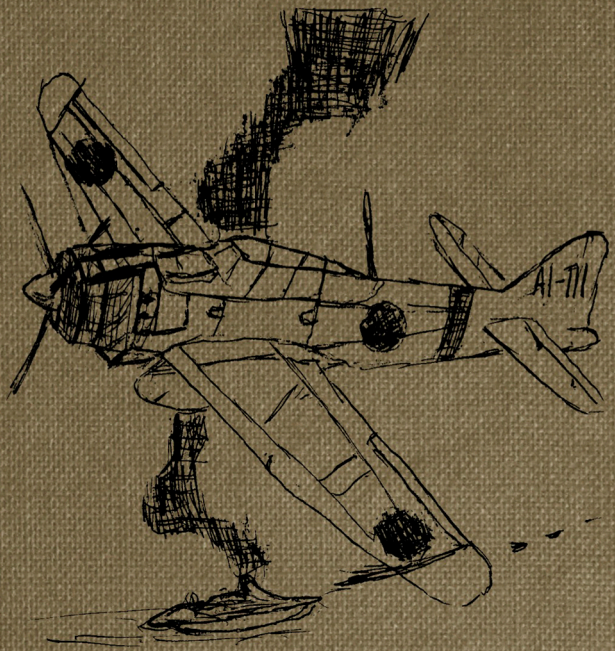
Echoes from World War II

Young Writers Sharing Family Stories



The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration

10th Anniversary

The Grannie Annie
Family Story Celebration

The Grannie Annie invites students in U.S. grades 4 through 8 and homeschooled or international students 9 through 14 years of age to interview their family storykeepers and write a story from their family's history. The Grannie Annie experience leads young people to strengthen family and community bonds, encounter history in a personal way, and polish their writing skills. Students are encouraged to illustrate their story and then share their work with their family, school, community, and The Grannie Annie.

This special collection of family stories about World War II celebrates the tenth anniversary of The Grannie Annie. The stories included here are among those published by The Grannie Annie over the past ten years. All of the stories that have been published by The Grannie Annie, and many of the illustrations, appear on The Grannie Annie's website.

The Grannie Annie mission—to inspire young people to discover, write, illustrate, and share historical family stories—springs from a belief in the transformative power of "story." As the family stories in this book vividly depict challenges faced during World War II, they can help us summon our own courage to meet today's challenges. Sharing these stories of hardship and triumph sends echoes of inspiration, strength, and courage throughout the world.

Echoes from World War II

Young Writers Sharing Family Stories

The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration
Saint Louis, Missouri

The Grannie Annie welcomes—and desires to receive and publish—family stories from students of every race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, and creed.

Because the stories in this collection were captured from the oral tradition, they represent a unique blend of history, legend, and opinion. Accuracy—historical or otherwise—is not guaranteed, and the views represented are not necessarily those of the authors, directors, or publisher.

Cover illustration by Kevin VanHorn.

Particular thanks to fiber artist Elda Miller; graphics specialists TJ Jerrod, Josh Hagan, and Jeff Hirsch; and translator Graziella Postolache.

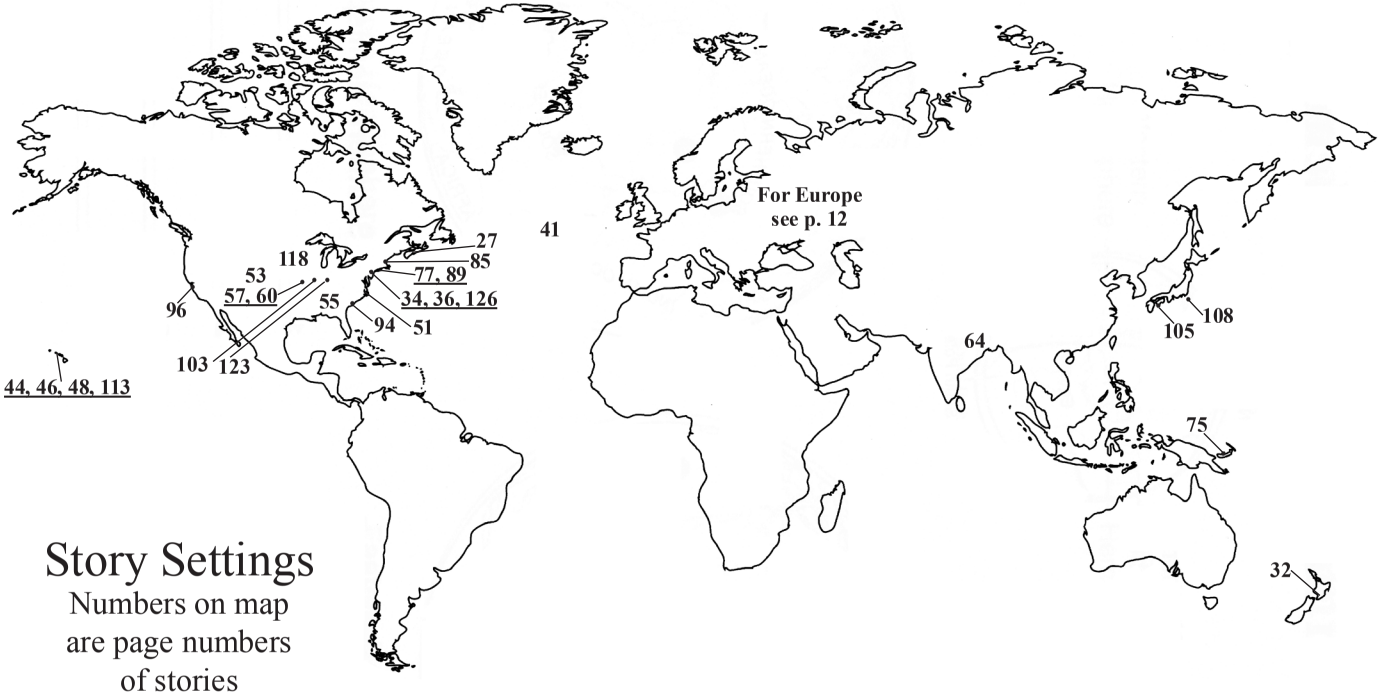
Publisher's Cataloging-in-Publication data

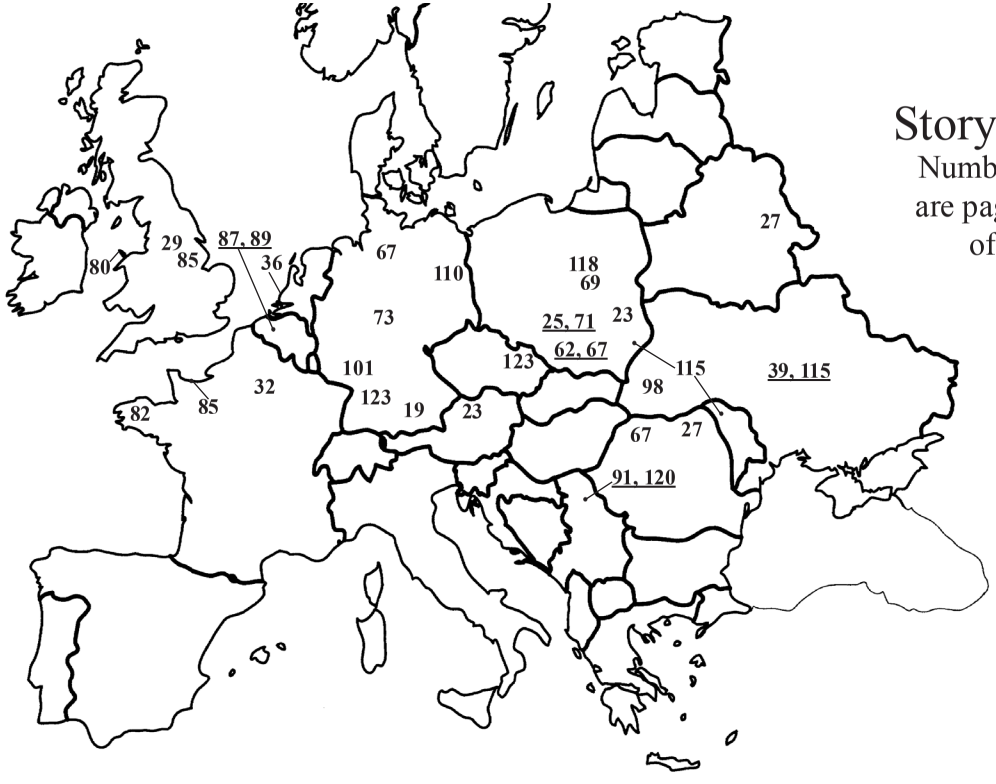
Title: Echoes from World War II : young writers sharing family stories.
Description: St. Louis [Missouri] : The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration, 2016.
Identifiers: LCCN 2015917584 | ISBN 978-0-9969394-5-4
Subjects: World War, 1939–1945—Personal narratives—Juvenile literature. | Children's writings. | Family—Juvenile literature. | Bisac: JUVENILE NONFICTION / History / Modern | HISTORY / Modern / 20th Century | HISTORY / Essays.
Classification: LCC D743 .G73 2016 | DDC 940.53—dc23

Dedicated to
all those whose lives
have been impacted by
World War II

Contents

* The time setting of each story is noted in parentheses here and also on the story pages. Where the exact year is unknown, "c." (circa) indicates the approximate year.


For Europe
see p. 12
41
27
85
118
53
77, 89
57, 60
34, 36, 126
55
96
94
51
103
123
44, 46, 48, 113
64
105
108
75
32
Story Settings
Numbers on map
are page numbers
of stories


Story Settings
Numbers on map
are page numbers
of stories
29
87, 89
85
36
80
67
110
118
69
27
73
25, 71
23
62, 67
101
123
115
39, 115
32
98
123
19
23
85
82
67
27
91, 120

Foreword

Let me tell you a story.

There may be no more powerful sentence in the English language than the one made up of those six small words. "Let me tell you a story" means you are about to hear something good—it may be funny, it may be scary, it may be happy, it may be sad, it may be filled with adventure, or it may move along at a quiet pace, but you know it's going to be fascinating.

For better or worse, when most of us think of "story" we think of fiction, of something that was made up. We think of knights and princesses, or wizards and goblins. But some of the most interesting stories are the ones that happened to real people, to people like us. Often, the best stories come from the past but are just as relevant to us today. As someone who works at a history museum, I am surrounded by these stories every day. I get to hear and share stories about a young enslaved woman who fought for—and won—her freedom; stories about explorers who charted new paths—whether those paths led them out west or across the Atlantic; stories about soldiers and salesmen, about artists and environmentalists, about athletes and architects.

Some of my favorite stories have been told to me by people who were eyewitnesses to history. I will never forget listening to a nurse who took care of NASA's astronauts or a woman who was involved in early sit-ins in St. Louis or a veterinarian who had to give shots to a walrus. These people had unique perspectives on history

because they were part of history. That is the power of story—it can bring the past to life.

And that's why projects like *Echoes from World War II* are so important. They keep the past alive by preserving the memories of people who are still around to share them and by retelling stories that have been passed down for generations. The fact that this collection features young people as the authors is all the more important; these are the people responsible for carrying our stories and our past into the future.

The stories included here offer personal and powerful perspectives on World War II and what it meant to the people who lived through this period in our history. They are intriguing as well as educational and bring this era to life in a compelling way. These young authors—these young *historians*—are doing incredibly important and engaging work.

Let them tell you a story.

Jody Sowell
Director of Exhibitions and Research
Missouri History Museum

About This Book

"World War II" was a natural choice of theme for this special volume of stories to celebrate the tenth anniversary of The Grannie Annie. Not only has it been a recurring theme in the stories submitted over the past ten years, the challenge of conflict—or any kind of difficulty—can bring out the best in us, which can in turn inspire others.

The historical family stories in this volume deal with varied aspects of war—not only combat but also internal turmoil and the far-reaching effects of war, even on civilians thousands of miles from the conflict. We see people who—willingly or unwillingly—are separated from their home and their family, or take strangers into their own home. We see people wrestling with their beliefs and priorities to decide whether rules should be obeyed or defied. We see that war can affect people long after the conflict ends—affecting their choice of career, and their attitudes and relationships throughout their life. In many of these stories, family members find life-saving help in unexpected places, or find ways to live out their beliefs amid oppression and to celebrate their blessings amid war.

The forty-six stories in this volume were written by young authors in seventeen U.S. states and in India and Moldova. As the maps on pages 11 and 12 show, the stories take place in twenty countries on three continents.

We invite you to savor the personal treasures that echo through the pages of this simple, powerful book and to be inspired, strengthened, and encouraged by the resilience of the human spirit.

Connie McIntyre and Fran Hamilton
Directors of The Grannie Annie

If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten.

—*Rudyard Kipling* (English author, 1865–1936)

Echoes from World War II

Escaping from Germany

1930s[1]
Munich, Germany

"Hi, Dad," I said.

"Do you want me to tell you a story?" Dad asked.

"Sure," I said.

"*My* dad—Alex—told me this story around twenty years ago, when I was a kid," Dad said. "It's about when Alex was growing up."

> Alex Schindler, your grandfather, lived in Munich, Germany. He was eight years old. It was 1933, and Hitler had just come to power.
>
> "Bye, Dad," Alex said very sadly. His dad was leaving. He didn't think Hitler was a good ruler, so he was leaving his family and moving to a different country. Alex's mom didn't think that there was anything bad about Hitler, and her business was in Munich, so she didn't want to leave. Alex didn't care about Hitler. Little did they know they should've gone with Alex's dad.
>
> Years later, Alex was still upset his dad had left. November 9, 1938, a little bit after Alex went to bed, Nazis invaded the town and destroyed most of the Jewish stores in the town. They shattered the windows of every shop owned by Jews, and destroyed all their

1. The setting of each story is noted below its title. In cases where the exact year is not known, "c." (circa) indicates that the year given is approximate.

Isabelle Hilbert

synagogues. All the Jewish stores had glass lying all over. Mrs. Schindler finally realized her husband was right, and she realized what was going on. First, Alex's friends had stopped talking to him and all of the other Jews in the school. Now Kristallnacht[2]—they had to somehow get out of Germany! Hitler was bad.

When Alex's mom said that they were going to go live with his dad, Alex immediately wanted to leave. Alex missed his dad very much. They packed some clothes, toys, money, and other items. They really wanted to get out of Germany. They were going to escape to Switzerland. They wanted to leave, because now they knew Kristallnacht wasn't the worst thing that would happen.

Alex's mom didn't know how they were going to get out of Germany. It was illegal for Jews to escape. That is why she disguised Alex as a Catholic boy before she put him on a train to Switzerland. Awhile after Alex left, his mom came up with another idea. A forest guide owed her money, so she went to the guide to ask if he would take her to Switzerland. He agreed. She and the guide ventured through the woods. It was extremely nice of the guide, because it was illegal to smuggle Jews out of the country. Alex's mom was very thankful the guide was there and that she had made that loan.

2. *Kristallnacht* is known in English as "Night of Broken Glass."

Alex's mom found him when she got to Switzerland. They were both glad they were out of Germany and safe from the Nazis.

"So that's the story your dad told you when you were a kid?" I asked.

"Yes. That's the story he told me many years ago."

Stella Schindler
Missouri, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 1* (2006)

Times of the Holocaust

1937–1948
Lublin, Poland;
Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp, Austria

When I was fifteen, I was taken from my home in Lublin, Poland. After being detained in different places in Poland for five years, I was sent to the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp in Austria and put to work in a factory. While I was there, one of my jobs was to make sights[1] for the guns on the *Messerschmitt*, the first German jet-propelled combat airplane. However, this was not my favorite work. I was used to working outside on my father's farm, not inside a factory like this. But I had no choice about the work I was doing. I *did* have a choice about how to do it though. So instead of doing my job right, I moved the base of the sight too far one way or the other, making the gun miss its target when fired. I also put sugar in the engines to make them seize.

Why did I do this? I did this because I was forced by the Nazis to work in a labor camp because I had refused to join the German Army when I was asked. I did anything I could to work against the Nazis. I even used shrapnel I found on the ground to cut communication lines. I worked against the Nazis because I was not on their side. I didn't agree with what they were doing. I was determined not to fail. I was also determined to live.

I lived by doing what I was told, and that's how I somehow lived through eight years of my life. Once one

1. A sight is a device on a gun that helps the shooter aim at a target.

of the "icemen," a soldier in a special unit of the Nazis, told me to clean his boots, so I did. Then later the same "iceman" came back and saved me from being killed. But unfortunately my friends were not so lucky.

Another time, a German guard sent a group of us to take showers. But then another guard, who was Austrian, sent me back to the barracks because he thought I was a good worker. I ran back with my clothes in my hands. No one came back from that shower. Gas was released in the showers, killing everyone. I had been saved again.

My real freedom came in 1945, when I was finally freed from the Nazis by American and Russian troops. I immediately wanted to join the United States Army so I could fight against the Nazis for real.

Three years later I immigrated to America, arriving at the navy depot in New York. Though I look as round as Santa now, I actually weighed only fifty pounds when I got here. I lived with my mother's sister in North Thamesville, a part of Norwich, Connecticut.

Though life was different in America, I had the chance to live it. I was lucky I was alive. The lessons I learned in concentration and work camps, like following directions but also never giving up, helped me in America. I also never forgot that doing something little could make a big difference.

Paxton Hilgendorff, great-great-nephew of narrator
New Jersey, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 9* (2014)

A Courageous Soldier

1939
southern Poland

I hadn't seen my family in months. Hitler's soldiers hadn't come within miles of Poland yet. "So why should I stand here?" I thought to myself in the burning heat, morning to night every day.

It was September 1, 1939, and it was going to be the hottest day in September. That's when I decided I was going to take off my uniform. Then, right when I took off my uniform—BAM! A shot came out of nowhere. Everyone ducked and looked at each other as if they were wondering what was going on.

But everyone knew.

BAM! Then came another shot—and another. Next thing we knew, we saw German soldiers marching toward us. We fought until we were out of ammunition, but after the last bullet was shot, I was captured along with my partner. All the other soldiers had been captured also, but then killed. Since we had taken off our uniforms, the soldiers thought we were regular townsmen passing by when the fight had begun.

My partner and I were sent to a concentration camp on the other side of Poland. But as we were transported there, I made a plan with my partner to escape. There was another man who tried to escape, but he died when the Germans opened fire at him. When my partner and I jumped out of the train, the soldiers opened fire at us. I was fortunate enough to escape, but my partner wasn't. He was shot in the back three times. I ran to the woods

as fast as I could, not knowing what was happening to my partner. I looked back and saw him lying dead on the ground. We had agreed that if one of us died, we would leave him behind. So I went on with my journey back home.

I walked two weeks in the woods, hoping no one would catch me. I walked during night and sheltered during day. I hunted small animals like squirrels and picked edible mushrooms. It was important I picked the right ones with the sponge-like bottom, or I could have been dead.

Once I reached my home, everything seemed normal except two things: I could not see my child playing outside or smell my wife's cooking. I went inside my home and could not believe what had happened. The Nazis had taken my wife and my daughter. My heart was broken. "Why me?" I asked myself. "Why me?" I decided to go back and fight again, after I thought about what the Nazis had done.

Once the war was over, I found out that my family had been killed in the concentration camp and there was no hope of seeing them again.

I later found another woman and married her. She was a fine woman who knew how to cook and take care of a family. Well, she had taken care of four younger siblings. We had five kids together—one son and four daughters.

Alexander Baszczij, great-grandson of
Vincent Skora, the narrator
New Jersey, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 6* (2011)

From Tragedy to Triumph

1939–1947
Radauitz, Romania;
Mogilev concentration camp, Byelorussia, USSR;[1]
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

This is a story about my savta and her older sister. *Savta* is a Hebrew word that means "grandmother." Yes, my family is Jewish. My savta was born to Moshe and Reisel Lackner in 1939 in Romania. Their father owned a brush factory. Life was already becoming difficult for the Jews there. It was the beginning of a horrible tragedy, the Holocaust.

From 1938 to 1940 Romania came increasingly under German power. In September of 1941 the Jews in my savta's town of Radauitz were given orders to leave. My savta's family was deported to the concentration camp of Mogilev when my savta was two years old. She remained there from May 1941 to June 1944.

In the camp the Jews lived crammed together in small huts. The only food they had was called "potato soup"—potato peels in water. To obtain this "food" a family member had to wait in a lengthy line. My savta's sister remembers taking her turn once on a wintry day. After waiting and filling her tin pail, she slipped on ice on her journey back to the hut. The soup spilled out, and on that night there was no food.

There were disease, forced labor, and hunger in the camp. But the saddest memory my savta has is losing

1. Byelorussia was a republic in the Soviet Union (USSR) from 1922 until 1991, when it became the independent country of Belarus.

her parents shortly after arriving at Mogilev. Her father was diabetic and succumbed to the illness. Her mother, Reisel, passed away from an outbreak of influenza. Luckily Reisel's sister, Aunt Pearl, looked after them.

One day the order came to pack up and proceed to a train. Aunt Pearl had a strong feeling they should not get on that train. She bribed the guard by giving him her last bit of gold jewelry. He allowed them to slip by. Sadly, the many Jews who did crowd onto the cattle cars went to their deaths at Auschwitz.

When my savta returned to her hometown in Romania, her home was destroyed and the factory was gone. Only 2,000 of the 8,000 Jews who had entered Mogilev had survived. From 1944 to 1947 Aunt Pearl worked hard making arrangements for my savta and her sister to travel to relatives in Canada. They were eight and twelve years old when they made the difficult and scary voyage along with 2,000 Jewish orphans aboard the SS *Sterges*, which transported them across the world to Halifax, Nova Scotia. There a cousin named Noa Heinish and his wife, Sarah, took them into their home.

My savta had triumphed. She got to start a new and better life. She could now go to school (at age nine), eat real food, wear nice clothes, and enjoy the comforts of a home with a family. Although Aunt Pearl arrived in Canada a year later, Noa and Sarah thought it would be best if they adopted the girls. At last my savta was no longer an orphan, and she could call Sarah and Noa her mother and father.

Matan Halzel; Tennessee, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 1* (2006)

A Walk into the Past

c. 1940
Sheffield, South Yorkshire, England, UK

We start our walk, heading down through the flower-filled village green, past the glimmering clear water that fills the pond. The fluffy yellow ducklings peep at our feet as we toss them stale breadcrumbs. The little birds sing their sweet songs; twitters pierce the air. We stop and listen, then continue our way down to the beach. It is a long walk with lovely scenery. I am visiting my grandparents in England. Grandma and I are taking a stroll. She begins to tell me a story from when she was a little girl.

> The blaring sirens tear apart the silent night. It is World War II. Nazi fighter planes bearing bombs are in the air. The devastating bombs fall through the night. Hysteria has broken out below. As citizens head for shelter, my grandma glances quickly around. Audrey, her baby sister, is missing! She fights the mob to help her but is sucked into the shelter. The door is locked, and nobody is allowed in or out until it is declared safe. All she can do is worry about her sister out there. Dirt falls from the ceiling as another bomb hits the ground. All she can do is hope, pray.
>
> At dawn the call is sounded; it is now safe to go out. Dashing to the door and outside, my grandma calls out, "Audrey, Audrey!"

Sarah Pinnell

She listens and hears quiet sobs of terror. As she glances around, she notes that nobody is nearby, but one of the tin garbage cans is softly shaking. Lifting the lid and cautiously peering inside, she sees a figure huddled there.

"Audrey?" she questions. As the figure looks up, a rush of relief engulfs her. She is alive. Her little sister is alive. All is well; nobody was hurt, or killed.

I sigh with relief. I can almost feel, as well as see, it all happening. As I come back to reality, I realize that we have entered and exited a field. We had stood together smelling the salt air and gazing at the waves foaming and crashing against the rock. This was a walk I would always remember. I learned much about my grandma and her past. We had also grown much closer in that one hike. I looked forward with much excitement to the next day with more tales. This was a time I would never forget.

Megan M. Howson
New Jersey, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 2* (2007)

Related to a Spy

c. 1940
Wellington, New Zealand; France

Family history can be very interesting. Some things may surprise you. I discovered that my great-great-grandma's cousin was a very famous French spy. Her name was Nancy Wake. She was often called "The White Mouse" or "The Witch" by the German Nazis. She played a great part in World War II.

Nancy was born on August 30, 1912, in Wellington, New Zealand. She became a nurse for a little while and then became a journalist for Hearst newspapers in France. That is where she met Henri Fiocca. They were married in 1939. Later the Nazis captured him.

When Nancy found out, she was furious and decided to join the French Resistance (this was like a French army). She became an undercover agent or spy. She was sent on many different missions to find captured soldiers in enemy territory. Her most talked-about mission was when she rode a bicycle forty miles nonstop through Nazi territory! She soon became the Nazis' "Most Wanted." She was always on the lookout for her husband.

After the war Nancy found out that Henri had refused to tell the Germans where she was. They decided that since he wouldn't help them, they would kill him. Also after the war, Nancy was awarded many medals, such as the United States Medal of Freedom, the French Médaille de la Résistance, and the Croix de Guerre.[1]

1. *Médaille de la Résistance* is French for "Medal of the Resistance," and *Croix de Guerre* is French for "Cross of War."

Where is she now? She is ninety-seven years old, living in a special retirement home in England for veterans of World War II. One last thing is I would love to thank all of my family, especially my grandma, who respectfully shared this story with me.

Emilie Barrett
Missouri, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 5* (2010)

A Real Life Lesson

c. 1940
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

"All Jews are responsible for one another." That was a lesson that my grandmother, my shasha,[1] learned as a child growing up in Philadelphia during World War II.

World War II orphaned a lot of children in different countries. My shasha's parents believed that every Jew was responsible for every other. They decided to take in a European child named Gusti. My shasha was eight years old at the time, and her sister Phyllis was ten. They weren't so ecstatic about taking her in, but to their parents, it was "never not an option."

Gusti arrived in a thin coat, despite the cold weather. My shasha and her sister felt pampered compared to her. They had a closet full of clothes and a shelf full of books, but here was a girl that had almost nothing but the clothes on her back. Gusti had come from a rich home, so my shasha's parents insisted on giving her my shasha's big room; my shasha was crammed into her sister's much smaller room, and they had to squeeze all their clothes into a small closet.

My shasha remembers one time Gusti had a very bad cold, which later turned into pneumonia. The doctor recommended that they take Gusti to the hospital for more intensive care.

"Gusti," my shasha's mother said grimly, "you might have to go to the hospital for your pneumonia."

1. *Shasha* is this family's word for *savta*, which is Hebrew for *grandmother*.

"No! I . . . I have been uprooted once from my home. I'm afraid to go to another unfamiliar place."

"It's okay, Gusti. It'll be safe."

"No, I won't go," Gusti protested. She was insistent that she stay there.

A doctor went to the house every day to check on Gusti's progress. My shasha's mother, Od' Shasha,[2] also became ill with pneumonia but had it much, much worse than Gusti did. It took all winter for Od' Shasha to recover completely. Gusti became well and resumed her new life in Philadelphia.

At first Shasha and Phyllis didn't like Gusti very much. They felt that their parents catered to her at their expense. Gusti seemed very sullen, and her long silences frightened Shasha. Gusti seemed to be happy only when she played the piano. Her favorite piece was "Für Elise" by Beethoven.

My shasha eventually came to like Gusti. "Was I able to really understand what she was suffering? Is it beyond the comprehension of a child to grasp such monumental loss as Gusti's?" she would ask herself. Even today, my shasha thinks of Gusti when she hears "Für Elise."

This is the first time I've heard this story, but it already feels like it's part of me. This lesson will stay with me forever.

David Kornfeld
Colorado, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 5* (2010)

2. *Od'* (ohd) is a variation of the Hebrew word for *another*.

Wilhelmina's Great Escape

1940, 1990
the Netherlands; New Jersey, USA

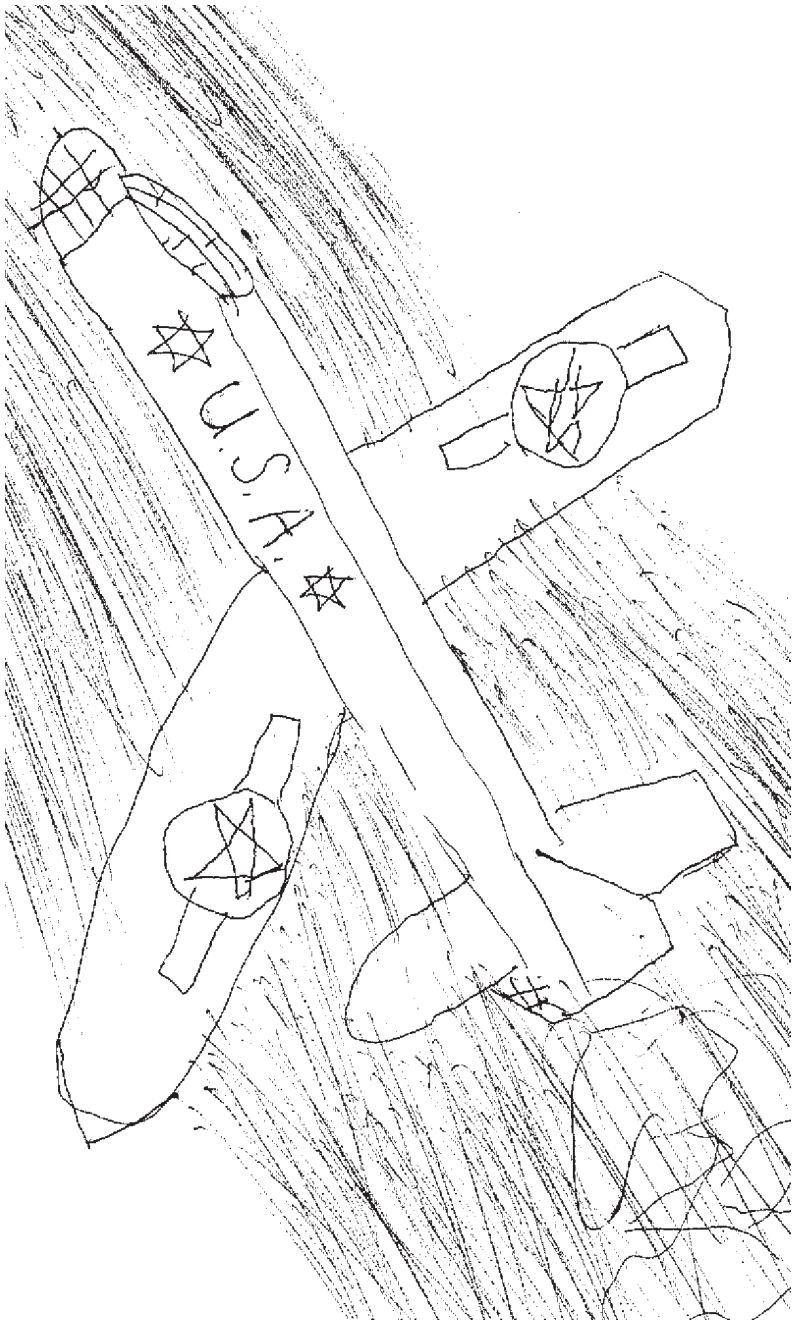
World War II was a horrible, yet victorious, time in our history. During that time our soldiers fought against the Axis powers.[1] In the Netherlands, Queen Wilhelmina was threatened by the Nazi takeover and had to leave her country under harsh conditions. A mission to save her from the Nazis was organized, and she was flown from her home to safety.[2] 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 plane, the Lockheed Key Constellation, and thanked them for risking their lives to help keep her safe.

1. The Axis powers included Germany, Japan, Italy, and some other countries that opposed the Netherlands, Great Britain, the United States, France, and the Soviet Union (USSR) in World War II.

2. Even today, these details of Queen Wilhelmina's escape are not widely known.



Kyle Rogers

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 had done 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. You never know how history will touch you or how you will touch history. History touched my grandpa.

Brigid C. Rosendale; New Jersey, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 3* (2008)

A Lucky Save

1941
Ukraine, USSR[1]

My great-grandmother lives in Russia. She is still living today, but her husband has passed away. The way they met, though, was unbelievable.

My great-grandmother originally lived in Ukraine—this all took place in Ukraine. Her name was Yevdokia, and she was the gentlest person you could ever meet. She lived in the country, and she had her own small house.

Unfortunately, she lived there during World War II. However, a person as kind as Yevdokia could never just sit around and let the wounded soldiers die. So every night she would sneak out into the fields and get the injured Ukrainian soldiers off the battlegrounds and into her home so she could nurse their injuries and save their lives.

There was a problem with this though: No one was allowed to hold any soldier in their homes, and if they did, they could suffer severe consequences. That was a risk my great-grandmother was willing to take.

Each night, when the moon was at its highest point, there my great-grandmother would be, rescuing the abandoned Ukrainian soldiers that lay in the fields. Yevdokia would take them back to her house and quietly take them to her basement. Why did she put them in her basement? It was because a Nazi general and his soldiers would walk around to each house and inspect it. The

1. During World War II, Ukraine was a republic in the Soviet Union (USSR). In 1991 it became an independent country.

Nazis would make sure there weren't any weapons or soldiers inside. They would carelessly search whatever they might be looking through in each house for any sign of weapons or soldiers.

The trick was that the Nazis had no idea there was a basement in this house, because it was covered. The basement was really a hole underneath the house, and the entry hole was covered by a dresser. There Yevdokia would treat the soldiers. They stayed with her until they were better, and then they would be off to fight again.

One man was injured so badly that he almost died right in front of Yevdokia. This man had been shot in the stomach twice. This soldier's name was Alexander. As Yevdokia was treating this man, she began to fall in love with this brave soldier, and the brave soldier began to fall in love with Yevdokia.

What you may be thinking is that next they will get married and live happily ever after. Well you'd be wrong, because that is not how it went. One day the general's soldiers found the soldiers Yevdokia kept in her secret basement. They beat, whipped, and harassed probably the bravest woman ever to live. She lived through it, but then she was the injured one.

Eventually she and Alexander did get married, started a family, and chose to move to Russia. I guess this proves that the greatest pleasures in life can come from the most unexpected things.

Michelle Favichia
New Jersey, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 6* (2011)

Ocean Waters

1941
North Atlantic Ocean

In November 1941 my great-uncle Lawrence Mann faced one of the most petrifying experiences of his entire life. Lawrence was on the U.S. Navy ship the USS *Wilson* in the Atlantic Ocean.

Lawrence was in his sleeping quarters. A huge chaotic storm was raging on outside. Suddenly Lawrence's door burst open. A man stood there. He barked at Lawrence over the howling wind. He told Lawrence he must go to the engine room and fix a broken pipe. Then the man left just as quickly as he had come—going to do another important task, no doubt. Lawrence knew this wasn't a request but an order. He stood up and ran out the door.

The ice-cold hail hit his bare skin like needles. The freezing winds seemed to wrap themselves around him like a snake. He ran beside the railing on the edge of the ship. The metal deck was slippery like ice, his feet almost sliding out from under him multiple times. When he turned a corner, a gigantic wave hit him dead-on. It swept him off his feet and dragged him into the dark, deathly ocean waters.

The water sent what seemed like millions of electrical shocks through his body. Luckily, a life preserver had also been thrown overboard. Lawrence swam to grab hold of the preserver. He held on for dear life as the storm raged on. The *Wilson* kept on going through the dark storm, oblivious to its fallen passenger.

Kim Cheng

Lawrence thought for sure he was going to drown, or die from some other horrendous act to come. Even so, he kept on holding on to the little golden chance that he would live, and return to his wonderful, beloved family. The storm was no easier to withstand in the ocean than on the ship. The waves went up and down like a roller coaster that was impossible to get off of. Finally, the storm ended. Lawrence was alive.

Lawrence was stuck in the horrible, seemingly deadly, waters for two days with nothing but his life preserver and will to live. Lawrence used his last bit of strength to hold on to the preserver. When he was just about to give up, he saw a boat coming toward him. He yelled out toward them, and the boat turned toward him.

The men in the boat pulled him out of the water and asked what had happened. Lawrence related his story to them. They told him that the *Wilson* had sent out a signal to all the boats nearby that some men had probably gone

overboard. They had decided to see if anyone was still alive in the ocean to save.

Lawrence thanked the men, his heart full of gratitude. He returned to the *Wilson* to finish his service in the navy. Lawrence told all of his children and grandchildren this story, which has been passed down as a true miracle in my family.

Amanda Diamond
Missouri, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 6e* (2011)

Pearl Harbor Day 1941

December 7, 1941
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, USA[1]

My grandpa was seven years old when he was shot at by the Japanese on December 7, 1941.

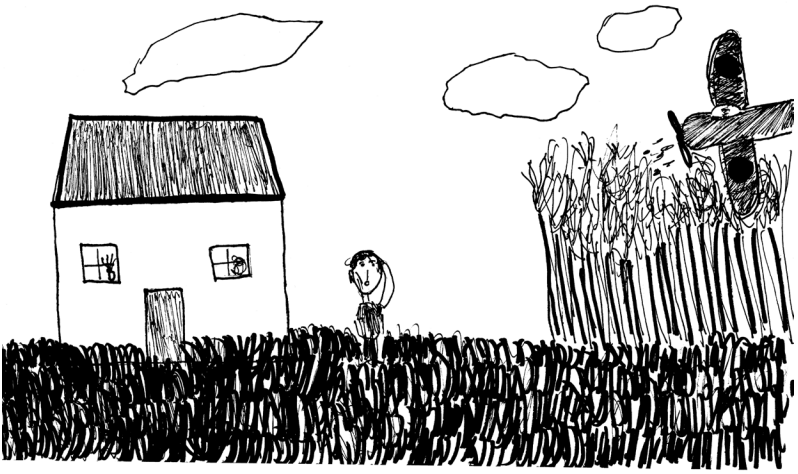
My grandpa Robert lived in the middle of 48,000 acres of sugar cane on the island of Oahu with his mother, father, and dog. Sunday morning was the regular menu, pancakes. His dad was asleep, and Robert could hear him snoring from the other side of the house. He was sitting in the kitchen with his mom and could smell the delicious pancakes cooking. It seemed a long time to wait for breakfast.

Suddenly a huge buzzing noise interrupted their meal! The house was shaking, the dishes in the sink were rattling, and the dog was barking uncontrollably! Robert's mom said, "What are those flyboys doing flying over our house on a Sunday morning?" She thought it was their pilot friends from Hickam Field who always flew over their house on Friday afternoons to signal that they would arrive in about one hour for cocktails. "This is too much for a Sunday morning." As she picked up the phone and started calling a friend at the U.S. Air Force base, Robert ran outside barefoot and in his shorts to see his flyboy buddies.

What he saw changed his life forever.

A huge squadron of planes was flying low over the sugar cane fields. All the planes had a big red circle

1. In 1941 Hawaii was a U.S. territory. It became the fiftieth state in 1959.



Alaina Ronning

painted on the underside of the wings. The planes were flying so low Robert could see the features of the pilots.

The Japanese planes fired small bursts of machine-gun bullets into the sugar cane field as they swarmed over his house on their way to bomb Pearl Harbor ten minutes later.

Avalon Derlacki
Oregon, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 1* (2006)

Raining Bombs

December 7, 1941
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, USA[1]

Imagine: It's a chilly day in early December. The cloudy sky shadows above as you notice the palm trees, wet with dew and rain from the day before. Your pregnant mother is hanging washed garments on the clothesline to dry as you and your two-year-old brother watch with boredom. Your father, a doctor for wounded soldiers at the U.S. naval base near your home in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, is getting ready for work. It's December 7, 1941, a day that changes the world forever, and you are in the worst place possible.

The previous paragraph describes that tragic morning from my grandfather's point of view—the morning Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and launched America into World War II. My grandfather was only five years old, but miraculously he and his family lived through it all.

On that day, at approximately 7:55 A.M., my great-grandmother looked up from hanging clothes and saw white planes flying above, with large red dots on their wings. Originally from the South, and with poor vision, she mistakenly cried out, "Look, Carl! Some planes are here with some Florida oranges!"

My great-grandfather Carl ran out and saw the planes, immediately realizing they were Japanese. He grabbed his children and wife, and took them inside while the first bomb dropped. There were screams, but he didn't

1. In 1941 Hawaii was a U.S. territory. It became the fiftieth state in 1959.

flinch; he wanted to keep his family safe. He gathered up all the mattresses in the house and piled them onto his family. Also, giving his wife a gun, he said, "If the Japanese come for you, shoot the kids and yourself. It'll be better than becoming slaves for them."

By now, my grandfather, his brother, and his mother had all grasped the awfulness of the situation. The young boys were both in tears, and she was shaking.

Carl had to leave, because he knew that the injured needed him, so he kissed his family one last time, knowing he may never see them again. "I love you" was all they heard as he dashed out the door.

Immediately the pregnant mother started feeding her children and herself, because she knew there was a chance they wouldn't eat again for a long time if they were captured by the Japanese. Once they were all stuffed, they huddled down into the mattress mass again. They waited there for hours, listening to the screams and gunshots and every other violent sound you could think of.

Finally they heard someone walk in. My great-grandmother shakily reached for the gun and prepared to shoot her firstborn child—when they heard their names being called in a familiar, warm voice. It was Carl!

He was reunited with his family. He knew they couldn't live in Hawaii anymore, so he moved his family to the safest place possible that he knew of—Huntsville, Alabama. My grandfather, his wife, and some of my cousins still live there today.

Anna Cathryn Brown
Alabama, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 8* (2013)

"It's Just Dummy Ammo!"

December 7, 1941
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, USA[1]

SPLASH! Water shooting into the air! "It's the Japanese! They're bombing Pearl Harbor!" Everyone screamed.

A short time earlier, at one hour past midnight on December 7, 1941, my grandfather was steering the USS *Vega* on the way to Pearl Harbor. The crew had no idea what was going to happen in the next few hours.

Once everybody docked the ship, they had liberty (permission to leave the ship and do as they pleased). Instead of going off drinking, my grandfather went to a Bible study, for he was a good, honest Christian man. Once the sun rose, it was a beautiful Sunday morning in Hawaii.

At 8:00 my grandfather was swabbing the deck when suddenly GQ (General Quarters) sounded. This meant for everyone to rush to their battle stations. My grandfather thought it was a drill, but why waste a perfect Sunday morning with just another drill? All of these thoughts changed when he saw planes zooming in the air with the Rising Sun emblem on the side—they were the Japanese. Bombs were raining down, and water was shooting into the sky like a rocket.

The USS *Vega* had depth charges and torpedoes that were perfect for destroying ships, but it had only four antiaircraft guns. My grandfather loaded the five-pound ammunition into the gun and prepared to fire. It was

1. In 1941 Hawaii was a U.S. territory. It became the fiftieth state in 1959.

Kevin VanHorn

blank, phony, dummy ammunition! Great! They couldn't even fire back.

The crew ran to get the real ammunition that was deep down in the ship inside a frozen locker. They had to slowly use a blowtorch to melt the ice. If this was not done carefully, the whole ship would be blown to smithereens. Altogether this took thirty-five minutes of valuable time.

Just to top it off, the planes were lined up for Sunday inspection, and many of them were blown to pieces. On the bright side, once the antiaircraft guns were operational, they saved an entire Dutch ship. This ship had no antiaircraft guns and was being shot at by the Japanese, so the USS *Vega* took the credit for shooting down the planes.

The entire attack lasted about two hours. Although all eight of the battleships were put out of commission and many of the planes were destroyed, the Japanese didn't continue to attack the unprotected Pearl Harbor. This was a big mistake for the Japanese. Instead, they went back to Tokyo and celebrated.

The United States learned a lesson that day about being prepared, and so did my grandfather. This inspired him to become a missionary. This is the greatest tale ever told to me; this is . . . my family history.

Kevin VanHorn
Texas, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 5* (2010)

The Summer of Salt, Sand, and German Submarines

1941–1942
Kitty Hawk, North Carolina,USA

I was eleven. My mother had died, and my father was very sick. I was sent to live with my aunt and uncle who lived in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. The simple oceanfront cottage was like paradise to me when I arrived. Days were spent combing the beach, searching for seashells, and splashing in the sparkling water.

Then the United States entered World War II, and everything changed.

Supply ships were coming out of Norfolk, Virginia. They were going to Europe to deliver supplies to the fighting soldiers. The route they followed carried them just off the coast of Kitty Hawk. German submarines were circling the route the supply ships were taking so that they could blow the ships up and disrupt the supply lines. At night we had to keep the blinds down so that the Germans could not see our lights. We would hear the whine of torpedoes and the boom of explosions as they hit the ships. I was very scared.

There would be wreckage, tar, and oil on the beach the next day. We would see and smell smoke coming from the burning ships. As we would play, we would get tar on our feet. The tar would stick and smear, making it hard to remove. Supplies became limited, and we had ration books, which told us how much meat, sugar, butter, bread, and coffee we could have.

An area of the Atlantic Ocean near Kitty Hawk became known as "Torpedo Junction" because of the number of German attacks there. My final memory of that summer was when three German soldiers were reportedly captured, and authorities found movie ticket stubs from Manteo, North Carolina, in their pockets. It was very frightening to find out that German soldiers had actually come ashore and were so close to all of us.

Whitley Anderson, granddaughter of narrator
North Carolina, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 10* (2015)

The Six Fiancés

c. 1942
Denver, Colorado, USA

My great-grandmother Helen Milstein grew up in Denver. She was youngest of her siblings. She, unlike most girls at the time, went to college. Just before America joined World War II, she was a construction agent and was dating six men. Her construction business started working for the army just before the war. Every one of her boyfriends was asked to leave for the war.

The first one came to her and said, "I am leaving to join the war, but before I leave, I have a question for you: Will you marry me?"

Helen thought to herself, "If I say no, he may not have any motivation to live, so I will say yes," and she replied, "Yes," just before he left.

The same happened with the rest of her boyfriends. Every day they were away at the war, she wrote to each of them.

One day one of her fiancés came home. As she was wondering what to say to him, he said, "I am sorry, but I don't think the engagement will work out."

And she replied, "I sadly agree," in the most polite voice she could muster.

When her second fiancé came home, she said, "I am really upset, but I don't believe that the engagement will work out."

"Are you sure?" he replied.

"Well, I said yes because I didn't know if you would live if I did not say yes."

After all of her fiancés came back, she told them the entire story.

Two years later she met my great-grandpa. On their first date she told *him* the entire story.

"That is hilarious," he said. "When did you last talk to them?"

"I talk to them all the time."

"Are you very good friends with them?"

"Yes."

Five years later she got married to my great-grandpa.

This story is important because it is one of the only stories about my great-grandma, and it has taught me to think about other people's welfare, because she only got engaged to the men so that they would live through the war.

Tristan Hecht
Colorado, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 7* (2012)

Pop!

1940s
Carbon Hill, Alabama, USA

"Pack your bags!" my grandfather Emory heard one dry summer day. His father and all of the men in his family were being sent off to fight in World War II. Emory's mother had decided to go to his grandmother's farm, since his father was leaving. Huddled in the car, his family drove to the noisy farm. The farm was located in rural Alabama, so it took a while to get there. It was surprisingly different without having his father along. Being the only boy in the family, Emory often felt lonely.

As they arrived at the farm, each child was given a list of chores. Emory was used to chores, but when his eyes glimpsed the extended list, he said aloud, "Holy cow!" He knew that living on this farm would be hard work.

Walking over to the chicken coops, Emory heard lots of clucking. Soon he found his wise grandmother sitting on an old stack of hay. Emory asked curiously, "What's for dinner?"

Answering, his grandmother said, "You're looking right at it."

"How are we going to kill them?" my grandfather said nervously.

"First," declared his grandmother, "we have to pop their necks."

Picking up a chicken, his grandmother said, "You might have trouble with this." As she swung the chicken, its feathers drifted to the ground. Astonished, my grandfather heard a loud POP!

He said, "I think I will give it a try." Hastily, he bobbled the shaggy chicken upright. Swinging the chicken back and forth, he listened for the key sound. But it never came.

"It takes practice," chuckled his grandmother.

When it came time for dinner, Emory was starving. He had worked hard on his chores that day. He was also disappointed because he had not been able to get the chicken's neck to pop.

Months passed, and Emory spent much of his time in the chicken coops. "Hallelujah!" he shouted one evening. Again he shouted, "I've done it!" Emory ran excitedly back to the house to tell his grandmother. She congratulated him and tucked him into bed.

A few weeks later his family received a letter from his father. His father was coming home. Emory felt his heart jump! He could not wait to see his father. Emory said his goodbyes to his grandmother and headed home to meet his father. When Emory arrived home, his father was waiting for him. He ran up to him and gave him a huge, loving hug. At dinner that night he told his father about how he had learned to pop a chicken's neck. His father was exceedingly impressed. Emory enjoyed having his father home. At last he could spend quality time with his father.

Madison Kirkwood
Alabama, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 6* (2011)

Sugar, Stamps, Bikes, and Metal

1942
St. Louis, Missouri, USA

I was eight, and it was the time of World War II. This is the story of one week of my life when my country, the United States, was fighting. My name is Al Siwak. If I had written a diary, this is how it might have read.

July 1, 1942
Today my friends and I collected metal. We knocked on doors of the houses in our neighborhood and asked for anything metal: chicken wire, tin cans, or aluminum foil from gum wrappers, which we saved in balls till they were large enough to be collected. Then a truck drove by, and we put all the metal in the truck. The truck driver takes the metal to a collection site, from where it is used to build tanks, ships, planes, and bombs for the war that's going on. My friends and I plan to do this every day until the war stops.

July 2, 1942
What's really a problem is that most of the metal our country has is being used for weapons, not for cars, so my parents can't buy a car, even though they want to. Also, we are only allowed to buy a certain amount of food, because the government is sending most food to

the soldiers. We have to use food stamps to buy meat, tea, cheese, and sugar. Once our food stamps are gone, we can't buy that kind of food anymore.[1] I am craving a big, meaty, delicious steak. Ugh . . .

July 3, 1942
Today my mom sent me to the store with a sugar stamp to buy sugar. I couldn't wait to taste my mom's brownies! I was on my way, skipping, when the stamp fell down on the concrete sidewalk. I didn't notice that I had dropped the stamp, so I kept skipping to the store to get the sugar. I went down the aisle, pulled the sugar down, and happily walked to the checkout lane.

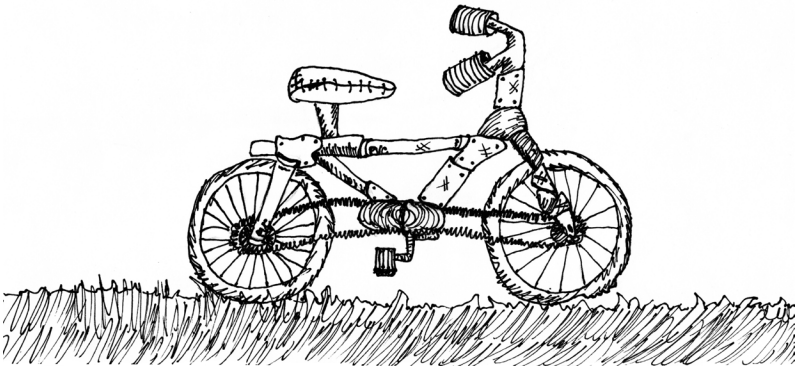
The clerk said, "Where's your stamp?"

I reached into my pocket, and it wasn't there. "I'm sure I had it!" I cried.

But the clerk said no. So I sadly put back the sugar and walked home with my head down. I told my mom my story, and I guess that's the end of brownies.

July 4, 1942
Today is the day I'm old enough to ride a bicycle. It's my birthday! But all metal is being used for weapons, so I thought I wouldn't get one. But then Grandpa Dave

1. Each person was allowed a certain amount of each rationed food for a certain period of time.



Maggie Morse

found somebody to make a bicycle for me out of used bicycle parts. Grandpa Dave is a little worried that it won't hold up, but I'm not. I love my new orange bicycle, and I'm so excited to get outside and show my friends.

That's a week of my ordinary life during World War II. Now I'm a grandfather myself, and I just bought my granddaughter a new pink bike. And I told her these stories, which she has written here.

Natalie Rose Schuver
Missouri, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 8* (2013)

Meat!

c. 1942
St. Louis, Missouri, USA

During World War II, people in the United States had something called "rationing cards." You would have cards for milk, meat, and other things, because the war made many kinds of food and other supplies hard to get. Every time you bought something that was rationed, the shop owner would punch a hole in your rationing card, and if you used up your whole rationing card you couldn't get any more of the product until you were allowed to get a new card. There were cars, but they were not used much because there was a stop sign at every intersection and it just took too long. There wasn't much gasoline anyway.

Meat was uncommon, because most of it was going to the war effort. Therefore, people didn't often have much meat. One day my grandpa was walking and playing with his friends when they decided to go to the deli. He walked in, and he saw a huge juicy steak right there in the deli. He wanted to tell his mom, but she was really far away, so he decided to run all the way back to his house to tell her.

He dashed about two miles back to his house. His mom said, "Let's get it!"

They sprinted all the way back to the deli, and luckily no one had taken the meat. They went up to the owner and asked, "Can we buy the meat in the window?" The owner said okay. He poked a hole in their rationing card and gave them the giant piece of meat.

They scuttled back the two miles to their house, carrying that giant piece of meat. When they got home, they cooked the meat and had meat for dinner that night. It is hard to believe that purchasing meat was so difficult!

Noah G. Steinbaum
Missouri, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 3* (2008)

The Worth of a Diamond

c. 1942
Auschwitz concentration camp, Poland

Have you ever wondered what a diamond is worth?

Yaakov Hirsh was born in 1910 and had eight brothers. He came from a small town in Czechoslovakia. When he was only twelve years old, he went alone to the city of Prague to become an apprentice to a great shoemaker. He learned how to make leather shoes by hand.

Around 1942, when the Nazis crept in, Yaakov was taken away to a concentration camp. Since he knew how to make shoes, they had Yaakov working and repairing leather boots for the Nazi soldiers. (If he hadn't been given a job, they would have killed him.)

One day a German soldier brought Yaakov a pair of boots that he had stolen from a Jew who had been killed. He asked Yaakov to fix and clean the boots so he could wear them. When Yaakov took off the heel of the boot, he had a great surprise! Hidden in the heel of the boot was a precious diamond! It was as shiny as a pot of gold and silver.

Instead of feeling happy and excited, Yaakov was very afraid. He knew that if the Nazis found out that he had the diamond, they would kill him for it. He knew in his wisdom that he had to get rid of the diamond. He sold the diamond on the black market[1] for half a loaf of bread and a bowl of uncooked noodles. That's how much food was

1. The black market is a system for illegally buying and selling goods, especially rationed goods.

worth to him in that time. That is how much a diamond was worth to Yaakov Hirsh.

Yaakov Hirsh was my great-grandfather. He was alive until I was five years old. When I was younger, I was lucky enough to see him often and spend time with him. I was, and I still am, very proud to be his great-granddaughter. Yaakov Hirsh was brave, strong, and very intelligent. He was a survivor. If he had not survived, I would not be here today.

Malka Neuman
New York, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 10* (2015)

Lali—The Legend

1942–1948
Uluberia, West Bengal, India

The man-animal relationship can be an unbreakable one, and our family legend rightly proves it.

It was the year 1942. World War II would continue for three more years, but it had already had its effect on India. India had to send tons of food and thousands of soldiers to aid the Allies;[1] after all, we were part of the British Empire. The taxes were already proving fatal for the farmers, but the war was something different. There was always a fear of Nazi, Japanese, and even Soviet[2] attacks, and there also was a strong possibility of famine and plunder.

My grandpa was then studying in a small school in a minute village. By that time, the famine had already started, and he was soon removed from school. After all, how will a child study while he is dying of hunger? Soon the schoolhouse was empty—not a single child came. Meanwhile, my grandpa had to work in fields with his mom, dad, and brothers so they could get one square meal a day. It was laborious, but at least they were not dying.

Then one day his dad brought home a small calf, totally red in color. Grandpa described it as the cutest being he had ever seen, and affectionately called her

1. The Allies were the twenty-six countries, including India, Great Britain, the United States, France, and the Soviet Union (USSR), that fought against Germany, Japan, and other countries in World War II.

2. The Soviet Union (USSR) had made an alliance with Germany *before* the war.

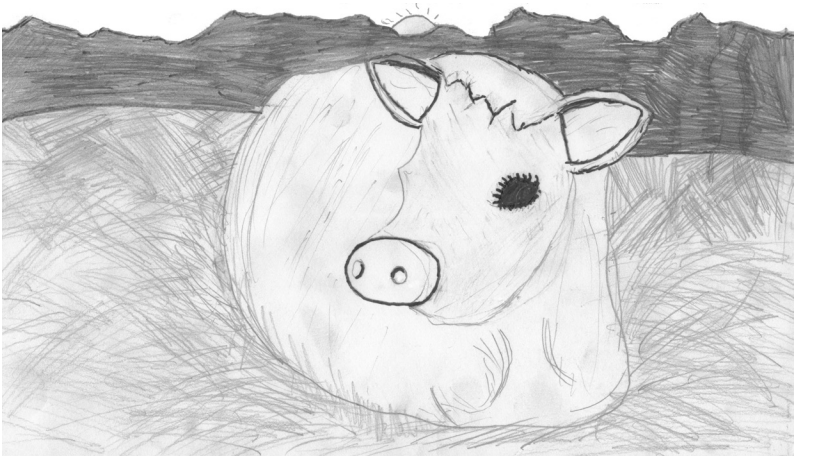
"Lali."[3] Soon all his time went into the care of the calf, and their bond started to flourish. In nights when the mosquitoes were scarce, Grandpa used to sleep near Lali, trying to protect her from all harm. In the meantime my great-grandfather passed away due to malaria.

Soon the calf was a healthy cow and was able to produce milk, and milk meant that there was another source of income. For a time all went well. My grandpa's mom was a tough lady, and she somehow managed to provide for the household by planting rice with her sons. Grandpa's job was to milk Lali and sell half of her milk in the nearby market. "She gave enough milk that even after selling two gallons we still had lots of milk," he boasted proudly. Due to the milk produced, Grandpa's family was able to buy a large land expansion, and farming also started bringing money into the house.

After the war was over, India became independent. Grandpa's cow was then in her golden years. Grandpa was again continuing in high school and had shown an extreme interest in music. His elder brother had got a job, and the house was renovated.

One day Lali took everyone by surprise. Her calf was constantly ramming itself on Grandpa's mom. And suddenly, out of nowhere, Lali came running like mad and gave a full-impact blow to the adolescent calf. That day my great-grandmother was injured gravely, but if it had not been for Lali, she would have died. The bond between Lali and our family was so strong that, ignoring

3. *Lali* (LAH-lee) is an affectionate form of the Hindi word *laal*, which means "red."



Regan Carpenter

her own maternal feelings, Lali saved her keeper from her own calf.

Even many years after her death, Lali still remains in our hearts.

Malab Sankar Barik
Uttar Pradesh, India

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 9* (2014)

One More Survivor

1940s
Glod, Romania; Auschwitz concentration camp, Poland;
Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, Germany

"Get over here, you filthy Jew!" the German officer said. "We're taking you and your family to a nice place."

But Harry, my great-uncle, knew it was not a nice place. He knew he was going to a concentration camp. He was separated from his sister Freydel. He thought she went to the gas chambers.

"Okay, you stupid Jews, get into two lines!" said the officer.

"Go be with your wife," Harry said to his father. They were in a deadly concentration camp; Auschwitz was its name. But what Harry didn't know was that the line his parents were in went to the gas chambers. He never saw his parents again.

Auschwitz was not a nice place. It was dirty, had barracks that they slept in, and of course there were electric fences. All Harry did was carry around dead bodies and then throw them into big piles. But Harry felt sure that one day he would be free.

September 25, 1942: Harry was being shipped to another concentration camp. He would get out of that dirty death hole Auschwitz and hopefully go to a better place.

"Get into the wagon, you Jew. We're going to take you to a wonderful place."

Harry did what he was told, but he shouldn't have. He was going to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. He had heard it was far worse than Auschwitz.

April 7, 1945: The Germans were losing the war! Harry was going to be free! Later that week, the Russians came and liberated the Jews in the camp. Harry gave a last glance at the camp. It wasn't much different from Auschwitz. After the Russians opened the gates, Harry and the other prisoners all ran out.

But the Germans weren't done. They popped out of the bushes with fully automatic rifles. BLAM! Harry heard—and saw—a middle-aged man fall to the ground with a bullet in his head. Harry then heard three shots near him.

Harry heard his remaining friends scream as he fell to the ground, "Harry! Are you all right?"

Harry woke up the next day in an infirmary, a small room filled with people and beds. It was very hot. The doctor told him he had been shot in the arm and twice in the leg. Harry got up and went around asking if anyone had seen anyone in his family, but they all said no.

After a few days, Harry's sister Freydel found him in the infirmary! She was his only surviving sibling. They talked awhile, and Freydel said she would get food, but Harry never heard from her again. He heard she was poisoned by rat poison. Harry went to America by boat and made a living with his uncle.

This story is important to me because if Great-Uncle Harry hadn't survived, I would be selfish and I wouldn't care about how difficult life is. He told me that if this ever happens again, we should fight back and not surrender.

Caleb Wedgle; Colorado, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 7w* (2012)

Saved by the Blink of a Statue's Eye

1942–1944
Mosciska, Poland

Close your eyes and imagine having to live in a small, dirty, bug-infested hole in the ground with seven other people for two years.

My grandfather lived in Mosciska, Poland, in the 1930s. His name was Mark Reches. He had a brother named Henry, who is my great-uncle. Their parents, Clara and Saul Reches, were my great-grandparents, and this is their story.

In the fall of 1942 the Germans decided it was time to free Mosciska of all Jews. My great-grandmother knew the Germans were coming and that she had to make a game plan.

She went to her neighbors, who had a farm, and asked if her neighbors' family could hide them. The neighbors said, "We have to ask our mom, and she will get back to you next week."

My great-grandmother knew there was no time and that she needed to have an answer right away. She ran home. The next day she layered herself with her furry, warm coats. She was going to use the coats to bribe the people to let them stay.

When she got there, she asked the girls if she could speak to their mother right away. The mother, Rosallia, said, "As a good Christian, I want to do the right thing. I stayed up all night and prayed to the Virgin Mary for advice. When the eyes of the statue blinked at me, I knew that the Virgin Mary was telling me I had to hide you."

There were two other people, a brother and a sister, who found out that my family was going to be hidden and insisted they come along in order to survive. The brother owned a watch store, and it was going to come in handy.

On the way to the farm they were caught by soldiers. The brother rolled up his sleeves and bribed the soldiers with the watches. The soldiers said, "Go with G-d,"[1] and let them continue on.

By the time the beautiful sun rose, they had all made it safely to the farm. No Germans in sight.

Rosallia did not know where she could hide them. My great-grandmother insisted that she could dig a hole in the barn. That is how the two years in the hole began.

There were eight people that lived in the hole: my great-grandparents, my grandfather, my great-uncle, my other great-grandmother Rivka Gerber, my other great-uncle Mordechai Gerber, and the neighbors who were brother and sister.

They suffered in the cramped, dark hole. They could only sit, not stand. The bathroom was a bucket that was emptied every night. Sometimes it wasn't safe to empty it, so they left it, and the smell was unbelievably bad.

After almost two years, in July of 1944, the Russians marched into Mosciska and freed the Jews. They freed Mosciska of German control. All eight people that were hiding survived this horrific experience.

Yaakov Reches
Maryland, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 8* (2013)

1. This incomplete spelling is a show of respect.

Faith in the Darkness

c. 1943
Starachowice labor camp, Starachowice, Poland

"Get to work!" shrieked one of the horrible Nazis. Hurrying and hurrying, a few people were running.

"What's all this hurry?" thought Yossel, my great-grandfather.

He was in a forced labor camp. If you did something wrong, they could shoot you on the spot. He was hired to be a translator for the Germans. This was not a safe job.

One day a Jew came over to him and said, "Passover[1] is coming, and we have to bake matzahs."[2]

So Yossel went to the head of the Nazis and said, "My people and I want to make a special food for Passover."

"Okay," responded the horrible Nazi. "Take all the ingredients you want, but you may only use one oven."

Yossel agreed in a happy and excited voice. He took flour and water, and made matzahs. The ovens were so hot that the matzahs baked in just a few short minutes. The Jews didn't have any wine, but when Pesach[3] night came, they had matzahs.

The men ate the few matzahs with gusto. While they were eating, the Nazi stormed into the room looking angry, and screamed, "What are you Jews doing?!"

Yossel, the translator in the group, explained, "We are eating our special food. I told you it is Passover, and

1. Passover is a Jewish festival celebrating the Jews' rescue from slavery in ancient Egypt.

2. Matzah (MAHT zuh) is a thin, crisp, unleavened bread, traditionally eaten during Passover instead of leavened bread.

3. *Pesach* (PAY sahkh) is the Jewish word for *Passover*.

we cannot eat leavened bread. We are eating matzahs. You told us we could eat."

The Nazi said, "You said you wanted bread. This isn't bread. You will starve!! Eat the bread!"

Nobody moved to go near the bread.

The Nazi started getting angrier. He turned to an older Jew in the group. "Goldshtoff!" he yelled. "You're smarter and older than them! Tell them to eat the bread! Who knows the next time that you will have food!"

The Nazi saw that no one was going to eat the bread. He began turning red in the face and sputtering, "You . . . you . . . you . . . look at you!! Your G-d[4] left you! And you are going to be destroyed!! Goldshtoff!! Answer me! Hasn't your G-d forsaken you?? Hasn't He left you?? Hasn't He?!??"

The room was quiet. No one said a word. All of a sudden, Mr. Goldshtoff looked the Nazi in the eye and answered, "No. He has not forsaken us. *Nisht totalla un nisht uf aiybick*.[5] Not totally and not forever."

The Nazi looked around the room in disbelief. Too taken aback to answer, he turned on his heel and walked out of the barracks.

This is the legacy that my great-grandfather left me: G-d will never forsake us.

Not totally, and not forever.

Chava Deutscher
New York, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 10* (2015)

4. This incomplete spelling is a show of respect.

5. This phrase is in Yiddish, provided here in Roman alphabet letters.

Bravery in Battle and Beyond

c. 1943
Germany

My great-grandfather Murray Dronsky was a United States soldier in World War II. He entered the army when he was only eighteen years old, in 1943. He was a foot soldier in the 86th Infantry Division of the army, the Blackhawks. He fought against the Japanese in the Philippine Islands and against the Germans in Europe. In Germany he liberated the Dachau concentration camp and captured Hitler's hideaway in Berchtesgaden, where Hitler spent most of his time during the war. My great-grandfather was awarded the Purple Heart medal for being wounded while fighting and received the Bronze Star medal for bravery in battle.

One very scary morning in Germany, Murray and his fellow soldiers were ready for another dangerous day in the beaming hot sun. The sky was gold with a few blue stripes through the clouds. The men got in their army jeep. Everything was quiet until they turned the corner. Something very frightening caught their tired eyes. It was a fire from a German bomb. Immediately they knew what was going to happen. They saw a German sniper aiming at them, so they quickly jumped out of the jeep to go under it to protect themselves. It was too late, because as Murray got out of the car, he got shot in his behind and suddenly dropped to the rocky ground. He was able to crawl under the jeep so he would not get shot again. A German soldier was sent to make sure that none of the U.S. Army soldiers were still alive. As the German soldier

came up to Murray, they locked eyes. Then the German soldier turned around and told his commander that all of the soldiers were dead. Murray thought, "Maybe not all the Germans are bad after all."

Murray was eventually taken to a safe place, where he waited with other wounded soldiers to be taken to the hospital. They were sitting around a campfire. Suddenly a German bomb fell in the middle of them and killed all of the soldiers, except for Murray, right in front of his eyes. Luckily, Murray had jumped back as soon as the bomb fell and did not get injured. By the time the bus got him to the hospital, his wound was already closed, and the bullet stayed in his body for the rest of his life.

After the war was over, Murray stayed in Germany to help translate for the United States Army in the displaced persons camps, because he spoke Yiddish.[1] When he got home, he married Marion Davidowitz and had three children. He was involved in organizations that helped Holocaust survivors, and he became a post commander in the Jewish War Veterans.

Some people think that the Germans were responsible for the Holocaust, but Murray felt that the Nazis were the ones responsible and not all of the German people. He traveled back to Germany many times in his life.

I am very proud to be the great-granddaughter of a Jewish American hero.

Nili Hefetz
Maryland, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 8* (2013)

1. Yiddish is a language developed by Jews in eastern and central Europe. It is based on German with vocabulary from Hebrew and other languages.

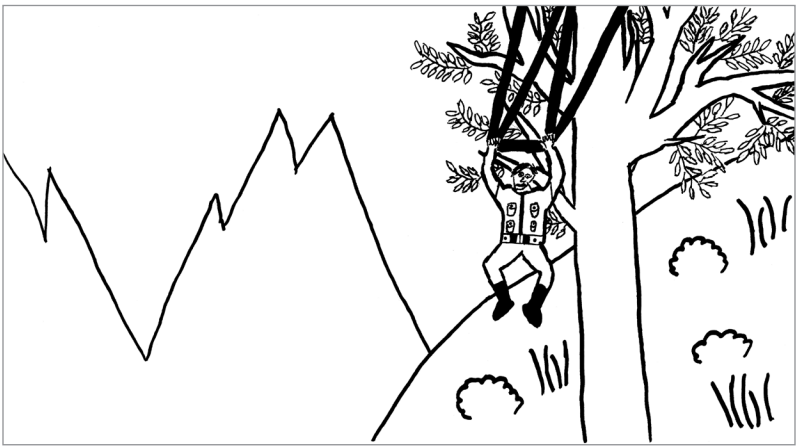
The School That Fell from the Sky

1943
Ea Ea, New Britain, Papua New Guinea

Imagine waking up dangling from your parachute, stuck in a tree in the middle of a jungle in Papua New Guinea during World War II. Your plane was shot down. Well, that's what happened to my great-uncle's father, Fred Hargesheimer.

It was June 5, 1943. Fred was flying a P–38 Lightning fighter plane in the 8th Photo Reconnaissance Squadron. All of a sudden his plane was shot down by the Japanese. Using his parachute, Fred leaped from his plane, which was on fire.

In time Fred fell from a tree in the middle of the jungle. He foraged for food for thirty-one days. He ate snails for food and drank polluted water. While he was eating one day, he heard music. He hoped that, if he went over by the melodic music, the people wouldn't turn him



Esten Ronning

in to the Japanese. He went over there, and it turned out they were native New Guineans collecting water. They did not turn Fred in, but took care of him and nursed him back to health. Surprisingly they even hid him when the Japanese came to the village looking for the American pilot.

While the villagers cared for Fred, he suffered from malaria. He had a terrible fever and was in a lot of pain. More days passed, and it was clear that songs and prayers were not enough. For ten days Fred could not eat. For the next ten days the only thing he could keep down was mother's milk from his native friend Ida. He had survived yet another challenge!

When the villagers were able to, they got a message to a British Coast Watcher. Finally Fred was rescued by a submarine and returned to America.

In honor of this village, Fred sent money to build a school in the village. He visited several times. Fred later wrote an autobiography about his experiences and titled it with the name that the villagers use for their school. They call it "the school that fell from the sky."

Peyton Kopel
Minnesota, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 9* (2014)

Oh, Say Can You See

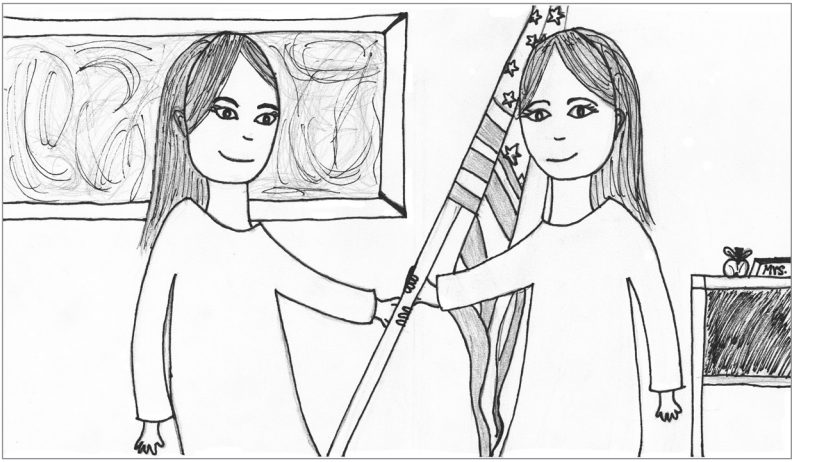
1943
Queens, New York, New York, USA

It was the year 1943. All over the world, the havoc of World War II was raging. Bombs shattered over London as German fighter planes released their explosives. Guns tormented the French as the Nazis infested their land. Troops invaded Italy as the Allies[1] seized their target. All the while, the pencil of Lois Franks scratched the paper. Lois, my grandmother, was hard at work finishing her homework for Mrs. Fowler's third grade class. She was also hard at work scheming some way she could hold the flag.

At PS 127 elementary school, if you had a family member fighting in the war, you could stand up and hold the flag while your class sang the national anthem. To Lois and the other children, this was a great privilege. So as Lois walked to school, she was confident that she would hold the flag. Her brother had not only fought for his country but had died for it. There was only one small obstacle: Lois had never had a brother. However, her desire outweighed this minor difficulty.

Lois arrived at East Elmhurst School in Queens, New York, with her twin sister, Ruth. She entered the classroom and went to her desk, where she immediately envisioned what it would be like to hold the flag that day.

1. The Allies were the twenty-six countries, including Great Britain, the United States, France, and the Soviet Union (USSR), that fought against Germany, Japan, Italy, and other countries in World War II.



Abigail Ruckman

When Mrs. Fowler finally asked for a student to come hold the flag, Lois raised her hand sky-high.

"Lois, do you have a family member fighting in the war?" Mrs. Fowler asked politely.

"Not anymore, Miss. My brother, Harry, died in action."

"Oh, how dreadful! Here, you can stand on the right of the flag, and Ruth can stand on the left."

Ruth! In remembering her fictitious brother, Lois had forgotten her factual sister. Her heart raced—the lie had been in vain. If you had a sibling, you only stood on one side of the flag. However, this was not Lois's only fear. The uncertainty as to Ruth's action tormented Lois, who knew there was nothing left to do.

Ruth stood . . . and crossed to stand on the opposite side of the flag. Relieved, Lois felt convinced that she would not be punished for this lie. True, she didn't get to hold the flag, but this way, unless some unforeseen crisis arose, she was safe.

Nothing did arise—at first. Then, one ill-fated day, Mrs. Franks and her daughters were at the grocery store. In the aisle next to her mother, Lois spied Mrs. Fowler heading straight for Mrs. Franks. As the women spoke, Lois helplessly watched the expressions change on the two ladies' faces. She was caught.

After a good spanking, Lois reprimanded herself for her poor behavior. She reminded herself that standing next to the flag—even holding it—was by no means worth the pain of knowing she had done wrong. Nothing is worth the price of a guilty conscience.

Marissa Little
Pennsylvania, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 9* (2014)

Oranges on the Beach

c. 1943
Holyhead, Anglesey, Wales, UK

Have you ever had so little going on in your life, and then had something good come along? It's surprising, really, to think that miracles actually can happen.

In 1943, when World War II was happening, people were extremely low on food. In Wales they had things called "rations"—people got a set amount of butter, milk, sugar, etc. a week. It's easy to say that they barely ever got fruit or sweet things.

It was a normal summer day on the coast of Wales, except for the fact that the war was happening. Valerie woke up, did her morning chores, and collected the rations. Her mom suddenly came bursting through the door and said, "Valerie! Go down to the beach and collect as many oranges as you can! The Germans torpedoed a cargo ship filled with oranges!" Valerie rushed down to the beach to find not only a few dozen oranges, as she had expected, but hundreds!

That evening Valerie and her mother sampled a few of the oranges to find that they were *cooking* oranges![1] Her mother said she would never get enough sugar to make marmalade, but she would put some aside every week to save for it.

Soon they had enough sugar. Then Valerie and her mom spent a big part of a day making marmalade. They made so many jars it lasted them a whole year!

1. Cooking oranges are a slightly sour type of orange, often used to make jam or marmalade.

"That marmalade was so good," said Valerie. "It's a shame it didn't last longer; I suppose it was a break from all the negativity all the time."

Valerie, my grandmother, found out that even in the toughest times, good things can come. Just try to stay positive, and things will be okay in the end.

Caitlin Harper
Idaho, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 6e* (2011)

Flag of Freedom

1940s
Landerneau, Finistère, France

Do you know anyone who would risk his or her life just to have a simple flag? Well, I do. My French grandfather and his sisters and mother made a United States flag during the French Resistance in World War II. His mother and sisters sewed it illegally.

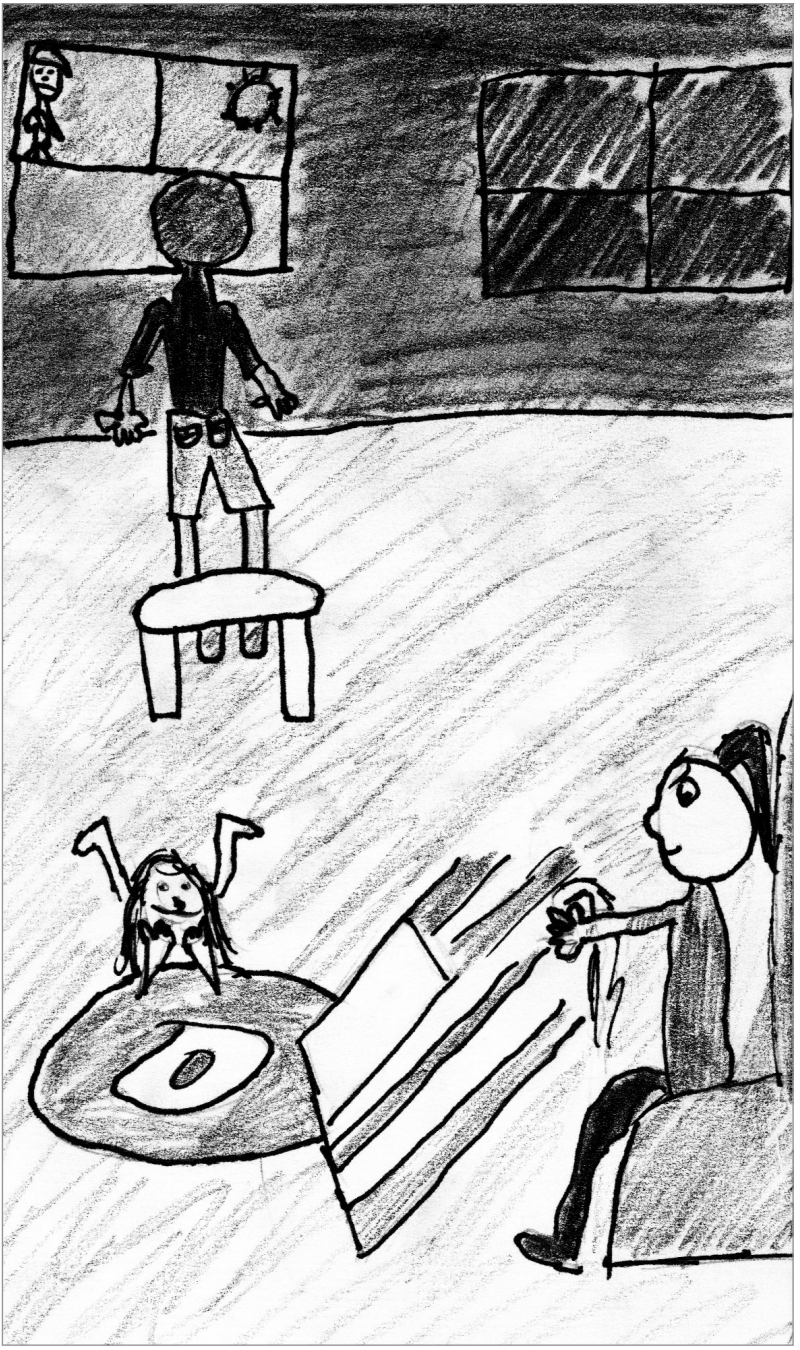
Pierre, my grandfather, was just about nine years old when the Nazis invaded France. It was terrifying for such a young boy. He did not understand what all the Germans were doing there and what the black "spider" on a red flag meant.[1] (It was really called a swastika.) All he knew was that the Nazis caused his parents to get worried.

When the United States joined the war, France had hope. Now they had the powerful United States Army fighting for them with the French and British armies.

To celebrate this, Pierre's family went secretly into their tree house, even though the Nazis were down the street. The family had saved up rations[2] and money for a very long time and finally bought red, white, and blue fabric and began sewing the Stars and Stripes together. They knew very well that they were risking being captured and sent to concentration camps by making this flag. Pierre, being the only boy, was keeping watch. The whole time they were sewing the flag together,

1. The flag of Nazi Germany included a black swastika in a white circle on a red background.

2. Rationing was a system that gave citizens a fair chance to purchase their share of items that were in short supply during the war.



Monica Ehret

nobody outside the family went into the tree house, and the family was never found out.

When the war was finally over, Pierre took the flag out, and many years later he came to the United States and showed it to everyone in my American family, including my American grandfather, to whom Pierre gave the flag. When he brought the historic flag to us, the once-bright red, white, and blue colors were very faded. The once-white stars had a yellow, bleached look to them. One side of the flag had more stars on it than the other. With its faded colors and wonderful story, we could tell that the flag belonged in a museum. Anything with a story like that deserves a place in a museum.

Eventually my grandfather did donate the flag to the National World War II Museum in New Orleans, where it is today. Most people would not think a faded, ripped flag would be of any importance, but no matter what anybody says, I will never stop being so proud of Pierre—the lookout and my grandfather.

Ellie Guyader
Alabama, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 6* (2011)

Love at First Sight

1940s
Omaha Beach, Normandy, France;
Nocton, Lincolnshire, England, UK;
Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Do you know how my great-grandfather Joseph Donovan first met my great-grandmother Catherine O'Donnell Donovan? On December 8, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared war on Japan after that country bombed Pearl Harbor. The United States then became engaged in World War II. In 1944 Joseph Donovan, at age twenty-three, was drafted into the United States Army. That same year, Catherine O'Donnell, only twenty-one, enlisted in the United States Army as a nurse.

Great-Grandma Donovan was a first lieutenant in the army. She started out nursing in field hospitals but was transferred and stationed at Nocton Hall, a hospital in England. She was in charge of the nurses who cared for the seriously wounded soldiers. She cared for both American and German soldiers. Grandma didn't care where they were from. She treated them all the same and did everything she could to make them well.

Great-Grandpa Donovan, a second lieutenant, was stationed all over Europe. On June 6, 1944, he led three boats onto Omaha Beach in Normandy, France. That was one of the most tragic days in history for the U.S. Army. The day was called "D-Day." Grandpa said, "I will never forget that day for the rest of my life."

Grandpa did not know how to swim, but thankfully the boat he was on made it to shore. He tried to take cover, but the Germans saw him and shot his knee with

an MG42. In earlier battles of the war he had been shot in the head, stomach, and arm. Now he was hurried to a field hospital and then shipped to Nocton Hall in England. That is where it all began!

At the hospital in England, Grandpa was bandaged up and put on the healing table. His best friend introduced him to Nurse O'Donnell. It was love at first sight! Grandpa and Grandma talked and talked all day long about themselves. After Grandpa got out of the hospital, he was sent to a rehabilitation hospital. They dated, and two weeks after they met, Grandpa asked Grandma, "Will you marry me?"

Grandma thought he was joking, but he really meant it. She said, "Yes!"

Grandpa's service time ended and he was shipped back to the States, but Grandma still had two weeks to serve. Grandpa didn't want to leave her, but he had no choice. She promised she would meet him back in Boston.

Grandma kept her promise! Grandma and Grandpa were married in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1946. They had six children and raised their family in Milton, Massachusetts. Grandma continued nursing as a school nurse while she raised the family, and Grandpa worked for the United States Postal Service until he retired. Grandma died on June 23, 1994. They had been married for forty-eight glorious years. Grandpa Donovan is now eighty-seven and still living.

It's interesting how bad events like wars can bring people together and change their lives for the better!

Colin James Oakley; Nebraska, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 3* (2008)

Courage's Call

c. 1944
Ardennes Forest, Belgium

After training for and taking part in the D-Day landings, I was tired, homesick, and scared. The war had torn me apart, but I still fought for the people of Europe. City by city we moved deep into France, liberating the lives of the many civilians under Nazi oppression. Fear was constant. I just wanted to go home, see my wife, and live life as it had been before the war. Little did I know what lay around the next corner. . . .

The shell whistled through the air as it plummeted toward its target: an American tank. When the shell hit the tank, both exploded, and the tank burst into flames. I found myself running and stumbling. I knew that the Germans were advancing, and we had no air support. "Take cover!" yelled one of my leaders. My division and I climbed into old foxholes that had been dug for previous fights. We loaded our weapons and waited for the worst, waiting and praying.

As the Germans neared and we heard the gunshots get closer, the tension began to build. Soon we had to duck as bullets began to fly over our heads. Bullets rocketed from my gun and created the stench of gunpowder. I continued to pray and kept aware of my surroundings. As the Germans neared, I had to change foxholes several times; an end seemed more distant every moment. Cries of pain came from a nearby foxhole. I saw that my buddy had been hit and was calling for a medic. I knew I couldn't leave him or he'd die. Summoning up my courage, I

started toward him. Inch by inch, second after second, I crawled toward his foxhole.

Just as I reached him, I felt a stinging in my shoulder. That's when I realized I had been hit. My heart raced, and for a moment I thought of quitting and leaving him in order to save myself. But after thinking of my own family and home, I continued toward him. In utter desperation, I managed to get him into my foxhole, saving his life. The pain from the bullet began to overcome me. Knowing I had done my duty, I waited for a medic to rescue us both.

I awakened in the army hospital. I had been bandaged and medicated. "Robert," the doctor said, "you were wounded in your shoulder but will fully recover."

As I remembered the horrors I had seen, fear came flooding back into my mind. I examined the large cast that was on my shoulder. I remembered my friend and asked, "How is my buddy?"

"Fine," he said, "but if you hadn't got him out of that foxhole . . ." He didn't need to finish. He continued, "You should be very proud of what you did for him. You're a hero."

Later I was informed that I had earned a Purple Heart. It was an honor that I, Robert Tecklenburg, had received a Purple Heart in the course of saving a friend's life and doing my duty.

Zachary Pinz, great-grandson of Robert
Missouri, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 3* (2008)

The Silver Spoon

1944
New York, New York, USA;
Ardennes Forest, Belgium

I was drafted into the U.S. Army in the spring of 1944, during World War II. By mid-December I found myself in a dense forest in Belgium under surprise attack by the German forces. This would eventually be known as the "Battle of the Bulge."

The sharp winter air cut through my clothes as I loaded another round of bullets and shot them into the madness. Suddenly I flew through the air and felt a searing pain in my chest. I reached down into my front shirt pocket and yanked out the silver spoon I was carrying. The bullet that had knocked me over was fused to the spoon.

The spoon wasn't just any old spoon. My roly-poly mother had given it to me. My mother had immigrated to the United States from Russia in the early 1900s and spoke mostly Yiddish.[1] She was well known for being an amazing cook and for being incredibly stubborn.

On the day I shipped out, she gave me a firm hug, smelling of cinnamon, and a care package. The care package contained gray wool socks (which I am currently wearing), home-baked raisin challah, and a sterling silver spoon, which we used on Sabbath. She told me to wear the socks to stay warm, to eat the food to stave off hunger, and to carry the silver spoon in my front shirt

1. Yiddish is a language developed by Jews in eastern and central Europe. It is based on German with vocabulary from Hebrew and other languages.

pocket to remind me of home. I told her I didn't need the spoon, but she shook her sterling-haired head sadly and placed it in my hands. I still refused.

My brother Jay, who had slick brown hair and our mother's stubborn streak, pulled me aside and asked why I wouldn't take the spoon. I didn't really have a reason. Jay told me to carry the spoon so our mother would be happy. I heeded his advice and took the Sabbath spoon with me.

As I lay in the midst of the raging battle, I examined the spoon. It looked like a bent piece of junk, but I didn't care. That spoon was my savior. That very same spoon that had served me matzoh ball soup and helped me fling peas at Jay had taken the brunt of the bullet and saved my life. My mother's love and our religious faith were embodied in the spoon, and that is what truly saved me.

I will never polish the spoon. I will never remove the bullet from the spoon. I will carry the spoon with me forever. I'm Lenny, and my mother's special sterling silver spoon saved my life. And if you ever see me, I will *always* have my silver spoon.

Amy Tishler, great-great-niece of Lenny
Missouri, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 9* (2014)

Wedding Joy in Wartime Trials

1944
Belgrade, Serbia, Yugoslavia[1]

My grandfather and grandmother, whose names are Milan and Nada Miladinovich, lived in Yugoslavia in 1944 during World War II. Belgrade, which was the capital city, had been under German occupation for three years. America was strategically bombing the Germans to decrease their military capability.

Milan was preparing to go to war against the Nazis, but before he did, he wanted to marry his girlfriend, Nada. First he was faced with the problem of finding a church. The churches in Belgrade were not in regular use during the week, only for Sunday services because of the danger of bombing. Milan's relative, who was the minister of the church, reserved St. Marko's Church for the wedding at 6:00 A.M. on Sunday. It was beautiful, and it was practical because bombs were usually aimed not at churches but at areas that would cripple Germany in the war. If there was any danger of bombs during the wedding, the basement would provide a suitable shelter.

Milan and Nada invited friends and relatives to the wedding. Each brought a food dish for the reception afterward. The wedding continued fine—until the dreaded sirens blared! The blasts like ambulance sirens were used to warn the civilians that planes were passing overhead. Yet Milan and Nada decided they were safe enough, so they continued with the wedding. Soon a

1. Today Belgrade is the capital of Serbia; Yugoslavia is no longer a country.

Tori Hughes

second siren went off, signifying that the planes had passed over and everything was safe. The planes had flown over to bomb a nearby oil field in Romania. When the wedding was over, the new Miladinovich couple left the church. They saw numerous people coming out of bomb shelters, like ants scurrying out of their holes.

Because Nada's terrace was too small for the guests, my grandparents decided to celebrate at the park. The wedding, fine weather, and the assurance of safety cheered the city people up so much that they started celebrating with the guests at the reception! They came with guitars, fiddles, tambourines, and joyful spirits. There was music, dancing, and merriment, ultimately making for a remarkable wedding.

Hope Miladinovich
New Jersey, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 2* (2007)

The German Fisherman

1944
Charleston, South Carolina, USA

It was 1944, and World War II was happening. My grandfather was about five or six years old. He lived in Charleston at the time. His father and mother worked at a navy shipyard. They couldn't take my grandfather with them to work, so they paid a retired Greek fisherman to keep him for the day. The retired old man took very good care of my grandfather. He would talk to him, play with him, and feed him. The old man had a business—making fishing nets. While the old man worked, my grandfather would sit on a sea chest where he stored his toys. Over time he grew to love the old man.

When my grandfather had been with the fisherman for a few weeks, he noticed that some strange guys would visit and go to the back of the shop with the old man.

Esten Ronning

While they were back there, they would speak a foreign language.

One day the police, navy, and other authorities stormed heavily into the shop and arrested the old man. My grandfather was shocked and confused at the same time. He stayed there on the chest until they said, "Come with us." They took the old man and my grandfather to police headquarters. Later my grandfather found out that the Greek fisherman was a spy for Nazi Germany. He had been giving food, drinks, and information to German sailors from off-shore submarines.

My grandfather stayed in police headquarters in shock, tears steadily rolling down his face, until his parents came to pick him up and take him home. He cried and cried for the next few weeks, because he loved the old man. It had been hard for my grandfather to see him go.

My grandfather still has that chest where he kept his toys, and he misses the old fisherman to this day. It's funny how you could love somebody so much, yet you barely know that person.

Isabella Palmieri
Alabama, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 10* (2015)

Bad Explosion, Good Result

1944
Richmond, California, USA

When my grandma, who was in kindergarten at the time, lived in Richmond, California, World War II was raging on. She had two older sisters, one younger sister, and one younger brother. Usually her older sisters were gone, leaving her and her younger brother and sister alone in the house. Grandma's parents worked late. In fact, they worked from 3:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M.

One night as Grandma slept in the bed, which was the only bed they had possession of, there was a blackout, and it was in this blackout she heard it: BOOM! The windows rattled furiously, and Grandma thought someone was breaking in. Grandma jumped out of bed. They weren't supposed to go outside, but she was five and her parents were gone, so she rushed outside. She discovered that a ship had exploded at Port Chicago![1] At this time the black sailors were the only ones handling the bombs. Sadly, many black sailors were slaughtered in the decimating explosion.

On the Sunday after the catastrophe, Grandma's family drove down to the location of the big bang to examine the damage. All the windows for twenty miles around were blown out! The black sailors had had no safety devices or special training. Consequently, an enormous uproar began. The black sailors who were so poorly treated refused to work until something was done.

1. Port Chicago was a storehouse for ammunition, and the place where ships were loaded with supplies for fighting in the Pacific.

They finally were given what they wanted: White and black sailors, side by side, would work with the bombs, with appropriate training and safety devices. That terrible explosion caused the government to face how poorly and wrongly they had been treating the black sailors, and how badly they needed safety devices and proper training.

Andrew Holcombe
Hawaii, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 4* (2009)

The Escape

1944
Munkacs, Hungary[1]

Gustav Schonfeld prays to forget his dark past. He tries to focus only on memories filled with picnics in the park, nights sitting around the piano, and family meals prepared by his mother. Those were happier times, fun times, family times, and times he likes to remember. However, those happier times changed without warning.

A simple knock at his front door changed his life forever. The Hungarian gendarme[2] on the other side of that door harshly shouted, "Open the door! You're being arrested for violation of religious beliefs." Before there was time to respond, Gustav's front door burst open, and in marched ten armed soldiers. They immediately dragged his grandmother, mother, brother, father, and him into the street and forced them into a truck. No screaming or begging for them to stop was heard. No level of resistance worked against these heavily armed soldiers. Throughout that night, the soldiers collected other terrified and bewildered Jewish neighbors. They were forced to sit in silence or face a machine gun placed inches from their face.

Eventually they stopped at a train station, where everyone was forced to board an overcrowded boxcar. Gustav remembers holding on tightly to his family members in order to stay with them. Thereafter, they

1. Munkacs is now in Ukraine.

2. A gendarme (ZHAHN dahrm) is a police officer.

traveled in the freezing and cramped boxcar for hours, without rest, food, or water. It was horrifying, terrifying, and most of all, unexplainable.

After what seemed like days, the train finally stopped. Gustav, only ten years old, was scared. He saw large buildings with smoke billowing out of chimney stacks. He heard screaming and crying coming from those buildings. He saw sickly people being pushed around by soldiers with shotguns. As lines were being formed, his father grabbed him and whispered, "Tell them you're sixteen. It will save your life."[3] While it *did* save his life, that was the last day Gustav would see his younger brother and his grandmother.

In the concentration camp, Gustav was separated from his family and housed in a 300-man overcrowded building. He was forced to sleep on wooden bunk beds without bedding, and often go without food. He worked long hours and got very little sleep. Eventually, men started disappearing from his cabin. Gustav didn't know if they went to another building, a different camp, or worse.

One night, without explanation, the eleven remaining men in his building were lined up outside. Gustav knew this meant the firing squad—and his death. As the men gathered into a circle, Gustav moved to the middle. The guns started firing, and all the men fell, including Gustav. Luckily, Gustav was not shot. Instead, he faked his death and later that night escaped.

3. Often, young children arriving at Nazi death camps were in danger of being put to death because they were too young to work.

Gustav Schonfeld finally immigrated to the United States, where he became accomplished in medicine, including serving as chairman of the Department of Medicine at Washington University in St. Louis and making significant contributions in medical research. Most important, he leaves the world his wonderful family: his wife, two sons, one daughter, three granddaughters, and three grandsons. Without Gustav's bravery and courage, the world would have missed a medical and philanthropic marvel.

Katie Korein, granddaughter of Gustav's best friend
Missouri, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 7* (2012)

The Miracle That Gave Me Life

April 8, 1945
Mannheim, Germany

Miracles can happen anytime, anywhere. We can see them if we take the time to look for them. One miracle can change the destiny of many lives. The miracle that certainly affected my life is the story of how my grandpa survived World War II.

It was a normal spring day on April 8, 1945. My grandpa Bernard Bermel was with the American troops about forty miles from Mannheim, Germany. They were chasing the German soldiers through brush and fields. Grandpa was near the front of the line. He was assigned to carry a "BAR" with a tripod. (This was a Browning Automatic Rifle.) It was heavy, it could shoot many shells, and it could shoot them fast. The Germans always tried to shoot the soldier carrying this gun, since it could do a lot of damage to their troops.

It was around 5:00 P.M. when an enemy's bullet hit Grandpa's shell clip. The bullet went through his hip and stomach, and then lodged close to his spine. Grandpa fell to the ground, bleeding to death. A medic treated his wound by trying to stop the bleeding. When the medic was done, he warned Grandpa not to move or he may start bleeding again and could die. He said someone was coming to get another soldier and assured Grandpa that they would get him, too.

Grandpa lost consciousness. When he woke up, the sun was up, and there was a foggy mist hovering around the clearing he was in. Off in the distance he saw several

deer. Grandpa thought he had died and was in heaven. It didn't take long for his pain to kick in and for him to realize he was alive. He figured he had been lying there for about fifteen hours, and he realized that there wasn't anyone coming back to get him. He had been left on the battlefield to die. Remembering that the medic had told him not to move and risk dying, he had to make a decision. He could lie there and die, or get up and try to find someone to help him.

Grandpa got up, and for three fourths of a mile he pushed himself from tree to tree until he came to a road. He saw people and cried out for help. Thankfully, they were friends instead of enemies, and they got him to a makeshift hospital, where they performed surgery and saved his life. When he was well enough to travel, he was shipped back to the United States. Grandpa was honorably discharged from the army and was given the Purple Heart medal.

It was a miracle that Grandpa didn't bleed to death on the battlefield almost seven decades ago. If he had, I would not be here today to tell you this amazing story. It fills me with pride to be the granddaughter of such a brave, honorable, and wonderful man.

Megan Trushenski
Minnesota, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 8* (2013)

Hero

1945
Springfield, Illinois, USA

"I don't think we should do this anymore."

The other robber rolled his eyes. "Of course we should do this. Do you know how much these gas stamps[1] are worth?" He said, "Now come on. Let's hit this place already, before the owner comes back."

It was a Sunday in 1945, and I was putting on my church clothes. My family goes to church every Sunday at exactly 10:30 A.M., just like everyone else in town. Everyone else in town, however, gets to *drive* to church.

Not me.

I have the privilege of walking one mile to get to church. At least that's what my dad calls it—a "privilege." But I don't think it's a privilege at all; I think it's unfair.

"Dad," I said on the way to church that morning, "why can't we ever drive to church?"

"Mary," he replied, "I don't need to waste any gas stamps when you have two healthy legs. It's a warm, beautiful morning out, and you have the privilege to walk to church. I don't see why you're complaining."

I sighed quietly and kept walking.

That morning as we were strutting through town, it felt like something odd was going on. There were fewer cars on the roads and fewer people on the sidewalks. I was sure something wasn't right when I saw Mr. Morris,

1. Only customers who had gas stamps could purchase gas during World War II, and business owners had to collect the stamps when they made a sale.

the owner of the gas station, shutting off all of the gas pumps. My dad went over to talk to him.

"What's going on, Tom?" my dad asked Mr. Morris in a hushed tone.

"We were robbed last night," said Mr. Morris quietly, choking on the word *robbed*. "They took all our stamps."

My dad was silent.

Mr. Morris sniffed and then said, "I don't know what I'm going to do. I just don't know."

I stood there with my family, shocked. "Who would steal another person's stamps?" I wondered. My dad just looked at Mr. Morris for a few seconds, and then came over and whispered something in my mother's ear. She nodded. My dad went back over to Mr. Morris.

"Tom, I think I can help you. As you know, I work for the state, so I receive more gas stamps than most people for my travels. However, I enjoy walking to the places I go much more than being cooped up in an old car, so my gas stamps are of no use to me. I was wondering if you would take them off my hands—and put them to good use," my father said.

Mr. Morris was so happy that he actually hugged my father, and my father hugged him right back.

When I think of a hero, I think of Superman. I think of Superman flying from city to city, saving people's lives, and catching villains. But as it turns out, you don't need to have super powers or a cape to be a hero. All you need is a big heart, like my dad's.

Shannon Flynn, granddaughter of Mary
Missouri, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 6* (2011)

Clearing the Way

1945
southern Japan

In 1944 my grandfather was an eighteen-year-old young man from the coal mining regions of Pennsylvania. For the first seventeen years of his life he had never been more than twenty miles away from the town where he was born. After taking his first train ride to the big city of Philadelphia, he was shipped to boot camp[1] in Maryland.

Despite having aspirations of being a fighter pilot, given his proficiency in electronics he was designated to be a radio operator. Instead of fulfilling his dream of being stationed aboard an aircraft carrier or a mighty battleship, he was assigned to one of the tiniest ships in the United States Navy, USS *YMS 467*—a minesweeper whose job it was to clear enemy mines[2] before they could damage the larger ships of the American fleet.

Before he knew it, my grandfather was sailing through the Panama Canal toward Hawaii and then Guam. He saw his first combat action off the island of Okinawa. It was there that his ship began clearing mines to prepare for the amphibious landing onto that island. His ship had a wooden hull to avoid the magnetic mines that lay in wait. The ship was 168 feet long and drew a draft of only six feet of water. This small wake helped to avoid detonation of contact mines that floated

1. Boot camp is the place where new members of the military receive their first training.

2. A mine is a bomb that is hidden in the ground or in water, and is meant to explode on contact.

dangerously below the surface. The sailors also learned how to counteract a third type of mine, known as an "acoustic mine," by transmitting special sonic waves. After overcoming his initial disappointment at being stationed aboard a minesweeper, my grandfather came to appreciate the small but important role he played in the Allied war effort.

After victory at Okinawa, my grandfather's ship moved to its next assignment, Operation Olympic, the planned American invasion of the southern Japanese island of Kyushu. While his ship was performing its duties there, my grandfather, serving as the ship's radio operator, received a coded message that said to break off all operations and return to Okinawa! Little did he know that Japan had just surrendered and that the world had entered the atomic age.

A few weeks later a Japanese harbor pilot was on board my grandfather's ship, pointing out where the mines were hidden in Kure Harbor. My grandfather told me that it sure was easier finding enemy mines when you knew where they were. An advantage of being aboard a minesweeper was that it was one of the first ships to enter the enemy's harbor and you'd be one of the first to step onto foreign soil.

In September 1945, after clearing the mines from Kure Harbor, my grandfather was asked to escort a senior officer to a town about fifteen miles away called Hiroshima.[3] My grandfather does not like to talk about what he saw that day, but he tells me that what he saw

3. Hiroshima is the city where the first atomic bomb was dropped, on August 6, 1945.

that day he could never forget, no matter how hard he has tried for the past seventy years.

My grandfather is my hero, whom I love very much.

Molly Kuzma
North Carolina, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 10* (2015)

Mighty Mo

1945
Tokyo Bay, near Tokyo, Japan

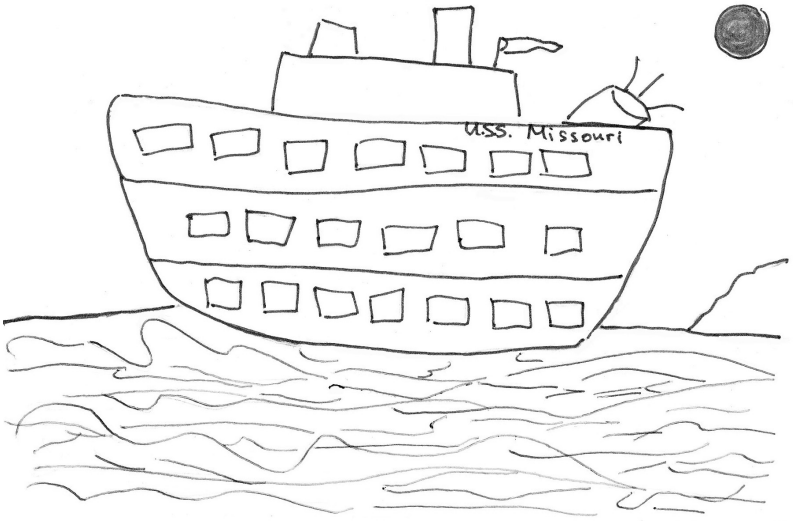
Raymond Melville Morse (Papa II) stepped onto the USS *Missouri*[1] in May of 1945. The *Missouri* was an Iowa-class battleship that housed over 2,000 sailors and support crew. The *Missouri* is just over 887 feet long and just about 108 feet wide. The USS *Missouri* weighs 58,000 tons, but it could still travel at about 30 knots.[2]

Papa was a fire-control electrician on board the USS *Missouri*. He worked on broken meters, guns, and telephones. One of his odd jobs was to go on the fantail, or the back of the ship, and operate the movie projector for the other sailors to watch in their downtime. When the sailors finished the movie, Papa would get on a tender boat and swap movies with other battleships and cruisers.

What Papa remembers most of all is the Japanese surrender to end World War II. After the United States dropped the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, several of the Japanese officers came aboard the USS *Missouri* to sign the surrender agreement. The Japanese officers were wearing black suits and top hats, too. This was a very formal event to end a hard-fought war. Once the Japanese officers left the ship, some of the crew-members threw all of their tools overboard. This was to celebrate the long and hard war finally ending.

1. *Mighty Mo* is a nickname for the USS *Missouri*.

2. This would be about 35 miles per hour.



Christine Kraus

Even though he had some good times on the USS *Missouri*, Papa's war years were still very hard for him. He lost some very good friends during the war. "The hardest part on the ship was being away from home," he said.

We are very proud of our Papa II and his service to our country. It is because of brave soldiers like him that our country is still a free nation and the best place to live in the world.

Allison Ulrich
Ohio, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 4* (2009)

Even Baseball Isn't Safe

1945
near Berlin, Germany

One day in Germany my grandfather Howard was playing baseball with his army buddies. Little did he know he was in for a surprise. He was relieved that World War II was over and that he could just have a little fun until he went home. It was a few days until his infantry unit would go back to America. So what better way to pass the time than America's pastime: baseball. Baseball had always been Howard's favorite sport. He was sick of all the fighting, all the terror. He didn't want to worry about anything.

They were playing in a field, and the grass was tall, and fresh with morning dew—just grass as far as the eye could see. Howard loved places like this. They relaxed him.

"Howard, you're up," called one of his army buddies. Howard grabbed his bat and sauntered to home plate. But then something by home plate caught his eye. It looked shiny and was lying in the dirt.

"It's probably just scrap metal," Howard thought. He went over to get a closer look, then brushed his hand over the thing to remove the dirt covering it. Guess what he found. It was a mine![1] Howard took it all in, thinking it was his last moment on earth. He waited a few seconds. Finally, when he realized he wasn't dead, he called to his

1. A mine is a bomb that is hidden in the ground or in water, and is meant to explode on contact.

comrades, “Guys, we have a mine over here!” His friends sprinted over to see the mine.

“Holy cow!” said one of his buddies. “It must be left over from the war. I guess it was never activated.”

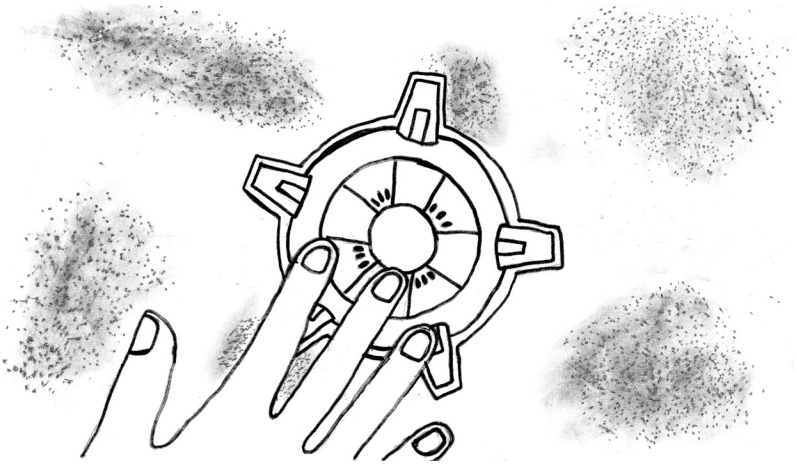
“Everyone back away,” warned another man. “It could still be active.”

None of them knew what to do. Then something clicked in Howard’s brain. They were holding Nazi soldiers prisoner in a camp nearby. He hoped one of the soldiers had deactivated mines for the Nazis. He ran so fast to the camp that even sound was begging for him to slow down. When he got there, he told the guard he needed one of the soldiers.

“But what if he escapes?” the guard asked.

“It’s worth a shot,” Howard replied.

The guard released one of the prisoners and handed him to Howard. Howard took the German to the field and showed him the mine. “Deactivate it.”



Belle Gage

The German seemed to understand, and opened the mine. Everyone was worried about what would happen. Would the mine explode? Maybe the German would intentionally kill them. Then the mine beeped. It was deactivated, and they were safe.

The men went on to play baseball, carefully checking everywhere they stepped. They could now hardly run from one base to the next without worrying that they'd be obliterated any second. Fortunately, no more mines were found.

So next time you play baseball, be thankful you don't have to worry about land mines. Howard was lucky to be alive. I bet it was the most interesting game of baseball he ever played.

Paul Weir
Alabama, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 9* (2014)

Peanuts

1945–1946
Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, USA[1]

It's 1945, and my great-grandfather is in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, addressing his latest letter to his family in south Alabama. After months of hard work in the North Atlantic and South Pacific during World War II, he will be among the last of the troops to go home. He is in the United States Navy, and it is more convenient to send the ground and air troops home first. As he sends the letter, he dreams about going home and seeing his family again. Little does he know that he will spend another eighteen grueling months on the humid, intolerable island.

Days later, he gets a response from his sister, telling him about the latest happenings at home. He suddenly hears rattling in the envelope. He reaches in and grabs a handful of peanut seeds. They may be just peanuts to you, but to him they are a link to his family and home. He sprints to his quarters and finds a space outside to plant the peanuts.

He plants the peanut seeds in a small plot behind his barracks. Each day, he tends to the plants, thinks about his family, and wonders how long he'll be stuck there. A tropical island may seem like paradise to some people, but not to him. All he wants is to go home and enjoy his family traditions, such as Thanksgiving dinner and an Easter feast. But he has no idea when he'll go home.

1. In 1945 Hawaii was a U.S. territory. It became the fiftieth state in 1959.

The peanut plants have finally gone to seed and died, and the next generation of plants is growing. My great-grandfather has given some of the seeds to his neighbors and has shown them how to grow peanuts. Months have passed, and the peanuts are prospering. Thanks to his guidance, several neighbors have started their own peanut gardens. Although some are skeptical, many Hawaiians are excited to have an inexpensive and delicious new food to add to their diet.

Later, a message arrives from the United States military: He will be able to enter the United States in two weeks. He is so excited to go home and see his family again. My great-grandfather was important because he introduced Hawaii to a delicious and nutritious plant that is loved all over the world.

Shelby Lloyd
Alabama, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 7* (2012)

During the Time of War and Famine

Excerpts from Stories by Students in Moldova

(Translated from Romanian)

1938–1948
Petrunea, Glodeni, Moldova;
Ukraine, USSR;[1] Poland

For a long time, people in my village lived in small houses with straw or thatched roofs. They would wear simple clothes during the workdays. But for celebrations or on Sundays, they would change and put on better faces.

from "Untitled"
Ionela Golban; Glodeni, Moldova

During the Second World War people didn't have boards with which to make floors; instead they just had dirt. People didn't have carpet at that time; instead they just used straw. Every night they would lay out the straw, and in the mornings they would burn it.

Women during the war didn't have soap to do their laundry. Instead they used ash to clean clothes. The way they would do the laundry was to first put the clothes in a barrel, then put the ash on top and pour boiling hot water over all of it. During the war, women would make all of their thread by hand in order to make shirts, pants, and rugs.

1. During World War II, Ukraine was a republic in the Soviet Union (USSR). In 1991 it became an independent country.

During the war, people ate weeds and different kinds of grass. People also didn't have bread to eat; they used to eat cornmeal. Cornmeal mash sometimes had the stalks from the corn put into it, too. When making soup, they would also add this mash for flavor. Because they didn't have food, they would eat weeds from the garden that weren't really meant for eating, and sometimes people would get sick.

from "During the Time When the War Passed"
Nadea Tcaci; Glodeni, Moldova

After the Second World War, there was a great drought. During this time many people died of hunger. Rich people would hide their food left over from the end of the war under the floor, in their couches, and under other things made of wood. However, people who had less money, and didn't have anything to eat, would put grass in a little boiled wheat bran and eat it after it had swelled a little. People who couldn't do this died.

from "How It Was During the Time of Hunger"
Cristian Goncearuc; Glodeni, Moldova

The time of hunger took everyone away from home. They had a very hard life. My grandfather's father had five kids and nothing with which to support them. The oldest of the five kids stayed home in the village among the neighbors, but the other kids left with their mom and dad for Ukraine, hoping that there they would find a better life. However, when they got there, they found that they could not live much better than they had in Moldova, so they left for Poland.

In Poland the parents worked very hard in order to support their kids. The clothes that they had brought with them from home had to be sold to help feed the children. They only had one pair of clothes each. During the workdays they would wear the clothes, but before celebrations their mom would wash them all and the kids wore only a shirt until everything dried. At that time they lived wherever the parents found work.

Every day the parents would find themselves different places to work, and would carry their kids on their backs.

from "During the Famine"
Sorina Guţuleac; Glodeni, Moldova

When my great-grandmother learned that her husband had died in the war, she cried for a long time. She remarried after a few years of loneliness with her daughter.

Living in peace and understanding, she had eleven children—seven girls and four boys. By the time she was eighty-seven years old, she had twenty-seven grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and even one great-great-grandson.

She is very happy when I go over and kiss her on the cheek, wrinkled from all of the years of crying and smiling.

from "A Story About My Grandparents That I Love"
Anastasiea Bejenari; Glodeni, Moldova

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 5* (2010)

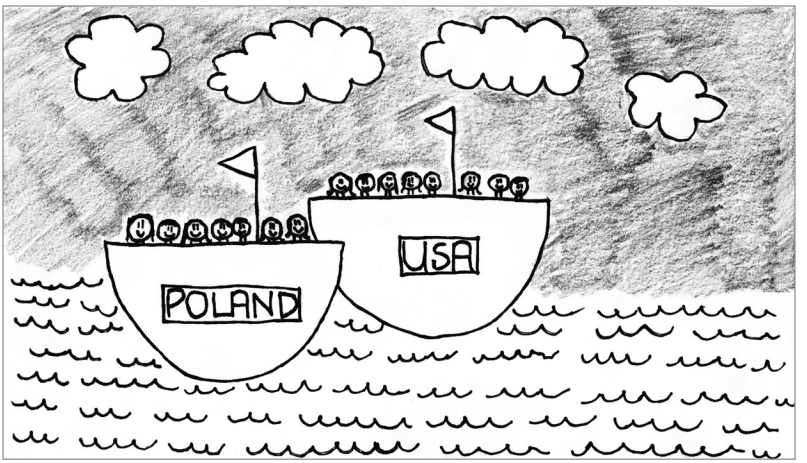
Passing By

1930s–1940s
Warsaw, Poland;
Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

My great-great-great-grandfather lived in Warsaw, Poland. He saved up money to send his wife and children to the United States to have a better life, but he did not have enough money to send himself. He stayed behind in Poland and saved up more money so he could later move to the United States.

In the United States my great-great-great-grandma got tired of waiting. She saved up money to visit my great-great-great-grandfather in Poland as a surprise. By this time my great-great-great-grandfather had saved up enough money to move to the United States to be with his family.

My great-great-great-grandparents were on separate ships and crossed each other's paths at sea but did not even know it.



Molly Andersen

Before my great-great-great-grandparents had left the United States and Poland, they had written letters to each other, saying that they would be coming to be with each other. However, back then it took several months for the mail to travel overseas, so my great-great-great-grandparents did not receive the letters before they left to get on the ships to go where they were going.

My great-great-great-grandma got to Poland and found out that my great-great-great-grandfather had gone to the United States. She could no longer go back to be with him because of the Iron Curtain.[1]

My great-great-great-grandparents never saw each other again.

Makayla Matvick
Minnesota, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 8* (2013)

1. *Iron Curtain* is the name for the blocking of contact between people in Communist and non-Communist countries in Europe after World War II, from 1945 to 1990. It was not a physical curtain.

The Definition of a Nightmare

1940s
Karlsdorf, Serbia, Yugoslavia[1]

Many years before World War II, Germans had swarmed into Yugoslavia to live. After World War II, however, a different situation emerged. Russians arrived and kicked Germans out of Yugoslavia and put the Slavic power back in Yugoslavia. And the Slavs remembered—they remembered Germans taking their land and their property. So they imprisoned Germans in concentration camps. Unfortunately, my grandpa and his mom were put into two such camps.

My grandpa's family had been ethnic Germans[2] living in Yugoslavia for over 250 years, but they were still put in camps, the first of which was the worst. The first year they were in an aircraft hangar with about 1,000 other people, which made up their whole town. They were given just about the daily minimum of food their bodies needed. Sometimes, when the guards weren't looking, my grandpa would run up to the fence and someone would slip him some bacon. He didn't have time for much more though. If he stayed there too long, a guard might notice him. Thankfully that didn't happen. For nearly a year he lived under those conditions, and for a nine-year-old boy, it's a miracle he made it out alive.

After about one year, the Slavic government realized that what they were doing was considered genocide. The

1. Serbia is now an independent republic; Yugoslavia is no longer a country.

2. Ethnic Germans are people who follow many German customs, even though their family might not have lived in Germany for many years.

government relocated the German prisoners to a town not far from the border of Romania. They also lessened the border patrols, which meant fewer guards watching and circling the camp. Even as a boy, my grandpa understood: He had to escape.

Finally the time came. One day when no guards were looking, my grandpa and his mom ran across the border to Romania, heading to Munich, Germany. To get to Munich, they had to cross through three countries: Romania, Hungary, and Austria. Romania and Hungary, the first two countries, my grandpa and his mom passed through with ease. However, when they reached Austria, something went wrong. The Austrians, realizing that my grandpa and his mom were fugitives, threw them in jail, where they stayed for about a month. Then the Austrians, finding my grandpa and his mom were trying to get home after escaping from a concentration camp, freed them and allowed them to continue to Munich.

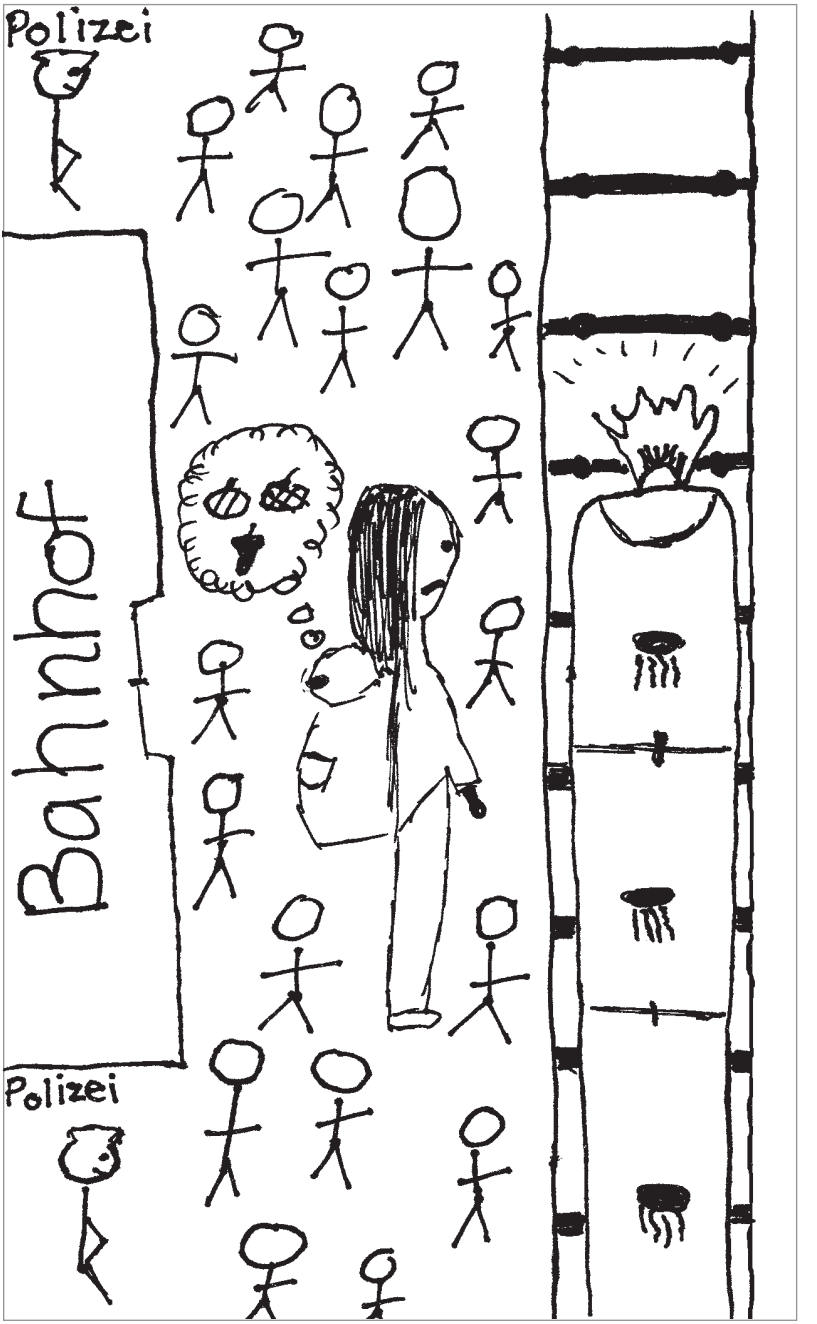
In the end, my grandpa safely reached Munich with his mom. Several years later, they came to America.

It is estimated that at the beginning of World War II there were over 400,000 ethnic Germans in Yugoslavia. About half of them left during or immediately after the war. After the camps, only around 10,000 ethnic Germans were left.[3] Thankfully, my grandpa was one of the few that made it out alive.

Nick Hugeri
Arizona, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 7w* (2012)

3. Estimates of the number of people who died, left, or remained vary widely.



Petra Petermann

Growing Up German

1934–present
Kunau, Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia;
Westerheim, Germany;
Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

My grandma Oma was born on May 18, 1934, in Kunau, Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia, which later became part of Germany.[1] When World War II was over, Sudetenland was taken from Germany and returned to Czechoslovakia, and German people who lived there were forced out of the country.

In August 1945 Oma's family was told they would have to leave their house and everything they could not carry. They were told that each person could take only forty pounds of "stuff." Oma carried the family Christmas ornaments. These Christmas ornaments are made of fragile glass and are all different shapes and sizes, not just round bulbs like the ones we buy today. My family has many of these bulbs hanging on our Christmas tree every year. Oma has some of them hanging on her tree each year, too.

Oma's family had to get ready to leave early in the morning. All the Germans that were forced to leave had to meet at the train station. Fifty people were loaded into each boxcar and taken away. All of Oma's family traveled in one boxcar with forty-four other people. They knew only some of them. No one knew where they were being taken. All they knew was that they had to leave their

1. Sudetenland was taken from Czechoslovakia and added to Germany by the Munich Agreement of 1938. Today Kunau is located in the Czech Republic.

homes, friends, and neighbors. There were forty cars to each train, so that meant there were 2,000 people on each train being taken out of the country. No one knew how many trains carried all the people away.

Oma's train took them to Westerheim, Germany. What was left of the German government had told the residents of Westerheim that they were required to give up part of their house and land to those coming from Sudetenland. 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 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 finished the eighth grade and soon worked as a housekeeper making $10.00 a month. Since the

war, the country was left without many businesses and without much money or food. Oma was happy to find housekeeping work, because she could get food at the house she kept.

Soon she found a job at Siemens. This was a factory job that paid $6.00 a week. With her better-paying job, Oma bought a green bicycle with lights on the front and the back so she could ride fourteen miles round trip between home and work each day. Also, she had to give her mom and dad $2.50 a week to help them with costs at home.

Oma married Wallace (Opa) in October of 1955. Opa was in the United States military. They traveled to and from the United States for many years until they landed for good in Indianapolis in 1968. My house is just a couple of doors down from Opa and Oma today. I like living close to Opa and Oma.

Oma's family and other families were not welcome in a country that they were made to live in. There were no choices on either side about the post-war way of life. Oma's story 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, USA

This story is a blend of two stories first published in *Grannie Annie, Vols. 2* and *3* (2007 and 2008).

Obachan's or Ojichan's Cooking? The Answer Is Obvious

c. 1970
Piscataway, New Jersey, USA

When my mom and her sister were children, my *obachan*, meaning "grandma," had to deliver my great-grandfather's ashes to Japan. The ashes had to go to Japan, because it is traditional to return ashes to the family grave. When Obachan was in Japan, she wanted to visit her friends and relatives. Therefore, she was gone for a long time. It was heaven for Obachan, but it was the opposite for my mom and my aunt, who were stuck in the United States with my *ojichan*, meaning "grandpa."

Mom and Aunt Akiko stayed at Ojichan and Obachan's house in New Jersey. They had to eat the same dinner over and over again, because Ojichan was awful at cooking. He could not cook anything except rice. Well, Ojichan would cook the rice in a canteen, not a pan. He would put some rice into the canteen, and he would put it over an open fire. Then he would burn it—and not on purpose either. So every night they would eat burnt rice.

Even though Ojichan was not a great cook, he was an excellent storyteller. He would sit down on the ground and tell my mom and my aunt stories.

One of the stories he told was about when he was in World War II. He was just a child working in the rice fields. Then he would see airplanes—American war planes—coming. He would then hide in the bamboo, because the bamboo was so thick the pilots couldn't

shoot at him. Then the planes would come so close to the ground that Ojichan could touch them. The pilots then would shoot. After that, a flare of anger would flash through him. He thought, "Why would they kill the villagers?" He would watch a lot of people be killed every time a plane flew in.

It amazed me that growing up Ojichan learned to hate Americans—and that he could love my dad. My dad is American.

When Obachan got home to New Jersey, Mom and Aunt Akiko hadn't just missed Obachan herself, but her cooking, too. Obachan's cooking was superb and a lot better than Ojichan's. Even though the cooking was a bad experience for my mom and my aunt, the experience would turn into a great story and teach them a lot about their heritage.

Maya Cassady
Alabama, USA

First published in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 7* (2012)

Illustrators

p. 20 Isabelle Hilbert; Missouri, USA

p. 30 Sarah Pinnell; Missouri, USA

p. 37 Kyle Rogers; Texas, USA

p. 42 Kim Cheng; Missouri, USA

p. 45 Alaina Ronning; Missouri, USA

p. 49 Kevin VanHorn; Texas, USA

p. 59 Maggie Morse; Missouri, USA

p. 66 Regan Carpenter; Missouri, USA

p. 75 Esten Ronning; Missouri, USA

p. 78 Abigail Ruckman; Missouri, USA

p. 83 Monica Ehret; Missouri, USA

p. 92 Tori Hughes; Missouri, USA

p. 94 Esten Ronning; Missouri, USA

p. 109 Christine Kraus; Missouri, USA

p. 111 Belle Gage; Missouri, USA

p. 118 Molly Andersen; Missouri, USA

p. 122 Petra Petermann; Missouri, USA

Praise for The Grannie Annie

From youthful voices come resounding truths. This beautifully crafted book of World War II stories from students' interviews of their elders serves a double purpose: It captures important history, otherwise lost, and it awakens young people to the wider world and the roles their own loved ones played in it. A must-read for anyone from nine to ninety.

Peter H. Green, Author of *Ben's War with the U.S. Marines*

These echoes of history from very personal and multinational perspectives tackle serious topics in engaging styles. Some stories reveal World War II–era experiences most have never heard of before. The young voices speak of bonds created and lessons learned from the passing of stories from one generation to the next, enriching family relationships and making the past fascinating and real.

Linda Austin, Co-author of *Cherry Blossoms in Twilight,* a World War II Japan memoir

Our son's *oma* is overwhelmed that her "story" is in print. . . . Every family member and family friend has a signed copy.

Karie Millard, Parent; Indiana, USA

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.

Florrie Binford Kichler, Patria Press, www.PatriaPress.com

Teachers and parents, if you want to motivate students to love writing, ask them to write for The Grannie Annie.

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

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

The Reading Tub™, www.TheReadingTub.com

Although most students in our Eastern European village live next door to family members from earlier generations, The Grannie Annie prompted them to talk with their grandparents in new ways—and to discover the customs and challenges of times past. In addition, stories from the Grannie Annie books have given my students a glimpse of the world outside their village, where differences may abound but the underlying human condition remains the same.

Martin Ellinger-Locke, Peace Corps volunteer in Glodeni, Moldova

The Grannie Annie is remarkable in its goals and in its approach. Recording and sharing the stories of preceding generations goes to the heart of education—it teaches us who we are as family members, citizens, and members of human civilization.

Matthew Lary, Co-author of *Victory Through Valor: A Collection of World War II Memoirs*

Year after year, my fifth-grade students are eager and excited to submit their work to The Grannie Annie. The experience of submitting a manuscript—with the hope of publishing—gives newfound meaning to their learning. The students stand taller when they become cognizant that the world is benefiting from their contribution.

Rebecca Friedman, Teacher; Maryland, USA

Publication of our daughter's story is special to us for so many reasons. . . . Both my mother and grandmother passed away a few years ago. Growing up, I heard this story countless times from my grandmother. It's wonderful seeing that story told through my daughter's words.

Andrea Rominger, Parent; Alabama, USA

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*

The Grannie Annie provides the perfect opportunity for students to start asking questions about their families' past—not just the facts, but the stories. Then as they write, students begin to understand how *telling a story* differs from *writing a biography of facts*.

Mark Futrell, Teacher; North Carolina, USA

It is in 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. . . . We discover a deep sense of belonging, values, and pride.

Debra K. Shatoff, Ed.D., Family therapist and author

When young people participate in The Grannie Annie and discover, and then reflect upon, their family's stories and the family stories of others, the experience can create in each of these young authors an enhanced sense of appreciation, understanding, and "connection." Thank you to The Grannie Annie for giving our communities young people who will see our diversity as an asset rather than a deficit, will recognize the sameness even in our differences, and will bring to our world a bit more compassion.

Dr. Phil Hunsberger, Senior Partner, Educational Equity Consultants

Family Stories from World War II

Written and Illustrated by Young People

The family stories in this book are remembered from battlefields, prison camps, and homes in twenty countries around the world. Passed down through generations, these compelling stories honor family members who courageously faced their challenges—many bravely living out their beliefs and celebrating their blessings. Sharing these stories sends echoes of inspiration, strength, and courage throughout our world today.

"The stories included here offer personal and powerful perspectives on World War II and what it meant to the people who lived through this period in our history. . . . These young authors—these young *historians*—are doing incredibly important and engaging work."

—Jody Sowell, Director of Exhibitions and Research, Missouri History Museum

"A must-read for anyone from nine to ninety."

—Peter H. Green, Author of *Ben's War with the U.S. Marines*

"These echoes of history from very personal and multinational perspectives tackle serious topics in engaging styles. Some stories reveal World War II–era experiences most have never heard of before."

—Linda Austin, Co-author of *Cherry Blossoms in Twilight*, a World War II Japan memoir

$14.95
ISBN 978-0-9969394-5-4
51495>
9 780996 939454