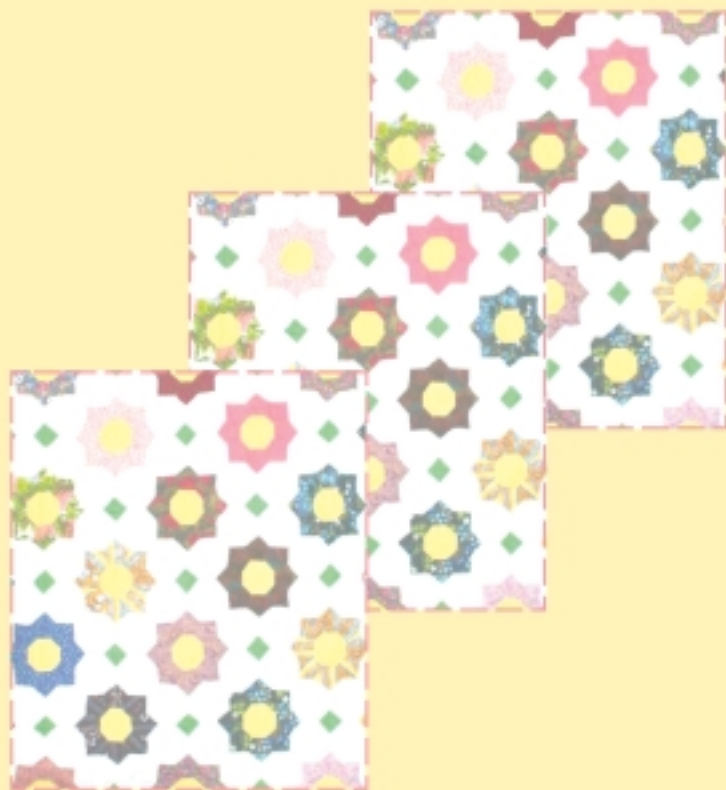


Grannie Annie



Vol. I

Selections from the 2006

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 were invited to interview their family storykeepers and write a story based on their interview. They were encouraged to share their story with their family, school, community, and The Grannie Annie. Twelve stories from each of two submission categories, chosen to represent the stories received this year, are included in this first annual edition 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 seem very different from our own. Suddenly, gently, the world moves one step closer to peace.

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Grannie Annie

Vol. I

Selections from the 2006
Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration
A Writing Contest for *One-of-a-Kind* Kids

Thumbprint Press

Portico Books

Saint Louis, Missouri

Listening is an act of love.

—*Dave Isay, StoryCorps*

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

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

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“A WORD FROM GRANNIE ANNIE”]

A Word from Grannie Annie

Some Native American nations so valued their histories that they designated a tribal storykeeper. My mother has filled that role in our family for decades, and before that, our family storykeeper was my mother'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. My mother has 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 my mother's stories now, I remember aunts and

uncles and cousins gathering around the kitchen table to listen. When Gramma and my mother shared their stories, they 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

The stories in *Grannie Annie, Vol. I* bring history to life, giving us vivid personal accounts of life in “the good old days.” The stories include humor, adventure, hardship, and triumph. They entertain us, teach us, and help define our identity.

The experiences that build our courage and our character, however, are often those experiences that provide our greatest challenges. Recognizing this reality, we have included stories of family members in conflict and stories in which the extreme circumstances of war or oppression necessitated difficult choices.

Please read the *Grannie Annie* stories yourself before sharing them with your children. Decide which stories you will share now and which, if any, would better be left for later. Think about how you will answer the challenging questions children are sure to ask after reading some of these stories—questions about right and wrong, justice and injustice, peace and violence.

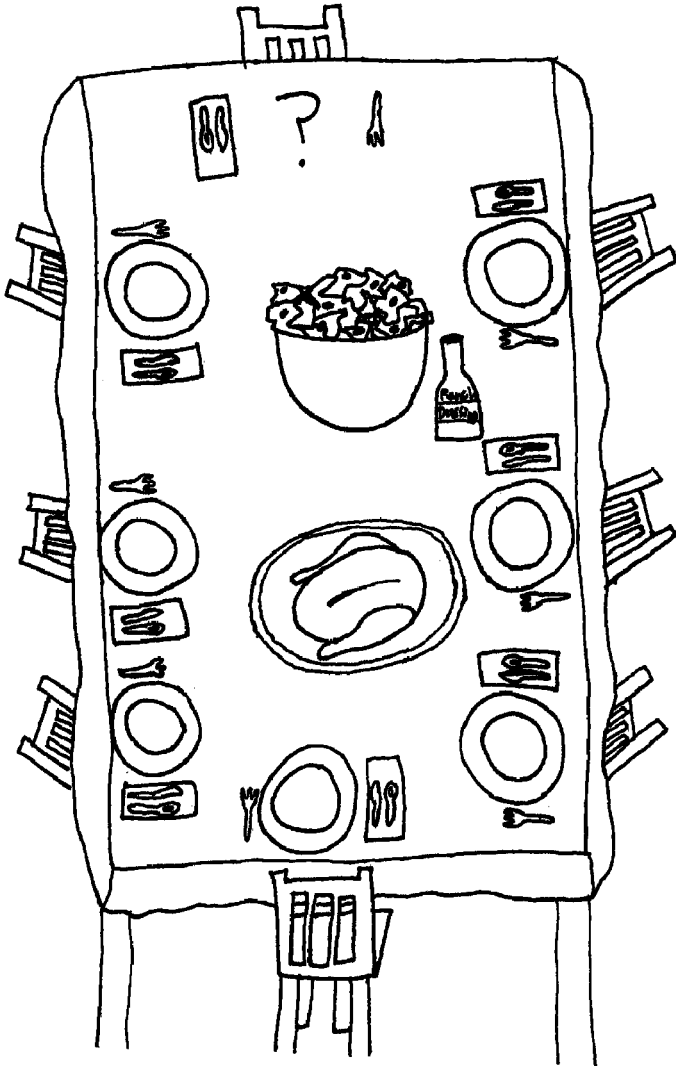
We believe that sharing these remarkable stories will help all of us to understand ourselves, and others, a little bit better. We believe that facing the reality of our past will help us to join hands and walk together into a more peaceful world, into the future that will create the next generation’s stories from the past.

Thank you for becoming an important part of this adventure. We hope you’ll join us again next year for The Grannie Annie—A Family Story Celebration.

Connie McIntyre and Fran Hamilton
Sponsors of The Grannie Annie

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Grannie Annie, Vol. I



The Family Reunion and the Missing Plate

It was dinnertime at Grandma and Grandpa Doby's farm. It was a feast, but it wasn't Thanksgiving—no special occasion. It was a beautiful summer day. They had chicken, mashed potatoes, gravy, green salad, stuffed celery, corn, and fruit salad. They sat at the table. Grandma passed the food around to Grandpa and their two girls. Hungrily Grandpa told them, "Looks larrupin'.* I'm as hungry as a bear." They were having Sunday dinner together.

As soon as Grandpa picked up his fork, they heard a car drive up. Grandma opened the door, and in came Aunt Maud. "Come in, come in! You're just in time," Grandpa exclaimed. Then in came Aunt Dessie, and Grandma called, "No problem at all." Then in came Aunt Clara, friends, and family.

Grandpa always sat in the doorway to get some breeze. There was very little room in the kitchen behind his chair. So he got up and scooted his chair in so people could get through. But he thought to himself, *That was a mistake*, because his plate disappeared right before his eyes! He thought to himself again, while putting his fork down, *Well, there isn't much use for this anymore.*

*larrupin' = delicious

Grandma tried to serve the kids cups of water, but Aunt Dessie told her, “We’ll take care of ourselves.” Then everyone started crowding around the sink and cupboard. They all passed drinks around, but even the parents couldn’t get enough. Grandpa told everyone, “The Texas water was so bad, it not only ate up natural teeth, it ate up dentures, too.”

Kids were as thirsty as they were hungry—and they were pretty hungry! There were lots of kids there. Grandma had enough food for four, not twenty-four! They still hadn’t figured out who took Grandpa’s plate.

Aunt Dessie helped Grandma set out more dishes and made a big vegetable salad. Grandma pressure-cooked sweet potatoes. It didn’t take five minutes. The girls tried to help, but Aunt Dessie told them that they best stay sitting at the table—that way they wouldn’t get trampled. Grandma added some canned fruit to the table and made vegetable broth stew, potatoes, gravy, and rolls. She filled everyone’s plate. Grandpa didn’t eat but sure enjoyed his friends and family.

There was a lot of laughter. No one had to wonder if they were having a good time. Everyone tried to outtalk each other. Everyone was extra happy!

The visitors announced their thank-yous. They told them, “Hate to eat and run!” They did their hugs and more good-byes outside. They took pictures outside.

Leaving was hard. People waved all the way to the fence. It wasn’t Thanksgiving, but it felt like it. Grandma was definitely proud to be part of the Doby family! It wasn’t Grandma’s best meal, but it was most

enjoyed. They never found out who ate Grandpa's plate or when he ate, but they did know that he enjoyed his family, and that was enough!

Sara Michelle Zachary
Missouri

My Grandfather

My grandfather Emil Andrew Dubas was born to Frank and Frances Dubas in 1931. Emil had eight brothers and four sisters. He had so many brothers and sisters that they had to have three or four children in a bed, and they didn't have food for all.

My grandfather lived on a 160-acre farm. The farm was seventeen miles from Fullerton, Nebraska.

My grandfather ate a lot of chickens growing up. They raised chickens at the farm. One night some people went to my grandfather's house and stole most of my great-grandmother's chickens. When she realized that the chickens were stolen, she cried.

My grandfather also ate hogs growing up. They canned the meat. They had no freezer back then.

When my grandfather was four years old, he got kicked in the head by a horse. He was sitting in the horse's shade, the dog nipped the horse, and the horse kicked. His brothers Leo and Steve raced back to the house with him. My grandfather didn't see a doctor.

When my grandfather was little, he had chores like milking the cow. He had to chop sunflowers and cockleburs in the field. He thought the worst thing was cleaning the chicken coop. For other chores he had horses instead of tractors.

When my grandfather was eight years old, his

whole family survived scarlet fever. The doctor quarantined the house. No one could go in or out besides the doctor.

My grandfather spoke Polish until he started school. After he learned some English, he didn't want to speak any more Polish. Talking Polish made him feel different.

My grandfather had to walk one and a half miles to school. The government would give food to the school for the students to eat. They gave them fruit and peanut butter. They also gave them (my grandfather's favorite) pork and beans. All that my grandfather had to bring was two pieces of bread for a peanut butter sandwich.

My grandfather was out of school when he was in the eighth grade—he was twelve years old. He was so smart at math. He took his exam to get out of school, and he got a 100 on it.

The family didn't go to church very often. The children had to take turns going because the car was way too small. The gas cost too much, and they lived seventeen miles away from church, so they didn't always go.

My grandfather is still alive. He is seventy-four and is cheerful talking about when he was growing up.

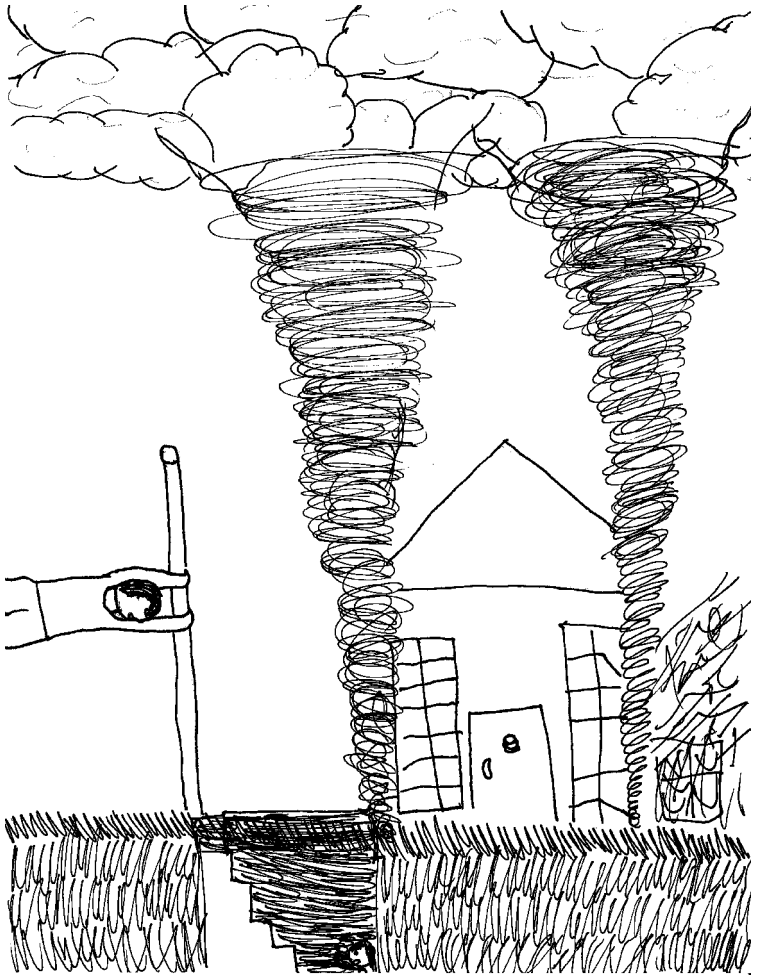
Kelly Steenson
Nebraska

The Tornado

A hot, humid day in June of 1972 started out to be normal, as normal is on a farm with five kids. But around 12:30 Grandpa turned on the television like always to catch the news. The TV said that there were two tornadoes on the ground and one more in the clouds forming. They all heard Grandpa yell, “Kids, get to the cellar!” But what he really meant was to get into the potato cellar about twenty feet from the house.

The TV beeped again and told people in the vicinity of Pibel Lake, where they lived, to take cover. All three tornadoes were down and would be there within minutes. Grandpa grabbed the blankets and followed the kids to the cellar door. Grandpa grabbed a rope that held the cellar door shut and tied it around his waist. This was to keep Grandpa from blowing out of the cellar. As soon as Grandpa shut the cellar door, the tornado hit.

The noise sounded like a train right on top of them. Grandpa was holding the door shut with all his might when the door flew open and Grandpa was tossed into the front yard. Grandma and the kids were far enough into the cellar that it didn’t suck them out. Grandpa reached out and grabbed the light pole that stood in the front yard. Grandpa heard something that sounded like a horse. As he looked up, he saw the family



horse, Petunia, flying through the air.

Within seconds Petunia was out of sight. The roof of the chicken coop out back was being tossed around and torn apart. Several boards off the chicken coop hit Grandpa as he held on for his life. The wind stopped for a few seconds, so he thought it was over, but as soon as he let go of the pole and took a few steps toward the cellar, he saw two tornadoes side by side behind the grove beside the house.

Grandpa knew he couldn't get back to the cellar, so he grabbed the pole again. These funnels came straight at the house and Grandpa. Just seconds before both tornadoes would have hit him, they went up into the sky. Things that had been sucked up into the tornado started falling around Grandpa. Grandpa ran to the cellar to check on Grandma and the kids. Grandpa pulled the door open, and as soon as they all came out, they started looking around. They could see things were a mess.

The chicken coop where Grandma had all her baby chicks was gone, and they found baby chicks all over the yard. There were even a few chickens in the house scattered on the floor. Grandpa told the family that he had seen the horse being blown away. They cleaned up for days after the storm. To their surprise, three days after the storm hit, a neighbor told them that he had found their horse, Petunia, in his pasture. She was alive! It took several days to clean up, but life was back to normal again on the farm.

Jeffrey Paul Duda
Nebraska

Over the Years: A Story of My Grandfather

Families all have stories to tell of their past. They all have different pasts, and when the past is revealed, so is an adventure.

My grandpa was in the Second World War in the Navy in the Pacific Theater, and he joined them in 1944. He was assigned to an LST, which stands for “Landing Ship Tank.” An LST took tanks to shore and back out to sea to the next destination. While my grandfather was in the Navy, his crewmates smoked cigarettes, and when some of his crewmates bought him a pack, he would trade them for some licorice.

During his service he served as a quartermaster to steer the rudder of the ship. To get to his post he had to go past three hatches and seal them, and he was asked by the captain himself not to open them if he was hit. During battles my grandfather could hear the Japanese torpedoes whizzing by him as he steered the ship to avoid them. The captain was communicating to my grandfather by a headphone set to tell him which way to go. When their ship would reach a destination, they would arrive at high tide and leave at low tide after the tanks and infantrymen were deployed.

When Japan surrendered, Grandpa and his crewmates were sent to China to clean up after World War II. My grandfather took some Japanese to China

on the LST. To get to a destination an LST took days, sometimes months. My grandfather's brother, Chester, was in the European Theater in the Army. Chester was in a tank along with three others rolling on the terrain when they ran directly over a land mine and were instantly killed.

After my grandfather's service in the Navy, he went back to Columbus, Indiana, in 1946 to work at a tool and die shop for two years. After those two years, he met my grandmother in June of 1948, and they later on married in August of 1948. My grandfather started college two years after his marriage in '48 at Indiana Central College, which is now the University of Indianapolis. He graduated in the year of 1954 then went on to seminary to become a minister. My grandfather said that it was his experiences in the war that encouraged him to become a minister. A few years later on, my grandfather founded Rosedale Hills United Methodist Church and became the head minister from 1958 to 1982.

My grandfather had a good life, but with some sorrows, too. Our grandparents can tell us stories like none we have ever heard and can influence us. Like my grandfather always told me, "Be careful of your words, they become your actions; be careful of your actions, they become your character; be careful of your character, it becomes your personality; and be careful of your personality, it becomes you."

Colin M. Kea
Indiana

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Honorable Mention

Alone in the Dark with the Dead

Gunnar Smith, Indiana

The Eureka Saga

Michael Clark, Warracknabeal, Australia

The Flood

Jacob Timothy Killinger, Nebraska

The Flying Golf Ball

Nina Bocchini, Missouri

The Grandpa That Got Away

Austin William Healy, Indiana

Growing Up in Maine

Lauren Elizabeth Deisley, Nebraska

The Happiest Family in Houston

Charlie Anthony Caspersen, Indiana

A Hard Life

Katrina Leigh Ondracek, Nebraska

Jumping Horses

Lacey Ann Smith, Missouri

My Interesting Ancestors

Ian James McQuinn, Indiana

Snowball

Robby Marshall, Missouri

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Illustrators

- p. 14 Lily Rose Gage, Missouri
- p. 21 Joy Rachel Gage, Missouri
- p. 24 Griffin Reed, Missouri
- p. 28 Andrea Rose Stiffelman, Missouri
- p. 38 Ellie Harrison, Missouri
- p. 45 Yunli Emily Chu, Missouri
- p. 48 Rebecca Michelle Stiffelman, Missouri
- p. 58 Alyssa Fritz and Ellie Harrison, Missouri
- p. 67 Griffin Reed, Missouri

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Invitation to Participate

Please join us for the 2007 Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration. The submission deadline for stories and art for *Grannie Annie, Vol. II* is February 14, 2007. Complete details, including the required entry form, are available at www.TheGrannieAnnie.org.

Praise for The Grannie Annie

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

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

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

The Grannie Annie—A Family Story Celebration takes us back to the old porch swing and to a world of stories from the past. On days filled with CDs, DVDs, electronic games and screens, we yearn for an afternoon in Grandmother's kitchen sprinkling cinnamon and sugar on cookies fresh out of the oven or a long walk down to the river with Grandpa to see the tadpoles. It is in these moments with our elders that stories are shared and we discover who we are, our true legacy. For their tales contain wisdom, laughter, and love that connect us to our past and to each other. These shared memories that will live on in us help us “come into our own,” but not “on our own.” We discover a deep sense of belonging, values, and pride.

Hop on this old creaking swing and you'll hear stories that will bring tears to your eyes or make you laugh till your sides hurt. Grab your pen—you'll want to get one of your own family escapades down so that you can submit it to The Grannie Annie, share it with others, and pass it on to your grandchildren someday. 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

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.

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