

# *Grannie Annie*



*Vol. 4*

**Selections from**

**The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration**

**An Annual Writing Contest for Young People**



## *The Grannie Annie*

### *Family Story Celebration*

The mission of The Grannie Annie is to celebrate family stories! Students in U.S. grades 4–8 and homeschool or international students ages 9–14 are invited to interview their family storykeepers and write a story based on their interview. The Grannie Annie experience leads students to discover and save family stories, encounter history in a more personal way, and hone their writing skills. Students are encouraged to share their story with their family, school, community, and The Grannie Annie. Twenty-six stories from two age categories, chosen to represent the stories received this year, are included in this fourth annual volume of *Grannie Annie*.

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



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The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration  
An Annual Writing Contest for Young People

Thumbprint Press

Portico Books

Saint Louis, Missouri

Because the stories in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 4* 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, sponsors, or publishers.

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In memory of Ann Guirrerri Cutler,  
who was passionate about saving family stories  
1944–2007

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Listening is an act of love.

—*Dave Isay, StoryCorps*

## *A Word from Grannie Annie*

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

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

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

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

April 2006  
Ann Guirrerri Cutler  
The Original Grannie Annie

## *Note to Parents and Educators*

Sail from Sicily to Ellis Island in the belly of a boat. Carry a lantern through the mountain passes of Greece. Grip the railing of a Chinese train just in the nick of time. Enjoy the gentle humor of one grandma who plays spy, and another who simply changes her mind. Discover the drama of pioneer life as one family travels by horse-drawn wagon and another family braves danger in a remote cabin. Cheer for a teen whose steady courage saves the family dairy, and for an uncle who in a burst of courage swims from enemy waters to safety. Clearly, the twenty-six stories in this fourth volume of *Grannie Annie* offer a rich, engaging read. Many also challenge us.

As in family life itself, family stories often bring us face to face with difficult topics. Children and adults make mistakes or poor decisions, and must accept the consequences. Armies attack or surrender, and every person caught in the crossfire is someone's family member. Other less formal conflicts leave some families wondering whether their battle for freedom will ever be won. You may want to preview the meaty stories in this volume so you will be prepared for the important discussions they will prompt.

We are delighted you are part of the Grannie Annie family. It is our hope that the stories in these pages will inspire you to learn and share many family stories in the years ahead, and will lead you to join us again next year for The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration.

Connie McIntyre and Fran Hamilton  
Sponsors of The Grannie Annie



*Grannie Annie, Vol. 4*





# *Boopie-Nonny and the Garlic Talisman*

c. 1915

Aboard a ship crossing the Atlantic from Memfi, Sicily,  
and on Ellis Island, in New York Harbor, USA\*

This is the story of Boopie-Nonny, a very tiny woman who lived a very big life! She was ninety-two years old when we first met. She was born on the island of Sicily. In Sicilian *boopie* means “little doll,” and *nonny* translates into “grandmother.” That’s how Boopie-Nonny got her name. We became best friends, and I got to know her really well. You see, Boopie-Nonny was my great-grandmother.

Because she had lived a very long life, Boopie-Nonny had lots of stories to tell. Her favorite was about the garlic talisman. It was my favorite, too! It made me feel happy, sad, scared, and proud—all at the same time. Boopie-Nonny said that life sometimes makes you feel that way.

When Boopie-Nonny was a little girl, her family decided to move to America so that they could have a better life. She couldn’t wait! Everyone told her that the streets in America were paved with gold. But America was far away.

The only way that Boopie and her family could get to America was by boat and across the Atlantic

\*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.

Ocean. That took almost a whole month! Boopie-Nonny and her family stayed in the bottom of the boat. It was dark and cold all the time. There were lots of other people there, too. They spoke languages Boopie did not understand. But the one word everyone understood and was scared of was *influenza*. Influenza was a monster virus that made people very sick. Some even died.

Boopie-Nonny never got sick. She was protected by the garlic talisman! She wore a magical necklace with three cloves of garlic on a silver chain. My great-great-grandmother made her wear the talisman to protect her from diseases and the monster virus. She smelled so bad no one wanted to get close to her. So she didn't catch any germs!

Boopie-Nonny and her family finally arrived in America. All the passengers on the boat were from other countries. They were called *immigrants* and had to go through immigration at a place called Ellis Island. All immigrants had to stay there until they were cleared by the American officials. Some had to stay for many, many days!

Ellis Island was also called Heartbreak Island. Boopie-Nonny said that a lot of people called it that because sometimes they were separated from their families. Even worse, if they got the monster virus, they were sent all the way back to the countries they had come from! Boopie called it Heartbreak Island, too, when she had to be separated from her mother, who had a cough. Luckily my great-great-grandmother didn't catch the monster virus, and she and Boopie-Nonny got to be together again.

Boopie was proud to be an American citizen. She lived to be one hundred years old! Someday, when I have children, I will tell them about Boopie-Nonny and the garlic talisman. I will never forget Boopie-Nonny. She was a very important person in my life, and we will always be a part of each other.

Brendan J. De Luca-Rodenberg  
Florida

# *The Miracle Man*

1914–1933

Waterbury, Connecticut, USA

A long, long time ago there was a man named Chief Two Moons Meridas. He was my great-great-great-uncle who happened to be Native American and was a part of the Cheyenne tribe.

Chief Two Moons devoted his time to healing others. He began in 1914 selling bags of roots and herbs on the street corners of Philadelphia, and transferred to New York and eventually to his home in Waterbury, Connecticut. Chief Two Moons' healing treatments were considered miraculous because of the way he healed so many sick and needy individuals during the immense influenza season of 1918. Chief Two Moons developed herbs that not only treated his patients, but also kept all of them alive. Countless patients would come to him in search of a treatment that would restore their health.

One of his most superior achievements was the development of Bitter Oil. Bitter Oil was a laxative, a medication used to treat constipation. Using this medication saved many people from suffering unbearable pain caused by undigested foods.

By the time he was thirty years old, various publications declared Chief Two Moons "World's Greatest Herbalist" and "The Miracle Man." Unfortunately, he died at the young age of fifty-five in November 1933. Chief Two Moons was buried at Hillside Cemetery in Rosalyn, Pennsylvania, and was

put in the Waterbury Hall of Fame on September 16, 1997.

Although I was never able to meet my great-great-great-uncle, his legacy has been instilled in my heart. One thing that really stood out to me was when I heard about how Chief Two Moons always gave people free advice and donated a lot of money to charities. Through his hard work and dedication to helping others, Chief Two Moons has inspired me to study hard in school so that one day I can also make a valuable contribution to the lives of many others.

Gwen Haney  
Pennsylvania

# *The Rag Man*

middle 1800s  
Ireland

It is Ireland sometime in the middle 1800s. My great-great-grandfather is awakened by the sound of clanking metal and a voice shouting, “Rags! Rags!” My great-great-grandfather Daniel hurries to the window in time to see a cart filled with rags and scrap metal turning the corner. The cart is pushed by a man with a dirty face and pointy nose, who is dressed in green and brown rags. The wooden cart is a light shade of brown with metal bolts to hold the wheels. It looks as though it will collapse any second.

Daniel hurries into the kitchen and asks his father who the man is. His father, Jimmy, replies, “The man is called ‘the rag man.’ He goes around buying rags, pieces of metal, and newspapers from people for a low price and selling them for a higher one.”

Daniel asks, “Do you know the rag man?”

His father answers, “No, I do not know him, but he is said to be a distant relative. I don’t know for sure though. The rag man is rumored to actually be very rich. It is said that he lives in a very large mansion in Dublin. Some people say he has spent millions of dollars traveling the world, and uses his money to help the poor children in many countries. I don’t believe any of those stories, as I think he is just a poor man trying to help feed his family. Many people think the rag man is mean and gruff, although others say he is kind and dedicated to his wife and family.”

Daniel then runs off down the stairs, hoping to catch a better glimpse of this fascinating man who he is convinced is his relative.

The story of the rag man has been passed down for generations in my family.

John Sullivan  
Ohio







# *The Golden Cross*

c. 1935  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

As we sat on the old wooden porch listening to my grandmother tell stories of her childhood, she began to retell a story that my family members know very well.

“How would you children like to hear the story of my golden cross necklace?” She fingered the chain as she spoke to my sisters, cousins, and me.

“We’d love to hear that story!”

“Yes, it’s my favorite one!”

Since we all seemed happy enough, my grandmother settled herself in as she prepared to retell the beloved story. . . .

“Olga! Have you finished washing all of that clothing yet?”

“The year was 1935, and I was thirteen years old. My mother had been yelling at me since early that morning to finish washing the laundry, and I was nearly done. As I was climbing the steps to my family’s apartment, I realized something didn’t feel right. Had I left a piece of clothing at the public laundromat? No, that wasn’t it. After pondering what I could possibly be missing, I realized my golden cross—the cross I’d had since I was seven years old—was not around my neck.

“I began to panic; the necklace wasn’t anywhere I had gone that day. I searched everywhere—my bedroom, the kitchen, the hallway leading out of the apartment—it was nowhere. For the rest of the day I continued to search for the necklace that meant so much

to me. The days turned into weeks, and as time went by I realized I had lost the necklace for good. Eventually I stopped my searches altogether.”

“Oh my gosh, this is the best part of the story!” my sister yelled.

“Settle down, children. Let me finish the story,” said my grandmother.

“I remember the day clearly; I was sitting up in my bedroom gazing out my window when I saw a glittering object in the middle of the sidewalk.

“*What could that be?* I thought to myself as the object continued to sparkle in the afternoon sun. I raced down to the sidewalk to retrieve what was lying there.

“As I neared the object, I started to think I was losing my vision. There, lying in the center of the sidewalk, was my lost necklace. In that moment, as I replaced my golden cross around my neck, I realized that miracles really do happen.”

“You really are lucky, Sitoo.”\*

“I’m so glad you found it!”

“I am, too, children,” she said. “You have no idea how much this necklace means to me.”

“That is a great story,” I complimented my grandmother.

“Thank you, darling. I’m glad you enjoyed it.”

“Can you tell us another story, Sitoo?”

My sitoo didn’t pause a moment before she responded, “I’d love to.”

As my family encircled our grandmother to hear

\* *Sitoo* is Arabic for *grandmother*.

yet another story, I looked out to see the mountains in the distance. As her words echoed through my ears, I watched the setting sun sink its way down into the horizon until I could no longer see its glowing light. When I turned back around, the story was just getting started.

Katie Salloum  
North Carolina



## *Marianca, “My Sweet”*

c. 1930

North Judson, Indiana, USA

On Marianca’s Indiana farm one summer in the 1930s, my grandma, Elenor, was helping her mother plant tomatoes. Marianca, the family’s crafty and ill-mannered goose, frequently chased young Elenor with her sharp, snapping teeth. Marianca thought she owned the farm and therefore supervised the daily activities.

While Elenor was helping her mother plant tomatoes, Marianca was in her lair, the wood box, planning her next move. She saw the tomato plants, and her crafty brain contrived an ingenious plan. She silently stalked toward the tomato plants and quickly snatched one up in her teeth. She pulled hard, and with a finishing yank it came out of the ground. She silently laid it down and stalked over to the next one. Elenor and her mother were so absorbed in their job that they neither saw nor heard Marianca pull up every tomato plant that they had just planted.

When Elenor and her mother rose to go to the next row, they spied what a neat mess Marianca had created. They turned around to spot Marianca, with her mouth in a laughing grin showing her huge pirate tooth.

Elenor was very afraid of Marianca, for just yesterday Marianca had pinned her against the wall of the barn and threatened to slash her with the pirate tooth. Marianca was strutting around the farm when she had seen Elenor stumbling from the strawberry patch, her arms filled with strawberries. When Elenor saw

Marianca staring at her, she dropped the strawberries and bolted. Marianca had eyed this and, with her tooth gleaming, chased Elenor all the way around the farm until she had her pinned. Elenor's brother, Jim, came with the broom and shooed Marianca away.

All this went through Elenor's mind as she saw Marianca watching her. Elenor left her mother's side and ran as fast as she could to the safety of the house, with Marianca hot on her heels. Marianca stopped short of having the door slammed in her face by Elenor. Marianca strutted away, feeling as if the whole world belonged to her.

After a while Elenor stepped outside to say goodnight to her dad. Marianca let out a bone-shattering scream and let loose for the chase. Elenor was cut off from the house, so she ran to the massive wooden barn doors. Marianca pinned her against the doors and hissed. Elenor squirmed her way inside the barn and found all sorts of things to throw at Marianca, including corncobs, baskets, and pails. All these she pitched at Marianca while Marianca dodged expertly. Elenor's dad spotted the cascade of items spewing out of his barn, so he dashed over to see what was happening. He shooed Marianca away and rescued Elenor from her. He carried Elenor back to the house, sent her off to bed, and walked back to the brooder house to feed the brooder-stove fire. Meanwhile, Marianca was in her lair planning her next move as a pirate plans his next raid.

Erika Dunkelberger  
Indiana

# *Cane Maze Adventure*

c. 1960

Greeley County, Nebraska, USA

It was 1960 on a hot summer day in Nebraska. My dad and all of his eighteen brothers and sisters were bored, and Grandpa had a field full of cane.\*

My dad, his brothers, and his sisters decided to make a maze in the cane. My dad and the others didn't wear any gloves, and cane can cut a person. When they started to make the maze, they cut their hands, so they started to use their feet. But the cane cut their legs. My dad got a corn knife. It was dull, but he went into the shop and sharpened it. He came back and started to cut the cane. His brothers and sisters also went to find something to cut the maze. They found a mower and used it.

After cutting the cane, they played hide-and-seek in the cane maze. The maze went all through the field, even to the road. A person didn't know when the others were coming to find him or her. No one could hear them yelling. If they were next to the fence on the other side of the field, it was even more difficult to hear. If you got caught, you were "it" and then helped the others find all the hidden kids.

When everyone was found, the game started over. The first two caught were "it" for the next game of cane maze hide-and-seek. When it started to get dark, they

\*Cane is a tall, densely growing crop related to sugar cane. It is used as feed for farm animals.

ran back to the farmhouse, hoping their cuts were healed so Grandpa wouldn't know what they had been doing.

But Grandpa found out. They were in trouble! In the morning they had to carry all the cane they had cut down and run it through the machine to get the seeds out. Grandpa sold the cane and used the money to plant more cane the next year. By that next year, though, they had learned not to go into the cane field and make a maze.

That next year, the siblings made a fort in the trees next to the house. They used old car seats and tractor tires. That fort is still in the trees today for us to play in if we want.

My dad and his brothers and sisters are all grown up now and enjoy telling stories about what they did for fun out on the farm. There are many more stories about my dad and his siblings when they were kids. The story that I like the best, though, is the story of the cane maze. It is funny that they had to go out in the field and carry all the cane they had cut down in the making of the cane maze.

We still have hot summer days in Nebraska, and we still grow cane. But there will never be another cane maze in the cane field!

Clayton O. Wood  
Nebraska



## *Burn, Stacks, Burn*

c. 1938

Evansville, Illinois, USA

When my grandma was growing up, she lived on a hog farm. She had two horses called Duke and King. Her father grew hay and corn to feed the hogs and Duke and King. Once the hay was harvested, it was put into stacks to dry. Stacks are much larger than hay bales. They are at least seven feet tall and just as round.

A while before my grandma was born, her six-year-old brother, Paul, and her two-year-old sister, Yvonne, went out to play in their hay field. As they left the house, her brother quickly snatched some matches (obviously when his parents weren't looking), ran out into the field, and hid behind some haystacks. Paul began to light the matches one by one. Once they were close to burning his fingers, he would throw them backwards over his shoulder. The drying haystack was catching on fire. That's a lot of hay to burn.

Once Paul realized the stack was burning, he frantically grabbed his sister's hand and they ran away from the fire. When their parents saw the stack was on fire, they tried to put it out, but they couldn't. They had to wait for it to burn out on its own. Once it was out, they called the police. They had no idea that it was Paul who had started the fire.

After the police left, Paul and his sister snuck back home. When questioned by his parents, Paul said that he didn't know about any fire, and Yvonne was too scared to talk.

Much later his father asked, like he would ask any other question, “How many matches do you have in your pocket, Paul?”

Paul replied, “Oh, about three or four.”

Lily Turbe  
Missouri

## *Mother Said, “We’ll Find a Way”*

1942

Mars Hill, North Carolina, USA

Imagine watching your house burn to the ground, and feeling all your hopes and aspirations burning, too. This is what Luther, who always dreamed of being a doctor, experienced sixty-seven years ago as a teenager.

Luther grew up in Mars Hill, North Carolina. Located in western North Carolina, Mars Hill was a very small mountain community. Times were hard for Luther’s family, as they were for most families in the years following the Great Depression. Luther’s mother was a schoolteacher, and his father farmed. The family’s two-story eight-room wooden house sat on a hill, with Mars Hill College at its back door. In order to earn more money, Luther’s mother housed overnight guests in the spare bedrooms and boarded college boys in the basement.

On January 22, 1942, eighteen-year-old Luther woke up at 1:20 a.m. to find smoke filling his upstairs bedroom. Sprinting down the stairs, Luther, then a student at Mars Hill College, raced to the dining room, where a wood-burning stove was located. Throwing open the dining room door, Luther discovered the side of the room in flames.

Dashing around the house, Luther awoke his parents and the sleeping guests. Then, in his pajamas and bare feet, Luther ran through snow and ice down the hill about one hundred yards to the business district. He rushed toward the doorway leading up to the

telephone office. Banging on the locked door, he called out to the telephone operator, "Mrs. Fleetwood, our house is on fire!" She heard Luther's cry and switched on the wailing fire alarm.

The fire truck arrived at the house within minutes, and after heavy hosing the fire appeared to be out. However, the fire was still very much alive, burning behind the beaverboard. In zero degrees Fahrenheit, college boys and townspeople helped take possessions from the house to an empty store building. Thanks to the help of the many volunteers, Luther's family was able to save almost everything in the house.

Watching from across the street, Luther and his parents witnessed their house go up in flames a second time. As he watched the house burn, Luther also saw his dreams of becoming a doctor go up in flames. Luther commented to his parents that now he would be unable to attend medical school. As Luther later recalled, "Mother said, 'We'll find a way.'"

Thanks to the United States government, there *was* a way for Luther to follow his dream. Luther joined the Army and attended medical school during World War II. After completing his training, Luther served as a doctor in the Army of Occupation in Japan and China, going on to practice medicine for over forty-one years. Luther also married Mary, raising four children. Now he is retired in North Carolina and is my loving grandfather.

Even though Grandfather Luther thought his dreams had gone up in flames, he was able to "find a way" to chase them. Today a mirror scarred by the fire

hangs in my house as a reminder of my grandfather's courage.

Mimi McCarthy  
North Carolina

# *Battle in the Pacific*

c. 1943  
Pacific Ocean

James Hinkle was my great-great-uncle and a World War II veteran. He was born February 10, 1922, and died November 14, 1992. One of the greatest stories I have heard about him was the one in which he got shot down over the Pacific Ocean.

He was flying in his P-38, *Ol' Meanie*, over the Pacific Ocean along with his squadron. His plane seated only one person.

Suddenly his plane was hit by a Japanese missile. Hinkle ejected his seat and landed within the three-mile limit off the coast of Japan.

The captain of a nearby submarine got orders to try once to rescue him. The submarine couldn't make it in time. They would have to try to get orders for a second chance.

Meanwhile a Japanese patrol boat raced toward the wounded Air Force pilot. The Japanese wanted to take him POW (prisoner of war). Since Jim Hinkle was within their borders, they could still take him prisoner.

Hinkle struggled to get on the other side of the border. His bleeding leg stung him, but the water was helping to cool it. However, he was in danger of sharks. Even if sharks didn't swim in that area, two thirds of a shark's brain is devoted to the sense of smell.

While Hinkle was struggling to survive, the captain of the submarine tried to get orders for another attempt to rescue him. The person in charge said they

couldn't try again. However, the captain knew better.

The submarine raced against the patrol boat to reach the wounded pilot. The submarine surfaced just enough to open the hatch. A few men jumped out and swam to James Hinkle.

Hinkle safely made it aboard the ship and didn't get caught by the Japanese. Although he was hurt, he wasn't dead. He had survived the plane crash.

During Hinkle's lifetime he was awarded the Purple Heart (for his leg injury), the American Campaign Medal, the World War II Victory Medal, the National Defense Service Medal, and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, along with two Bronze Stars and other medals I can't name. James Hinkle was a true hero during World War II, and we should remember all those who served with him.

Daniel Friend  
Oklahoma

# *Mighty Mo*

1945  
Tokyo, Japan

Raymond Melville Morse (Papa II) stepped onto the USS *Missouri*\* 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 35 miles per hour.

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

What Papa remembers most was the Japanese peace 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*. 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.

Even though he had some good times on the USS *Missouri*, Papa's war years were still very hard for him.

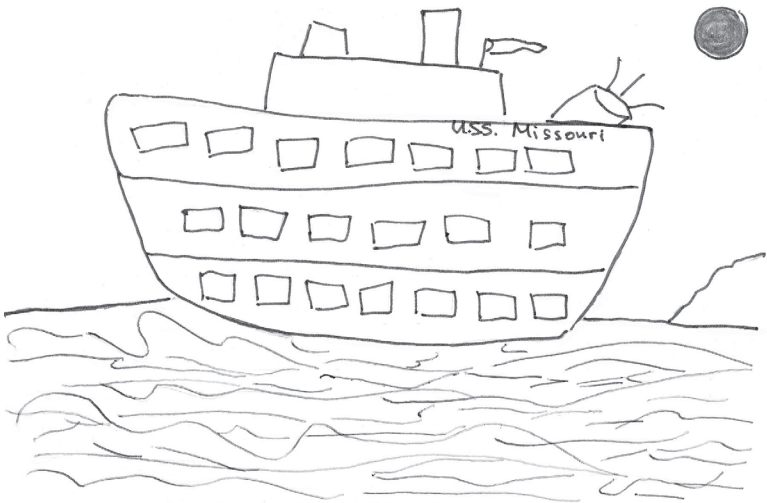
\*The USS *Missouri* is nicknamed *Mighty Mo*.



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



# *The Freedom Fighters*

1971  
Bangladesh

About thirty-seven years ago the war of 1971 changed a whole country. Back then the country that is now known as Bangladesh was just a part of Pakistan. Pakistan was divided into two parts, East Pakistan and West Pakistan. East Pakistan wanted to be a free and an independent country, but West Pakistan wasn't okay with that, so the war of 1971 began. Since East Pakistan wasn't a country, it didn't have a military to fight with. My grandpa, Moshareff Hossain Shajahan, made a group called the Freedom Fighters so East Pakistan would have somewhat of a military.

None of Pakistan's military knew about the Freedom Fighters and wasn't expecting any type of attack from East Pakistan. The first time the Freedom Fighters attacked, Pakistan's government was extremely angry and wanted to know who was responsible for making the Freedom Fighters. Somehow West Pakistan found out my grandpa had created them, so my grandpa had to stay in hiding and be undercover for a while. Every day Shajahan would teach the Freedom Fighters how to use guns, rifles, and other weapons for war. The small group of Freedom Fighters began to grow stronger and stronger!

On the amazing day of December 16, 1971, West Pakistan was defeated! Since East Pakistan was now an independent country, it needed a new name. East Pakistan had fought with West Pakistan about twenty

years before the 1971 war so that East Pakistan's people could speak Bangla. Now the country is called Bangladesh, and no one in Bangladesh will ever forget my grandpa and the Freedom Fighters. Only six months after the war had ended, while some people from Pakistan still wanted to severely punish my grandpa, my mom was born. That certainly was not the last problem my grandpa had with Pakistan, but I am very thankful that I have a brave grandpa like him who will risk his own life to help his country.

Nusaiba Rahman  
Ohio

# *Down by the Railroad*

1944  
La Grange, Georgia, USA

In La Grange, Georgia, my great-grandfather, Jim Dennis, lived a good life. He also had much wealth for being an African-American. He even had a street named after him called Dennis Lane, on which he lived and owned many acres of land. He also had a huge family, which consisted of his wife, three boys, and five girls—all supported by his job on the railroad track. My great-grandfather was the only African-American working on the railroad in La Grange. The main issue was some of the white Americans did not like the idea of African-Americans having the same jobs that they had. They also did not like them making decent wages. Therefore my great-grandfather's life was threatened many times.

It was a normal August day in 1944 in La Grange, Georgia. My great-grandfather woke up to get ready for work as he did every morning, not knowing it would be his last. His job that morning was to repair a small piece of metal on the track. He would not normally work alone, but that day he decided to do the repairs himself. The repair needed to be done between two railroad cars. He had been working for several hours. Then suddenly one of the railroad cars mysteriously started to move quickly toward him with no warning, not giving him any time to react. My great-grandfather was immediately killed between two railroad cars.

As you can imagine, this was a very sad and depressing day for the Dennis family. My great-

grandmother was left a widow with eight children to raise all by herself. If that wasn't enough, rumors were also being told that Jim Dennis was not accidentally killed, but murdered. After the tragic incident there was an investigation, but by law it was ruled an accident. Eventually after several years my great-grandmother moved her family to Indiana to get a brand new start at life.

Gabrielle Nicole Lloyd  
Missouri

# *The Tragedy*

1928

Davis Junction, Illinois, USA

Riney, my great-great-grandpa, was driving down the road in Prairieville, Illinois, listening to the birds sing. *There is a cardinal*, he thought as he listened and tried to figure out the birds' songs. *That one there is a western meadowlark. What is that odd humming noise?* As he went over the top of the hill, he saw an automobile coming in his direction. *So that is what the noise was*, he said to himself when he saw the car. As it got nearer, the car got louder and louder. It drowned everything else out. It got closer, and was right beside him when it swerved and crashed into the buggy. Riney was flipped out, into the air. There was a sound of splintering wood as the buggy was smashed into pieces. He tried to break his fall, but crashed into the ground with part of the buggy on top of him. A searing pain went through his neck and right arm.

When he came to, Alice, his wife and my great-great-grandma, was sitting in a chair by his bed, sewing. Her needle went through the cloth, then pulled to tighten the stitch, and then repeated again. He tried to move, but couldn't. Looking up from her work, her eyes were blood red, as if she had been crying.

"I'm so sorry about what happened to you. The doctor said that you are . . . you are . . .," she stammered, ". . . paralyzed," she said, finishing her sentence with great effort. She bent down and wept. "Oh," she continued through her tears, "what am I supposed to

do? There is too much for me to do! The farm, you, and our daughter, Harriet . . . and how will we ever have enough money?"

"Don't worry," said Riney. "We'll think of something. God will be with us," he added encouragingly. Then a sudden idea hit him as he watched Alice sewing. He said, "Perhaps you could sew to earn money!"

"You know what—that is a great idea," she replied, her face lighting up. "I'll do that!"

So they sold the farm and rented a house in a town called Davis Junction. Free from the farm, Alice was able to sew all day long. As she sewed for others, she stayed home by Riney's bedside, taking care of him.

For over twenty years Alice took care of Riney, until he passed away. Through those years, she had the courage and the strength to do whatever was necessary to get by. I don't know if I could do all that she had to do.

R. A. Risley  
Nebraska

# *The Long Road to Success*

c. 1902  
Kastania, Greece

My great-grandfather was one who captured my respect the most, even though I never met him. He was a well-respected man at the age of sixteen, the eldest of nine children. He was the only son among eight daughters.

Konstantine Samaras lived in the small village of Kastania, which held 150 people in the mountains of north central Greece. He worked in a candy factory twenty miles away in a larger village called Volos. His job was so far away that he would have to leave Sunday night after an early dinner with family. My great-grandfather would walk twenty miles over mountainous terrain, using an oil-lit lamp, traveling all night to get to work by Monday morning. He worked Monday through Friday for approximately one dollar per week. Konstantine would then leave Friday night and walk back to be with his family by Saturday morning. That dollar would help support his entire family.

Konstantine would only be able to spend Saturday to Sunday evening with his family week after week, except for days off at Christmas and Easter. He would walk through dust and heat, or cold wind and snow, just to work to support his family.

Konstantine lived in a dormitory with several other men during the week when he worked in the factory. They had no plumbing, running water, or bathrooms, only outhouses. Meals were rationed, and



almost all the men were very skinny.

My great-grandfather would often say that he was grateful to get that dollar every week to support his family. He took no vacations but only promised that one day his hard work would pay off and his name would be followed by a title. Fortunately, that was my father, Dr. Konstantine Demosthenes Samaras, named after my great-grandfather. My great-grandfather Konstantine Samaras never got to see his grandson become a doctor. I am proud to be his great-granddaughter and my father's little girl.

Leah Samaras  
North Carolina



# *Escape from the Japanese Invasion*

c. 1948  
China

“They’re here! The Japanese are here!” an echoing voice screamed eerily around the dark town. Soong Wong Lee, or Margret, my grandma, lay in her bed sleeping soundly with her eight-year-old legs sprawled out in front of her. She awoke with a start as her bedroom door was flung open and her mom bustled in.

“Hurry up!” Her mother, an oriental woman with a sharp Chinese accent, ran to her bed and pulled her upright.

“Whaaa?” Soong Wong Lee blinked the sleep out of her slanted Asian eyes.

“Get something you like. Hurry, we must leave at once.”

“Whazgoinon?” Soong Wong Lee mumbled.

“Move! Get one of your favorite toys, *now*.” Her mom was starting to sound frustrated. That roused Soong Wong Lee enough to send her staggering toward her closet, her jet black hair flowing behind her. She grabbed her only doll. She turned around and let her mom usher her to the door. As Soong Wong Lee held her doll by the hair, her mom guided her out of the bedroom door and down the hallway. Her mom ran back to one of the rooms. She reappeared a few minutes later with a bag full of clothes and food, and Soong Wong Lee’s little brother. Behind him came Soong Wong Lee’s

father, clutching the precious brass trumpet he'd bought in America after a group of missionaries had given him an airplane ticket to fly there. The family ran to the door and opened it.

"Out, now. Go!" Soong Wong Lee's mother said. Dashing outside and onto the street, Soong Wong Lee pulled her brother blindly along the dark road. When they neared the end of the street, she came to an abrupt halt. Silhouetted in front of them were almost half of the villagers blocking the street. Soong Wong Lee's parents came up behind them and urged their children through the massive crowd. Soong Wong Lee stumbled through the people who were pushing and shoving their way to get to the last train leaving town at midnight.

BANG!

People around them started to scream. One thought was racing through their heads: *Those are gunshots!*

"Go, move!" Soong Wong Lee's mother and father cried. Everyone around them started moving faster. The cobblestone street began sloping upward. Once Soong Wong Lee and her family reached the top of the hill, the train became visible. Everyone around her surged forward.

Then they were upon it, a few yards behind the already packed train. It started to creak and groan, moving slowly forward.

"Get on!" Soong Wong Lee's father picked her up and set her on the platform at the end of the train. She instinctively grabbed the bar to her left. Her family got

onto the platform with her. The train started to pick up speed.

Soong Wong Lee stood clutching the railing with one hand to stay on the crowded train. She watched as her village, the villagers trying to get on the train, and the invading Japanese disappeared into the distance.

Ciarra N. Peters  
Missouri

# *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. Now 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!\* 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 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

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

treated refused to work until something was done. They finally were given what they wished—white and black sailors, side by side, worked with the bombs, with appropriate training and safety devices. If that terrible explosion had not happened, the government might not have realized how poorly and wrongly they had been treating the black sailors and how badly they needed safety devices and proper training.

Andrew Holcombe  
Hawaii

# *The Baby and the Braves*

c. 1911

Fort Hall Indian Reservation, Idaho, USA

When you think about taking a 300-mile trip today, you would just jump in a plane or car for a few hours. But that was not always the case. When my great-great-grandfather (Charles Henry Parkin) and great-great-grandmother (Emma Florence Tolley Parkin) were alive, a 300-mile trip was about ten days long.

It was always Grandpa Charles's dream to own his own barbershop. Many times he owned one in Ucon, Idaho. Every time, Grandma Emma would miss her family and they would move back to Nefi, Utah, taking their children—Marie, Florence (or Flo), and Foye (Charles). Each trip from Nefi, Utah, to Ucon, Idaho, and from Ucon, Idaho, to Nefi, Utah, would be a 300-mile trip one way and would take ten days.

On the eighth night of one of their trips back to Ucon, Idaho, they made camp on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. While they were camped, two braves rode up to the wagon, looked things over, and then rode away. The Indian braves who lived there were feared, and it was told they were dangerous. Grandma Emma convinced Grandpa Charles to break camp and move on towards Blackfoot, Idaho. After they had been traveling for several hours, Grandma Emma looked back to check on the children. She saw only two children and realized two-year-old Marie was missing! Grandpa Charles turned the wagon around and headed back to the reservation.



Can you imagine the worry of these two pioneer parents as they hoped to find their young child alive on an Indian reservation? Hours later when they arrived at the reservation, they found Marie. But she was surrounded by Indian braves! When seeing the parents, the braves politely gave her to the parents. Grandma and Grandpa were filled with joy. Then they noticed that the baby was perfectly healthy and not crying. The braves could not communicate with them, but Grandma and Grandpa realized the Indians had taken care of Marie, hoping they would come back for the child.

This story has been passed down through generations of my family. Though some minor details have changed, it is still very important. This story is not just interesting but a story of hope—hope that a young child would be alive on a dangerous Indian reservation.

Bradley Cluff  
Nebraska

## *A Black Bear's Paw*

1875  
Quebec, Canada

In the late 1800s when pioneers were moving westward and the number of American Indians was dwindling on the plains, one of my maternal great-great-great-grandmothers and her family settled in a log cabin in the wilds of present-day Canada. Nobody lived within a few miles of their place, making it vulnerable to any danger that might occur. In addition, since there was no electric power at that time, it was pitch black when nighttime came so no one was able to tell what was outside in the woods.

One night my great-great-great-grandfather was on a hunting trip, leaving his wife and four children behind in the dirt-floored cabin. After nightfall when my great-great-great-grandmother was putting the children to bed and cleaning the dinner plates, she heard a gentle scratching sound coming from the door. Straining her ears, she heard it again: It sounded almost like a big animal of sorts trying to get in somehow. Curious, she went to investigate the noise, getting a candle from the nearby table and looking out the window. Standing outside their door was a huge black bear, scratching at the dirt underneath the door, trying to get in!

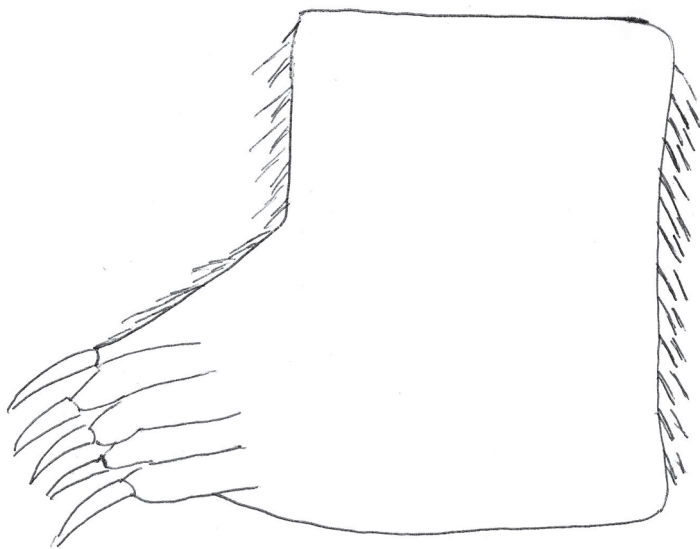
Thinking fast, my great-great-great-grandmother piled chairs and other furniture behind the door, but to no avail, for the bear was trying to get *under* the door, not through it. She kept on trying different things, such

as hitting the bear's fingers whenever they came through. However, this did not work either. Soon most of the bear's arms were inside the cabin, and the hole kept on getting bigger and bigger.

Finally, out of desperation, she took up my great-great-great-grandfather's axe and swung it down with all her might on the bear's paw, cutting it completely off! The arm quickly disappeared, and after an enraged roar from the other side of the door, there was utter silence.

Luckily no other bears tried to disturb the cabin, but if they had, I know what my great-great-great-grandmother would have done: taken an axe and chopped off the paws, no questions asked!

Mimi Ke  
North Carolina



# *A Twentieth-Century Pioneer*

c. 1905–1959  
Ohio, USA

She filled her name out on the paper: Blanche Rice. She knew she had to pass this if she wanted to fulfill her dream of teaching. She would go to college for an official degree later. In the meantime, she needed to get started with her career. A month later the good news came in the mail: She'd passed the teacher's test. Now all she needed to do was get a job. Blanche didn't have a degree, but most women didn't.

A few days later Blanche went to Dundee, Ohio, and applied for a teaching job. She would be teaching high school science, math, and home economics. A week later she found out she got the job. She started the next fall.

On her first day Blanche met her students. She had five seniors. Her first impression of them was that they were very intelligent. She spent that year getting to know these students very well. She admired them for their hard work and perseverance. All those graduating students went to college the next fall. Blanche felt she was a big reason they went.

After seven more years of teaching, Blanche decided to go to college. She attended the College of Wooster in Wooster, Ohio, from 1915 to 1918 and lived in a boarding house for women while she was there. She earned her college tuition by selling pots and pans door to door.

While Blanche was in college, a historical event

occurred in Ohio. She was part of the first group of women to be able to vote in Ohio. There were still some states that hadn't yet started to let women vote. Blanche then voted in every election from 1917 until the time she died at age ninety-nine in 1988. She said, "It's the right thing to do." It was 1920 before the entire country allowed women to vote.

Blanche was one of few women to graduate from college back in 1918. Now she could embark on her teaching career fully prepared. She taught in northeastern Ohio—Canton, Sugarcreek, North Fairfield. She retired in 1959 after teaching for many years. Blanche took time off to have children because women were not allowed to teach when they were pregnant. In one school she was only allowed to teach home economics because she was female.

My great-grandmother lived through the struggle for women's rights. She truly appreciated her rights as a woman and was a pioneer as one of few women with a college degree.

Kristen Rockwell  
Ohio

# *Mail Clerk*

1939  
Gibsonburg, Ohio, USA

After getting married to Frances I. Stewart in 1938, my great-grandfather, Robert Norman Basen, became a mail clerk. He wasn't just any plain mail clerk; he was a mail clerk on a moving train!

On his first day on the job, he was set up to learn from a crazy instructor who didn't really know the correct way of delivering the mail, so he taught Robert how to deliver the mail his way. The instructor told Robert to just throw the mailbag out of the train and try to make it land on the hook. Also he told him not to care if he made it or not. Just between you and me, Robert was really supposed to grab onto the train-car handle, slowly lean out of the moving train, and hook the heavy, thick, big brown bag on the hook.

On his second day of work, the train that Robert was happily working on by himself slowed down as it passed the mining city of Gibsonburg, Ohio. Robert stood up and grabbed the brown bag and then walked over to the opening of the train car. He threw the bag and . . . it missed the hook!

Instead of making the hook, it flew right under the quickly moving train. BOOM! The bag had exploded into millions of tiny little pieces that flew everywhere. The bag's explosion wouldn't have been so horrible if the bag hadn't been filled with the miners' paychecks for one month.

Somehow—I don't understand how he did it—

Robert managed to keep his job for another forty years!  
This is one of the *big* stories from my great-grandfather's  
very adventurous life.

Emily May  
Ohio





# *My Pa-paw*

c. 1957  
Eufaula, Oklahoma, USA

My grandpa (Pa-paw) was about fourteen when his dad was injured very badly while working with a big piece of machinery. At that time my great-grandpa ran the town dairy of Eufaula. The doctor told my great-grandpa he couldn't run it anymore because he had broken his collarbone and had hurt his back. Therefore Pa-paw had to run it for my great-grandpa until he was better.

Every morning went the same way: get up at 5:00 in the morning and milk the cows. Even if Pa-paw spent the night at a friend's house, he would have to get up at 4:30 just to get home in time to milk the cows. After that, he took the milk to his mom so she could skim it and place it in the refrigerator.

When that was done, he took yesterday's milk and put it in the milk truck. He would head to town to deliver the milk to the residents of Eufaula. (Notice: He was only fourteen, so it was illegal for him to drive the truck. He would take the long way through town so he wouldn't get caught.) Afterwards he would park the truck at the grocery store and then walk to school. After school he would work at the store for thirty cents an hour. When he was done working, he would go home and do more chores than any other kid. Then he would eat supper and go to bed. When he woke up, he would do the same thing all over again.

There were many times when Pa-paw would have

to hike through snow just to milk the cows. In the summer or in the winter, he still had to run the Eufaula dairy. This is why I look to my pa-paw; I know that if he could run a dairy by himself, I can do anything.

Dylan Brown  
Oklahoma

# *Baby Saves the Farm*

1969  
Samsun, Turkey

The air was cool, and the wind lightly brushed my back. I popped a fresh green chickpea into my mouth and let its delicious taste stay in my mouth for a while. I was in my father's farm. Seeing the farm he grew up in and eating the veggies there was great! After the picnic was over, we were upset to leave. But my father told us that we might not have been able to see the farm at all. That led him to tell us a story. . . .

Cuma Kose (my grandfather) was beginning to feel overwhelmed with all the work he had to do every day. He had to take care of the water buffaloes, cows, chickens, ducks, and horses. Also, the time for harvest was soon to come. All day long, from dawn to sunset, Cuma and his only son worked hard. Exhaustion filled them at the end of each day.

Cuma knew he had a big farm with the best land in the village. Taking care of the farm was hard work, especially for only two people. Soon Cuma started thinking about selling the farm and moving to the city, even though he loved his farm very much.

When he announced he was selling the farm, many people wanted to buy it. It was in the best spot in the whole village, and it had the best farmland and animals. After negotiating with different people, he found the right buyer.

Meanwhile, his wife was pregnant. Cuma thought that the baby would be another girl to add to his three

daughters, so he didn't think it would make a difference for selling the farm. Girls grew up and soon left after getting married. They didn't stay on to help in the farm work.

One winter February day it began to snow a lot. There was two feet of snow, which caused the roads to close. That day was the day on which the baby was to be born. But the closest hospital was thirty miles away, and going by horse (their only means of transportation) would take five hours. With the help of a midwife, though, the baby was born very healthy.

The baby was a boy! The excitement was all over the house. Someone was told to tell Cuma right away. When Cuma found out, at first he didn't believe it. He was very happy. Suddenly the future in the farm looked promising. He changed his mind about moving to the city, for he believed the baby boy would soon be old enough to help work in the farm. The farm was saved.

Even though my father (who was the baby) never worked in the farm and moved to the United States to study, the farm still is his and we were able to see it and enjoy our summer there.

Nur Kose  
Delaware

# *The Tale of Two Horses*

1920s

Greeley, Nebraska, USA

How would you put a horse on top of a house? I have no idea, but somehow my great-grandfather did it! He not only put one horse on top of a building; he put up two horses and a wagon! This was one of the best pranks that our town has ever seen.

One day Denny Donovan was bored. In a small town in the twenties, there was not much you could do. You went to school, you went to the farm, and you went to church. There was no time to do anything else! Denny was one of the more popular kids in high school, so he was responsible for “makin’ news.” One day he decided to do something so big that people would be talking about it for years. Denny got all of his friends together to talk about the plan.

Denny explained, “Okay, this is what we’re goin’ to do. We are goin’ to get the wagon and the horses and put them up on the roof of that house on Main Street.”

“But, Denny, that house is two stories tall! We’ll never get them up there!” one of the boys complained.

“We’ll use a ramp to get the wagon up, and then we’ll hoist the horses up. The roof is flat, so it will be easy from there.”

So it was decided that they would pull this prank during church on Easter Sunday, because everyone would be at the longer mass. When the time came, Denny acted sick to get out of going to church. He met his fellow pranksters in front of the building they were going to



prank, but there was a problem. Back in those days buildings often had a “fake front.” The front was raised, making the building look larger, but it added two feet to the front side of the building. Denny had not considered this, but when church was let out, there were two white horses and a wagon on top of a building on Main Street!

Now this would be a good story as it is, but what happened next makes this a great story! The priest noticed that Denny was not in church that day, and when he saw what had happened on Main Street, he immediately knew the person who was responsible. The priest made Denny and the other pranksters plant every tree in the local cemetery! On the great treeless plains of Nebraska they had to plant, and care for, over one hundred trees!

So now whenever I see one of those trees, I smile and think of my great-grandfather Denny and the tale of two horses, and a wagon, on the roof of that house!

Ryne Donovan  
Nebraska

# *Grandma Lovey Learns to Drive*

c. 1956

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

Years ago my great-grandma Lovey got tired of asking for rides all the time. So she decided to buy a car and learn to drive.

Grandma Lovey saved her money for a while, then went out and bought a Chevy. Grandpop Richard fell in love with the Chevy. He thought that Grandma Lovey wouldn't drive it and he would end up with it. Grandma Lovey thought different. She said, "No, I am going to learn how to drive."

Grandma loved her car so much. Sometimes she would go outside and look at it, or even sit in it. Everyone would ask, "Lovey, when you going to learn to drive your car?"

Grandma Lovey would always reply, "When I am ready."

While she was waiting to decide when she would learn to drive, her granddaughter Kathina became old enough to drive. Grandpop Richard started to teach Kathina to drive. They drove all over the town in Grandma Lovey's car. Kathina became such a good driver; she eventually obtained her license, before Grandma! Grandma still didn't know how to drive.

Finally, Grandma Lovey got fed up with all this, so she decided that it was time to learn how to drive. She got up the courage to get behind the wheel of the car.

On her first lesson, she drove around the block a



couple of times. She had no more interest in driving and soon became fed up with people always borrowing her Chevy, so she sold it. Grandma Lovey was done driving, and she never wanted to get behind the wheel of a car again. She stuck with asking for rides for the rest of her days, or she rode the bus. The bus . . . well, that's a whole other story!

Daria Scott  
Pennsylvania

# *The Mystery of the Kindergarten Pants*

1960, 1995  
Kinloch, Missouri, USA

My dad, Leroy, was in kindergarten at Holy Angels Catholic School in 1960. He wore navy blue pants and a white shirt to school every day. He walked to and from school with the older kids that lived on his block. His mom would wait for him every afternoon on the front porch. Every single day his left pant leg would be torn from the thigh to the shin. Grandmother would ask, “Boy, what happened to your pants?!”

Sometimes Leroy would reply, “I don’t know.” Other times he would say, “I fell.”

Grandmother was very puzzled, so she started going to school and walking him home in the afternoon. Miraculously on those days the pants did not get torn! So Grandmother let Leroy walk with the other kids again. Once again the pants were torn every day. They continued this cycle week after week. Every time Leroy walked home by himself, the pants were torn. Every time Grandmother walked home with him, the pants were perfect. She even asked the other boys that he walked with if they knew what happened to the pants. The boys said, “We have no idea.”

Grandmother decided to be a private investigator. She tried to hide along the route that Leroy took home so she could spy on him. She thought she would finally know why she was buying new uniform pants week after week. Some of the boys spotted her and told Leroy, “Your

mom is over there.” Grandmother wasn’t such a good private investigator after all.

One day a teacher saw all the boys jumping over a chain-link fence. She told them not to do that anymore. It turns out that little Leroy was trying to follow the older boys when they jumped the fence, but he was so small that his left leg hit the top of the fence every time. After getting caught by the teacher, Leroy was afraid to get into trouble, so he never jumped the fence again. And he never came home with torn pants again.

Grandmother was glad, but she didn’t know why the pants had been torn in the first place or why it had stopped. In 1995 the mystery was finally solved. My mom and dad had been married for fourteen years. Mom and Grandmother were having a conversation about the crazy things my big brother was doing at five years old. Mom said, “The next thing you know, he’ll be jumping a fence and tearing his pants every day.” Grandmother couldn’t believe her ears! It turns out that my dad had told my mom the story about the torn pants. It took thirty-five years to solve the mystery of the kindergarten pants!

Maya Denise Holmes  
Missouri

# *The Griot*

c. 1930–2009  
Detroit, Michigan, USA

Every family has a story to tell, and that story has to be remembered so that it can be passed down to others years later and always stay alive. That's why my family has a special tradition where one member of the family, every fifty to sixty years, becomes the new griot,\* a person to keep the stories of the past in their memory. Griots have to have a love of and interest in their family's past and all the stories from that long-ago time. The griot then passes their role down to another family member, not by choosing a person whom they think would be best, but by choosing the one who asks a lot of questions and is curious about their family, and has a natural love for and interest in stories. The next griot chooses themselves, and when the elder storyteller sees it, they start to train the next person to come in their place.

The earliest griot my family can remember—and maybe even our first griot—was my great-aunt Lucy. She loved learning the history of her family, and keeping memory of everyone and their interesting lives. Sharing stories with others was one of her favorite things to do. Thus she happily became the family griot.

When Great-Aunt Lucy became old, she bequeathed all the family stories to Cousin Ethel. Cousin Ethel was tall and loved to talk and tell stories of the

\* *Griot* (GREE-oh) comes from western Africa, where it refers to a storyteller who passes on the oral tradition and history of a village or family.

many generations of our family. She traveled around to different states by train, often visiting with different people. Cousin Ethel had a wonderful memory of everyone, and always knew who was who, and where they lived. Her great family knowledge came from her many travels and from adventures she had in the places she visited. Every Thanksgiving, she'd weave together wonderful stories about her life and the lives of the many people she knew and met along the way on her journeys across country. Sometimes during her conversations about something, she'd lapse into telling about a particular person, what side of the family they lived on, and with whom. In any case, Cousin Ethel loved her family history and was an avid storyteller.

But there was another curious person in the family who would become the future griot. That person was my auntie Carol. She too wanted to learn about the past, so she asked Cousin Ethel questions about the long-ago generations, and Cousin Ethel gladly taught the new griot everything she knew. After Cousin Ethel, Auntie Carol inherited all the stories of the lives of different people, the history of our family, and just the love and curiosity of being a learner of the past generations. Auntie Carol traveled to many different countries over the world, keeping in touch with family along the way. She has a love for talking with people and learning from them.

I see griots as sages of the family, filled with unending knowledge and wonderful tales. And someday, I may become the next!

Raven Marie Morris  
Virginia



## *Illustrators*

- p.14 Ellie Harrison, Missouri
- p. 21 Maddie Lapp, Missouri
- p. 22 James Moore, Missouri
- p. 26 Caitlin Hawkins, Missouri
- p. 39 Christine Kraus, Missouri
- p. 48 Sadija Lilic, Missouri
- p. 57 Javereious D. Thomas, Missouri
- p. 62 Simone Hall, Missouri
- p. 68 Stephanie Zhang, Missouri





## *Honorable Mention Stories*

Anything Is Possible

Drake Jellison, Indiana

Bang! Bang!

Alexis G. Holguin, Arizona

The Confines of Determination

Maxwell Winter, North Carolina

Explosion at the Last Frontier

Mitchell Shaw, Colorado

For the Love of Animals

James Ross Spellman, Arizona

A Glance into the Future

Ian Maynor, North Carolina

The Life of a Survivor

Haley Redfern, Ohio

Love at First Sight

Eugene Zhang, North Carolina

Magic Medicine

Kaitlyn Conner, North Carolina

Manhole Rescue

Araya Frohne, Washington

Ramona, the Ornerly Horse

Sara E. Petersilie, Colorado

(continued on next page)

Revolutionary Bill  
Hailee Gragg, Ohio

The Silent Hero  
Drake Moore, Ohio

Soldier of Poland  
Lucas T. Fraize, Maryland

A Torturous Trip  
Nicholas Youngblood, Ohio

The War  
Luis Mejia, Jr., Nebraska

## *Invitation to Participate*

Please join us for the 2009/2010 Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration. The submission deadline for *Grannie Annie, Vol. 5* is February 14, 2010. Complete details, including the required entry form, are available at [www.TheGrannieAnnie.org](http://www.TheGrannieAnnie.org).



## *Praise for The Grannie Annie*

Since first becoming involved with The Grannie Annie, we look forward every year to the truly unique and heartwarming stories each student brings to the classroom. It reminds us that we are all connected by the fabric of family and should cherish the life experiences/lessons learned by past generations.

Brian Billings and Laura Amburgey, Teachers  
Whitehouse, Ohio

The Grannie Annie offers my students an excellent opportunity to record and share stories from their family histories. By interviewing relatives, the students learn to appreciate and experience the triumphs and the troubles of their ancestors. These stories should be preserved for these students and for future generations, and The Grannie Annie provides this worthwhile opportunity that benefits all generations.

Susan Jewell, Teacher  
Wolbach, Nebraska

It is a privilege to be a part of The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration. This wonderful anthology helps to shape our children's identity by providing them with the opportunity to understand and value their ancestry.

The infinite power of hope, valor, perseverance, and compassion are present in these endearing and eloquently written stories. These significant character-building qualities of generations past can only contribute to strong family foundations today and tomorrow.

May the legacy of The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration continue for generations to come!

Jodi J. De Luca, Ph.D., Parent  
Tampa, Florida

*Grannie Annie* is a beautiful collection of stories—educational, funny, exciting, touching. . . . When youngsters learn

their family stories, they get a sense of how they themselves fit into history, they become more closely bound to older relatives, and they are more likely to recognize their ancestors as three-dimensional people who will amaze and delight them.

Linda Austin

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

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

The Reading Tub™

[www.TheReadingTub.com](http://www.TheReadingTub.com)

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

Florrie Binford Kichler

Patria Press, [www.PatriaPress.com](http://www.PatriaPress.com)

We had an incredible time working on [our daughter's *Grannie Annie*] story. It was a great way for Amy to learn about the rich heritage from which she comes—and to get more writing experience to boot.

Ruth Whitaker, Parent

Dallas, Texas

The Grannie Annie proved to be a valuable experience for the students in my school. . . . When the children shared the stories, some students who are normally quiet or reserved got to shine because of something really neat that they wrote about.

Dianne Elson, Teacher

Carmel, Indiana

Thank you for starting such a heartwarming project where *all* the kids are winners, whether their stories are published or not.

G-g Metzger, Teacher  
Dallas, Texas

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

Karie Millard, Parent  
Indianapolis, Indiana

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*

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

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

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*, [www.A4Achievement.net](http://www.A4Achievement.net)





# Grannie Annie Order Form

**Price per book: \$14.95; \$10.00 each for 10 or more**

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# *The Grannie Annie*

## *Family Story Celebration*

### **Young People Learning and Sharing Family Stories**

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