

Grannie Annie



Vol. 2

**Selections from the 2007
Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration
A Writing Contest for *One-of-a-Kind* Kids**

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The Grannie Annie

A Family Story Celebration

The mission of The Grannie Annie is to celebrate family stories! Students in U.S. grades 4-8 and homeschool or international students ages 9-14 are invited to interview their family storykeepers and write a story based on their interview. They are encouraged to share their story with their family, school, community, and The Grannie Annie. Twenty-six stories from two age categories, chosen to represent the stories received this year, are included in this second annual volume of *Grannie Annie*.

The Grannie Annie mission—to discover, share, and celebrate family stories—springs from a belief in the transformative power of “story.” The simple and very personal family stories in this book can help us connect with people in today’s world and people from times past. In unexplainable ways, these stories foster feelings of unity with people whose lives may seem very different from our own. Quietly, surely, the world moves one step closer to peace.

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Selections from
The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration
An Annual Writing Contest for *One-of-a-Kind* Kids

Thumbprint Press

Portico Books

Saint Louis, Missouri

Because the stories in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 2* were captured from the oral tradition, they represent a unique blend of history and legend. No claims of accuracy, historical or otherwise, are guaranteed by the authors, sponsors, or publishers.

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In memory of
Catherine Randazzo Guirrerri,
who loved to tell her stories

and in honor of
Ann Guirrerri Cutler,
who is passionate about saving family stories

Also in memory of
Madison Paige McIntyre,
author of “Longest Attack of Hiccups,”
Grannie Annie, Vol. 1

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Listening is an act of love.

—*Dave Isay, StoryCorps*

A Word from Grannie Annie

Some Native American nations so valued their histories that they designated a tribal storykeeper. My mother filled that role in our family for decades, and before that, our family storykeeper was Mom's mother, my grandmother Randazzo.

Gramma Randazzo lived with us when I was a child. She didn't speak English well; however, at an early age I learned to say "Tell me a story about the Old Country" or "Tell me again the story about the baker's daughter who had dough under her fingernails." Then she would begin, in her broken English that made the stories even more fascinating to me. She told me stories about the olive groves on the family estate in Italy, about Grampa Randazzo's brothers and all their escapades, and about the family's early years as immigrants in Brooklyn. Mom carried on the tradition with her own repertoire of stories—about teaching in a one-room school, about blizzards and floods on the farm, and about rolling up the rug and inviting the neighbors over to dance.

I was fascinated by their tales and still am. I have written down many of their stories, saved them in keepsake books so they won't be lost. They're a treasure to read now, just as I had hoped, but I find I saved more than the stories themselves. Listening had been a way to be close to Gramma Randazzo. When I read Gramma's stories now, I remember sitting near her, hearing the stories from Gramma herself. When I read Mom's stories now, I remember aunts and uncles

and cousins gathering around the kitchen table to listen. By sharing their stories, Gramma and Mom created a sense of family, a sense of closeness and security, that will stay with me forever.

Ann Guirrerri Cutler
The Original Grannie Annie

Note to Parents and Educators

Grannie Annie, Vol. 2 is a miniature “history of the world” that reads like your grandparent’s journal. The twenty-six family stories, which span several centuries and four continents, bring to life historical events and unfamiliar cultures. These tales of family life, adventure, hardship, and triumph entertain and educate us. Even more than that, our stories connect us.

Again this year we received many stories set in difficult times or dangerous situations. Recognizing that it is through challenge that we grow, we have included stories of families separated by war or handicapped by poverty. We’ve included stories of children thrust into adult roles and of family members facing prejudice.

You may wish to read the stories in this volume before sharing them with your children. Previewing the stories would allow you to consider the responses you’ll give to the difficult questions your children are likely to ask as they read some stories—questions about poverty and justice, stereotypes and peace.

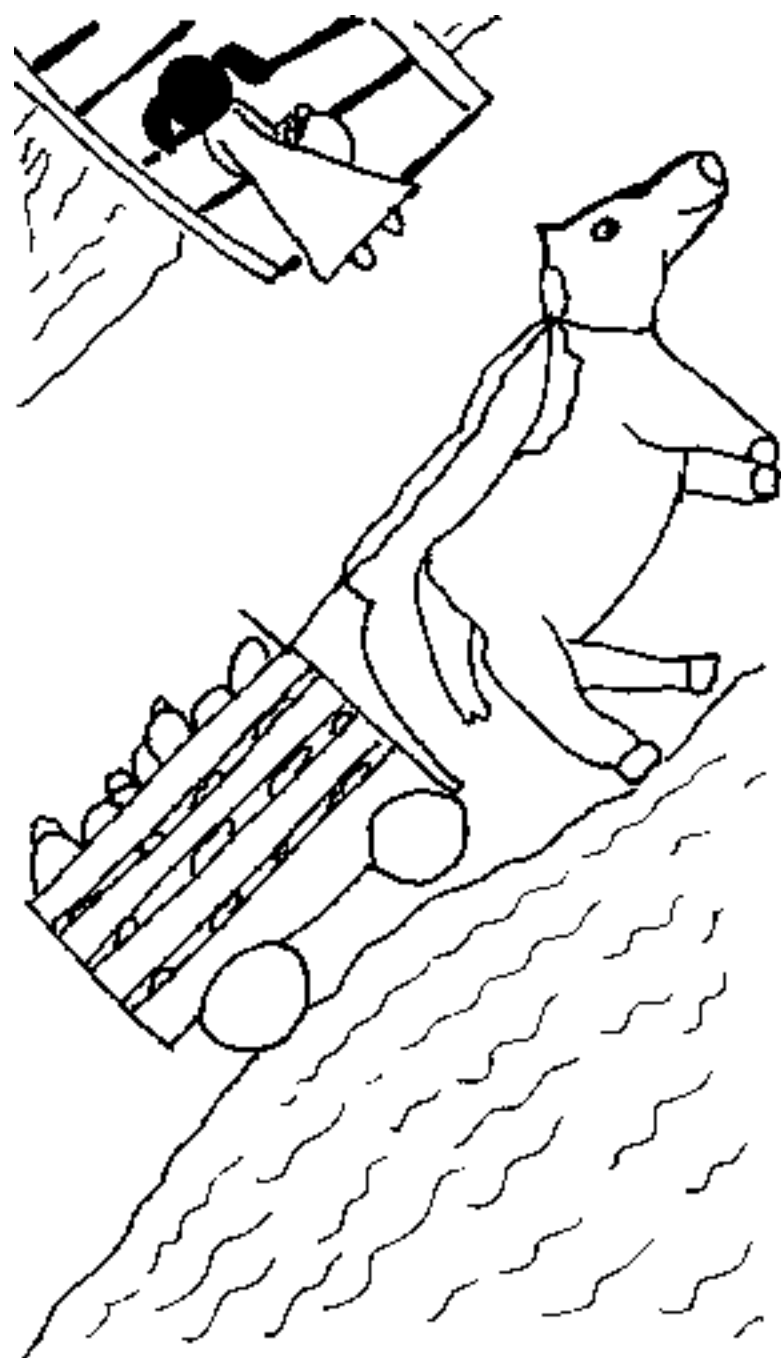
We believe you’ll find that the stories in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 2* have a special ability to inspire and motivate. We also believe that by learning from our past we can face the future with greater confidence and vision.

Thank you for becoming part of the Grannie Annie family. We hope you’ll return next year—and also invite others to join The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration.

Connie McIntyre and Fran Hamilton
Sponsors of The Grannie Annie

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Grannie Annie, Vol. 2



Ferdyl

“Grandma, will you tell me a story?” I ask.

“Sure. Which one?” she says in a warm and kind voice.

I reply quickly, “Ferdyl.”

“Okay,” she says. “I was living in a growing city, Chicago. I was just eight years old. My papa didn’t have a lot of money, so he had a lot of jobs. No one really had any money, so it had more value. An apple would only cost five cents.

“One of Papa’s jobs was a vendor. A vendor sold goods from his cart. Personally, that was my favorite job for Papa out of all his jobs. Because the one who pulled the cart was Ferdyl. Ferdyl was a beautiful horse. His name is Yiddish for ‘little horse.’ When my papa let me ride in the cart, I was very excited. My adrenaline shot up, and I was overcome with happiness. I was gonna be with my papa for the whole day!

“As I rode in the cart, Papa stayed on the side walking with Ferdyl. When we went faster, it got bumpier on the ridged streets. As we went, my papa yelled, ‘Happles, honions, and potatoes,’ in his thick Yiddish accent. He had to yell loudly because the streets were bustling and it was hard to hear over everything.

“When Papa heard someone calling to him for his produce, he would tell me to get out of the cart and walk

with him up the stairs. We would give the people their goods, get paid, and go on to the next customer.

“By the end of the day, I was so tired because we had walked those stairs all day. After we dropped off Ferdyl at the barn, my papa and I walked home. Together like two peas in a pod.”

This is my favorite story. It makes me feel like I’m a time traveler. My grandma passed along her history, and now I’m passing it along.

Samuel Kramer
Missouri

Holding Hands

My dad and his sister had a little adventure in Xing Hua, China, when he was a little over five years old. Back then, my dad's parents did not have a babysitter and both went to work. My dad practically was the babysitter. (Get it?)

My dad and his sister did a lot of things together. They would play and fight, but they were good friends. One of their favorite activities was going out to the main street to browse through the shops. Their favorite was a candy stand. The owner (they called him Mr. Candy) blew hot candy into action figures, animals, fruits, and all kinds of interesting shapes. It was just like balloon animals at the fair except it was smaller and you could eat it if you wanted. Most of the kids eventually did.

One day my dad was watching Mr. Candy blow a complicated figure, the monkey king, when he felt his right hand close around nothing! He searched everywhere he could—the crowd, the street, he even went back and searched their home. But he could not find his little sister. He went to his dad's workplace and told him the story. They first went to the police department, and then they posted a radio announcement. Back then the radios were wired to the reception tower.

The next day, which happened to be a Sunday, in the middle of breakfast there was a knock on the door.

They answered the door, and there was dad's sister! The man with her explained that he had found her outside the candy store standing alone. When he asked where her parents were, she said they were at work. He decided to take her home with him. It just so happened that his wife heard the radio announcement. He brought my dad's sister home the next day. After he explained what had happened, the man said, "Don't just *tell* her to hold *your* hand; hold *her* hand."

So after that, until she was old enough, my dad would always hold his sister's hand.

Benji Gu
Missouri

The Golden Chocolate Bar

My family is Jewish, and when I listen to my grandparents' stories, it helps me to learn more about my history and my heritage. My savta (Hebrew for *grandmother*) and her sister were born in the late 1930s in Romania. Sadly, they were subjected to one of the most tragic events in our world's history, the Holocaust. Their parents died at a concentration camp. Miraculously, my savta and aunt survived. The following story is one that my grandmother has told me and my three siblings many times.

My savta was eight years old, and her sister Blanca was twelve. It was the winter of 1947 in the month of February. My savta and her sister were survivors of the Holocaust. After enduring a difficult and frightening childhood during the war, they would finally get a chance for a new life. Arrangements were made for them to travel on a ship called the *S.S. Sterges*. The ship used to be a United States Navy troop transport vessel. It was heading from Europe to Canada. There were 2,000 Jewish orphans on this ship, and my savta and her sister happened to be the two youngest people aboard.

The seas were very rough, making my savta very seasick most of the long voyage. However, as the ship began to near the port of Halifax, Nova Scotia, in Canada, the seas became calmer. My savta started to feel

better, and she was finally able to go up to the dining area to eat. On the way, a kind porter stopped her and gave her a treat. It was her very first candy bar, a Hershey chocolate bar. Savta had never eaten anything like it. First, she carefully unwrapped the beautiful golden paper. Then she sniffed the wonderful, chocolaty aroma. She loved the gold paper wrapper so much that she saved it for a long time, even long after she finished the chocolate. Of course, she didn't consume the chocolate all at once. She ate just a small square each day and savored the special treat.

Once the ship docked, my savta and her sister were met by their cousins Sarah and Noa Heinish. The Heinishes had brought warm, cuddly coats and boots to keep the girls warm and dry on the ride to their home. About a year later, Sarah and Noa decided to adopt my savta and her sister.

Eventually, my savta became a teacher. One day she told her twenty-one third-grade students the story about the Hershey bar. When she went into her classroom the next day, there were twenty-one Hershey chocolate bars on her desk. My savta was so touched by this that she burst into tears. She always knew she loved her students very much, but this loving gesture warmed her heart everlastingly.

Ariela Halzel
Tennessee

John Howland

I will just put it right out there and say it: I am related to a klutz. No, I am not talking about my dad (though he is on my dad's side). I am talking about my great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather, John Howland. That is ten *greats*, which is a lot. But then I guess you would need that many *greats* to go back to the *Mayflower*. Yes, you read this right. My ancestor came over on the *Mayflower*, and then fell off the *Mayflower*.

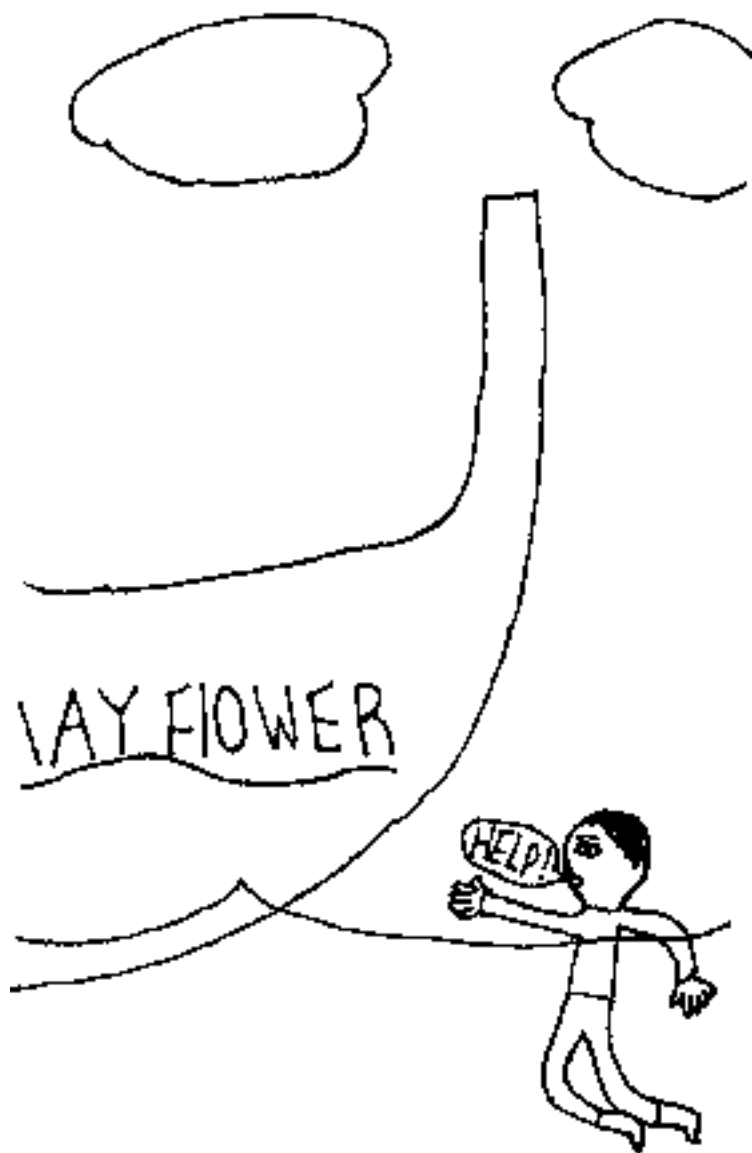
In 1620, as we all know, the *Mayflower* set forth to find a better home for its passengers. That home was America, a new and better horizon. It had the promise of freedom of religion, which is what had caught my tenth-great-grandfather's eye. There were many families aboard the *Mayflower*, and many couples, too. But John Howland went alone. He was not married, and he did not have any kids. Both his parents stayed in England, the place where John was born, and no friends went with him. He was alone. Kind of depressing, but true. The good news was that he could make friends on board the *Mayflower*, and that I'm sure he did, though I cannot really know. What I can tell you is that he made one friend for sure, Elizabeth Tilly, whom he later married on shore.

Halfway through the journey, something

happened. They were in the middle of the ocean when a storm hit. Waves were crashing and breaking on the deck where an unlucky John stood. One giant wave was all it took to wash the man overboard. But he was smart enough to reach out and grab the topsail halyards before going under water, so when he came back above the water's surface, he was still hanging on to the boat. That gave the crew enough time to get a rope into the water and drag him out of the frigid, dark water. I'm sure that Elizabeth was glad they were able to save him. In fact, I'm sure glad they were able to save him, because without him there would be no me! Now you can certainly see how I'm related to a klutz.

Now I'm not saying I'm ashamed of my tenth-great-grandfather. Oh no, on the contrary, I'm quite proud of John Howland and the rest of my heritage. He came to a new world for a better life, was married, built a house, raised kids, and lived to be the happy eighty-four-year-old he was when he died. And of course, I'm thrilled with the family he left to me. In conclusion, I guess I would just like to say that even though I don't exactly brag about him falling off the *Mayflower*, I'm proud of him and would like to thank him for my family; after all, I probably owe it to him.

Kaylie Hodge
Ohio



My Great-Grandpa Was Great

My great-grandpa was a great man. He is respected, appreciated, and admired to this day.

Great-Grandpa's name was Michael McQuillan. When he was eighteen or nineteen, he graduated from high school. He decided not to go to college. He stayed in town and took a job at the bank. He soon married my great-grandma. They soon had Jimmy, their first child. My great-grandpa was drafted in World War II when Great-Grandma was pregnant with their second child. While Great-Grandpa was in the war, my great-grandma had Mary, who grew up to be my grandma.

When Great-Grandpa returned, he continued to work at the bank until about the 1980s. That may not sound like a very good story, but the part you do not know is why my great-grandpa was such a great guy.

When Great-Grandpa worked at the bank during the Great Depression, life was hard for people. Everyone needed money, but no one had it. Many times the poorest people would walk in the front door of the bank. Some people may have looked at them and frowned, but my great-grandpa would smile and say hello. They would need a loan desperately; some bankers would never give them a chance. The bankers thought they would never be able to pay back the loan. It would be too big of a risk for the bank and their jobs.

My great-grandpa was the one to take that risk. He never judged anyone by his or her looks. He gave everyone an equal chance.

My grandma Mary told me that people today walk up to her and tell her how grateful they were and are that her dad was in their lives and gave them that loan during the Depression. They tell her if not for that loan they would not have made it through. It makes my great-grandma and my grandma and the whole McQuillan family happy that Great-Grandpa was able to help so many families.

Today Great-Grandpa is where he belongs, in heaven. He packed his bags and left last June. I know what he would do if he saw someone walking down the street. He'd smile and say hi in his friendly voice. He never judged anyone.

Kimberly Wood
Nebraska

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Honorable Mention Stories

- The Blitz—A World War II Story
Dylan Teachey, Pennsylvania
- The Broken Ice
Alex Purvey, New Jersey
- The Coon and the Hound
Kendall Pemberton, Ohio
- Frozen Cast
Courtney C. Chervenak, Ohio
- Grandpa's All-Time High
Sarah Vektorino, Ohio
- The Great Miracle
Michayla DeMaree, Idaho
- Lost Hikers
Zoë Schaeffer, Missouri
- More Guts than a Fishing Worm
Katie Vektorino, Ohio
- The Singing Faucet
Davide Johnson, Pennsylvania
- Some Call It Luck
Steven Orgill, Missouri
- Tragedy Strikes
Jenna-Marie Tracy, New Jersey
- Watch Out for That Moose!
Lauren Elizabeth Deisley, Nebraska

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- p. 23 Mary K. Snapp, Missouri
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- p. 48 Andrea Stiffelman, Missouri
- p. 51 Madi Schuldt, Missouri
- p. 56 Erica Gramke, Missouri
- p. 63 Tori Hughes, Missouri
- p. 73 Samantha Werdel, Missouri

Invitation to Participate

Please join us for the 2008 Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration. The submission deadline for stories and art for *Grannie Annie, Vol. 3* is February 14, 2008. Complete details, including the required entry form, are available at www.TheGrannieAnnie.org.

Praise for The Grannie Annie

Perhaps the greatest value of the Grannie Annie stories is something not written in the book. When a child interviews an older relative, the child gets to know a person he or she may have taken for granted. The relative gets to tell a story that might have been lost. A bond is created or strengthened. A story is recorded for posterity. New memories are woven, and—just maybe—a writer is born.

Lulu Delacre
Author/Illustrator of *Salsa Stories*

When kids learn details about what life was like decades ago, the past comes alive for them. History becomes real—and they want to know more! The Grannie Annie provides an opportunity for kids to be inspired by their own family's history—and to share it with the world.

Florrie Binford Kichler
Patria Press, www.PatriaPress.com

This book should be on the bookshelves in all elementary and junior high schools. . . .

The Reading Tub™
www.TheReadingTub.com

The Grannie Annie offers students real writing in a real setting . . . [and] offers readers true stories that expose the human heart and create space for conversation about what truly matters in life.

Bonnie M. Davis, Ph.D.
Author of *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You: Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies*, www.A4Achievement.net

Thanks for offering The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration. My daughter had so much fun talking to her grandmother about “the old days.”

Susan Pennington, Parent and English Teacher
St. Louis, Missouri

The Grannie Annie proved to be a valuable experience for the students in my school. The children’s interviews with their parents or grandparents sparked some good conversation. When the children shared the stories, some students who are normally quiet or reserved got to shine because of something really neat that they wrote about.

Dianne Elson, Teacher
Carmel, Indiana

Folks coming together and getting to know one another can bring us all closer to a peaceful world. Sharing family stories helps people see what they have in common—and helps them discover their roots as well. Without a doubt, The Grannie Annie is a great idea.

Michael Terrien, President
Play for Peace

Taking time away from your technology-filled life to join in The Grannie Annie is like trading fast food for Sunday dinner at Grandma’s.

Debra K. Shatoff, Ed.D.
Family Therapist and Author of *In-Home Child Care: A Step-by-Step Guide to Quality, Affordable Care*

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The Grannie Annie

A Family Story Celebration

Young People Learning and Sharing Family Stories

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