

Grannie Annie



Vol. 3
Selections from
The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration
An Annual Writing Contest for *One-of-a-Kind* Kids

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The Grannie Annie *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 third 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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Vol. 3

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. 3* 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 Ann Guirrerri Cutler,
who was passionate about saving family stories
1944–2007

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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.

April 2006
Ann Guirrerri Cutler
The Original Grannie Annie

Note to Parents and Educators

Grannie Annie, Vol. 3 dips into the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and dives headlong into the mid-twentieth century. It hopscotches between Asia, Europe, and both Americas, landing most frequently on the coasts and plains of North America. In short, the variety of times and places visited in the twenty-six stories of this year's volume, in addition to the wide range of topics, is sure to keep you turning the pages.

Recognizing that your appreciation of the stories would be enhanced given some historic and geographic context, we have added a new feature to this volume of *Grannie Annie*. The location and year each story takes place are noted below its title. In cases where the exact year is not known, the notation of "c." (circa) indicates that the year given is approximate.

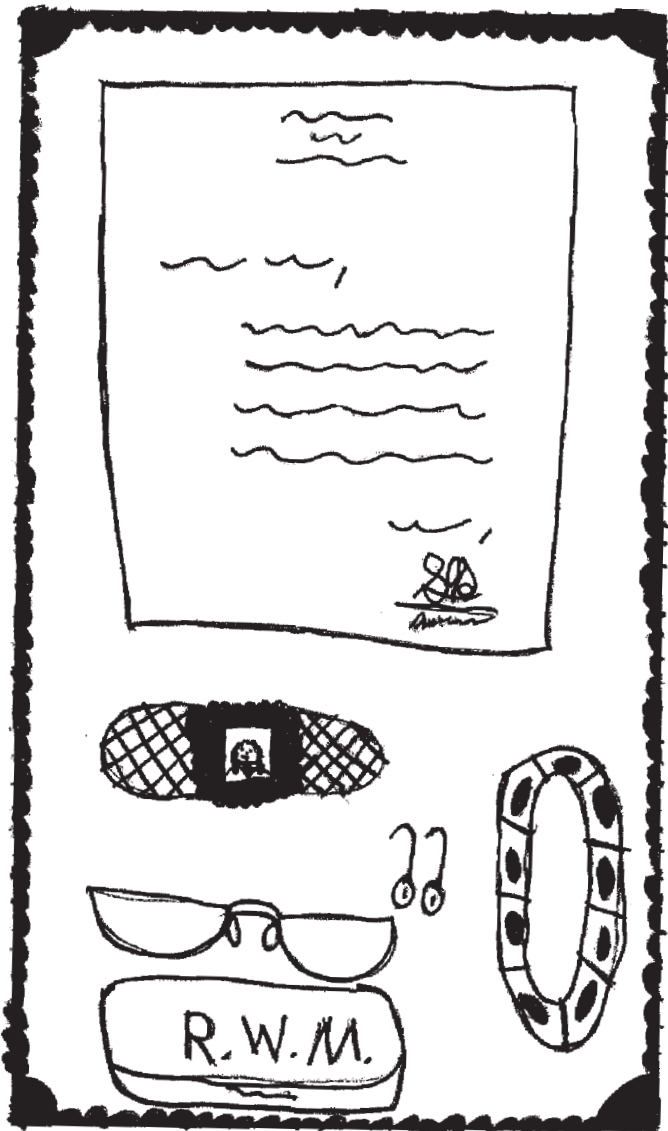
It appears that those events in a family's history that give rise to strong emotion are most likely to be remembered and passed on. The stories published this year include stories of excitement, surprise, and pride. They also include stories of fear, sorrow, and regret. Adults and children make errors in judgment. Governments ask more of their citizens than seems fair or even possible. Disease does the same. Previewing the stories before sharing them with your children may help you guide the discussions that are sure to follow.

We are pleased you have joined 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. 3



Treasures from the Past

1672–present
Middletown, Connecticut, USA

My grandfather died last summer. He left us a box full of old letters, jewelry, and other stuff. I knew there was old stuff in it, but I didn't know it was that old. But I am a history geek. So the moment I saw that box, I knew I was going to need to look at it. I was right; my need for history got the better of me. I just had to look at it. And that is probably the best thing I have ever done without meaning to. Some of the documents are actually pretty old, from about the 1850s.

Inside a small box were several pieces of jewelry. My favorite, and the most unusual, is a bracelet that appears to be made out of human hair. It is very old—from my research, dating from the time of the Civil War. The band is woven from hair, and there is a picture of a young girl with her hair in curls and wearing a cameo brooch. I wonder who she is.

There are five very old pairs of eyeglasses in their cases. They do not look like the eyeglasses you would see today. Several pairs just pinch onto your nose—they don't have earpieces!

Some of the older documents refer to a man named Governor Benjamin Miller. Sounds like a pretty fancy title, huh? Well, it is. Benjamin Miller was born July 20, 1672, in Middletown, Connecticut. He was my distant relative. He and his family moved to Middlefield, Connecticut, in 1701. They were one of the first three settler families. People called him *governor* even though

he wasn't actually the governor; he just seemed very important. If you saw him, you would say that he was an important man. He once got himself into a little bit of trouble. One Sunday he noticed some of his hogs were missing. Since the land was underdeveloped, he thought a bear or wolf was sneaking into the hog pen at night for a midnight snack. That night he sat up with his gun and shot the bear when it came looking for seconds. Now in those days it was against the law to kill anything on the Sabbath Day, or Sunday. Later he was arrested, taken before a magistrate, and fined for disrespecting the Sabbath Day. I'm pretty glad we don't have that rule today. Poor Benjamin!

As you can see, our family has a lot of history. It is not special or anything, but somehow when you think of people from way back then, the 1700s and 1800s, their ordinary lives seem so special to us now.

Samantha J. Lopez
Texas

Stuck on the Farm

1930s
Norwalk, Ohio, USA

I'm here to tell you about my grandma's childhood.

My grandma grew up on a dairy and grain farm near Norwalk, Ohio, in the 1930s. Both her parents and grandparents were also born in Norwalk, Ohio. She was the third of ten children; one died of pneumonia when less than one year old.

My grandma had a wood stove they used for heat and cooking. She had no running water, so she had to haul the water from outside. Her family did not have a refrigerator, so they didn't keep a lot of food on hand. They stored fruits and vegetables in the cellar and got their milk and eggs from their animals. They had no radio, television, or newspaper, so they got their news from town.

My grandma had to work on their farm before and after school shoveling manure, putting fresh bedding down for the cows, and feeding the cows. She also had to help plant and harvest the crops. In fact, her father made her quit school in the tenth grade and get a job to help support her family.

She liked going to school a lot, and math was her favorite subject. In her school the teacher taught two grades together. My grandma really wanted to finish school, but her father wouldn't let her.

She did not have much playtime or toys, but she liked playing school with her sisters, making shelves out

of cereal boxes and “food to sell” with mud pies. Her grandma would give her pennies to spend at the general store. Her uncle had a red convertible car with a rumble seat in the back. He would take her sisters for rides and to her grandma’s house. Her father wouldn’t let her drive a car, just a tractor.

Christmas at my grandma’s house was special. Even though they did not have a Christmas tree or decorations, they did celebrate Christmas and always got one big present. Her mom and dad would decorate the dining room table with lit candles, small gifts of fruit, nuts, and candy, and a larger present. My grandma remembers her favorite present as being a small cedar chest filled with sewing supplies, because she loved to sew. Her parents made the family attend church services on Christmas Eve and Day. Her parents were very religious.

When my grandma was in the seventh grade, the whole family came down with scarlet fever. (Scarlet fever was a deadly disease.) They had to be quarantined in their house for about two months. They had big signs on the doors warning people not to enter. They had to pass notes through the door to let family and friends know what they needed, like groceries. Neighbors or family had to take care of the farm when they were sick.

I could never live in my grandma’s shoes.

Jacob Bores
Ohio

Pigeon Racing

c. 1938
Toledo, Ohio, USA

When my grandpa was a kid, he had many pets. One kind of pet he had was pigeons. His friends also had pigeons, so they came up with a game to use them in. That game was pigeon racing. They would all give their pigeons to someone on a freight train. This person would be anyone they knew, such as the engineer, fireman, or conductor. When the train had traveled between 60 and 250 miles, the pigeons would be let go. When the pigeons were released, they would circle around in the sky a few times and then begin their journey home. Usually the pigeons would fly straight home, but sometimes they would stop to eat or rest. The pigeons might travel about ten miles an hour, so the trip would take at least six hours, not including the time the train would take to get to the release point.

Each pigeon would usually return to where it lived or in some cases to where it had been born. If the pigeon had been captured from the wild instead of raised, it might return to the wild. To keep from losing pigeons, the boys would put their name and address in the birds' ankle bracelets. Then if anyone found a lost pigeon, they would know how to return it.

The boys would figure a rough time for the pigeons' return. At that time they would all go outside

and wait for their birds. It was exciting for them to watch their birds win, even though there wouldn't be a prize.

Matthew Dick
Ohio



Right-Side Up

c. 1968

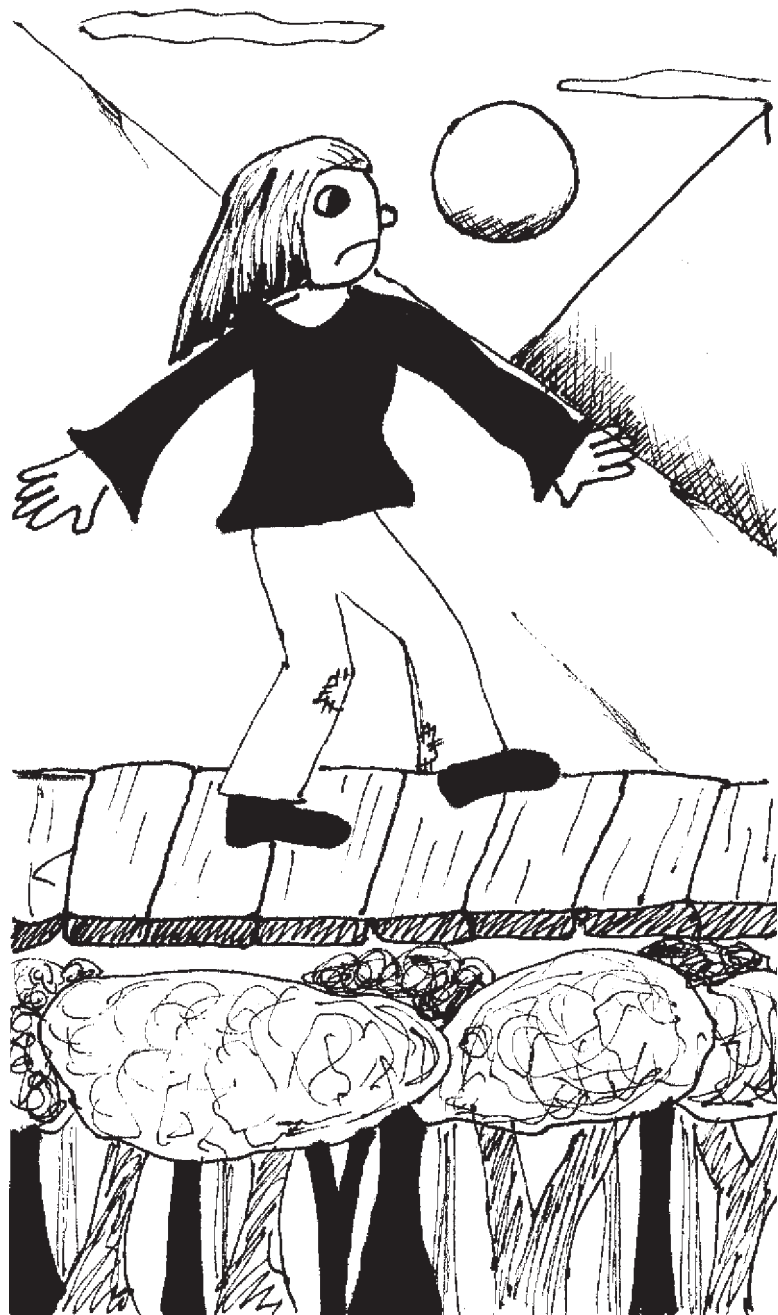
Guangxi Province, China

“This is an exciting story, Lucy. Good job!” my mom encouraged as she put down the last page of my story about a girl going on a dangerous and magical quest. To my surprise, my mom smiled and said, “When I was a young girl, I experienced adventures just as terrifying and exciting as the one you wrote about.”

I laughed and said, “Yeah right, Mom.”

“Well, let me tell you a story,” she began. “I was born and raised in a big city in China, but when I was a teenager, the government forced many people to go work in the countryside, and I was one of them. Going to the countryside meant that I would stop going to school and help build roads in faraway villages.

“One day several friends and I had to travel on mountain roads and head toward a village, because that was the place we were going to build roads. The mountain was so steep! We were so high I could only see the tiptop of the trees, and I had no idea how high I was because I couldn’t see the ground. We climbed and climbed until my legs started to hurt. My feet grew heavy, as if two big stones were stuck to my feet. I kicked at a brick, and it flew into a yellow bush. Almost every plant on the mountain was yellow because of the intense heat. I started to think about all the good stuff I ate in the city and then remembered that from now on I would have only vegetables and rice to eat, and hardly ever any meat.



“Suddenly we reached a bridge we would have to cross to get to the other side. But it was hardly a bridge at all! It didn’t even have a rail to hold on to. It was just a narrow log. And if you stepped onto it, there was no turning back because the log was so narrow that you couldn’t turn around. If you tried to step backward, you might fall down into the endless trees.

“None of us dared to cross the log. Finally I decided that we had to cross the bridge before the sun set because there were wolves in the mountains, and they were always hungry for human flesh. As I took a step forward, I looked down, and my knees instantly went weak and turned into pudding. I kept on telling myself to keep going. The only way to not look down was to look forward. When I finally got to the end of the bridge, I fell down on my butt because my knees were so weak. My friends followed me, and we all made it across the bridge. Looking back at the log, I was so glad that I stayed right-side up.”

My mom had finished the story, but I was still amazed. I couldn’t believe these were her real life experiences. “Wow, Mom, I should write stories about you!” I exclaimed.

Lucille Man
California

Growing Up German, Part II

Living Post-World War II

c. 1947
Germany

My *oma** was born in Kunau, Sudetenland, on May 18, 1934. She has three sisters. All three are still alive today. When World War II was over, Czechoslovakia took over Sudetenland and ordered all the Germans to leave at once. Each person was allowed to carry only forty pounds of “stuff.” The Germans were loaded onto boxcars. Each boxcar held fifty people. They did not know where they were going.

Their first stop was Augsburg, Germany. Some people got off there to stay. Oma’s family was taken on to Memmingen. There they got off the train with two hundred other people and stayed in a very large building like our gymnasiums today. The *bergermeister*** of each of the surrounding villages told the villagers to “make room” for fifty or more people from the trains to live in their village.

After a few days, Oma’s family was sent to Westerheim to live in their assigned house. Oma’s family was given two bedrooms and their own kitchen for the six of them to live in. In the bedrooms there were only bed frames with sacks filled with straw to lie on. In the kitchen there were only some chairs and one table. They used crates to store their kitchen items and used the

* *oma* = grandmother

** *bergermeister* = mayor

wood-burning stove to cook. Everyone in the house shared the bathroom.

Oma and her family earned their stay by going from house to house and village to village to beg for food. This wasn't easy. No one wanted to help them or give them anything to eat. The villagers were very unkind to the new families. They didn't want the new families to live among them. The farmers would make Oma stand at the edge of the wheat field and wait all day until the farmer was done reaping the wheat. Then the farmer would let Oma find what little was left to glean. The weekly ration of food for Oma's family was very small. There wasn't enough food to last all week for all of them.

School was hard for Oma and her sisters because the students didn't like the new families either and made it very hard for Oma to make friends. The kids were mean just like the adults.

Oma's family and other families were not welcome in a country that they were made to live in. The villagers were told that they had no choice but to make room for the "German immigrants." There were no choices on either side about the post-war way of life. Oma had to give up her childhood house and possessions and move to a strange place among people that didn't want her family there and wouldn't do anything to help them.

This sure makes me appreciate how rich my life is now in Indiana, and all the freedoms and privileges that we have in America!

Sean Millard
Indiana

Wilhelmina's Great Escape

c. 1943, 1990
The Netherlands; USA

World War II was a horrible, yet victorious, time in our history. During that time our soldiers fought against the Axis powers. In the Netherlands, Queen Wilhelmina was threatened by the Nazi takeover and had to leave her country under harsh conditions. A mission to save her from the Nazis was organized, and she was flown from her home to safety. John Richard Evans, my grandpa, was on that plane.

Queen Wilhelmina stood for peace and justice. When the Nazis came to the Netherlands, she and her family had to escape as fast as they could so they would not be killed or imprisoned. The plane flew her out of the Netherlands while the Nazis tried to shoot it down. They were unsuccessful.

My grandpa was a civilian pilot during World War II. On his uniform, he had half a wing, which stood for being a civilian. At first when he was asked to fly an important person from the Netherlands, he was not aware that it would be Queen Wilhelmina, but he was honored and took the offer right away. Once he and his crewmembers arrived, the queen entered the Lockheed Key Constellation, the plane, and thanked them for risking their lives to help keep her safe.

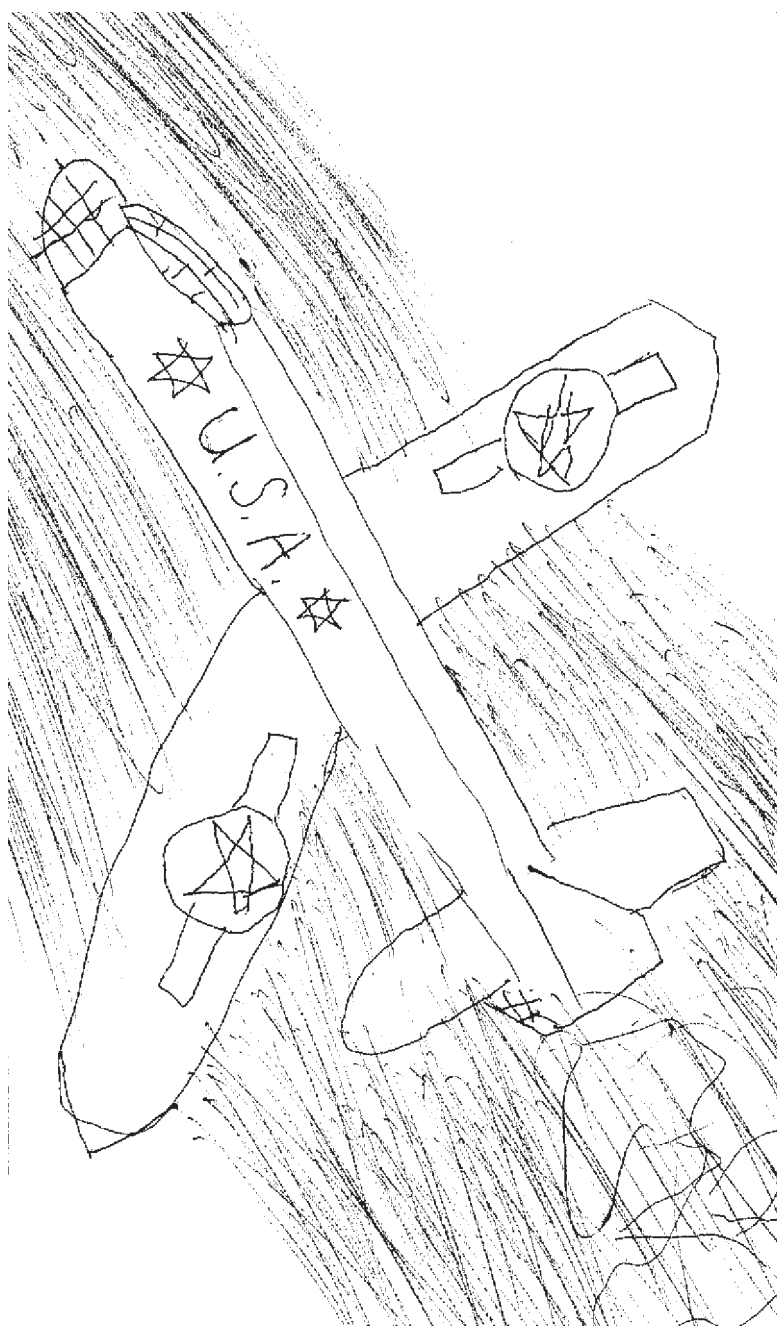
After this heroic deed, the crewmembers were each presented with a golden ring, the Queen's ring. This ring was very special, especially to my grandfather. It had a *W* with a queen's crown on the top of it. The *W*

stood for *Wilhelmina*. My grandfather wore the ring while he flew people across the world. That ring stayed on his finger. He always was a superstitious man and had two or three things he always carried with him. One of these was a silver dollar that his mother had given him when he was a young boy. He would wrap it up in a handkerchief and would keep it in his left pants pocket. Then he always wore that significant ring on his finger. He loved that ring; it reminded him of something he did not only for his country but also for Queen Wilhelmina.

Shortly before Grandpa died in 1990, the ring accidentally fell off his finger and could not be found. My mom had been thinking of burying my grandpa in his pilot uniform, with his silver dollar and the ring, but she could not find the ring. However, a few weeks after the funeral, my mom and my uncle were outside the house talking about the loss of the ring. When my mom looked down at our unpaved driveway, something caught her eye.

My mom went over to it, and as she examined it, she realized it was something very special. She called my uncle over, and they both thought the same thought: The ring was not lost forever. It had fallen onto our driveway for our family to find and keep as a memento of Grandpa's bravery. It goes to show that you never know how history will touch you or how you will touch history. History touched my grandpa.

Brigid C. Rosendale
New Jersey



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Illustrators

- p.14 Samantha J. Lopez, Texas
- p. 21 Scott Gmoser, Missouri
- p. 27 Cameo Biggerstaff, Missouri
- p. 35 Meira Cassorla, Missouri
- p. 43 Sadija Lilic, Missouri
- p. 48 Hanh Bui, Missouri
- p. 52 Petra Petermann, Missouri
- p. 57 Alyson Yawitz, Missouri
- p. 69 Scout Olivia Sale, Missouri
- p. 75 Kyle Rogers, Texas

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Honorable Mention Stories

The Amazing Day

AnnaLisa Glenn, Nebraska

A Dangerous Ride

William Keating, Missouri

The Devastating Barn Fire

Lindsay Marie Lammers, Nebraska

The Fire

Kaitlyn Louk, Iowa

Frank, the Crazy Rooster

Stella Bernstein, Maryland

Frozen Fear

Kimberly Wood, Nebraska

The Funeral

Alexander Lee Coulson, Idaho

A Man from the 1800s

Bryce Wood, Nebraska

Mouse Attack

Chelsea Trombley, Arkansas

The Storm

Edward Graff, Nebraska

Turf

Sarah Reddy, Ohio

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Invitation to Participate

Please join us for the 2008/2009 Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration. The submission deadline for *Grannie Annie, Vol. 4* is February 14, 2009. Complete details, including the required entry form, are available at www.TheGrannieAnnie.org.

Praise for The Grannie Annie

Grannie Annie is a beautiful collection of stories—educational, funny, exciting, touching. The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration reminds us that everyone is a storyteller, and who better to share our stories with than our children? When youngsters learn their family stories, they get a sense of how they themselves fit into history, they become more closely bound to older relatives, and they are more likely to recognize their ancestors as three-dimensional people who will amaze and delight them.

Linda Austin

Author of *Cherry Blossoms in Twilight: Memories of a Japanese Girl*

Our son's *oma* is overwhelmed that her "story" is in print in *Grannie Annie*. She is thankful for the opportunity to tell it! Every family member and family friend has a signed copy. I know many will be ordering future volumes—they have enjoyed all the stories, just as we have.

Karie Millard, Parent
Indianapolis, Indiana

Thank you for starting such a heart-warming project where *all* the kids are winners, whether their stories are published or not. Each student who participates in this worthy event learns a wonderful family story and becomes better connected with family members, society, and history.

G-g Metzger, Teacher
Dallas, Texas

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

The Reading Tub™
www.TheReadingTub.com

We had an incredible time working on [our daughter's *Grannie Annie*] story. I had never told Amy about her ancestors. She was thrilled to learn that they were farmers, since she dreams of being a farmer when she grows up. It was a great way for Amy to learn about the rich heritage from which she comes—and to get more writing experience to boot. . . . Thank you so much for providing this one-of-a-kind learning experience.

Ruth Whitaker, Parent
Dallas, Texas

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

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

The Grannie Annie offers students real writing in a real setting. Teachers and parents, if you want to motivate students to love writing, ask them to write for The Grannie Annie. Students not only write their stories, they write their families into history—with a payoff of possible publication.

The Grannie Annie offers readers true stories that expose the human heart and create space for conversation about what truly matters in life. So give yourself a gift: Sit down with a copy of *Grannie Annie* and share these stories with your family.

Bonnie M. Davis, Ph.D.

Author of *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You:*

Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies, www.A4Achievement.net

The Grannie Annie proved to be a valuable experience for the students in my school. . . . 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

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 Family Story Celebration

Young People Learning and Sharing Family Stories

Grannie Annie is a beautiful collection of stories—educational, funny, exciting, touching. The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration reminds us that everyone is a storyteller, and who better to share our stories with than our children? When youngsters learn their family stories, they get a sense of how they themselves fit into history, they become more closely bound to older relatives, and they are more likely to recognize their ancestors as three-dimensional people who will amaze and delight them.

Linda Austin, Author of *Cherry Blossoms in Twilight: Memories of a Japanese Girl*

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Florrie Binford Kichler, Patria Press

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Karie Millard, Parent

