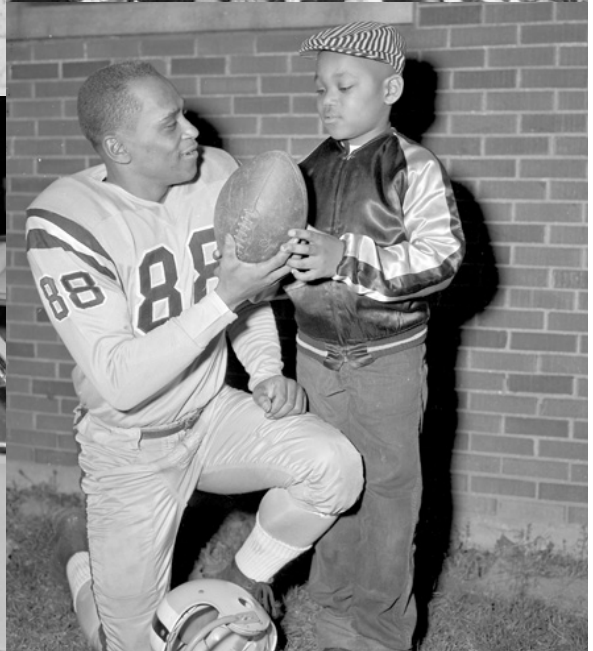


WRITING THROUGH TIME



Images courtesy of Hamilton Public Library, Local History & Archives

CONTENTS

- 9/ McMASTER MOVES TO HAMILTON
by Keri Switzer
- 11/ THE RED AND BLACK BOA
by Viga Bolando
- 14/ A PEEK AT THE HAMILTON ART SCENE
by Anita Joldersma
- 18/ INSIDE THESE HALLS
by Terry Martens
- 20/ THE LAST MAN STANDING
by Barry G. Gottlieb
- 26/ IMMIGRATION AND OSHWEEKEN
by Johanna Matthews
- 30/ MAN-URE IN TROUBLE
by Anita Joldersma
- 32/ THE VILLAGE AT THE BAY
by Julie Cunningham
- 36/ OH DEER
by Adrienne Yau
- 38/ THE MAN NEXT DOOR
by Lynda DiPietro
- 40/ McMASTER UNIVERSITY: CLASS OF 1934
by Keri Switzer
- 42/ MEMORIES OF A ONE-ROOM SCHOOL
by Karen Wood
- 46/ THERE'S ALWAYS TOMORROW
by Viga Boland
- 50/ FINDING DORI
by Anita Joldersma
- 52/ MY ANGEL ABOVE
by Patti Teepell
- 54/ CABIN ON THE ROCKS
by Terry Martens
- 56/ LITTLE MISS BOO
by Lynda DiPietro
- 60/ MOMENTS IN TIME
by Terry Martens
- 64/ REMEMBERING GRAPPA
by Michael Williams
- 68/ ROMANCE AND THE WONDER GROVE
by Sheila Hanratty
- 70/ THE DESJARDINS CANAL DISASTER
by Terry Martens
- 74/ THE TULIP
by Linda Lambert



FOREWORD

We are pleased to share the second issue of *Writing Through Time*, the output of a community engaged project offered in partnership with the McMaster University Reading Lab, the Seniors' Computer Lab Project and Hamilton Public Library. *Writing Through Time* brings together community members of Hamilton, Ontario and McMaster University students for intergenerational storytelling and learning of digital skills.

Participants of this program worked together over fifteen weeks to put together a collection of stories that were inspired by historical photos from the Hamilton Public Library's Local History and Archives and their own lives. This process involved learning how to use video conferencing tools, navigating new websites, and recording writing digitally, all while sharing their experiences with other storytellers and further developing their creative writing skills. This program has successfully created a platform for an intergenerational exchange of skills and knowledge.

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to all who participated in this program: Anita, Viga, Lynda, Keri, Barry, Adrienne, Terry, Patti, Johanna, Sheila, Julie, Michael, Karen and Linda. This photobook stands as a testament to the talent and creativity of all who took part.

We would also like to thank Adrienne Yau (BSc, McMaster University), Allyson Appleton (BA, McMaster University), Emilie Altman (MSc, McMaster University), Raghad Elgamal (PhD, McMaster University), Allison Stockton-Aird (Manager, Adult Program Development, Hamilton Public Library), Nancy McPhee (Manager, Adult Program Development, Hamilton Public Library), Cindy Poggiaroni (Director, Collections and Program Development, Hamilton Public Library), Leora Sas van der Linden (Program Manager, Community Research Platform, McMaster University), Nancy Siciliana (Community Partner, Seniors' Computer Lab Project), and the Future of Canada Project McMaster University team: Drs. Brian Detlor, James Gillett, Ranil Sonnadara, Brenda Vrkljan, and Victor Kuperman for their valuable contributions to this project.

Writing Through Time is supported by the Future of Canada Project at McMaster University.

Sincerely,
Lucy Thomas
Research Assistant, McMaster University

Nadia Lana
PhD Candidate, McMaster University

TESTIMONIALS

What a wonderful project this has been - from our zoom calls on Tuesday evenings to the gathering of our stories. Some of those zoom calls had us laughing so hard - some of them had us shedding a tear or two.

Thanks to the team that offered this opportunity for us to gather weekly on a computer screen and to help us navigate the decisions of what to write about. It was a delightful way to meet and get to know fellow writers and to listen to each other's stories. We are so glad we now have this chance to share the stories with our community.

[Anita Joldersma](#)

I am very grateful for the opportunity provided by this project and would like to thank the organizers for their time and thoughtfulness. I've enjoyed the memories shared here and hope that all the stories contributed will bring a smile, maybe a tear, but mostly an appreciation for times gone by and all the wonderful experiences we have had.

[Michael Williams](#)

I am so thankful that I was given this very special opportunity to share the personal stories of people that I have never met and walk a few steps with them into their personal memories; those that I met on zoom; and being able to add my own personal story into that lovely mix. Thanks to the generous donors of the grant, to Lucy, Nadia and the mentors from McMaster and Hamilton Mountain Writers' Guild. I feel I have found some new friends, learned so much more about writing and a journey in confidence building.

[Johanna Matthews](#)

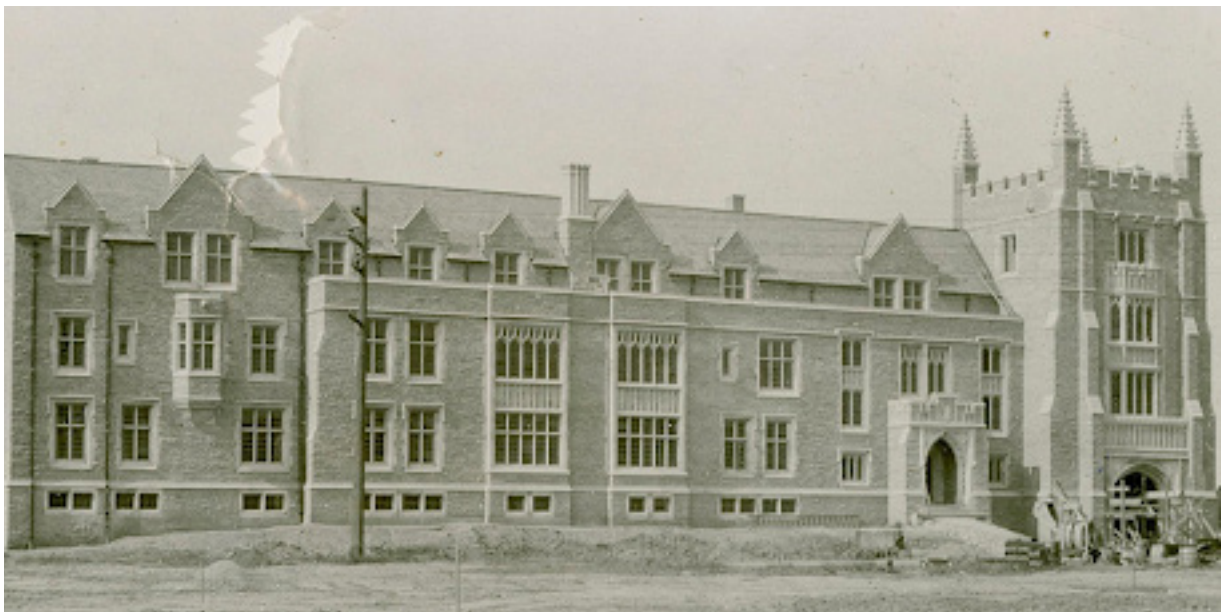
Thank you so much for including me in this project. It's been an interesting opportunity to meet new people and share ideas and memories. Shared human experiences help each of us to cope with life in general. It helps us to realize that we are more similar than different. Hopefully these stories will help future generations appreciate life challenges both past and present.

Sincerely,

[Karen Wood](#)



“At the turn of the century, Hamilton was a booming city and interest was growing for the city to have a university of its own.”



University Hall, McMaster University, August 14, 1930, Toronto Public Library Digital Archive

McMASTER MOVES TO HAMILTON

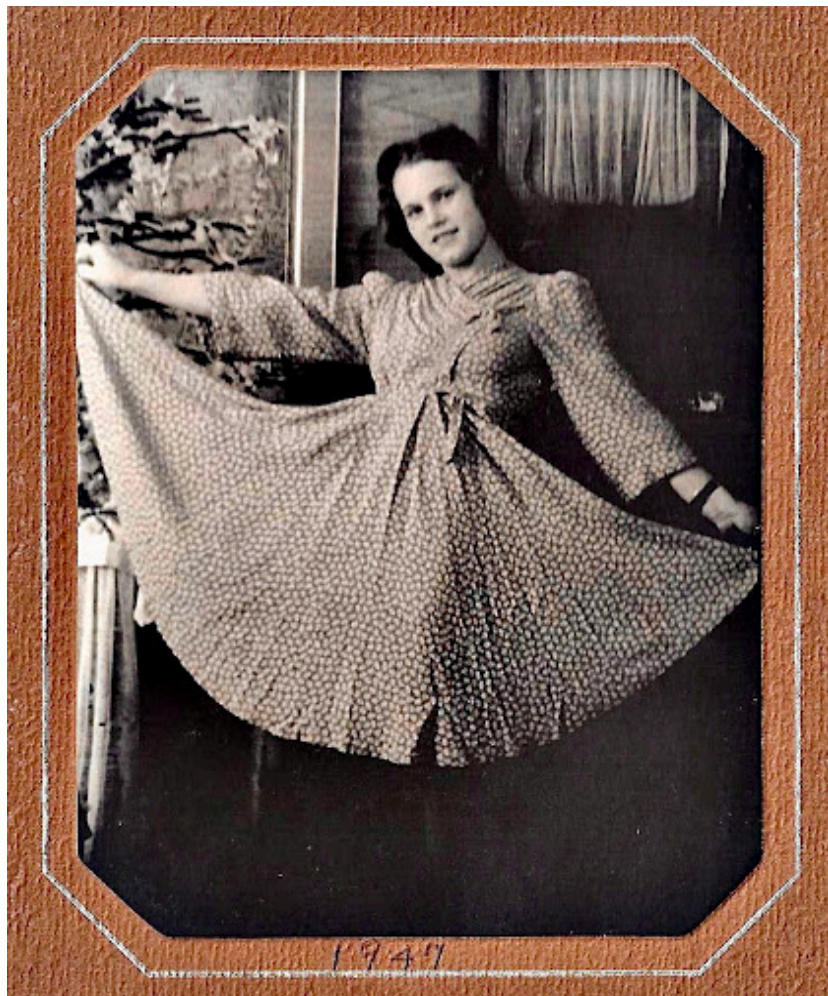
by Keri Switzer

Today it might seem hard to imagine Hamilton without McMaster University and its beautiful campus. However, 100 years ago the area that now makes up McMaster's campus was a vast, undeveloped tract of land. The location didn't become home to McMaster University until 1930.

At the turn of the century, Hamilton was a booming city and interest was growing for the city to have a university of its own. The outbreak of World War 1 meant changing priorities for the citizens and leaders of Hamilton; participation in the war effort delayed progress towards establishing a university in the city. Interest was revived in the postwar years and gained strong momentum in the early 1920s, in part, due to a campaign by the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce. The campaign was supported by McMaster's Alumni Association where there was a strong feeling that McMaster was outgrowing its existing home in Toronto. Migrating McMaster from Toronto to Hamilton would achieve the goals of creating a bigger space for the university and avoiding the possibility of McMaster being absorbed into the University of Toronto. Finally, a deal was reached in 1927 by McMaster and the City of Hamilton to move the university.

Hamilton born architect William Lyon Somerville was hired to design the university plan. Somerville designed the iconic University Hall, Hamilton Hall, Wallingford Hall, and the Refectory buildings which all still grace the campus today. His inspiration for the designs was the Collegiate Gothic architectural style which was popular in the early 1900s. The style is characterized by fine stone work, arched entryways, and ornate carved ornamentation. Other examples of this style can be seen at Princeton, Yale, Cornell, as well as, numerous other university campuses across Canada and the United States.

McMaster University has thrived in its Hamilton home growing into a campus recognized around the world for research and innovation.



“My beautiful mother”. This photo from our family archives was taken in Germany in 1947, a year after I was born.
Photographer: Bogdan Kubala

THE RED AND BLACK BOA

by Viga Bolando

The red and black boa startled me. I gasped in surprise. I never thought I'd find this! It was exactly what I needed for that feathery costume I wanted to make for my 6-year-old granddaughter. But who had put the boa in this old basement trunk? My mother? When would she have worn it? And why?

Though mom had often dreamed of being on stage, I knew she'd never stepped foot on one. Yet, this red and black boa was just the kind of thing a dancer or performer would wear. For a second, I closed my eyes envisioning mom dancing around beneath red and green spotlights, tossing her golden hair and smiling becomingly. Ah, she was singing too! Her rich, melodious voice rang out across the theatre. The audience was mesmerized and mom knew it. She was in her element, confident, beautiful, happy! They had come to see her, only her, and she was giving them everything they craved and more.

I opened my eyes again and the heart-warming vision faded. As nice as it was, I knew it had never happened. I picked up the soft boa. Little red and black feathers loosened and floated gently down onto the dirty concrete basement floor. The boa was old. The more I touched it, the more feathers dislodged themselves. It most definitely hadn't been my grandmother's either. She was long dead and had never left Poland. But mom had. When WW2 ended, dad had brought her and me, just a baby, to Australia to begin a new life.

"Australia is a land of milk and honey," my father had told her. "We will have a good life in this country. There is nothing for us in Poland. Nothing!"

But for mom, that sunburnt country and her new life with a husband she didn't love, and a baby she never wanted, was anything but milk and honey.

As a 13-year-old child in Poland, before the German soldiers had snatched her away in the night to work in the prison camps, mom had loved to dance. She was a natural, with rhythm in every part of her body. But after she married dad, whenever she danced with him, her movements were stiff, unnatural.

She had loved to sing too. Occasionally, she even sang to me, but as the years went by, the music went out of her heart.

“Mama, would you sing me a song, please? I love listening to you sing...”

“I don’t feel like it Janey. I’m too tired. Leave me alone.”

But there was one song that lit up mom’s eyes when it came on the radio. It was that old classic, “Smile” from the Charlie Chaplin movie, *Modern Times*. When Mom heard that, I’d catch her humming along to the words that reminded her to smile even though her heart was aching. And, from the look on her face most of the time, her heart ached too often.

As mom drew closer to her last days on earth, she would tune into AM 740, the “old people’s station” as she called it and her eyes still lit up when Nat King Cole came on and reminded her to “SMILE”. After all, mom knew a lot about smiling: she’d been “practising” smiling since she’d married dad. He was domineering, controlling. He never asked; he demanded. He never suggested; he ordered. He had no patience with tears. Only a smile and complete subservience were acceptable.

I looked again now at that red and black feather boa in the trunk. How did it get there? It must have been mom’s but why on earth did she have it? When did she buy it and why?

“Of course!” I said out loud to no one. “That’s it!”

After dad had passed away, mom finally started to live...never quite the way she wanted to since, after all, she was now far too old for dancing and singing on a stage. But at last, she was free to go where she wanted and spend what she wanted. No more \$1, \$5, or \$10 allowances generously doled out to her by the man who had ruled her life and controlled the purse strings for over 50 years.

Mom’s old friends, the “girls” from the factory began urging her to come out with them. She was hesitant at first, but after a few trips with them to the local casino, mom started smiling again. Really smiling... from the heart.

“I had such a nice time with the girls, Jane. I played on the pokies, had a fantastic buffet lunch, even a glass of wine.”

She giggled...almost like she’d done something naughty...and I shared her girlish giggles. I could almost see my young mother again, and my heart filled with joy at her renaissance as she recounted her indulgence in the simple pleasures other women took for granted. For the first time in over 50 years, she was truly enjoying herself.

She’d also come home from an entire week away with bags of “stuff” that she’d purchased when the “girls” took her shopping. Neither she, nor any of us needed what she purchased, but she bought things just because she liked them and thought we might like them too. One week it was a ceramic doll for my adult daughter who’d long ago stopped collecting ceramic dolls. Next time it was an infant’s crocheted cap and scarf, but there were no longer any infants in our small family. Another time, she carted home two sets of satin sheets for her bed but complained crankily that “...they’re too slippery to sleep on! I’ll fall out of bed!”

And she did that more than once too when the chemo treatments started.

Every shopping trip resulted in another pair of shoes that were pretty but pinched her swollen feet; or a pair of slacks that looked exactly like the ones she'd purchased on a previous trip but the elasticized waistband on those had been "too tight" and the legs too long for her 4'10" frame. She'd spend a week cutting and hemming the slacks by hand, her eyes blurry with cataracts, while she simultaneously watched old videos with Jeanette McDonald or Jane Powell or Carmen Miranda singing and dancing on the big screen. And she'd smile, living the life she had so wanted through these beautiful women of film.

The red and black boa. Yes, I remembered it now. Mom had bought that for Victoria, my younger daughter, the one who did grow up to become the singer/dancer mom so wanted to be. She had thought Victoria might be able to use it in one of her shows, and even if she couldn't, well it was pretty, wasn't it? And besides, now, with "him" gone, she could buy whatever she wanted, right? So why not! There was no one to tell her it was useless, to berate her for spending hard-earned money, or to ask her why on earth she'd want this or that silly thing. All that mattered was that it was pretty... and she liked it. That's all. Simple. And it made her smile.

I put the boa back in the trunk and closed the lid. I'd have to find something else to use for that costume. Even though mom was gone, I wasn't ready to see something that had made mom smile used frivolously, even if it was falling apart and useless.

After all, what was useless about something that made a mother smile? I'd found a treasure, and as far as I was concerned, that red and black boa was priceless.

"I could almost see my young mother again, and my heart filled with joy at her renaissance as she recounted her indulgence in the simple pleasures other women took for granted."

A PEEK AT THE HAMILTON ART SCENE

by Anita Joldersma

Part 1

Hamilton, Ontario has a vibrant art scene. Let me tell you about one of its artists.

Arlene Mussche has been active in Hamilton art circles for a number of years now. She focuses mostly on fiber arts but has dabbled in murals, painting, theatrical scenery, sculpture, quilting and liturgical banners.

Arlene immigrated, on her own, from the Netherlands to Canada during her teenage years. With extended family nearby, she put down roots, married and raised her family in Hamilton. In her earlier years, she landed a job at Duthlers fabric store and knew she was in the right place. She also worked at the Quilt Rack in Ancaster and there the fiber art world opened up to her.

With her imaginative eye and her skilled hands, thread and textiles come alive. She has a keen eye for colour and movement. At times, the fabric she is working with calls for unique additions of bits of rusty metal or pieces from nature. She often receives inspiration for her work from the beauty of God's creation and she seeks to bring glory to God through her art.

Arlene was the featured artist at the 31st Art in the Workplace exhibit at McMaster Innovation Park in November 2019. She was the featured artist on the Turner Park Gallery wall in March 2016. She has donated numerous pieces towards fundraising efforts of causes that she holds dear to her heart. Those of us who are blessed to own one of her pieces, treasure it deeply.



Photo courtesy of Arlene Mussche

Part 2

Banksy is a world renowned anonymous artist who has been challenging the art world since the 1990's. Since then, his secret identity has only increased the popularity of his elusive works.

With a nod to Banksy, and with my tongue placed firmly in my cheek, I present to you:

Stealth Art by Artist Anita

When Arlene Mussche was the featured artist on the Turner Park Gallery wall in March 2016, her cousin Anita was, shall we say, a tad envious. The enthusiastic attention for Arlene's beautiful fiber art pieces caused the green-eyed monster Envy to raise its peevish head. It was when looking at that wall, Anita decided that, she too, should try to be an artist. After all, how hard could it be? A plan was hatched.

A self portrait was decided on and the work began. Once complete, a date was chosen and, with cat-like reflexes, Artist Anita approached the gallery wall of the Turner Park Library where Arlenes art hung in all its glory. The corner wall to the east was unadorned and Artist Anita decided to adorn it and she hung her epic artwork with pride. Unlike the elusive Banksy, Artist Anita stood proudly next to her work and a photograph was taken to memorialize the occasion.

If there were to be an art review of this imaginative piece of art, it would have read thusly:

The Turner Park Library Gallery is pleased, if not confused, to present Artist Anita in her first art show. This simplistic styling has captured the essence of the subject, as the subject herself, is herself the subject. We were amazed to discover that this self portrait was designed and executed within one afternoon. But what an afternoon it must have been. Creativity flowed and the magic marker did indeed become magic. Nuances abound and are sprinkled enthusiastically throughout this work. It is the fortunate soul, who can gaze upon such a thing.

Then, before the Bad Art Police could be called, to have Artist Anita's masterpiece removed, it vanished into the ether from whence it came. Never to be seen again. Stealth indeed.



Photo Credit: Anne teGrotenhuis

INSIDE THESE HALLS

by Terry Martens



In 1925 a large secondary school was built in the east end of Hamilton on Main Street. The building had an almost castle-like appearance. A large archway above the front stairway covered the multiple levels of marble stairs leading to the main rotunda.

The inside of the school is just as breathtaking with the marble floors that appear throughout the main building. In 1978 Jenna walked through the doors for the first time, shocked at the beauty that lay within. Excited by the wonder she looked forward to her upcoming years and adventures that were to come.

The four years would fly by in no time. Classes, friends, committees, and sports would play equally important roles. Jenna became an active member of the Girls Athletic Council for each of the years. This would hold special memories of being involved in the athletic banquets, assemblies, and other activities. Jenna loved sports as a

In each of the years, Jenna was involved in a variety of intramurals, her favourite being that floor hockey. Of course, it was non-contact for safety reasons. Games would take place at lunch hours a few days a week in the girls' gym located on the second floor. The girls' gym was unique in the fact that it had doors on both sides of the gym, the back doors opened onto the second-floor hallway. On this floor, only the hallway was in a complete square that allowed you to walk around the entire hallway. Many students would walk around the hallway during their lunch hour.

It was not unusual for Jenna to take a penalty for tripping or hooking as she was always very dedicated and aggressive during the game. This was not in a negative way; she was just very enthusiastic when playing sports. In one game she had been harassed repeatedly by one player who continually slashed her. As the game continued tempers began to flare and Jenna decided it was time to stand her ground. As the player approached her Jenna stopped suddenly, the opposition crashed into her at full speed, causing her to bounce off and bang against the rear gym doors. As these doors had large bars across them to push to open the player went right into the second-floor hallway. Keeping her record intact, a penalty was called only this time for unnecessary roughness.

This was just one of the many memories that stand out in Jenna's mind to this date. Other prominent memories from Delta were attending hockey and football games. During that time both the football and hockey teams were successful and went on to win several games and championships.

To this day, she remains in contact with several of the friends that she had made at the time. There had been a large gap in between for the friends to reunite but the "Final Walk Through the Doors" of the school was in May of 2019. Although she did not make it to school that day it was the beginning of a reunion for her and 3 close friends. It was amazing when they all went for lunch, it seemed like yesterday and not 40 years since they had last been together.

Now the halls of Delta remain empty. The beauty of the marble and intricate Gothic designs is all that remains. As the main part of the school has been designated as a heritage site the building will be preserved, at least part of the school. The property has been sold to a developer who will create a 975-unit housing development.

Much of the front portion of the school will remain intact while 3 high rises and townhouses will be added to the rear of the school. The rental units are said to be offered at "entry-level" prices. Hopefully, this will mean that low to middle-income people can have an opportunity to enter the real estate market.

Although for many "Delta" will hold a new meaning, for past students "Gonthi Se" the school motto "Know Thyself" will remain. We will still hold the many memories we had when we were in school for which many of us still have a sense of pride to this day. On a positive note, seeing the building and its historical value maintained is nice even if the function has been repurposed.

THE LAST MAN STANDING

by Barry G. Gottlieb

Sometimes friendship can last a few years and if you are fortunate enough can last a lifetime.

Remember everything. Forgive nothing. Risk everything. Regret nothing. Those were a few of my best friend's Keith favourite quotes when I was much younger playing baseball in 1966 at Bruce Park on the mountain. Quotes that I never forgot as he kept reminding me all of my life.

So, let's start from the beginning when I met him walking in front of my house where I was sitting on the front steps just looking around at all the people passing by. My family just moved into this house beside Bruce Park on Hamilton Mountain where there was a baseball field that was shaped like a diamond and was covered by nine players.

He asked me if I played baseball and I had to reply I didn't have a baseball glove but since he had two of them hanging from his bat said I can use one as they need a second base person. He told me his name was Keith, and he lived a block away from my parent's house.

As we walked to the baseball diamond, I saw a group of other young people waiting for the game to start. Keith introduced me to all the players on the team who were around my age of 16 years old. I was going to play second base since the person who used to play second base had quit the team because their family moved to Toronto.

We played every Saturday morning as long as it didn't rain and then the game would be played on Sunday morning. We won most of our games as we practiced during the week and had our baseball shirts and baseball caps with the letters Y.M.C.A. on the back of our shirts as our sponsors. Keith loved playing baseball whenever he could. Every time that he would step up to the plate he was always swinging and dreamed about hitting the ball over the outside fence and seeing all his team members cheer him on as he rounded all the bases. In all the time Keith had played, he never had a home run but was always close. Sometimes hitting the wall just short of the ball going over the fence, but today that was about to change. Keith now had his last chance if he wanted to hear the roar of

his teammates as he rounded the bases.

Finally, the first pitch simmers past him as the umpire screeched “Strike one”! The pitches then went by and they were all balls. By now the count was 3-1 against Keith and he knew if the pitcher had one more chance at getting him out. There was, a pitch right down the middle as everything seemed to be in slow motion when he swung at the ball as hard as he could. Pow! The ball went flying into the air and cleared the outfield wall.

All of his teammates including me went wild as Keith trotted around the bases with a grin on his face. When he reached the dugout, all his teammates were right there congratulating him on his achievement with high fives and pats on the bag. After the game, our coach greeted Keith with the baseball that he would keep for the rest of his life. Today I have that ball Keith signed to include the year Bruce Park 1966.

After baseball season finished, we spent a lot of our time at the Y.M.C.A. on Upper Wellington Street. Bill who was another good friend had the idea of starting a dance committee at the Y.M.C.A. We could have dances on Saturday night from 7:00 P.M. until 11:00 P.M. Bill, Keith and I would become the disc jockeys to play the latest dance music. We charged 50 cents to get into the dances and gave 75% of our profits to the “Y” for letting us use the big hall for our dances. We also bought nine yellow nylon jackets with our names in blue lettering that we wore as proof we were on the dance committee.

Every Saturday night, rain or shine the place was packed with young teenagers. By the late ‘60s, hippie and rock ‘n’ roll influences began to surface with an “anything goes” attitude. Bell-bottom pants (the wider the better) were standard. Boys paired plaids with stripes of all colours and vests with jeans. Hippie outfits for young men ranged from rock T-shirts and ripped jeans to flower-pattern caftans to fringed leather or suede jackets. The colours were bright and vibrant. Anything different from the norm or the “establishment” was groovy.

The 9 of us from our baseball team became good friends and always tried to show up at these dances with our girlfriends at that time of our lives. We had the latest music like the Twist, the Pony, not to forget the Loco-motion, or how about Mashed Potato, the Freddie, Martian hop, and my favourites the Limbo and the Jerk to name a few of the most popular dance music.

It was a lot of fun, especially after the dances going to the A. W. hamburger restaurant on Upper James. A few of the guys had cars that we would all pile into to go to the dances and we shared the cost of gas, which was 37 cents a gallon.

Bill, Keith, and I would always buy the latest new albums for our dances at the Y.M.C.A. and after 3 years of disc jockeying had a substantial collection of record albums. I then came up with the well-thought-out idea of starting a Disc Jockey company. Bill, Keith, and I disc-jockeying weddings, private parties, or any other function that we agreed to. Since the three of us were in grade eleven with good grades, our parents didn’t complain, especially when we agreed not to play our music at home.

We all decided to grow our hair long, as this was the time of rebellion against the establishment. I never understood who the establishment was, except for the old cronies that make up new laws and the running of our country. Then, breaking all the established rules of parents, school, and country with a provincial license in hand I bought a used motorcycle, a beautiful 650cc BSA.

That did concern my father but also my mother, but nothing was ever mentioned, not that it would matter to me, as I was getting older and after all, I was making my own decisions, with my money working part-time in a bookstore. A job that gave me considerable time to read numerous books on any subject or the questions I still had no answer for about life, politics, history, religion, or anything else that grabbed my interest at that moment.

I finished high school and the three of us were getting ready to go to McMaster University. I was studying Business, Keith Engineering, and Bill Economics. The 3 of us were still disc jockeying as it was easy money and a great way to meet girls. Our university days were a time of study and more studying and the disc jockey business faded away.

Of course, a few years passed and Bill and Keith got married, which I attended but I was too busy studying to finish my last few months of university for my degree as I had other plans. But even at my young age, I could see for myself, and for so many of my now engaged friends, that it would be more fulfilling to respect the individuality of another, to love than to perceive it as a threat, or as something to be altered.

Then one day it happened to me after parking my motorcycle beside our fenced-in backyard my sisters were yelling from their upstairs window. Some girl was waiting for me on one of the park benches close to the backyard of Keith's parent's home. When I was walking toward the person sitting on the bench I had to freeze for a moment and realized I already knew this girl it all began when I was in high school or was it public school and why does she want to see me now after all these years?

I didn't know exactly the day or hour when I fell in love with her; after all, does anyone ever know when he or she falls in love with that special person? There is not a sudden moment when the music stops and you look into one another's eyes for the first time, or whatever. Maybe it is like that for some people, but not for me.

Everyone has to have a good answer to the meaningful question, don't they? I fell in love with her then I fell in love with him or her because... it is a sort of social necessity. You cannot very well say, oh, I forgot, or wasn't it obvious? I knew I could not say that, can you?

For me, I could imagine walking into a room, seeing her for the first time and thinking perhaps why should I consider marriage now? It wasn't because I needed anyone; I was still young, but because it could hold the dynamics and function for a more interesting future with someone I would admire for a lifetime, and maybe even be a challenge. Even within each relationship that I had already experienced in my young life, I had enjoyed that there seemed always to be two sides, positive and negative. If only I could perceive those opposites as creating a productive whole, could come to the understanding that two people functioning together were a happier arrangement than one free soul alone.

It seemed easy to understand when you think of it that way, but who would ever think of it in those terms? Nevertheless, this was a time when I had to think about what the question was, whether was I ready for it or if there were other things I needed to do on

my own first. It was just that, which made me love her even more.

That and everything else, in fact, the way she hugged me tight when she ran to me, the way she sounded when they we went for long walks and discussed things she wondered about, like my job, and when I went to university to study for my teaching degree. No one knew of my quest to get a higher degree of education and who would blame me or who would believe me?

Then I decided to marry this girl and only after talking to my parents who agreed to my decision as everyone in my family just loved this girl as much as I did, after all, she was beautiful, educated and had a good job. Every time we went out it was with Keith and Bill and their wives and we had already planned our wedding day for Valentine's Day 1970 and I was 22 years old.

But what happened next destroyed a big part of me as she was killed by a drunk driver, two weeks before we were supposed to get married, while she was on her way to pick me up from university. She was gone, with all her warmth and her love and her broad wisdom about the world, her fascination with people and history and things in some secret ways that made her not fit into the mould that she had been born in this life.

It was as though she had taken a huge piece of me with her. The piece that used to smell of wildflowers when I went to her office to visit her when she had to work on Saturday mornings. The piece that could talk to me as though she understood the world as it was. She would always ask me all kinds of questions about our future together.

This was the past, a past I had to forget. After all, she has been gone now for so many numerous years, there is nothing that I could do to change my feelings of missing her and that is something I understood. I have not even been to her gravesite in years but she still lives in my burning memory.

I had already learned a long time since it was very dangerous to love someone completely. After all, if my girlfriend had lived would she have been this apart from the real world? The only feeling I had was anger and hate and did not want to think about what I would do to the man who killed her because he was drunk and went to jail for only 5 years.

I remember thinking of her when I was an officer in the Air Force still remembering my past with my fists tightly clenched; I knew my face was red with anger and old feelings crept up on me to search and destroy; no questions, just kill the faceless enemy. I realized I had to stop, catch my breath; think of what I should do. I phoned Keith as I need to talk to a friendly person who was always there when I needed someone to talk to.

After my 2 years in the Air Force, I decided to leave and applied for a job teaching and after only three years of teaching I was asked if I would like to go to China. I was to become the Director of a new program to help Chinese students attend one of our 223 Canadian private or public Universities. It was supposed to be for two years but the two years turned into 18 years with 15 Canadian teachers.

After coming home, both Keith and Bill met me at Toronto airport with my new wife and daughter my 8 suitcases and my small dog. After getting settled in Hamilton, I became Keith's caregiver, looking after his banking and grocery shopping as he was divorced years ago. We would watch baseball games together on his big flat-screen television and have a few beers. We would sometimes discuss the past and sometimes we didn't talk at all we didn't have to.

On the 12th day of December 2022, I got a call from the hospital that they were going to do an emergency operation to amputate Keith's left leg below the knee because he was not getting any blood into his other leg.

Since I was the Executor of his will, I rushed to the hospital and talked to Keith to see if he agreed to this operation and he agreed.

After the operation, I went to visit him but because of Covid; I had to wear all the protective clothing needed because of the restrictions of the hospital. The last time I saw him alive before I was leaving, he grabbed my hand and said Barry, let me go; I told him to stop talking nonsense and left the hospital.

The next morning, I got a call from the hospital that Keith passed away during the night. He was my good friend for 57 years. Keith had already made plans to be cremated and you will never guess where I buried his ashes.

I consider myself the last man standing because I was fortunate enough to keep all 8 friends until they all passed away. Some died because of cancer or from a disease I can't even pronounce, car accidents and after all these years still remember them because of a baseball game that never ended.



IMMIGRATION AND OSHWEEKEN

by Johanna Matthews

I am a writer of sorts. At least in my own mind.

I love writing poetry and short stories in particular, but often write political letters to, of course, politicians or media sources about concerns I have and occasionally to thank them, and as I'm writing this, thinking...not enough thanking.

I have been writing as long as I can remember and have an assortment of notebooks, bits of paper with poems and part stories written on them and PC files filled with my writing junk.

In the middle of Covid, I moved from London, Ontario to Hamilton, not an overly impressive move, and completed my UWO writing courses virtually. When the libraries opened again, I joined the Hamilton Mountain Writers' Guild and that led me to "Writing through Time."

I am giving this bit of mundane information to let you, my reader, know how I arrived at authoring my difficult story.

I had chosen as my 'show and tell' for Writing Through Time, to "show" a 1957 photograph of my parents, who as new immigrants, were learning English as a second language at Saltfleet District Highschool in Stoney Creek. The principal Mr. Belyea had arranged a Dutch Christmas celebration for his immigrant students on December 6, which is St. Nicholas day in the Netherlands, while the birth of Jesus is celebrated on December 25, with no Santa Claus.

My story would "tell" the silliness of literal translations and the difficulties of learning a new language in a new country but focus on the thoughtfulness and support our family were given as new Canadians.

Learning a new language while living in your birth country is easy. You spend a short amount of time thinking and speaking deliberately and then your mind is freed to speak naturally in your native tongue. Learning a new language while living in a new country requires constant and intense focus on your adopted language and culture. It's tiring and hard!

I would start with the history of our immigration leading up to taking English as second language classes. I dug out the photograph for inspiration. Included in the picture, beside the principal, were other teachers, St Nicholas of Spain wearing a long red coat and holding a long staff, and his sidekick, with a black face, named Black Peter. Hmm. That was 1957. In 2023 we have learned to respect all races and that picture was not appropriate.

So, I switched that train of thought to another lane.

Recently I sent an email to my sister about what I thought was a pretty funny personal

experience.

During a day long, open to the public, Pow Wow in Oshweeken, I felt honoured to have a seat in the elders & disabled tent. It turned out my chair was smack dab in the center of a quarrel between three very senior women (more senior than I). Two of the ladies, obvious friends, sat directly in front of me and the third, also a stranger, sat beside me on the right.

Their wrangling was a sharp contrast to the unity we were celebrating, and the sniping was reminiscent of bickering siblings in the backseat of a car on a way too long road trip. Given their age and their less than flattering comments, I found the exchange between these three hilarious, like an English comedy, but kept a straight face and like everyone else around me, a closed mouth. I had a great photograph to go with the story for my “show.”

My sister’s feedback wasn’t very enthusiastic. Either the story wasn’t as ironic as I thought it was or she didn’t get it.....Would anyone else then?

I pulled my memory switch back and forth between the two stories. Immigration & Oshweeken. Immigration and Oshweeken. I recognized a parallel and the truth hit me.

I knew it would be difficult to write..

I wasn’t born in this beautiful Country. I am an immigrant to Canada. My four siblings, my parents and I travelled from the Netherlands on a massive immigration ship, aptly called the “Great Bear” across the wild and often stormy Atlantic Ocean to Canada. The voyage wasn’t easy but the journey to Canada was my father’s lifetime dream.



August 16, 1953. At Rotterdam waiting to board the immigration ship that would take us to Canada.

His dream became a reality only after two catastrophic experiences. The first was living through the horrors of our country's occupation by invaders; subjected to their laws and cruelty during the Second World War and then, eight years later, surviving the terror of a raging sea that tore through the man-made walls built to keep it out and its rushing, icy cold water engulfing most of our province and our small village, taking with it, in its fierce onslaught, the lives of 2500 people including our neighbours and friends.

We had been spared twice but the land my father worked on, and our home was decimated – it was a sign to make my father's dream a reality. And so, we emigrated to Canada.

My parents carefully protected their younger children from their personal parental fears; fears during the war; fears during the flood, and their trepidation at saying good-bye, forever, to family and friends and moving across an ocean, to a new country, culture, and language. At six years old, I was blithely unaware that there were larger problems than what I felt was the unfairness at not being able to stay up as late as my older brothers.

They were anxious about the future, but as God-fearing parents they were thankful for a new beginning. They immediately started the process of becoming citizens. We lived a protected Dutch reformed life in which they tried to leave judgement out of conversations. So, I grew up in Canada with a very deep respect and love for a country that had accepted us, treated us well and where we prospered.

I was never fully aware of the dark side of this country that I was always so proud to call mine.

From my young and carefree years until long past raising my two boys, I didn't see that our Indigenous people had suffered; not for six years as my family had under occupation in Europe, but for hundreds of years, living the same horrifying experiences.

The irony between the invasion of our birth country, the Netherlands, and the entire world fighting and dying to liberate us, and that our liberators had been the same Europeans, some from my birth country, who invaded and imposed cruel laws on the rightful citizens of Canada when we claimed Turtle Island as ours, was overwhelming.

That awareness crept in over the years, until one day the entire world was face to face with "Every Child Matters" and we all sat riveted to our television screens showing outlines of tiny graves and survivors telling their story, again, only this time to a country that was starting to listen.

I felt shame that our family, liberated by young men in their late teens, boys really, some aged 19, 20, 21, from Canada and across the globe, who sacrificed their lives, not for their own families safe at home, but for our family in the Netherlands whom they didn't know, and for a cause that wasn't theirs, yet no one came across the ocean or from other countries to liberate the people we kept as prisoners on their own land.

I felt shame that after our liberation, and move to this great Country, our family, in less than 70 years, accumulated land, and relative wealth, live in beautiful houses, own cottages, drive expensive cars, send our grandchildren to prestigious schools and universities, and water our lawns and gardens with purified drinking water, while the people whose land we invaded and whom we oppressed, live in near hovels with no running water.

How is that even possible?
And yet here we are. The white privileged.

At this point I stopped writing. I felt mired in guilt and shame and not sure how to pull myself out of the sludge I had fallen into.

Usually, when I get stuck on a writing piece, I'll either leave it for a few days, or put a lid on it and tuck it away while it continues to brew in my mind, until I have an epiphany or, and this is what usually happens, I forget about it altogether and over time the writing becomes buried deeper and deeper in the storage rooms in my mind and on my laptop, until I need to purge for more storage and find it incorrectly filed under taxes.

Now I had a deadline. And a short deadline at that. Working under pressure usually works for me – that is, if I have a roadmap to the end. This time I had nothing. I had opened up a can that needed my serious involvement in a world I knew little about.

I've been drawn to Indigenous art which speaks to me in a way other art doesn't. I am a believer in justice for everyone and will march in a protest or send indignant letters but had no idea how to move forward after coming face to face with my new reality.

I googled Reconciliation. On the website: Office of the Treaty Commissioner, I read:

“Reconciliation is about exploring the past and choosing to build a better future. Many people do not know where to start in this overwhelming process. This quick graphic is meant to be a general guide to help people find where to start the conversation. Reconciliation is about understanding each other; building trust and creating a better future for us all. We are all Treaty people, and we all have a role in reconciliation.”

The graphics shown are Head. Heart. Hand. This was not meant to be difficult.

I saw that reconciliation is meant to be a kind learning process and understanding the horrors in my own history may help me relate to the history of the Canadian Indigenous people. The empathy I am learning will find its way from my head to my heart and the fingers I have been given to write my new journey.

*I've started at the beginning – MY HEAD
Which will open up - MY HEART
And my heart will guide - MY HAND*

Head. Heart. Hand.

*I've have learned my own history
From books and through my dad
Now it's time to study yours,
Ancestral years to abuse by us, so sad*

*Through understanding who I am
I hope to one day see
Exactly who you really are
And pray, together, we'll be free.*

MAN-URE IN TROUBLE

by Anita Joldersma

Some people call it ‘farmer’s gold’ - others call it manure.

Once, back in the early 1980’s, my dad dreamed of getting some good manure for his garden. He imagined huge potatoes and tons of beans, if only he could get a hold of some quality cow poop. His garden would be the envy of everyone on the block. How to get it onto the garden of his city sized lot, was going to be a bit of a puzzle. Garden centers could deliver but that would cost too much.

Coincidentally, my husband had just landed a barn cleaning gig for a farmer in Mount Hope. With his skid-steer loader, he would be scooping up lots of cow dung. Coincidentally the farmer was willing to part with a couple of truck loads of it, for a break on the invoice. My hubby thought to offer some of the bounty to my dad who jumped at the chance without even mentioning it to mom.



Photo credit: Gerda VandenBerg

After a morning at the farm, my hubby delivered, to my parents driveway on Upper Ottawa, two heaping truckloads of steaming manure. It was very fresh and came with it's own flies. My father surveyed his treasure and insisted that the neighbours flowers were leaning over the fence for a sniff of his glorious prize.

My mom arrived home from work and was shocked to see that the family car was sharing the driveway with an epic mound of stinking-to-the-high-heavens manure. She was not impressed and ordered the smelly pile off of the driveway posthaste. The way my dad told the story, he made mom push the loaded wheelbarrow, from the front of the house, to the garden out back (apparently in her high heeled shoes) (apparently he held her nose as she wheeled).

That should be 'enough said' about those loads of manure, but of course, it is not. To make a long story even longer...

When my dad and hubby were discussing the monetary cost of the pile of dung, the subject of dowries came up. In some cultures, the bride, or her family, gives property or assets to the groom, or his family. In other cultures, the articles of wealth are transferred from the groom, or his family, to the bride, or her family. My father decided that the exchange should be from the groom to the bride's family and those two loads of manure would officially qualify as a dowry.

So my husband got quite the deal. For the low, low price of two loads of manure, he got one slightly odd wife.

THE VILLAGE AT THE BAY

by Julie Cunningham

The elders tell stories about the village at the Bay. The white people came there on ships and built stone houses and made long, straight roads. The ladies walk through the village in beautiful cloth dresses and high heeled leather boots. I have never seen the village at the Bay or walked down a street with a village lady.

My Father will bring a message to the village by the Bay. He must see a Government man and tell him about a meeting with the Chiefs. My Father will take me and show me the trails to the village. I have not traveled that far from home in the seventeen winters I have walked the land. I am honoured to go with my Father.

We are at our summer camp by the big river. It is a day-long walk to get to the village at the Bay. My Mother and I pack dried deer meat and fry bread for our journey. My Father packs some gifts for the Government man. Tobacco and a deerskin to honour our treaty. We will stop at the heart berry field by the duck river. My Mother wants to give a basket of heart berries for the Government man's family.

We left camp with our food and gifts just after sunrise. My Father keeps a quick pace, but I can keep up. We talk about the plants and animals we see. My Father likes to tell stories and teach us about the land. I spot a heron flying over the wetland looking for a place to hunt. My Father says it is a good sign and our ancestors are watching us along our journey.

My mind wanders to our ancestors who walked this trail many summers ago. They know the white men that came in big ships with white sails. We traded our furs for their iron blades. The ancestors saw the white men come and go. They did not know the white men would stay. The ancestors didn't know they would make their own village at the Bay and bring more men. They didn't know the Government men who makes treaties with our people to share the land.

What would our ancestors tell us? As I think about that, my Father points to a rabbit running across the trail. He says there is a story of a big rabbit who stood on a trail like this one. Some hunters were walking when a rabbit stopped right in their path. It was the biggest rabbit they had ever seen. It was a good time to raise their bows, but they

did not. They watched what the rabbit would do. It looked at the hunters and thumped its foot three times. Then three times again. The hunters watched and waited. From the bush, many more rabbits came to join the big rabbit. The big rabbit thumped his foot in a pattern and the little rabbits started dancing. The hunters watched the dance, never raising their bows. When the dance was over, the big rabbit jumped into the sky and the small rabbits ran into the bush. That is how we got the Rabbit Dance. My Father knows I like to dance.

My Father walks ahead and I practice my dance. My feet tap the earth and I swing around to tap again. I spin and twirl and tap one foot after the other. The drums in my mind help me keep up with my Father who smiles at me from down the path.

We stop at the meeting place at the fork of the little rivers. I take off my moccasins and put my feet in the cool water. My Father and I eat some of our meat and sit silently with the land. I hear the whisper of the leaves from the trees and the calls of the birds in the bush. I feel the warm sun on my face and the wind blows my hair. It is a dance the spirits give to me as I sit with my Father.

After we finish our meal, we walk down the trail to the heart berry field near where the ducks sit on the water. I quickly fill our basket with the biggest and brightest red berries. I will tell my Mother the white lady will be happy to have such nice berries. She will be happy.

My Father says it is time to go and the village is much farther. I dance a new dance to give thanks to the ducks on the water and the berries in the field. My Father says we will look over the village at the Bay like a hawk looks down from a tall tree. I want to run as fast as I can to reach the edge of the mountain brow, but I continue to practice my dance.

We slow our pace as the trail widens. The dirt is carved by wagon wheels from carts and carriages from the people coming up and down the hill. It is after midday and the sun is high over the water. In the far distance, I see the shimmer of the big water. The dark blue goes on and on in the distance. It does not have an end.

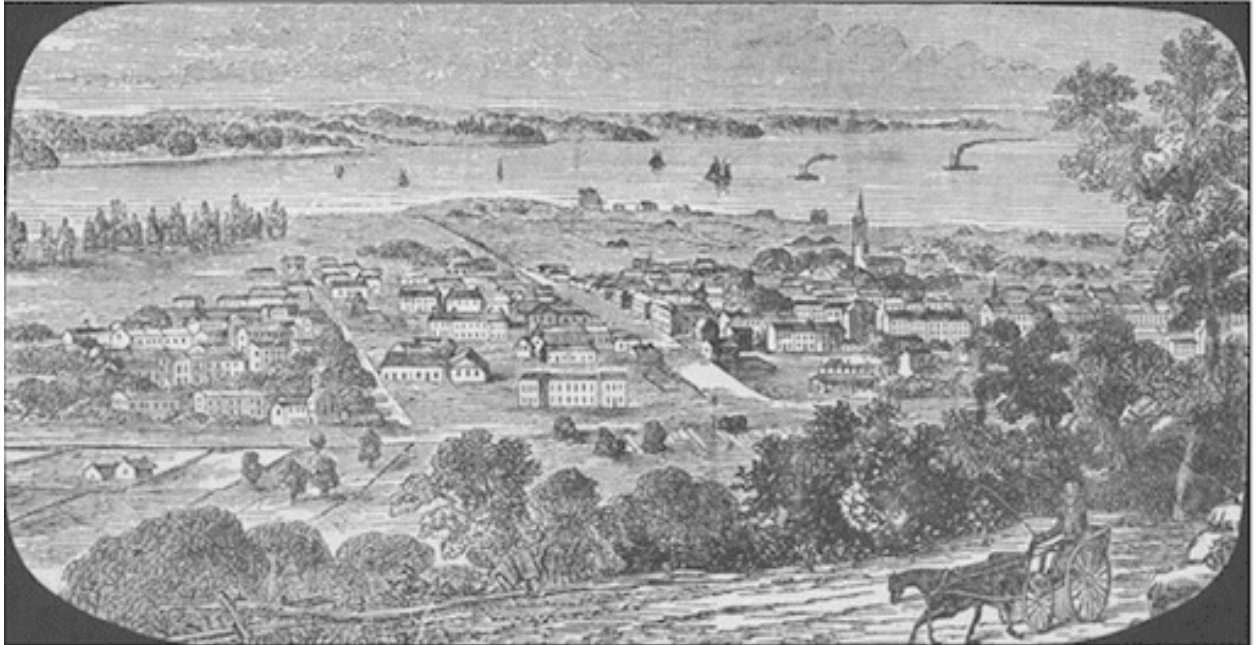
We come to the trail that leads to the edge of the ridge and goes down to the village. We hear a horse and wagon slowly coming to where we are stopped. I have seen the white men before but not this close. I stop to look. He passes my Father and then me. I look at his tall hat and smooth cloth jacket. I wonder what it feels like. He doesn't speak. He doesn't see us. We are spirits to him.

As we come to the edge of the ridge, my heart beats like a drum. All I see is the water on the horizon. I move towards the edge and off the trail into the long grass. I cannot see beyond the stacked rocks. I run and jump on to the rock to see what I have waited for.

Far below the ridge, along the bay shore are little square houses with stone roofs. They are in straight lines moving away from the harbour. The rows of roads run one after the other. More paths cross them like the webbing of my snowshoes. The ships in the water move slowly to the shore. They look like toys made of bark that my sister and I float in the stream. It is a pretend place that children have made. It is not someone's home where they live, hunt, sing and dance. I want to reach out and pick one up in my hand and take it with me.

I look at each of the buildings. I look to the water, to the forest, and back to the village. The buildings and streets pay no attention to the curves of the shore. The trees grow at the edge of the village. The land under the village is scraped clean of bushes and trees. The village is on the land but separate from the land. Like a mound of shells from the Bay piled on the shore. It does not belong here. I have seen the village at the Bay.

My Father says it is time to go to the village. He sees my heart is no longer light. I wanted to dance for the people and for the village, but my song is gone. He tells me we will have new stories and new dances with the people of the village. We need to be patient like the hunters and watch them as they show us their dance.



Hamilton in 1845 from the Hamilton Library Archives

OH DEER

by **Adrienne Yau**

On their daily walk around Coote's Paradise, a mother named Lily strolled hand in hand with her son, Max. As they were walking and admiring nature's bounty, a deer came into view with its eyes gleaming with curiosity.

Max's face lit up with excitement. He stretched out his tiny hand, eager to pet the deer. But his mom's iron grip on his hand prevented him from moving anywhere. His tiny movements caught the attention of his mom looking at the trees.

Lily leaped into action, exclaiming, "Oh no, Max! Remember what we talked about? We can't touch the deer. They might think we're trying to steal their snacks!"

The deer, seemingly unfazed by Lily's warning, approached the two with a twinkle in its eye. Max kept reaching for the deer even more before realizing his mom would not let go. Feeling rebellious, Max huffed and puffed before forming a pout on his little face.

"Mom, why can't I pet the deer? They look so fluffy! I promise I won't take their snacks!"

Lily suddenly remembered the advice she got from her mom. When your child questions why, always answer with magic. They will believe that. After all, that is how Lily's mom got her to believe in Santa Clause until she was eight.

Lily got into the role. She dramatically gasped, "Well, Max, rumor has it that deer have magical powers. If you touch them, they will sprinkle glitter all over you. You'd be shimmering for weeks!"

Max's eyes widened in wonder, amusement replacing his disappointment. "Really, Mom? Glitter?"

"Of course! But for now, we'll just enjoy their magical presence from a distance, and maybe they'll sprinkle some glitter our way."

Max's frown transformed into giggles as they continued their walk, the allure of secret glitter occupying his thoughts.



Deer in Nara Park, Japan sniffing a plush deer.
Photo by Adrienne Yau.

THE MAN NEXT DOOR

by Lynda DiPietro



I was five years old and he was seventy-eight. My parents, my sister and I, were moving in next door. I was left to my own devices poking around while my parents were busy unpacking. My little sister who was eighteen months younger than me, wasn't there. She must have been being looked after by someone in the family.

It's odd how childhood memories of a particular day contain snippets of vivid details while parts of the same day are obscured or forgotten.

I was getting pretty bored with all of the moving activities and my parents being so busy. As I sat outside on the back porch swinging my legs back and forth, I noticed a man in his yard making his way into his house. He didn't notice me. I decided to go over there. I don't really remember why. I knocked on the door and he answered. "Do you have any milk and cookies?" I asked. He looked at me for a minute and then answered that he did and invited me in.

As we sat there together enjoying the milk and cookie feast, we struck up a conversation. I don't remember anything that was said. What I do remember is that for the first time ever, this adult man spoke to me as if I were a person. Not a little kid, but a small person. Of course, I liked him instantly.

His name was Gregory and his wife's name was Ellen. They had no children of their own.

His wife came into the kitchen after a while, seemingly surprised to find me there chatting with her husband. She said that the new next-door neighbours had knocked on the door frantically wondering if their child was here by any chance.

It never occurred to me that my parents might be wondering where I was. Gregory kindly walked me home next door to my very relieved parents.

From that day on, almost every chance I got, I went back next door to see this man. Often with my sister in tow. I could hardly wait to visit with him. Each time I was at his house with him and his wife, was special to me. I revelled in their company, especially his and their welcoming us into their lives and their home. We spent as much time as we could with Gregory and his wife.

We would often sit together in the afternoon after school listening to 'stories' on the radio. On other days he would regale us with tales of his work, his life, his wife - the love of his life, and stories about what life was like when he was a young man. He would ask me about my life, short as it was, showing a real interest in what I thought about almost everything.

This relationship continued to build over five years that we were neighbours. I adored him. In my eyes, he was the most interesting man I had ever met.

The summer that I turned ten, my sister and I were away for a couple of weeks at a summer cottage staying with family. Gregory became very ill and was hospitalized. I didn't know it at the time. He had asked to see my sister and me but because we were away and the complication of getting us back to visit him couldn't be worked out, we didn't get to see him.

He died at age eighty-three, while we were away.

It was the first time in my young life that I had my heart broken. I was inconsolable. Not only because he had died but because I didn't get the chance to say goodbye to him. Now, as an adult, looking back on his influence on me, I would have loved the chance to be able to tell him just how much he meant to me. I don't think I could have put that into words at ten years of age. I like to imagine and hold hope that he knew how much I loved him and enjoyed being with him because I was joyous when I was around him.

I don't really know what he was like to adults as person, friend, husband, employee, citizen. But to me and my child's mind he was a giant among men. His wife was obviously still in love with him and he with her. They had a wonderful relationship. He was generous, kind and thoughtful.

There is no greater gift that a person can give to a child than to be listened to and valued. He did that for me. I was fascinated by this man. I could listen to him talking all day long. I never tired of his company or his wonderful sense of humour.

It took me a long time to get over his death. I missed him so much that my little heart hurt. I cried for days. I miss him to this day.

Twenty-seven years later having been married myself for ten years and having just given birth to a son, I was able to honour him, his life, his legacy and my memory of him. I named my son after him.

McMASTER UNIVERSITY: CLASS OF 1934

by **Keri Switzer**

The first group of students to begin their studies at McMaster University's new Hamilton campus graduated in 1934. The graduating class consisted of 71 women and 104 men. Student life for McMaster's first Hamilton class was very different from what university students might expect to experience today. Their student experience was characterized by strict guidelines around permissible student activities, dress codes, and the segregation of the sexes. Although, students of the era did begin to push back against what they considered to be a faculty with prudish or "Victorian" views.

When studies commenced at McMaster in 1930, male and female students had separate clubs and activities. They were even segregated by sex when it came to seating in the campus chapel and in the campus dining hall. It goes without saying that the concept of co-education dormitories and residences would have been nonexistent.

A Dean of Women was appointed to watch over the moral conduct and virtue of the women in residence. Male students during the time period had more freedom, but were expected to maintain a gentleman like appearance which meant that they were required to wear a suit and tie while studying for exams, eating dinner in the dining hall, and while writing exams.

Until 1930, any theatrical productions at the university would have been performed by either all male or all female casts. This tradition changed in 1931 when the Women's Literary Society successfully petitioned to hold the first co-ed play. With that one victory achieved, students continued to request change. In 1932, students requested that co-ed dances be allowed to take place on campus. These requests were denied repeatedly by administration throughout the 1930s. Not to be deterred, the students simply continued to hold these events off campus at other venues in Hamilton such as the Scottish Rite Temple and the Royal Connaught Hotel Ballroom.



Group of McMaster scholarship winners pose in 1934 (Johnston, Charles Murray. "Student days: student life at McMaster University from the 1890s to the 1980s", 1986. McMaster Digital Archive)

“Although, students of the era did begin to push back against what they considered to be a faculty with prudish or “Victorian” views.”

MEMORIES OF A ONE-ROOM SCHOOL

by Karen Wood

One, two, three.

Who are we?

We are the people of Murray twenty-three.

Have you heard us say, 'Ha, ha, ha?'

Then listen to us, 'Rah, rah, rah.'

This was our school cry at Field Day in June at the school-year end held in Wooler Fair Grounds.

Our school was in Murray Township nestled in the rolling hills of Northumberland County in Ontario, Canada; a community originally settled by United Empire Loyalist looking for a place to live under British law. These pioneers cleared the land, built homes, became a community, and thrived. They had a post office and built a cheese factory that the farmers supported and as partial payment for milk, received a large round of Cheddar Cheese each year. These pioneers built the original frame school at one end of the community, near our farm. The majority thought it was too remote; a central location would be more acceptable and accessible. Life was different back then and sometimes people solved problems in unconventional or even illegal ways. By mysterious circumstance, the old school burned making it necessary to build anew. This new school, built in 1872, would not be as susceptible to fire as the farmers collectively cleared their fields of enough fieldstone to build three-foot thick walls. Well, this building was centrally located and became the heartbeat of the community, the information exchange for families, a gathering place for socials, ball games, Christmas concerts, and a variety of meetings. Music was always an integral part of life on the Ninth Line of Murray Township.

My dad was born on our farm shortly after his family moved from Crookston, a little community in neighbouring Hastings County. They bought their farm from Jeremiah Chapman, a long-time resident of the area. Dad grew up in this community and inherited the family farm like his schoolmates. The children of these schoolmates were like extended family making this community special to us. Family names that remained when it was time for me to attend school were McColl, Caskey, Chase, Margetson, Thompson, Terry, Rose, Bird, Nelson, Zufelt, Chapman, and Locklin.

Schoolmasters changed over the years, the education system changed to meet the needs of the day, social norms changed as the world changed and Mapleview adapted. I was fortunate to have the same amazing teacher all through grade school. Mrs. Chase lived in our community and served, not only as our teacher, but as our second mother and Sunday School Superintendent. She was an integral part of our lives.

Students usually walked to school, the distance varying from one to three miles. School started in September when mornings were nippy and afternoons warm and sunny. When the bell rang we all lined up, girls in one line, boys in another line. Good manners

and respect for others was a normal part of our lives woven into every activity of the day. For example, girls always entered the school first, good basic training for the boys on their way to becoming gentlemen.

After students put lunches and coats in their proper spot, each student stood quietly beside his or her desk. We sang a little morning greeting song.

Good morning to you, good morning to you.

We're all in our places, with sunshiny faces.

Oh, that is the way to start a new day.

On completion of this song, we said the Lord's Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Before we sat down Mrs. Chase did a health inspection. 'Did you brush your teeth this morning? Let me see your fingernails.'



With eight grades in one room, organization and discipline was necessary. Mrs. Chase would get each class started on schoolwork before teaching a specific lesson to a specific class. Everyone benefited from hearing the lessons. The older students could quietly help the younger students while Mrs. Chase was busy teaching. Grade One students had lots of kernels of corn to place around a different letter of the alphabet each day repeating the letter with each kernel.

At recess in the fall, we would rake leaves into a big pile. Students circled the pile of leaves. Everyone closed their eyes and the person who was 'It' would choose someone to hide in the leaves. It was up to the others to guess who was missing.

There was always the popular 'kiddely kyddely clover, let the ball come over.' We chose teams and threw a ball over the woodshed attached to the back of the school. First the yell, then the ball. If you caught the ball you would run around to the other side and try to touch as many people as you could with the ball. These people became part of your team leaving the other side at a deficit.

Of course, there was always baseball set up in the drive. First base was the old maple tree. Second base was the entrance of the school, third was a cloth base over by the fence. All games required inclusiveness so that young and older all had fun. 'Let's play ball.' Have you ever seen someone pump a swing so high that he did a complete rotation over the bars? Well, Rod did. Managed to do it unscathed. The swing chain was another matter. Mrs. Chase read Rod 'the riot act' and Mr. Rose had to bring a ladder to untangle the chains, chuckling and shaking his head in disbelief.

Rod should have stayed playing Mr. Wolf May I, a game that taught us the difference between using 'may I' and 'can I.'

As weather demanded, parents drove us by car or horse drawn winter sled. Winters in the 50s supplied large heavy snow drifts which were great for kids to tunnel in or build snow forts and stockpile snowballs for a battle royal. The pond next door usually froze over for skating and on occasion someone fell through, was brought in, and placed near the woodstove to thaw. To keep the wood stove fueled each student visited the woodhouse in the morning and brought in a stick of wood. For lunch, Mrs. Chase had the older girls make hot chocolate or soup to add to our lunches. After lunch Mrs. Chase would read a chapter from a classic book to us. I remember crying through parts of 'Ole Yeller.' Woodworking was a good winter activity. A long table along one wall gave us working area and using cope saws we cut out figures and then paint them. Mine was a cat.

With Christmas came our school concert. The men would come in one evening and build the stage for us and hang the curtains. Next the women would come and make costumes using crepe paper. We practiced pageantry routines, songs, skits, monologues, and plays to the delight of our parents. Of course, the highlight of the evening was the arrival of Santa Claus. Everyone received a candy cane.

Spring brought different activities, one which included students circling the flagpole and reciting the Pledge of Allegiance to celebrate the Queen's birthday. For Arbour Day we cleaned the school yard of sticks and debris from the winter months. I remember us standing beside each other spaced across the width of the yard and moving forward in a row. It was like a search part covering every inch of the yard. After we had cleaned the yard, Mrs. Chase would take us on a hike into a nearby forest or meadow and we would have a picnic, play games, and enjoy the outdoors.

We practiced track and field activities, high jump, standing long jump, running jump, and races. I don't remember many trophies being brought home but what we lacked in performance we made up for in school spirit. We were more into public speaking and music festivals.

Seniors were prepared for Entrance Exams to High School. The majority did very well. Over the years, Mapleview produced several businesspeople, teachers, nurses, doctors, and missionaries. A few remained on the family farms, one served as Reeve of the Township, while others kept the community spirit alive when the school closed in 1966. The school is now the Mapleview Community Centre serving not only the Ninth Line but the whole township. An elected executive organizes socials, euchre games, dinners, and seniors functions bringing people together to socialize and share information. Volunteers donate their time to keep the buildings and grounds in good condition. The school is also available for rent for personal events.

The community spirit lives on and I'm proud to have been a part of it.



THERE'S ALWAYS TOMORROW

by Viga Boland



“Knowing when to hold them and when to fold them all away” Photo by Viga Boland, June 2023

“Am I a hoarder?” my darling 81-year-old husband, Ralph, asks me.

I know this is one of those Do or Die moments i.e. I’m damned if I do, and damned if I don’t answer him honestly. With over 50 years of marriage behind us, I know how sensitive he is and I don’t want to ruffle his drooping feathers. He’s always told me he likes me to be honest, but when I am, most of the time he doesn’t like my honest answer. What do I say?

“Um... do you want me to be honest, Ralph?”

“OK, so I AM a hoarder eh?” Ralph shouts, not realizing he’s shouting. He’s 90% deaf. “Do you have to be so blatantly honest about it?”

I roll my eyes, hoping he doesn't notice. I don't remember answering his question. Did I? I think I zoned out temporarily when I sensed his irritation. Perhaps I somehow beamed my answer into his mind since his hearing aid is constantly hit-and-miss. The ubiquitous "they" say that ability to think the same thoughts happens to couples the longer they are together because they know each other so well. Well, that's up for debate as far as I'm concerned. If he always knew what I was thinking and vice versa, I doubt we'd even be together having this conversation about whether he's a hoarder.

We are standing in the basement storeroom of our 2-story West Mountain Hamilton home...way too big for two aging seniors. We're surrounded by boxes of yellowed molding books and dusty shelves of memorabilia from five decades of marriage. Every so often I remind Ralph that it's selfish of us to leave this monumental job to the children. I use my gentlest "drive the point home" voice:

"If nothing else, it's heartbreaking to dispose of something a parent cherished, especially when you're still trying to get over the loss of that parent. You get that Ralph, right?"

Ralph gets that, but convincing him to part with what he treasures hasn't been easy...till this afternoon over lunch. He has agreed to come downstairs with me and take a serious look at what he might consider tossing out or giving away. Oh, happy day!

"Where'd all this stuff come from?" he asks, looking around the storeroom like it's the first time he's seen it. He shakes his head. He sounds weary as he continues: "I just don't get how we've moved ten times and had garage sales every time and this storeroom is chock-a-block with stuff. Some of it MUST be yours. It's definitely not all mine!"

I can sense he's miffed that, without saying anything, I've somehow confirmed his conclusion that he's a hoarder. I feel the need for immediate damage control. I don't want him to get upset over this now that he's agreed to come down here with me.

"Oh, of course, some of it's mine. I haven't quite been able to part with all the poems and short stories I wrote when I was a teenager. Those are in those two boxes over there," I reply pointing to the corner of the room near the Christmas tree we no longer use and several boxes of decorations. "For that matter, you know what? We really should take all that Christmas stuff and some of these other things we haven't used in the 20 years since our last garage sale to the SallyAnn's, don't you agree?"

"Well sure," Ralph replies. "That's fine about the Christmas and other stuff, but don't ask me to donate my James Patterson and John Grisham books and all the other paperbacks in my collection! I'm just not ready for that!"

Ralph's paperbacks occupy space on 3 shelves, each about 10 feet long. Another shelf is piled high with his collection of old comics, car mags dating back to the 60s, and National Geographics. Marvelous reading I must admit, and yes, quite the collectibles. However, I grimace. This is already not going according to plan. I bite my tongue and try to avoid saying what just occurred to me, but as usual, my mouth takes over my brain:

"Honey, honestly, what are you keeping all the darn books for? Do you plan to read them all again?"

"Well, I might!" His tone is defiant. I persist.

"Oh come on love! When do you plan to re-read them? You came home from the second-

hand Thrift Store with ten more books just the other day!”

“Well, each of those books was only ten cents.”

He’s getting edgy and I’m getting exasperated. “Ralph, that’s not the point! It’s not about the money. Wait...” I say, suddenly getting a bright idea (an infrequent occurrence nowadays):

“I know you don’t want to part with your books, but how about we agree that each time you bring home ten new ones to read you donate ten of your least favorite to the SallyAnns? Don’t you think that’s a great idea?”

“They’re ALL my favorites!”

He’s shouting again. My patience gives out.

“I’m not deaf Ralph! You don’t need to shout.” I take a deep breath and try again.

“OK fine,” I concede. “Let’s forget your books for now. How about we get rid of mom’s old record player? Mom’s been gone over 10 years now. That thing’s a relic and you said it speeds up on 33s and slows down on 45s. So we can’t even sell it...”

“Linda, it’s not a relic, it’s an antique, and antiques are valuable. It could be worth a fortune. Besides, I heard the other day that vinyl is back in demand and so are record players, not to mention that I’ve got all those great LPs as well.” Ralph crosses his arms over his expanding torso with a triumphant smile. “Gotcha!” He grins.

Now he’s really ticking me off. Before I can stop myself, I blurt,

“Valuable Antiques are those in perfect working condition! They’ve been stored carefully, not gathering dust and mouse poop in moldy-smelling basements!”

Silence descends. I’m thinking forlornly how this conversation we’ve been having every few months since we first discussed downsizing...about five years ago...always ends up like this. Right now, we’re only looking at what’s in the storeroom. There’s still the old laundry room on the other side. It’s full of darkroom equipment: trays, drums, 2 enlargers, and 20 to 30 frames for wall portraits of all sizes. Ralph was a professional wedding photographer for over 40 years. I managed to convince him to take all the wedding negatives to the dump 15 years ago as it’s unlikely our former customers might want reprints in this digital age. That said, I pray he hasn’t read that recent article about film cameras making a comeback!

Meanwhile, almost lovingly, Ralph is running his fingers down the spines of his paperbacks, eyeing his old, well-read comics and those priceless car mags collected since he was a youth.

Watching him do that, I’m almost jealous. For a moment it doesn’t seem that long ago that he would lovingly run his fingers down my spine when we first got married and we spent more time making love than warring with words.

Ralph breaks my reverie.

“What’s in this box here?” He asks.

“Why don’t you open it and look,” I reply, trying not to be nasty. “Probably something else of yours you need to get rid of,” I reply.

He pulls back the interlocked flaps and peers inside. “This isn’t mine. Do you recognize what it is?”

I go over to take a look.

“Oh, it’s our old Wii set. Remember how we used to play Wii bowling and table tennis with Eric and Sandra when they lived with us before they moved to Florida? Eric must have packed it all up and left it here for us in the storeroom. Oh, we used to have so much fun with them. Do you know how to hook it up?”

“I think I do. I remember helping Eric pull it all apart bit by bit. If I could remember which lead connects to which input in the back of the TV in the rec room, I would love to have a crack at the Wii Golf. Hey, maybe even you would like to try some Wii golf with me?”

“Well, I only played bowling and table tennis. I was pretty terrible at those and I don’t know golf at all.”

“I’ll teach you,” Ralph says with a grin on his dear old face. Twinkles have come back into his eyes and for the first time in days, he looks animated. He’s come alive again. My heart fills with joy. Have we empty-nesters found another way to keep ourselves from dying from boredom over these long winter months?

“Let’s do it,” I smile. “What the hell! I’ll go make some coffee while you hook everything up. The job here can wait till tomorrow, right?”

On that point, we both agree.

FINDING DORI

by Anita Joldersma

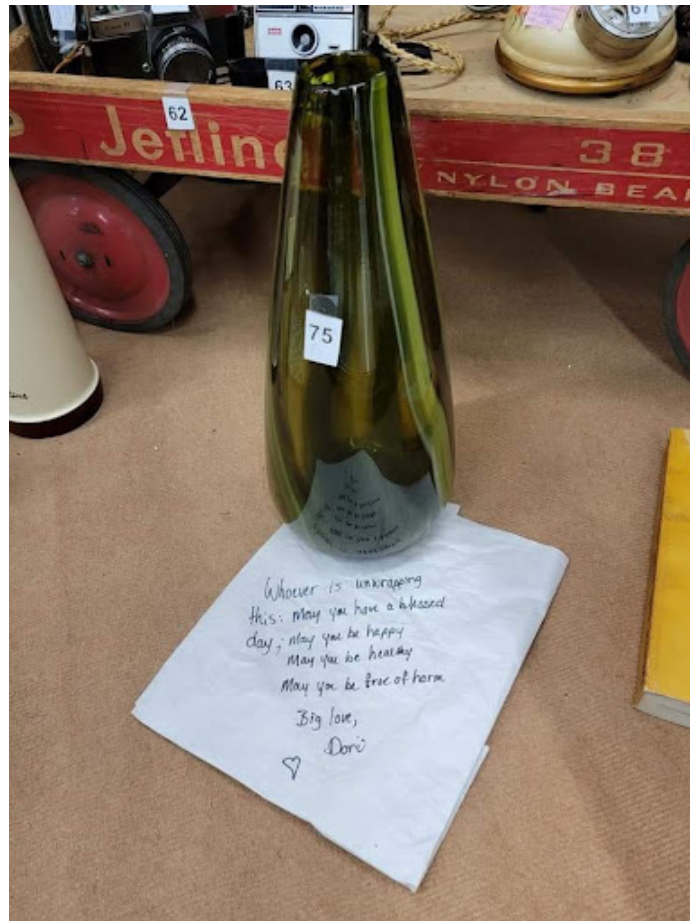


Photo courtesy: re-Source Thrift Shop

I am a thrift store shopper and enjoy checking out the stuff that gets donated to my favourite second-hand stores. I am much closer to needing to downsize rather than to fill a house with more stuff, but every once in a while, a treasure comes across my path.

Last spring I spied a silent auction item on the Facebook page of the re-Source Thrift Shop on Upper Gage, which intrigued me. A donation had arrived with a bit of a story. Item #75 was a large green vase which was wrapped in paper on which was written a note. It was the note that set it apart.

The note read:

Whoever is unwrapping this:

May you have a blessed day;

may you be happy

may you be healthy

may you be free of harm

Big love,

Dori

It really made my day to see that. It was a beautiful reminder that wishing the best for others can do so much for the soul. It was contagious. Dori was just donating something to a thrift store but she managed to encourage the staff that unwrapped her offering. Dori's words lifted my soul that day, so I went to place a bid on item #75. There were a few bids above mine, so I made my bid substantial enough that I hoped it would scare away anyone who might try to top my bid. I wanted that vase.

A few weeks later, the silent auction was over and a few days later, I received the phone call that told me that my bid had won. I had become the lucky recipient of the vase and the note that accompanied it. I happily went to the shop to pick up and pay for a green vase that I really did not need.

What I did need was the reminder that people like Dori make the world a better place when they do little things with love. It would be such a thrill to one day find out who Dori is and to have the opportunity to thank her for that clear reminder.

So Dori, if you are out there...thanks. Big love right back at you.

MY ANGEL ABOVE

by Patti Teepell

All my life I have aspired to be a writer. I always had a journal on the go and every night I wrote what things I learned, people I talked to, things I did and what I felt that I accomplished that day.

I often wrote about the things I felt and the feelings I had about my life and where I wanted to go and the things I wanted to try.

As a child things were never simple as I had a few minor physical things that affected me such as cerebral palsy, hip dysplasia, ear surgeries and braces. My knees constantly dislocated on me.

You would think that these issues would of prepared me for the more serious injuries that I sustained at age 45 when I was involved in a head on car accident that killed my 7 year old daughter Megan.

After nearly 5 years in hospital and more time in than out and 21 surgeries to put me back together and the strength and determination I had to get through the horrible feelings of despair I felt when after waking up from a coma after 2 and a half months and screaming “Megan, Megan, where’s Megan?” only to hear the awful words from my mom who was sitting beside my hospital bed which she said “Megan is in heaven with Grandpa.”

My heart stopped right then and there. I was having a hard enough time trying to even comprehend where I was, why my mom was beside my hospital bed, why I was even in hospital to begin with and not knowing why I was in a coma, only to hear the most devastating words anyone could ever hear and only to find out in the days, weeks and months that were to come why I could not walk, or ear and my right leg was totally destroyed. For months after I felt like I was walking in a haze or a fog. All I could remember was a crunch, and my seatbelt tightening around my waist. I remember screaming “Megan, talk to me, talk to me” and getting no response. I screamed “I love you.” Then the darkness clouded over.



CABIN ON THE ROCKS

by Terry Martens

It was the summer of 1971 when our family took a very special vacation on an island in northern Ontario. We parked our vehicle at the marina and boarded the boat that would take my father, mother, sister, Papa, Jamma and I to the cabin. The cool breeze blew across the water, spraying mists into our faces as we headed from the marina to an island in the middle of Georgian Bay.

We pulled up along side a narrow dock with stairs that led to a high diving platform. The dock was affixed to pink colored rock that formed the island. A white cottage with trees and wooden deck chairs were set back from the water's edge. After departing the boat my father, mother, sister, Papa and Jamma headed to the cottage where my Aunt Louise and Uncle Jim met us.

They had arrived at the cottage several days before us and greeted us anxiously with hugs and kisses. It was great to be here with the family for a week of sun, water and adventure. This was a long awaited vacation that would allow my sister and I to have fun with family and happier times.

The days were very hot and we spent a great deal of time in the cool waters of Georgian Bay, splashing about, jumping in, going out in paddle boats or the motor boat. Papa and Uncle Jim took us fishing several times, my sister was not thrilled but I loved it. I remember dad sitting under a tree in the shade wearing shorts, a stretched out sleeveless undershirt of my Papa's and his feet soaking in a bucket. This was the only way for dad to cool down. There was no air conditioning in the cottage. Dad had to keep covered and dry to protect the mappings that had been drawn on his chest for radiation. The sun would burn the sensitive areas that had already received doses of radiation in hopes of treating the lung cancer that was ravaging his body. This image of him sitting under that tree, watching us and trying to enjoy the time we had that summer are burned into my memory like a photograph.



One afternoon Aunt Louise took us for a walk along the rock path to another building. I remember having to be very careful where we stepped so that we did not venture into the many patches of poison oak that lined the sides. I am told that the other building was the house in which her father lived just up the path from the cabin in which we were staying. He also owned the cabin. He was kind enough to allow our family to share what would become a very special time up there.

It was a fun week but ended far too soon. We gathered up our luggage and boarded a larger boat for our return to the marina where our car was parked. Mom was too nervous to return on the boat that we had taken to get across to the island so Papa rented a much bigger one for our trip. We waved good-bye to the people on the dock as the spray of water swept across our faces. This would be a memory that I still hold onto so vividly even after forty-three years, as it was the last summer my father was with us.

Although we still shared other memories such as one last Christmas this one stands out for me. Not soon after my father's health declined and we lost him that following February. It was devastating losing your father at the age of seven and although more of my life has been spent without him than with him, I know that he is aware of all that we have accomplished. I am reminded of him every day when I look at my children and see their auburn hair, just like his.

LITTLE MISS BOO

by Lynda DiPietro

My son went up north for the weekend to attend a wedding.

That left me to attend at his place to feed and play with my grand-kitty 'Boo' while he was away.

She's a tiny little thing, the runt of the litter, black as coal. She's a little sweetie, very affectionate and misses her daddy when he leaves for any length of time.

Today, I brought my computer along so that I could catch up on a few administrative things, like appointments, paying bills, etc. when I visited her.

First, she had to inspect the bag that I brought the computer in. She had practically her whole little body right up in there investigating what was in that ever-so-fascinating bag. I had to pull her out to get the computer.

When I took it out and put it on the dining table, she had to do a full examination to ensure that I wasn't bringing something into her personal space that she didn't approve of. After about five minutes of laying on the keyboard, rubbing her face all over the screen, sniffing and inspecting it completely, she seemed to decide that it wasn't a threat. I opened it and connected to my bank website wanting to pay some bills online.

Well, she wasn't having that! She started playing with my fingers and generally causing havoc which caused me to have to enter my password three times before I was able to log in. One more time and I'd have been locked out!

She sat and stared at me while I explained how this was not the time for her to be messing around. I had to click on the appropriate payees and enter the correct amounts and dates so that I could pay my bills. She wasn't at all interested in my explanation, she just turned and walked away.

Next, I decided to write a little story to present to my writing group next week. That's when she became keenly interested again. She pushed my phone off the table onto the floor, shot my pen across the kitchen and plunked herself down next to me at the computer.

It didn't take long for her to become bored. She then made her way up the stairs. She must weigh no more than four pounds. If you didn't know better, you would have thought that a horse was clomping its way up those steps. How could such a little tiny animal make so much noise!

Then I heard something bang, so I called her downstairs. She came right away making even more noise as she descended the stairs. How does she do that?

Next, she gathered up one from the 'thousands' of toys that my son has for her and placed them on my computer for my perusal. Of course, I had to toss it for her so she could run after it. She played with it for a few seconds and then decided that she'd had enough of that one. On to the next.

Ten toys later, she again became bored and stretched out next to me to have a little rest. A very short rest as it turned out.

Next, she decided to have a little snack. I had changed her water bowl, topped up her dry food and given her wet food when I came in. She wasn't interested in the food then. Now she was.

After her snack, she decided that she was weary again and came back to the table for a stretch and a wee snooze having expended a lot of energy getting something to eat.

I thought that I should go upstairs to see what the noise was that I heard earlier and hoped that she hadn't done anything that would require serious attention. I couldn't find anything crashed upstairs so I have no idea what she was into. Here's hoping that it was nothing.

She was waiting for me, hiding, as I got to the bottom of the stairs pouncing on me as I got to the last step. I wasn't expecting that and embarrassingly, I screamed out loud. She got a little scared and ran off.

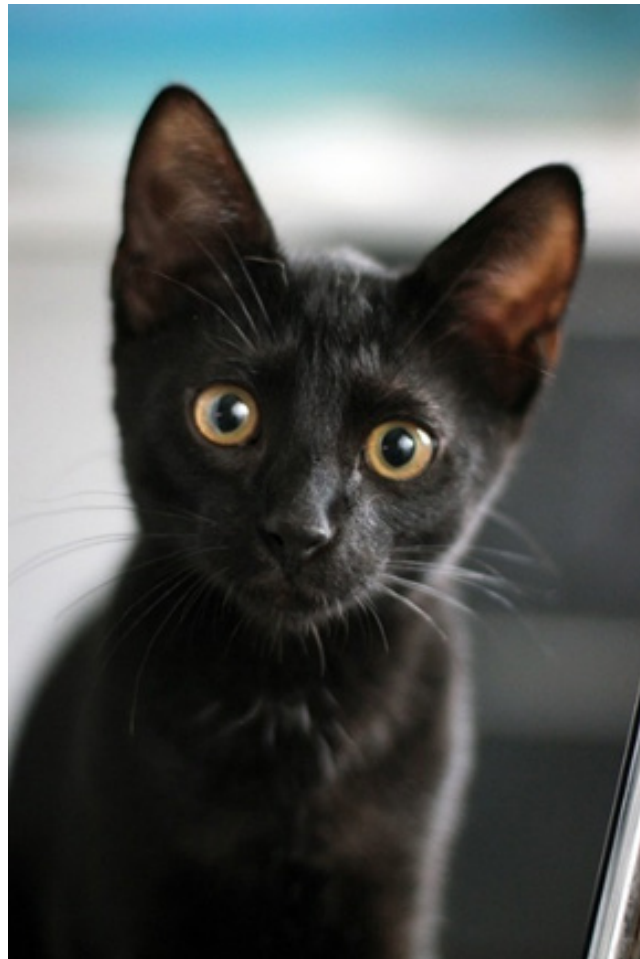
Five minutes later she was back running the length of the living room and kitchen with her favourite mouse toy in her mouth, happily tossing it into the air and playing with it as she scooted along the floor.

After about an hour and a half, I finished paying my bills online, did a first draft of my story for next week and then decided that I should make my way home to tend to my own cat. He who would likely be mad as all get out because I had left him at home alone. I think he can smell Boo when I return and is consequently peeved because I've been unfaithful to him.

I wished her goodbye, gave her a cuddle and a pet and drove home.

In my next life, I want to come back as a cat that has the same cushy, fun life that Miss Boo has. That little girl has a great life.

“After her snack, she decided that she was weary again and came back to the table for a stretch and a wee snooze having expended a lot of energy getting something to eat.”



MOMENTS IN TIME

by Terry Martens

I grew up in the City of Hamilton, Ontario just across Lake Ontario from Toronto. People often hear Toronto and know exactly where it was located but mention Hamilton and they would be at a loss. Toronto had the Toronto Maple Leafs, waterfront, the CNE and much more. Hamilton was considered a steel town with factories lining our waterfront. Yes, we had factories, Stelco, Dofasco, Steel Car and much more. They were at the water but not on Lake Ontario, they were along the bay. Our waterfront had its beauty. It was and still is famous for Hutches, known for their famous fries as well as other tasty food items.

We also have the Hamilton Tiger-Cats of the Canadian Football League, a rival of the Toronto Argonauts. Although we were not fortunate to have an NHL team like the Toronto Maple Leafs, however, we have had several OHL, AHL and other teams over the years. During this time, Hamilton has had many players that have gone on to careers in the NHL.

They may not have been of the same caliber as the Leafs but also drew many fans to their games. We have been proud to have players such as Scott Walker, Rick Vaive and Mike Peca from the Hamilton Canucks. Dale McCourt played on the Hamilton Fincups prior to his career in Detroit. The AHL Bulldogs more recently drafted and playing in the NHL included Carey Price, Brendan Gallagher and PK Suban. One of the Hamilton Red Wings that had one of Team Canada's memorable goals from the 72 Summit Series was Paul Henderson. Hamiltonians still recall these amazing players that one played in our city. We are a dedicated group.

Along the Hamilton Beach Strip near the lift bridge was an amusement park that existed for approximately 35 years. The amusement park contained games, a Ferris wheel, roller coaster, merry-go-round, pony rides and various treats. This was such a fun place to visit without having to go all the way to the Canadian Exhibition in Toronto, which was only there for a few weeks each year.

We would go to the Amusement park on many occasions enjoying the fun and excitement of the rides. I look back at pictures of the roller coaster and remember how big it seemed when I was a child although by present-day standards it was very small.



We would also spend many hours as a family down at the pier by the lift bridge fishing for smelts. This was something that was done in the dark of night with large nets. We would go as a family with my grandparents, aunts and uncles. Coleman lanterns were placed on their pier near the large bucket that the smelts would be deposited in and another we would hold over the water near the nets. This would attract the fish and also assist in knowing when it was time to lift up the full net. This was done by pulling on the ropes that were fed through a pulley attached to the ring above the net.

Many hours were spent catching the fish, chatting and laughing together. I remember the nights seemed very late for me as a child although I had no idea how late it actually was. I would often curl up on blankets in warm clothing right beside the smelt bucket not wanting to miss anything.

A favourite childhood memory was visiting downtown Hamilton with my Gram each holiday season. Back in the late 1960s and early '70s, the Eaton's department store stood in the location that is now Jackson Square. This was not just a brick and mortar building it had character and was always well maintained. There were several large windows along James Street. They stretched from inches above the ground to high above your head. Windows big deal!

Each year as the Christmas season grew close many hours of work were spent on the display designs. My Gram and I would walk hand in hand, spending a great deal of time looking and chatting about each of the glorious displays. Every window told its own story. The displays were animated and colourful. The thought and details in every part were amazing. The smiles sewn on the faces of the characters brought enjoyment to all who stopped to watch and enjoy, even for a few moments as they busily went on with their day.

There were mice sewing stockings in front of a fireplace, while children played about. The next window might be a family decorating a Christmas tree at the family home while someone was baking Christmas treats.

One of my favourite windows was Santa's workshop. All the elves were busy making toys or wrapping gifts while music played loudly in the background. Santa was always in at least one of the windows. Often somewhere in one of the windows, often in the background if you looked carefully you could find Mrs. Claus.

The bright colours and Christmas music would increase the mood of joy and the Christmas spirit. Walking hand in hand as we chatted. I never noticed the cold, not even when we could see our breath with every word we spoke. The only thing that made this moment better was the snowflakes falling gently from the sky. My Gram and I would often try to catch the snowflakes on our mittens to study the pretty designs of the flakes; each had its own beauty. It has often been said that no two snowflakes are alike.

During the holiday season, the trees were all decorated with brightly coloured lights. We would slowly walk about the park enjoying the little huts that had been placed throughout the park. These two would hold little scenes about the holiday season. The one that I remember the most is the manger scene with Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus and some barnyard animals surrounded by straw.

Although these displays were very different from the ones in the Eaton's windows, they were still nice to walk around and see. Special moments with my Gram extended during the stroll. Eventually, the time would come to an end, and we would head back to her house. This was always the saddest part of the evening as it meant the night was almost over, but there was still one more important tradition to enjoy.

Once back at the house we would start to remove the multiple layers of clothes, mittens, hats and scarves. After the layers were removed, Gram would begin making hot chocolate. She would not just boil some water and add the package of mix. Gram would use milk and cocoa from the tin that you would find in the baking section. We would enjoy the mug of hot chocolate topped with whip cream and of course an accompanying plate of homemade cookies. What better way to end a special evening with a person that still holds an amazing piece of my heart?

Some of the nights during our "Holiday Tradition" the nights the temperature was a great deal colder than other times. This did not stop us from going to gaze at the windows or walking around the park to look at the displays and coloured lights. Often on the colder nights, there were fewer snowflakes falling from the sky. When we would get home, often before the hot chocolate Gram would gently rub my fingers and especially my toes to warm them up and get the blood flowing. She was always so gentle when she did that it was never uncomfortable.

Funny I would never notice the cold until we were back home and talking chattering about all we had seen. We did this for as many years as I can remember. As a child, this time with my Gram was something we both cherished and meant a great deal to me. It was our thing. When I look back at this time together it was one of the "Simple moments" that meant so much. It did not cost anything other than the transportation to and from downtown whether it is by bus or car. If we drove there would be the added expense of parking. The time was just good old fashioned togetherness. Making memories, laughing and walking hand in hand as we chatted about all we saw

together. I guess this is what they may consider simpler times when you enjoyed each other's company and things that were free in life. Businesses would put efforts into their displays not just for the business but also for the enjoyment of their customers and the general public. This was something that all families and individuals could enjoy. There was no worry of having to miss the beauty because they would not afford the admission or cost.

I still miss those windows and was so sad to see the Eaton's store be torn down and replaced by a shopping mall. Although there are still displays and lights at Gore Park during the holiday season it does not hold the same importance to me.

Unfortunately, my children have not had the opportunity to share the beauty of the Eaton's store windows with their Great Grandmother, Grandmother or even myself. I have often told them about the beauty that downtown Hamilton once held at Christmas. We have however had the opportunity to enjoy the Simcoe lights together, something else we often did as a family when I was a child. This is again one of the special Christmas events that families can do without having to pay to this day. There are areas where you can make donations throughout the park display to assist in the continuation of the event.

As a family, we have had the opportunity to share the Simcoe lights when our children were small and still as they have grown. The opportunity to take my great nephews to share this along with a ride on the horse-drawn wagon makes me think of the times that I did this when I was young. It is so wonderful to be able to see the other side of things, enjoying the opportunity to watch the little one like my Gram did with us.

Many things in Hamilton had changed as I have grown. Some of the steel mills have closed and moved to the United States and although we are "Steel Town" or "The Hammer" we are also now the "City of Waterfalls". This brings a much nicer picture to mind when you think of the city. The beautiful side of the city, which was overlooked for many years, now has 100 waterfalls. Unfortunately, now due to the popularity of the many waterfalls and people who have had to be rescued after falls. As a result many of the falls now have a charge for parking or to visit.

There are still many amazing things to do in the city, including the beauty of the escarpment that overlooks Albion Falls, as well as the city below. The cityscape changes with the many trees budding in the spring, the beautiful colours in the fall and the soft white blanket of snow that peacefully covers the landscape.

Until you begin to look back into your memories or the history of your city it is surprising how much is right there just waiting to be discovered. The City of Hamilton has often been a city that has not enjoyed the glamour and respect as the City of Toronto has. When people think of Ontario they often think of Toronto and Ottawa first. People like the more popular cities, the ones that seem to be impressive and the ones to visit.

Taking the time to search back through memories as a child or looking at some of the histories of The City of Hamilton I can relive some of my favourite memories and think of others that I have not thought about in a very long time. It is surprising, what a sense of peacefulness and love that comes to you.

Non-Fiction

REMEMBERING GRAPPA: MY GRANDFATHER RON WICKEN AND THE BIG BAND ERA

by Michael Williams



New Years at the Brant Inn in Burlington. The photo brings back childhood memories. My younger brothers and I running around that balcony, making our way around tables, careful not to knock into men and women standing with their drinks in one hand and cigarettes in the other. Watching the people dance below, throwing their arms up in the air. Adults having fun.

Having fun wasn't something I associated with adults, at least not with my parents. During the week, there was a lot of shouting and arguing. But when they brought us to the dances, they changed, as if someone had cast a spell over them.

My grandfather was a big band leader. His name was Ron Wicken and the Ron Wicken Orchestra was synonymous with a list of venues where people came to dance: the Royal Connaught Hotel, the Alexandra, Wondergrove, and the Brant Inn to name a few. For 50 years, Ron "Darkie" Wicken and his orchestra entertained couples and so many others hoping to meet that special someone. To me, he was simply "Grappa" and I loved him.

I also loved going to his dances. My parents couldn't afford a babysitter (or more likely it was unlikely they could find anyone willing to take on four raucous boys under the age of 10. So, they'd dress us in our pyjamas, throw on our coats over them, and take us to the dance. Once there, we were warned to stay out of trouble and turned loose.

As the band launched into the opening strains of Grappa's signature tune, "The Creole Love Call", my brothers and I were making music of our own in the form of laughter and shouting. No one could hear us above the din of the music and the throng of dancers below us on the balcony. We explored rooms and hidden alcoves, sometimes disturbing couples smooching.

Tag and hide-and-seek were our favourite games until we ran out of steam, then we'd find a spot where we could observe the people below or around us. We'd laugh at their dancing, especially at the inebriated, although I always marvelled at how happy people seemed. Especially our parents. How strange to see them dancing together. They barely touched each other at home.

Eventually, my brothers and I'd tire and look for a place to lie down. That was usually the cloak room. To this day, I still have the scent of perfumed mink coats and after-shaved scented overcoats in my memory. I can still hear the strains of Grappa's music lulling us to sleep.

Then came the shocked laughter at finding four young boys curled up beneath the racks of coats and jackets or on a mink stole that had fallen to the floor. With sleep in our eyes, we'd be bundled into the back seat of our parents' car. No seat belts back then. One brother up in the window shelf at the back, one stretched out in the footwell below the seat and the other two stretched out on the seat.

I do remember one other time when I fell asleep behind the piano on stage. Grappa didn't mind as long as I kept out of sight. It was where I had my first taste of alcohol too. A sip of rum and coke offered me by the pianist, Jack. I think I wanted to know what made the grown-ups so happy. It couldn't have been alcohol, I decided, because it only made me more sleepy.

Today, decades later, I realize those years going to my grandfather's dances introduced me to some of the finest music ever composed. Although I was born into the age of rock and roll, that introduction laid the bedrock of my musical education. Rock and folk would be laid on top along with other genres but always the memory of my grandfather's music – music that made my parents and other adults happy – remained. And for that, I will always be grateful.

“As the band launched into the opening strains of Grappa’s signature tune, “The Creole Love Call”, my brothers and I were making music of our own in the form of laughter and shouting.”

ROMANCE AND THE WONDER GROVE

by Sheila Hanratty

The Wonder Grove was the go to destination in the summer of the 1940's! This beautiful Dance Pavilion located on Parkdale between Main and Queenston, in the east end of Hamilton, hosted the romantic setting where many young people would meet, and this is where my mother first met my father. The Wonder Grove was sumptuous, with gardens and trees and lovely pathways for summer strolls. My mother told me the evening was a glorious star-filled night, the weather perfect, warm but not hot, and strains of music filtered through the soft breezes surrounding the guests and enticing them onto the spacious dance floor. The Big Band music popular of that era attracted followers from all over the world. This was July 1948 and WWII had ended in September of 1945. My father was a young Air Force Lieutenant in the RAF, who recently crossed the Atlantic, with hopes of starting a new life in Canada. He was one of many immigrants to North America in search of a new beginning. His native England, like many European countries, was struggling to rebuild after the ravages of war. My mother, always a Hamilton resident, lived on McNeil Street and worked around the corner on Queen Street for the National Paper Goods. What were the chances that these two young people from very different backgrounds would meet? But meet they did?



The Wonder Grove, Hamilton, Ontario from HPL Archives

My mother related this story to me, many times over the years, and I never got tired of hearing it. My father, passionate about flying and aircraft, had recently been stationed to work at the Air Force base in Trenton. My father, had a life-long love for music and was a huge fan of the Big Band Sound, Glen Miller being one of his favorites, so when he heard from his buddies about this cool outdoor dance pavilion, that brought in bands from all over, they planned to attend. My mother, at the same time, was organizing a fun Saturday night out with her girlfriends to the same destination, the Wonder Grove. The place to see and be seen for her crowd and dance the night away. She said she took special care with her hair and makeup that night and she chose a new dress, recently purchased with a long flowing skirt. They all got in the car, drove there, parked and headed in. On arrival they took in the scene. They mingled, as people do, made eye contact and swayed to the music. She was standing there enjoying herself, with her friends, when this handsome man in uniform swaggered over and asked her to dance. She, of course, said yes and they danced. He was a really good dancer. So, one dance led to another. They found they wanted to dance every dance together.

The conversation flowed and they got to know each other. She loved his English accent , good manners and kind gestures. She didn't want to dance with anyone else that night. He told her about his life and she told him about hers. The night flew by and she knew there was so much more she wanted to know about him, however, it was getting late and they were both aware the evening had to come to an end and he had to get back to Trenton. They both lingered awkwardly, walking slowly, neither one wanting to say goodnight . My father stopped, stared into my mother's eyes and then leaned in close to kiss her and then he whispered in her ear. "I think I have just met the girl of my dreams and she is wearing a white dress with a blue satin sash around her waist." My mother sighed. She looked down at the white dress she was wearing. And right there and then my mother said, "I knew." I knew this was the man I was going to marry!"

THE DESJARDINS CANAL DISASTER

by Terry Martens

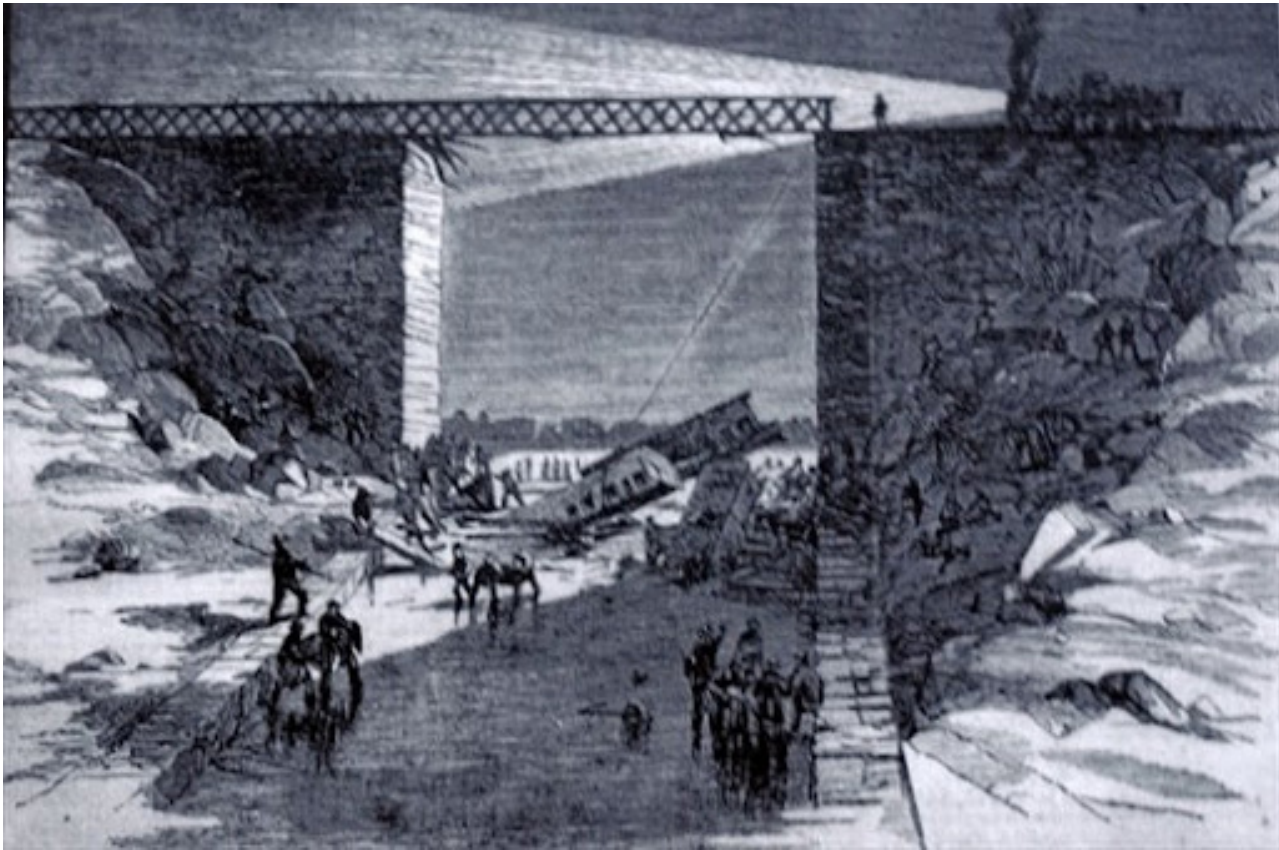
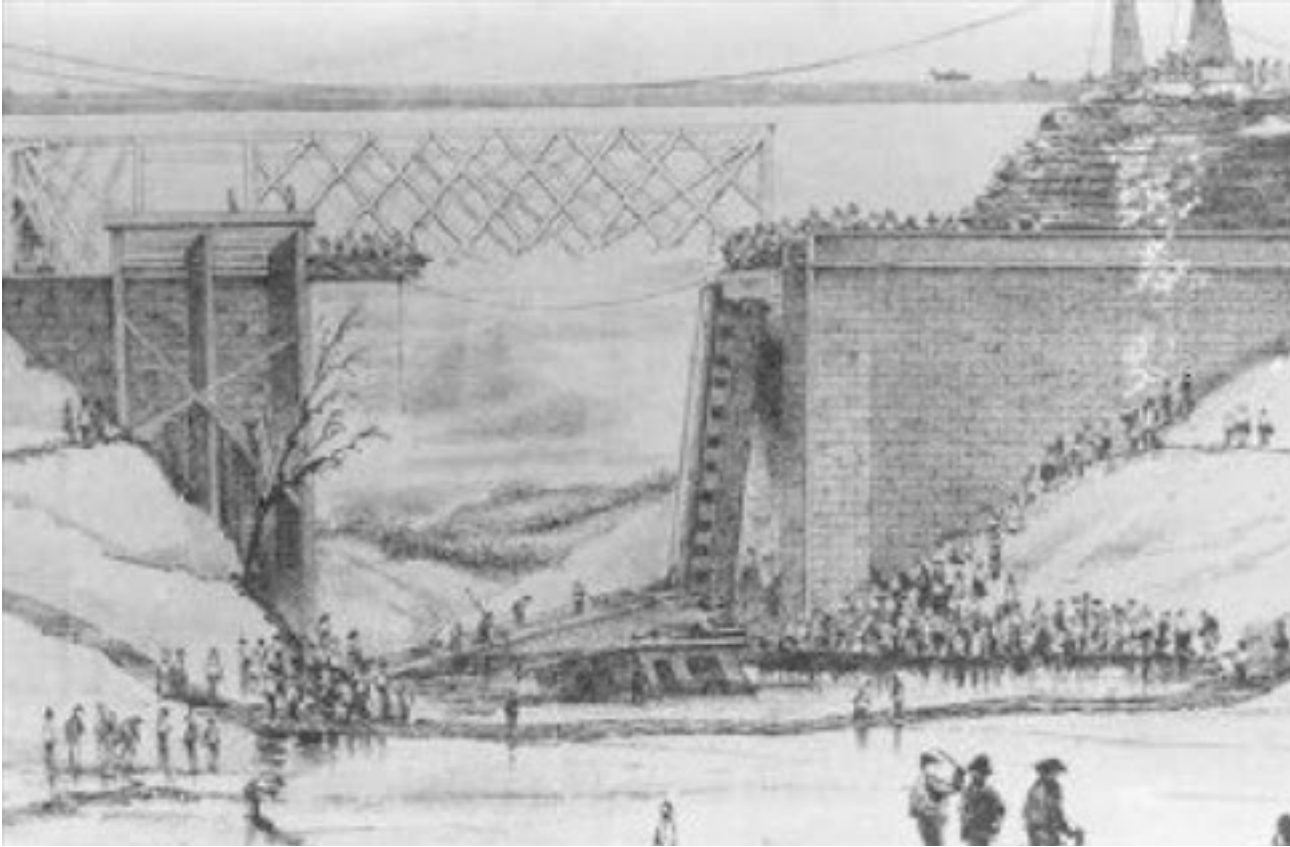
In 1837 the Desjardins Canal was created for the movement of cargo by boat between Lake Ontario and Dundas. For the canal to be created large sections of the Burlington Heights area had to be carved away to allow access for the ships. Although this solved the problem for the boats, it now caused a separation on the land in the area. As a result, a bridge would be required for the train access to continue. There was a discussion about the building of a high-level train bridge or a swing bridge. In the end, the high-level bridge won out.

20 years later, on March 12, 1857, this bridge would be the site of Canada's worst train disaster. There would be a total of 59 deaths, and the controversy continued. If in fact the swing bridge had been constructed instead of the high-level bridge it was unlikely that this accident would have accord according to investigators.

As the train reached the bridge, the enormous weight caused the timbers to be crushed

sending the train hurtling 60 feet to the ice below. Although the ice was approximately 2 feet thick at the time, the engine, tender or coal car, baggage compartment and 2 first-class cars broke through leading the way plummeting to the canal below. On impact, the engine and tender car crashed through the ice and fully submerged into the frigid waters.

One of the first-class cars was overturned and partially submerged, resulting in the death of all but 4 of its passengers. Two gentlemen and two children ages 8 and 9 survived. One of the children was thrown out of the window as the train tumbled towards the water, landing on the ice. The boy's uncle was able to push his sister out of a window and exit the train himself. The other gentleman had no idea as to how he was able to escape the sinking train car. He remembers trying to escape through the window as the cold icy water was rushing in.



Quickly people appeared to assist in the rescue efforts. Dragging passengers through the windows of the submerging cars, speed was their main concern. This is very different from any of the rescues performed in current times where care is taken to prevent further injury whenever possible.

Once they had rescued the people who were easily accessible on the ice and in train cars that were not fully submerged the harder work began. Rescuers used axes to break through the ice and the heavy metal of the train trying anything to access the passengers and bring them to safety.

The rescue and the recovery continued into the night. Trains were dispatched to take the injured back to the train depot. The rescue from the icy waters was only a portion of the difficulty facing both the rescuers and victims. Large locomotive lamps were placed about to cast light for the rescue efforts as this area was down the steep embankment which posed another issue. Ladders attached to ropes were used to provide a way they brought the dead and wounded up the embankment.

Frantically people arrived at the train station hoping to hear news of their loved ones. Unfortunately, the answers did not come quickly. At the train station in Hamilton, a large baggage room was used as a temporary morgue. The corners had the difficult task of examining and identifying the 60 bodies which were laid out on the floor. They did their best to identify the men, women and children who had perished in the crash.



Tempers of loved ones were rising as they waited for news of their specific loved one. Rumours and the site of the crash made it clear that many had perished. All they cared about was knowing if their loved ones were alive or behind the doors of the baggage room. As tempers increased, they tried crashing through the strong doors of the depot. Upon hearing this Major Booked and Captain MacDonald's companies of volunteers marched to the depot and stood as a barrier between the room and the angry crowd.

The devastation of the tragedy affected many people. As a result, a day of mourning was declared in the City of Hamilton on March 16, 1857. Approximately 10,000 people attended a large public funeral for the victims of the crash.

THE TULIP

by Linda Lambert



I first noticed her
Amongst the wild grasses and weeds at the side of my garden shed
She was the lone bright spot trying to reach the sun
Quietly standing tall doing her own thing
While all around her were angry dark thistles and thorns
And strangling vines
I marveled at her grace, and her stamina
Over several days I returned to check on her
And each time the sight of her growing more regal and luminous in the spring sunshine
Towering over the tangled wildness
Brought a smile to my face

Until one day I found her trampled
Cut down along with all the grasses and weeds
Her beautifully shaped leaves that had cupped her stem
And helped to raise her to the sun
Were destroyed
But her head was intact...the petals still strong
Waiting for me to pick her up
It would have been easy to just walk past
After all, she had her day in the sun
But something made me pick her up
And put her in a vase
A few more days of life...
Of beauty...

One morning I saw that a lustrous petal had dropped
Then another the next day
In graceful surrender it seemed
But still I kept her on my window sill
Over the next few days something wondrous happened
Her remaining petals shriveled and grew limp but the colours intensified
And turned glorious
At the end it seemed as if she had wrapped her petals around herself
And act of protection?
Or simply self love
Her time was done but she was going out beautiful and defiant
And that's when I took her photo
To remind myself
That I'm beautiful even though
The years are showing
That I will stay strong even when I feel trampled upon
And I will wrap my arms around myself
I am loved....




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