our appreciation to this season's program leader, Margo Karolyi, for her invaluable contributions in presenting and educating at each session. Lastly, we express our gratitude to the readers who bear witness to the artistry of these remarkable authors.

