

Grannie Annie



Vol. 6 Expanded
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 through 8 and homeschooled or international students 9 through 14 years of age 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.

The works of fifty-eight young authors from two age categories, chosen to represent the submissions received this year, are included in this sixth annual collection of Grannie Annie family stories—the first to be published as a PDF book. Thirty-eight of these stories also appear in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 6*, a paperback book.

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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An Annual Writing Contest for Young People

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 *Grannie Annie, Vol. 6 Expanded*, 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 publishers.

Particular thanks to graphics specialists Josh Hagan, Jeff Hirsch, Doug Nolte, and Harvey Huynh; and to language specialists Graziella Postolache, Steven Zu, and Joseph A. De Luca.

Quilt handmade by Elda Miller.

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Your tax-deductible [donation](#) will enable more young people to take part in The Grannie Annie, and will make the amazing, inspiring stories in the [anthologies](#) more widely available.

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In memory of Ann Guirrerri Cutler,
whose passion for saving family stories
inspired The Grannie Annie
1944–2007

In memory of
Marie Jensen Pedersen—Old Marie—
whose brave activism helped the women of Denmark
become among the first in the world to win the right to vote
1823–1907
Honored by donors Louise and Jack McIntyre

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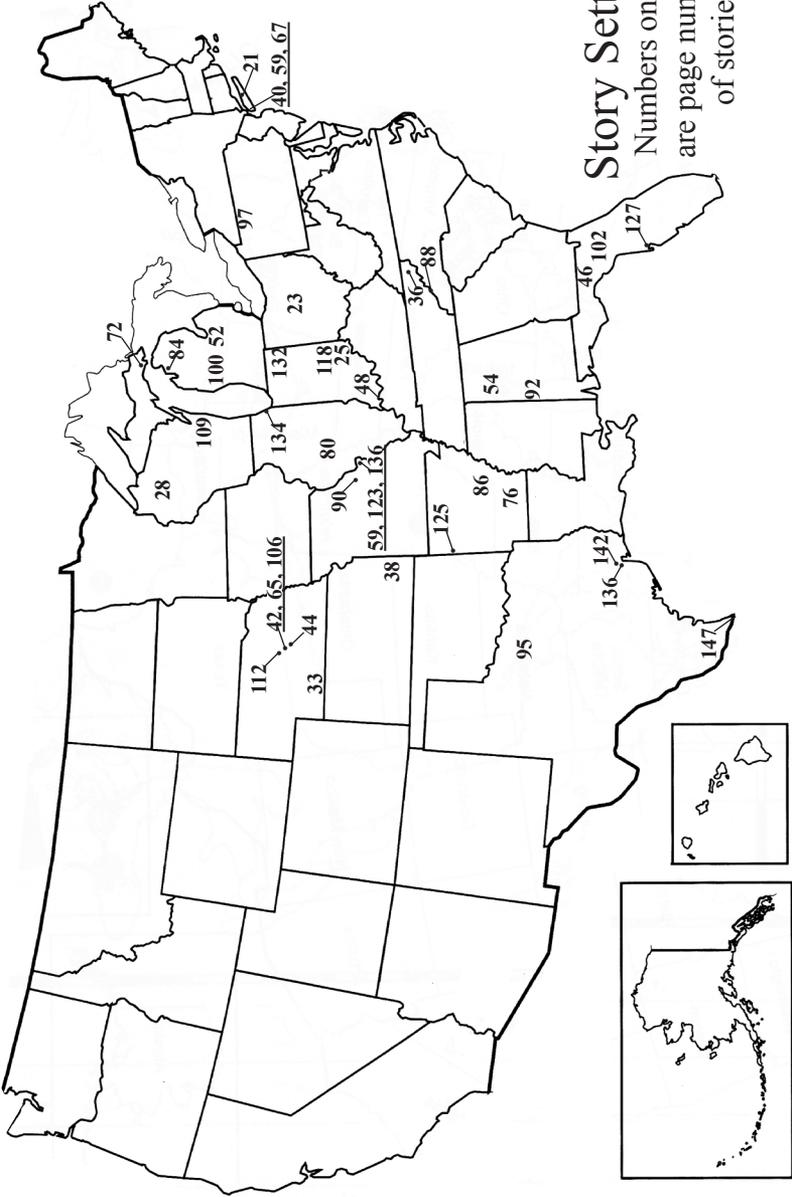
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For USA
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Story Settings
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A Word from Grannie Annie

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

Prepare to race and dive, gallop, collide, and disappear into . . . the pages of this sixth collection of Grannie Annie family stories!

You'll hear the screech of a playground whistle and the ricochet of bullets, set a trap for St. Nick—and catch a look you don't deserve. You'll find bravery at the old swimming hole and at the border, and when the trip is over you'll find love waiting for you on the old porch swing.

This year's journey—through 300 years of world history—proceeds chronologically: The first story in this collection takes place on the back of a bull in 1665; the final story brings you up to date with one of several “recent”—and memorable—immigration stories. This year's stories take place in fourteen countries on four continents—and in international waters! Turn back to pages 13 and 14 to see for yourself. And a note to readers of this PDF edition: If you enjoy holding a lovely book in your hands, you will want to [order](#) *Volume 6*, the paperback book that includes thirty-eight of the stories included in this volume.

Please note that while the published Grannie Annie stories are intended for family members of all ages, you may want to screen the stories for sensitive or younger readers.

Happy reading! May your horizons be broadened. May you be inspired, challenged, and entertained. May you go on to discover (and share) a family story of your own . . . and then join us again next year for The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration!

Connie McIntyre and Fran Hamilton
Directors of The Grannie Annie

Listening is an act of love.
—*Dave Isay, StoryCorps*

Grannie Annie, Vol. 6 Expanded

The Great Bull Ride

c. 1665*

Smithtown, Long Island, New York, USA

Richard Smyth (Smith), my ancestor, was the founder of Smithtown, Long Island, New York. He was a cavalry soldier for Cromwell's army.** Richard met some natives when he went to Long Island. He made an agreement with some of these Indians in 1665. They had heard he was a good horseman, so they challenged him to ride a bull. He would get the land that he rode around from sunrise to sunset while riding a bull.

This might seem strange, but Richard actually trained bulls for riding instead of horses. Richard chose his best bull and set out early in the morning. First he rode to the west. He turned south near a pond. At the pond he and his bull stopped for an enormous drink and some bread to eat. The valley that Richard stopped in is named Bread and Cheese Hollow, because that is where he ate his lunch. Richard continued east after lunch. Richard and his bull made their way back to the start by sunset. The Indians couldn't believe their eyes. They gave him the land that he had ridden around. Richard claimed the land and named it Smithtown.

Many people think this story is a legend. People figured the distance he rode, and some say it would be impossible to ride thirty-five miles in one day. Others think maybe he rode on the summer solstice to gain more

* 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.

** Cromwell's army overthrew King Charles I and the monarchy in the English Civil War.

hours of sunlight. Many people have different thoughts on how he could have accomplished his goal or whether it is a legend. My great-great-aunt told me this story, and I am telling you. Another interesting fact is there is a bronze statue of a bull in Smithtown, Long Island, New York, that supposedly represents the bull Richard Smyth rode on his journey.

Timothy Marshall
Ohio, USA

Chief Blue Jacket

c. 1770s–1795
Ohio Territory, USA

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be an Indian? Well, my great-great-great-great-grandfather Marmaduke van Swearingen got that chance. Marmaduke would never regret his choice.

It was a bright sunny day in Ohio Country.* Marmaduke and his younger brother Charles were hunting rabbits for their family's dinner when they saw a big fat rabbit. They slowly crept toward it and were about to shoot it when out of nowhere a couple of Shawnee Indians stepped out of the trees, scaring the rabbit away. The Indians indicated that the boys were now their captives. Marmaduke knew a little Indian language and asked them to leave his little brother alone, and in turn he would live with them forever. The Indians agreed quickly amongst themselves and slowly led Marmaduke deep into the untamed wilderness of Ohio Country.

Marmaduke quickly learned the ways of the Indians. The Indians gave him a new name—Little Rabbit—relating to the time they had found him with his brother. He slowly earned their trust and became one of them. If a white man saw him, he would think Little Rabbit was an Indian.

The Shawnee did not like the white men and wanted to fight, but their war chief wanted peace. The Shawnee did not like this, and they decided that Little

* Ohio Country (also called the Ohio Territory) was an area west of the Appalachian Mountains and north of the Ohio River.

Rabbit should lead them into war. (By this time, Little Rabbit had become their chief.) With this new position he got a new name and title: War Chief Blue Jacket.

Chief Blue Jacket won many battles for the Shawnee and became legendary with the whites and all Indian tribes. In 1795 he lost the Battle of Fallen Timbers against General “Mad” Anthony Wayne. Because he lost this battle, he had to sign the Treaty of Greenville, and he later signed the Treaty of Fort Industry. Chief Blue Jacket died several years later in 1808 at the age of about sixty-eight.

Katelyn Putzier
Idaho, USA

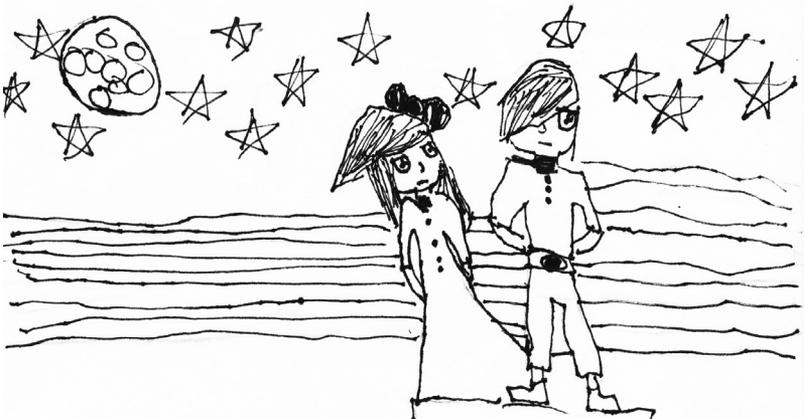
Return to Sender

c. 1883–1884

Jefferson County, Indiana, USA

What would you do if your wedding day was nearing and you saw your bride for the first time in decades? What would you do if you remembered her as beautiful with long black hair, but the person standing on the train platform was a shriveled, disheveled old woman who was a little off in the head? Would you honor your commitment to marry her, or recoil in disgust and beg to send her back? My great-great-great-grandfather John Eble was faced with this situation, and you may be surprised at his solution.

It all started in 1883, when his first wife, Grace Hayes Eble, died. John was lonely and depressed, and sought another love. A woman named Elizabeth came to mind. They had first met in Germany when they were in school many years before. John remembered Elizabeth fondly—and as being beautiful and well kept. He had learned that she, too, had been widowed.



Anastasia Small

An idea hatched in John's head. He decided to write a letter to Elizabeth. In that letter he stated that he wished for her to come to America and marry him. She agreed. John sent her money to come to America. She came by boat and train; therefore, it took a long time for her to arrive. After the long wait, the special day finally came.

That day, John felt as light-hearted and happy as a schoolboy, even though he was sixty-seven years old. When the train finally pulled into the station, what had been excitement and anticipation soon changed to shock and anger. The beautiful girl that he remembered from his school years was gone, and what was left was a somewhat senile and wrinkled little old lady. Feeling cheated, he hesitated to speak. He was angry and disappointed, but he took her to his home.

After Elizabeth was at his house for a few days, John discovered that she was a disaster in the house. She couldn't cook, speak English, clean a house, or learn about personal hygiene! At this point, John thought it was too much and wanted to send her back to Germany. His children said that he had made a commitment to marry her and he had to honor it.

Not wanting to cause anger among his children, John came up with an interesting solution. He solved the problem by building a separate room onto his house just for Elizabeth. There she would live comfortably by herself, and he would live on the other side of the house and not have to interact too much with her. She was happy with the set-up of the room.

Thanks to his innovative idea and willingness to compromise, they lived happily for six years until

John's death. His daughter Louise then moved into the house and took care of Elizabeth until she died twenty years later. This goes without saying: When things seem bad, try to compromise and work for a solution where everyone is happy.

Andrew Tuller
Idaho, USA

Josie and the Wild Cow Chase

1889

Glen Flora, Wisconsin, USA

In the year 1889, my great-great-grandmother Josephine Eming and her family ran a small trading post in the town of Glen Flora, Wisconsin. Though a small business, it did well, and many people liked it. Every day, Josie would help sweep the front porch.

One fine spring day, Josie was tidying up the front display when a young man of the Sioux tribe rode up. Before she could call out a greeting, the man untied one of the cows tethered off to the side and rode away! Without thinking, Josie grabbed a sharp stick and hopped on her horse. She *had* to rescue that cow, for it was one of only seven.

The dust danced in Josie's eyes, and she almost lost the criminal in the haze several times, the black-spotted cowhide fading in and out. The man started shouting curses at her.

"Neep-po! Neep-po!" he cried. Josie knew the area's culture well, and knew that this meant *I'll kill you!* in the Dakota language. She dug in her heels and galloped closer to the crazed rider. Their hooves left resonating thuds on the open Wisconsin hills, Josie slowly but surely gaining on him. Fortunately, the cow was incapable of moving fast for very long, so it wasn't long before they were only an arm's length apart. The thief was wise enough to release the cow so he could escape. Josie dismounted and soothed the disgruntled cow. They began to slowly retrace their path to the



Rebecca Rotty

trading post. Little did she know, she would have a lot more to show for that day than a memorable story.

The next morning a hearty knock came at the door. Josie arrived, flustered and breathing heavily, and flung it open. To her surprise, the chief of the tribe stood on their humble wooden porch cradling a beautiful belt. There were pristine pink, gorgeous green, wonderful white, and glittering gold beads scattered on its surface like wayward stars. He apologized for the behavior of his people and presented the belt to the astonished teenager.

“One side represents peace, and the other, war,” he explained, gesturing to the intricate patterns on either side. “We are at peace. You are a very brave girl.” And with that, he left the aforementioned girl clutching the beaded belt.

The belt stayed in the family for many years. Despite the fact that several of the beads are missing, nowadays the belt never leaves the town in which it was acquired, and it now resides in a museum there. Although

it is pretty and valuable, it is not very well known. Of the few people who do see it, many do not know its story or meaning. For our family, it is a precious heirloom representing the courage of our ancestors and of all the pioneers who settled the Western frontier.

Abby Urnes
Missouri, USA

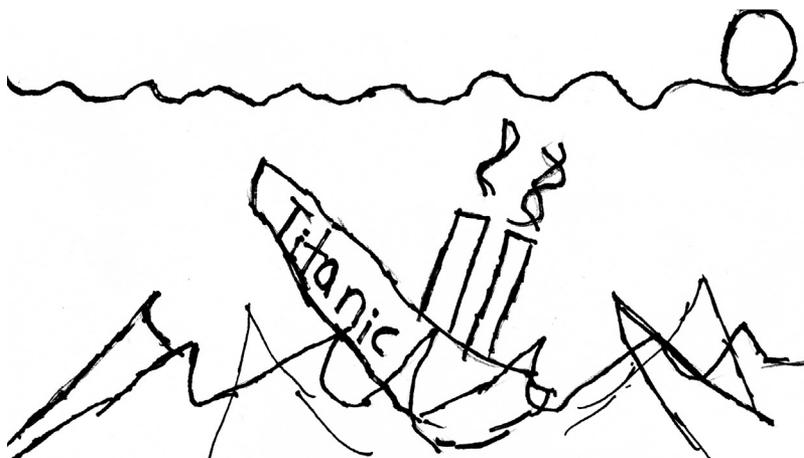
Terror on the High Seas

1912
North Atlantic Ocean

How scared would you be if you were on a ship in the middle of the ocean and you found out it was sinking? That is exactly what happened to my great-great-grandpa.

In 1901, when he was twenty-six years old, Guillaume (William) Joseph Demessemaker from Wilsele, Belgium, and his brothers Emmanuel and Jacques decided to move to the United States. They bought land in Montana, cleared it out to be able to farm there, and built a log cabin to live in.

Bill decided to visit his family in Belgium while his brothers took care of the farm. He met and married his wife, Anna, in early 1912. They boarded the *Titanic* as third-class passengers at Southampton, England, to return to the United States.



Jasphlina Armonie Simmons

Moments after the collision, just before midnight on April 14, 1912, they managed to get to the deck of the boat. When Anna was told to get in a lifeboat, she would not leave her husband's side. Bill picked her up and handed her to an officer in Lifeboat 13.

Thinking he would never see her again, Bill prepared to meet his fate. Just then, the boat ran out of crew members to row the lifeboats. Thankful for a chance to save the lives of himself and many others, he jumped into the lifeboat and helped row for the rest of the night.

He and Anna were reunited on the *Carpathia*, the ship that rescued the *Titanic* survivors. After their rescue, they headed west to the farm in Montana. Anna never recovered from the trauma of thinking she had lost her husband. She entered a mental hospital and died there in 1918.

Bill lived on the farm for a couple years after her death. He went back to Belgium in 1920, got married to my great-great-grandma Marie, and came back to Montana to farm. He died on June 5, 1955, and is buried next to his wives in Glasgow, Montana. There is a cool exhibit at the Pioneer Museum in Glasgow that talks about his history and more about the *Titanic*.

Bill was lucky to survive the sinking of the *Titanic*. Out of the 2,207 people on the *Titanic*, there were only 712 survivors, and only 181 of those survivors were third-class passengers. Bill was also very brave to go back to Belgium after what had happened to him!

Ethan Northup
Idaho, USA

From Covered Wagon to Airplane

1919
McCook, Nebraska, USA

Wade Stevens jumped out of the cockpit onto the ground. He did not know it, but he had just made the first flight in the world for professional purposes.

This story is about my great-great-uncle Wade Stevens. Wade Stevens was born in Nebraska in 1896, only thirty-one years after the Civil War ended. When his family went on vacations, they traveled by covered wagon.

But Wade's story really started when America entered World War I in 1917. Wade decided to join the Aviation Section, U.S. Signal Corps,* and he was sent to San Antonio, Texas, for flight training. After he finished training, Wade was given a thirty-day leave to visit his family before going overseas. While Wade was home, the Stevens' doctor, Frank Brewster, told him that he wanted to use an airplane to travel to patients, and he asked Wade to fly it for him when Wade returned to America. Wade agreed, unaware that this would lead to his becoming the first commercial pilot in the world.

Wade was sent to France and flew there until the peace treaty was signed. When he received his discharge from the U.S. Army, he went straight to Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Corporation and was told that an airplane kit for Dr. Brewster would cost \$8,000. Wade ordered the plane on April 2, 1919, and received it two weeks later.

* The Aviation Section, U.S. Signal Corps, U.S. Army, became the U.S. Air Force in 1947.

Wade did not know how to build a plane, but a local mechanic said he would help, even though he had never seen a plane in his life. Wade and the mechanic carefully built the plane, and on May 19, 1919, the first test flight was successful.

But that is not the ending of this story. On May 23, 1919, Wade Stevens made the first professional flight. He took Dr. Brewster to Kansas to attend to a man who had fractured his skull while working on an oil rig. Wade landed the plane on a nearby hill, and Dr. Brewster treated the patient.

When news of Wade Stevens and Dr. Brewster passed through towns, more people asked for their help, and Wade continued to transport the doctor. The Nebraska towns were very far apart and usually did not have doctors, so the idea of a doctor who would fly to the towns was exciting. Soon Wade became very well known throughout the Midwest, not only in Nebraska. The Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Corporation even sent Dr.



Aaron Schnoor

Brewster a telegram saying that the airplane had been the first in the world purchased and used for professional purposes.

That flight was only sixteen years after the Wright brothers' first flight and eight years before Charles Lindbergh's trans-Atlantic flight.

This is my favorite story in my family history, and although I never met Wade Stevens, this story helps me know about him very well. This story has been passed down through our family for years, and I hope it will continue to be.

Aaron Schnoor
North Carolina, USA

Don't Mess with Granny!

c. 1928
Elizabethton, Tennessee, USA

My great-grandmother Ora Campbell (in this story, “Granny”) married Andrew Bird Hardin on April 4, 1922. They had my great-aunt Vernilla Hardin on February 18, 1923. They had my great-uncle Warren Hardin on August 4, 1924. My great-aunt Arvella (V) was born on June 14, 1926. Last but not least, my grandfather was born on July 14, 1928.

Granny and Bird bought a house in Elizabethton, Tennessee. It had no electricity or running water. I know you're picturing a little house with pretty bad conditions. *Wrong!* It was a log cabin surrounded by acres and acres of lush, green farmland.

They were poor folks though. Granny had no job and no car. Now you may be thinking that there weren't cheap cars back then, but you must remember that the Model T was out, so there was an affordable car on the market. They had to walk everywhere: church, school, and even to visit friends!

'Most everything they ate, they either grew or killed. There were some exceptions though. For example, they went to the market to get flour for some delicious biscuits. You may be thinking, “How do you know?” Well, I know because my mom still uses the very same recipe today when she cooks, and, believe me, they are delicious!

My grandfather had to work when he was out of school. You might picture your summer as going to the

pool, playing outside, and going on vacations, but for my grandfather, it was working in the fields.

Now, you know that in the 1920s there weren't many opportunities for women. But Granny was smart. She had Bird put the land in both of their names, so if something happened to Bird, Granny would have it all, or vice versa. Why am I telling you that? Well, it's a crucial point in this story, and you'll see why.

Bird died on Christmas Eve in 1928, which left Granny with four children, all under the age of eight. Bird's brothers thought that they should be able to claim the property. Well, one day they came to do just that. When Granny saw them coming, she got her shotgun and got on her front porch. Then she shot—not anywhere in particular, but she still shot! She said that the property was hers and not to bother her anymore. They never came to that log cabin again.

Don't mess with Granny!

Brian Byerly
Tennessee, USA

Hard Times

c. 1930s
Walnut, Kansas, USA

Imagine growing up in a time when a lot of people lost their jobs and the economy was bad. Many families struggled and didn't have enough money or food. It was kind of like today's economy but much worse for a lot of people, and it lasted for a long time. My grandpa Melvin grew up during a time like this. It was called "the Great Depression."

My grandpa lived on a farm during the 1930s. For a period of that time it was extremely dry, and all of the crops dried up. Grandpa told me about seeing a big black cloud sometimes. It was made up of dirt. It would cover everything with dirt when the wind would blow. When it rained, it would rain mud and dirt.

Sometimes my grandpa's mom didn't know what she was going to make for the family's next meal. One day my grandpa's mom was upset because she had no more food for them to eat. My grandpa's older brother went next door and did some work for a neighbor and earned a little bit of money so my grandpa's family could eat.

Grandpa would take corn on the cob down to the mill and have it ground into corn meal. During the summer they would hook a team of horses up to a grinding mill and grind cane into molasses. So for lunch my grandpa's mom would make cornbread with molasses. My grandpa says this was a very soggy lunch, because the molasses would soak through the bread and make it soggy.

During the school year, my grandpa would take a bucket with his cornbread and molasses to school with him. He attended a Lutheran school in which they had two rooms where they put kindergarten through the eighth grade. In the morning the preacher would preach and teach religion and read German. In the afternoon the teacher would teach reading, writing, and arithmetic.

One warm day on the way to school my grandpa caught a rabbit. His family needed the rabbit for food, so my grandpa carried the rabbit to school. At the school there was a wood stove in the middle of the room that heated the classroom. Since it was warm outside and the stove wasn't on, my grandpa's teacher thought they could put the rabbit in the wood stove to keep it till after school. But the rabbit tried to escape, and it ran up the exhaust pipe and got stuck. My grandpa and his teacher had to bang on the pipe until the rabbit came down. The rabbit was okay, and my grandpa's family got to have it for dinner.

Even though my grandpa had to live through the Great Depression, at least he has lots of interesting stories to tell. I liked listening to all of his stories, but some of them made me sad and make me thankful that I did not have to live through the Great Depression.

Deborah Renée Kroenke
Missouri, USA

Great-Grandpa Joe and the Jolly Hearts Club

c. 1930s
Brooklyn, New York, USA

This is the story of my great-grandpa Joe. Although I never met him, I know him very well from the stories my grandmother tells me, and from old pictures. My grandmother is Great-Grandpa Joe's daughter.

Great-Grandpa Joe was born in Greenwich Village, New York. His life as a child was very difficult. His mother ran off, and Great-Grandpa Joe and his two brothers spent several years in an orphanage because their father, my great-great-grandfather, couldn't take care of them. Eventually, my great-great-grandfather married a nice lady, and Great-Grandpa Joe and his brothers had a home again.

Great-Grandpa Joe was a small man. But he was rough, tough, and hard-working, and he protected everyone he loved. At one time, he was even in the United States Cavalry and rode a horse named Babe. My great-grandfather also loved nature and painting pictures. But, more than anything else, he was a leader who took care of others. I think that living in an orphanage as a child made my great-grandpa Joe the caring person he was. He didn't want people to feel bad like he once had. So he did *everything* he could do to make them feel better!

The Great Depression happened in the early 1930s, and it was a terrible time in America. People were without jobs, some without homes, and some even without food! Because my great-grandfather was a caring

person, he started the Jolly Hearts Club, a gentleman's club composed of Italian-American men like himself. The club allowed members to relax, laugh, discuss world politics, listen to each other, and, at times, play cards. In the 1930s they did *not* have the Internet as a form of communication like we have today. Back then, they only had each other. Their name, the Jolly Hearts Club, represented what was important to them, to be *jolly* during a very horrible time in American history.

Occasionally, the Jolly Hearts Club had "family" days. As a toddler, my grandmother would accompany Great-Grandpa Joe to these meetings. She was very special to my great-grandpa. He called her "Babe," just like the horse that had safely accompanied him throughout his service in the cavalry. My grandmother was my great-grandfather's lucky charm.

The Jolly Hearts Club continued until the United States entered World War II in 1941. Like other American men during that time, members of the Jolly Hearts Club had to go to war to protect their country. And so the Jolly Hearts Club dissolved. Each member was given a possession in memory of the good times they had shared. As the founder of the Jolly Hearts Club, my great-grandpa Joe was given the very table that they had played cards on! This antique is a significant piece of American history as well as of my family history. It has a very *special* place of honor in my grandmother's home.

Today, as America faces another Great Depression, let us learn from the Jolly Hearts Club to *never* give up and to be there for each other!

Brendan J. De Luca-Rodenberg
Florida, USA

The Tornado

c. 1930
near Wolbach, Nebraska, USA

My great-grandma Mary McIntyre witnessed a tornado west of Wolbach, Nebraska, around 1930. She was a student at a country school at the time. She saw the tornado form and watched it from the school.

A country school was a school for the students who lived in that rural neighborhood. There were country schools around ten miles apart everywhere in the countryside. They are not used anymore, but you may still see some abandoned ones in the country.

The students would walk or ride a horse to the country school, no matter what the weather. If they got a lot of snow, they still arrived the same way. The school did not have a food program, so the students would have to take lunch from home. There were usually grades one through eight at the country school, and usually only one teacher.

Mary and her schoolmates were just having a normal school day, when they looked out the window. There was a big, gigantic black cloud in the sky.

“Ahh! There’s a tornado outside, and it looks pretty bad!” yelled one of the students.

“That *does* look like a tornado!” answered the teacher.

Then the wind started to blow really hard, and dust flew everywhere. They watched the storm clouds gather as the sky got darker and darker by the minute. They watched it out of the country school’s dirty windows.

The students and the teacher did not have anywhere to go. The country school did not have a shelter or a storm cellar. They just watched the tornado start coming. It hit the ground, and the wind blew terribly. All the kids were scared and did not know what to do, but they stayed calm and did not try to go home.

“Flip your desks over and get by the side of them. Get into position and make sure you cover your eyes! Everything is going to be okay,” the teacher instructed.

Instead of panicking, they got into the position. They had been taught to duck down and put their hands on top of their heads. They flipped their desks over and went under their desks for protection.

No one was seriously hurt at the country schoolhouse, but the tornado took two houses that were right near the schoolhouse.

“*Wow!* Look at that house!” exclaimed one of the schoolchildren, pointing as they came out of the schoolhouse.

The tornado had done a great deal of damage to those houses. One of the houses that it took was owned by the man who owned the grocery store in town but lived at his country house.

Still to this day, Mary hates tornadoes terribly. Because of all the damage that tornado did that day and what they still do in today’s life, people need to protect themselves and their property.

Cade Grossart
Nebraska, USA

The Abandoned House

1937
Cushing, Nebraska, USA

It was the summer of 1937. My grandma—Grandma Mc—was a very curious six-year-old. She lived in the small town of Cushing, Nebraska, with thirteen brothers and sisters. Growing up during the Great Depression was really hard, but that didn't stop Grandma!

Like most young girls, Grandma loved to bake and play house. But because she was curious, she *really* loved to explore. She explored every chance she had.

One very hot day during that summer, she and her sisters Ann, Helen, and June were very bored. So Grandma decided they should go exploring. They found lots of interesting things on their way, but not anything worth taking home. It was starting to get dark, so they headed back. They did their usual routine and went to bed.

The next hot summer day was the hottest of that summer. Grandma and her three sisters went swimming. After they got pruned and wrinkly from the water, they got out and went exploring. They did find several new cool things. On their way, they found a hill. My grandma was the leader. The walk was hot and horrible, but, like I said, my grandma was a determined person. So were her sisters. They didn't, and wouldn't, stop until they reached the top. They were about halfway up, and it was getting dark. But they could see something at the top of the hill, so they kept going.

Soon it was completely dark. Grandma couldn't see five feet in front of her, but she was not scared of anything. Finally they reached the top of the hill. About two feet in front of my grandma was an old house. Grandma and her three sisters walked slowly into the house. They discovered it was a pretty nice house. It had everything they had ever wanted. It had a kitchen with all the kitchen tools a young girl would want to play with! Well, they decided that it was getting late, so they headed home. They were excited for tomorrow to come so they could go play in the house.

That night Grandma told her mother about the house. Her mother told her that the house had been abandoned by criminals who were wanted by the police for making homemade whiskey. "No one knows where they are," her mother said. "They could easily hide in the house, because that house is huge!" Grandma and her sisters were forbidden to go near the house.

The next day only one daughter disobeyed her mother. Grandma went alone to explore the house some more. She went upstairs to explore. All of a sudden, someone grabbed her and tore her shirt! She ran as fast as she could, not stopping until she was home.

The next day she got her older brother to go there with her so he could show her that nothing dangerous was there. They discovered it was only a nail that had torn her shirt. But curious Grandma never entered that house again!

Kayla Rother
Nebraska, USA

Granny Sweetpea and the Swamp Cabbage Catfish

1937

Dowling Park, Florida, USA

I felt like I wanted to run away 'cause I was afraid to jump. The grapevine might break, the rocky cliff was high, and there was alligator-infested dark water below—I wished I hadn't gone up there!

“Jump already!” the other kids yelled.

“Okay, I'm just gonna get this over with.” I closed my eyes, held on tight, and jumped.

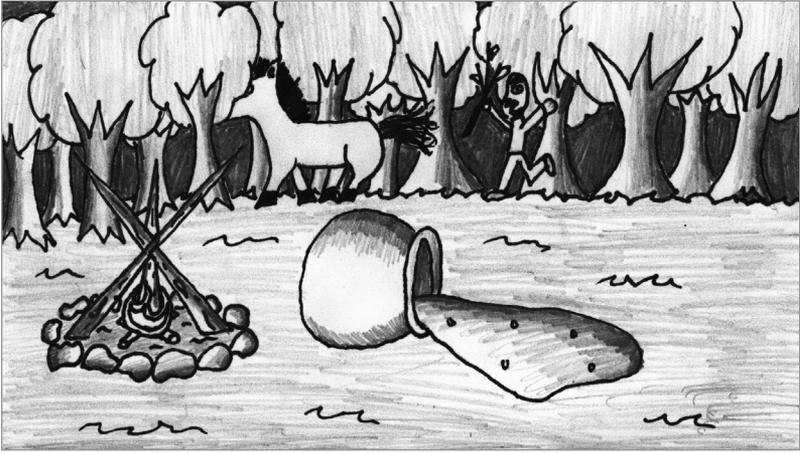
SPLASH! I can't believe I did it! The water splashed all over the kids at the top of the cliff. I swam to the shore and climbed up there again, 'cause it was fun!

I smelled somethin' cookin', so I ran down to the sandbar. I saw Momma by the kettle cookin' catfish that they had caught early that mornin'. I looked up at the sky, and it was dusk—the sun was goin' down behind the mossy oak trees. The river water looked like Coca-Cola. The sandbar looked like a white beach and felt smooth like I was gonna sink. It was gettin' cool.

Momma said, “Eula, shouldn't you be gettin' the swamp cabbage for the stew?”

“Yes, ma'am,” I said. I went and got it from the wagon that my mule Kate was pullin'. “Kate! Get back here!” I had to run and run until I caught Kate.

I held onto the strap, tied Kate to a tree, and then I got the cabbage out. I gave it to Momma. I walked over and lay on my homemade quilt to look at the stars. The sky was dark blue with millions of stars spread out all over it.



Kylie Paplanus

A little while later, the stew was ready. I washed my hands off in the river. All of a sudden, Kate came runnin' out of the woods, right for the stew pot! She knocked it over, and the stew spilled out all over the quilts. Kate licked and licked the ground until the stew was all gone. My daddy grabbed a tree limb to spank Kate, but she ran off into the woods. Daddy chased after her, yellin' all the way. Momma commanded, "Get your quilts and wash 'em off."

As I was washin' my quilt, I saw somethin' move in the water. Some lips poked out, and right then I knew it was a catfish! I tried to grab it, but I slipped and fell into the water. Everyone came runnin' to see what the matter was. I stood up, soaked from head to toe. I felt somethin' wigglin' inside my shirt. I pulled it out—it was a catfish! Everybody was so happy 'cause now we had dinner. I was proud of myself, even though I had caught it accidentally. I was the hero of the whole day! I felt like the luckiest girl in the world!

Breanna Fernald, great-granddaughter of Eula
Florida, USA

The Thief Who Received a Gift

c. 1939
Evansville, Indiana, USA

My great-grandparents Albert and Alma Boeke owned a forty-acre farm. Besides five daughters and one son, they also raised cows, sheep, and chickens. A man of great wisdom, Albert always knew how to handle problems.

During the Depression men desperately needed jobs. Occasionally a needy person or family would go to the farm pleading for food or a job. Great-Grandpa would always be willing to give, although he had a minute portion of money himself.

Under a bridge a fourth-mile away from the farm, lived a couple who was looking for work. While Albert was working in the field on a sultry day, Joe, the husband of the couple, ambled up to him and stated his situation, asking for a job. Because Albert was a thoughtful man, he offered to pay a dollar a day for Joe's work around the farm. Joe was thankful for the offer and accepted it.

One morning before the rooster crowed, Great-Grandpa was wakened by a squawking noise made by a chicken. Hopping out of his bed, he hurried to the bedroom window and peered out to see if there was a fox. By the time he cleared his eyes, the noise had stopped. Days later, at dawn, he was once again wakened by the chickens. Albert dashed to the window and this time spotted an outline of a man holding a burlap sack. Unable to view his face, Great-Grandpa could still notice the form of his body. It was Joe.

Rather than let Joe know that he had seen him, Albert thought of a better way of dealing with the situation. As though he had seen nothing, Great-Grandpa continued with his day. On payday, in addition to his weekly pay Albert presented Joe with a chicken in a burlap sack saying, “Here’s something extra for dinner tonight.”

Although Joe stayed for the needed money, he never stole another chicken. That day Joe was taught an excellent lesson of grace.

Caleb Yates
Indiana, USA

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

Stuck in the Quicksand

early 1940s
near Clio, Michigan, USA

My great-aunt Dolores spent a large part of her childhood living on a family farm. During World War II her mother had to work in a factory, and food was rationed* in the city. Father went to war. Dolores was sent to the farm so she would have enough food and would not be alone while Mother was at work.

There was a small lake on the farm, which Dolores liked to swim in. The lake had an area of quicksand, and Dolores was not allowed in the lake. She would have to sneak in order to swim. She avoided the quicksand and just got in and out of the lake on a beach area that did not have quicksand.

One day while Dolores was swimming, two horses wandered to the lake for a drink. Dolores saw the horses walking toward the area with quicksand, but she was already in the water. By the time she swam to the safe beach and ran toward the horses, they were already stuck in the quicksand. They struggled too much and began to sink lower. Dolores ran to the house to get help. By the time the men ran down to the lake, the horses were already too stuck to rescue.

Dolores then had to explain why she was wet and in her bathing suit.

Later that same summer a farm worker was driving a tractor along the hill by the lake. He hit a tree

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

stump, and the tractor turned on its side and began to roll down the hill. The worker jumped out, but the tractor landed in the quicksand. Because there were no horses to pull the tractor out, it also sank in the quicksand.

After that, Dolores never swam in the lake again.

Hannah Myers
Ohio, USA

Pop!

c. 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. My grandfather 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 he 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



Monica Ehret

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 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.* (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** 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, nobody outside the family

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

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

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 it 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

Knock 'em Out

1940s

St. Louis, Missouri, and New York, New York, USA

How many boxers in the world do you know that are in a Hall of Fame? Jackie Dicker or, as I call him, “Uncle Jack” is in one. Jack Dicker started training to be a boxer at the South Broadway gym in St. Louis, Missouri, when he was only seventeen years old. He trained hard by boxing the bag, sparring in the ring with other boxers, and boxing other opponents. Four years later, at the age of twenty-one, he became a professional boxer. In his whole professional career he lost only one fight, for a record of 24–1.

As a kid, Jackie had it rough. He was the youngest and shortest of four children. He was small but very tough. His parents were from Russia and split up when they came to America. This made Jackie upset, because he was a young child. It made him angry—so angry that he wanted to become a boxer.

Before he went pro, he boxed in St. Louis. Jack was so good at boxing that he was invited to represent the United States in the Olympics, but he rejected the offer. Jack rejected the offer because he thought he was tough as nails, so he decided to represent his country in World War II.

Participating in the war did not stop Jack from becoming a great boxer, because when he returned home in 1946 he won many championships, including the St. Louis Golden Gloves tournament.* Next on his journey

* The Golden Gloves competitions are for nonprofessional boxers sixteen years of age and older.

he went to New York and captured the National Golden Gloves Championship at Madison Square Garden. Jack continued to get better, and he won the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) title by knocking out the undefeated Nicky Sanders with a right hook. After all of these achievements, he finally became a professional boxer.

In Jack's first match as a professional boxer, he lost. He thought that he would not make it as a professional. Jackie trained very hard to make sure he never lost again. And what do you know—he ended up winning the next twenty-four matches and never losing again.

In 1995, when he was sixty-nine years old, Jackie was inducted into the St. Louis Jewish Sports Hall of Fame. But with all of his achievements he said that friends and family are most important.

Jackie married the girl of his dreams, Bertha Mae Barg, and they were happily married for fifty-seven years. He raised four children and put them all through college, cheering them on and helping them succeed at their life goals. Two of his children, named Ron and Dale, always wanted to get in the ring like their father had and become boxers. Jack said no, because he didn't want them to take the beating he had taken. So Ron and Dale became state wrestling champions for Parkway Central High.

At the age of seventy-nine Jackie passed away. Just two weeks before Christmas he was driving to a hip examination. At a red light, he slumped over the steering wheel and was gone. He will be greatly remembered for his accomplishments and his love for the sport of boxing.

Jeff Dicker
Missouri, USA

A Lucky Save

1941
Ukraine

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 the Ukraine—this all took place in the 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 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 unsuspected things.

Michelle Favichia
New Jersey, USA

Ocean Waters

1941
North Atlantic Ocean

In November 1941 my great-uncle Lawrence Mann faced one of the most petrifying experiences in 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 by 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 and grabbed 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.

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 boat. 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 relayed 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

The Uncontrollable Mare

c. 1942
near Wolbach, Nebraska, USA

Back when hard candy was a penny, my grandmother rode her horse to a country school near Wolbach, Nebraska. The two-room schoolhouse was four miles from her home, so it was a long ride in the bitter winter. The school attended by the rest of her family was only two miles away, but that school held first through eighth grades. Only her school had ninth and tenth grades. Grandma wanted to finish high school.

Grandma Marialice had just started riding Bird, her own horse, to class that school year, in the fall of 1942. Bird was still getting used to being away from her darling weanling. She did not like the fact that her young foal couldn't be with her. The ride to school was calm, even if Bird was slightly fidgety. Grandma left the mare in the weather-beaten school barn, as everyone did, and left for the first subject of the day.

After class concluded, Grandma approached the barn. Upon entering, she discovered just how anxious Bird was to get home. She could barely climb onto her horse before they exited the barn in a burst of rapidity. Off they went—a blur to the world! The speed was so great that Grandma had to let go of her books and lunchpail to hold on for dear life!

As she saw that she was approaching her brothers' and sisters' school, Grandma quickly steered Bird into the porch. The horse suddenly halted. Grandma's

brothers came out to help hold down the excited horse. Both Grandma and Bird needed a good rest, since one was aching from hanging on, and one was weary from dashing two miles.

Grandma rode the now-composed mare to her rural home. Bird was unhappy to have to stay in a different pen than her baby until it was weaned. I guess you could say it was the correct punishment.

The next day Grandma's dad drove her to school in the family car. They had to stop along the road and pick up her books and lunchpail, of course. After a while, Bird got used to being away from her weanling. She continued to be the main source of transportation to school until Grandma's tenth grade graduation.

My grandma continued high school in Omaha, Nebraska. She worked and stayed at her aunt's house. Every single one of Grandma's four children, including my dad, got to ride that excited mare around the family farm. They said that Bird stayed a kind and memorable family horse. Bird, still uncontrollable at heart, died of cancer around 1967.

Now candy is much more expensive, and I ride a bus to my school in Wolbach. I live between Cedar Rapids and Greeley, and only a quarter of a mile away from my wonderful grandmother. I hear this story, and it is my favorite one, but I do not think I would like to ride a horse to my school. I will forever remember the exciting tale of the uncontrollable mare!

Karleen Alma Kolar
Nebraska, USA

Extreme Makeover: Statue Edition

c. 1943
New York, New York, USA

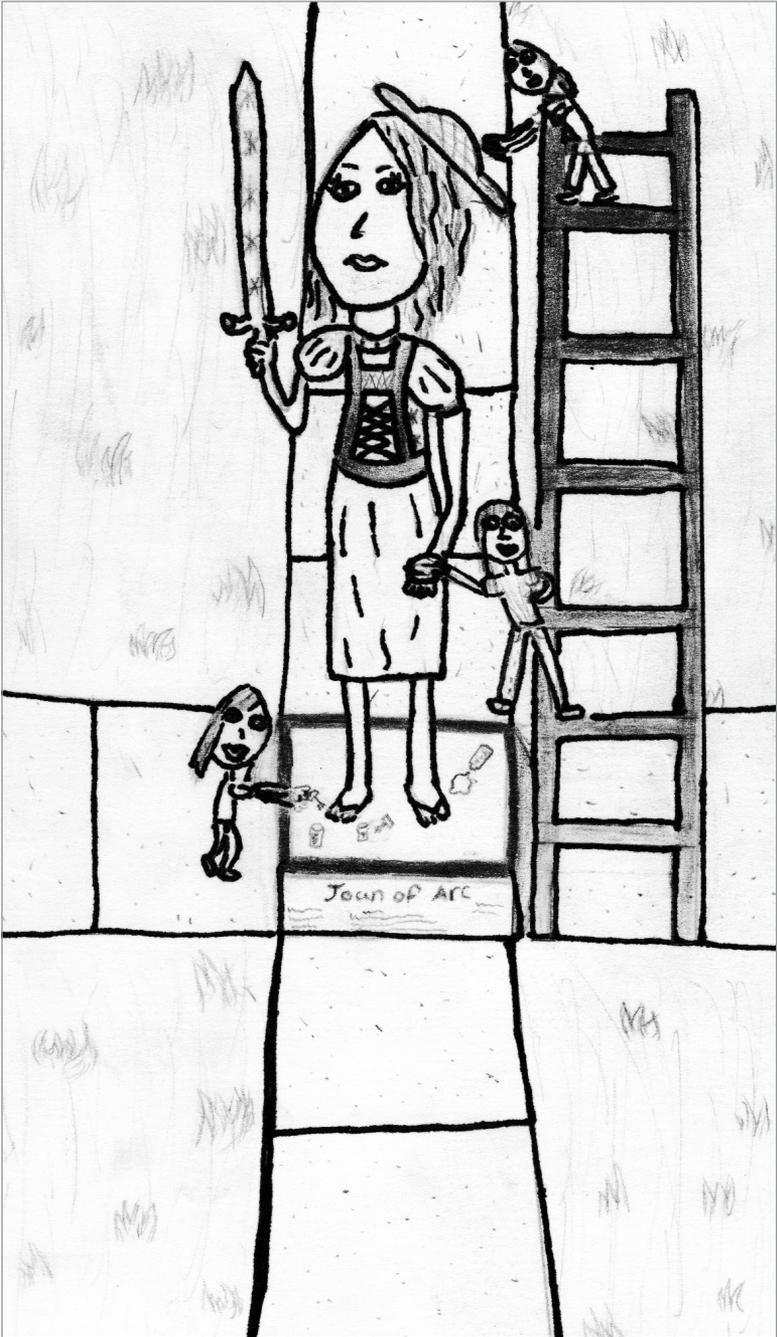
On a tired rainy day at The Mary Louis Academy a dangerous plan was being formed. . . .

The notorious Sister Angelica (known for not being so angelic) was out to lunch with a few other sisters, and my grandmother (also notorious for being not so angelic) was idle and twitchy—never a good combination.

And there, outside, with a golden halo of sunshine hitting her glorious self, she sat—a positively devilish reprieve from the drowning boredom.

My grandmother and her five fiendish friends were plotting *the* most epic prank in The Mary Louis Academy history, with my grandma as the ringleader. Demonic Debbie, Satanic Susie, and Villainous Vicky ran, gathering their diabolical decorations. They stole quietly toward the victim—a six-foot-tall statue of Joan of Arc holding a crown in her hand and wearing sandals and a sash.

The girls had decided that the fearless Joan of Arc deserved a pampering. With that, the gang descended upon their prey, laboring tirelessly with their noble goal in mind. Finally they stepped back to look upon their work of art. Joan of Arc now stood fashionably—her fingernails and toenails painted, lipstick on her lips, hamburger in hand (they figured she got hungry standing for centuries), and as a last touch they placed a hat upon her head. Their masterpiece was complete, and the girls wiped their brows.



Gina Reeves

Giggling, the guilty girls scurried on back to their unassuming positions, barely able to contain their anticipation of seeing their uptight principal dance.

Finally the moment arrived, and Sister Angelica emerged from her old Ford, unsuspecting and conniving. The girls held their breath as she walked toward the statue, still not noticing. As soon as the statue came into sight, Sister Angelica (and I quote) “gave a gasp, her face draining of blood as she pointed a shaking finger at the beloved statue.” The girls laughed hysterically from their posts and gleefully skipped back to school.

Later that day an assembly was called, and all the young girls were told to pray for the poor, poor young wretches who had done this *terrible* thing to poor Joan. The girls eventually confessed, but there were too many girls to expel, so instead Sister Angelica assigned them the task of cleaning up beautiful Joan. My grandmother reminisces of that day and shares that even though they looked remorseful, inside the girls were howling, because the look on Sister Angelica’s face was definitely worth their trouble.

To this day, my grandma gets a faraway look in her eyes when she thinks about her younger days, but with eight kids to raise she could never reveal her sinful younger days. Her talents were not wasted, however; they were passed on to her fifth son, who spent his days throwing apples at police cars from the rooftop.

Caitlin Magruder
Missouri, USA

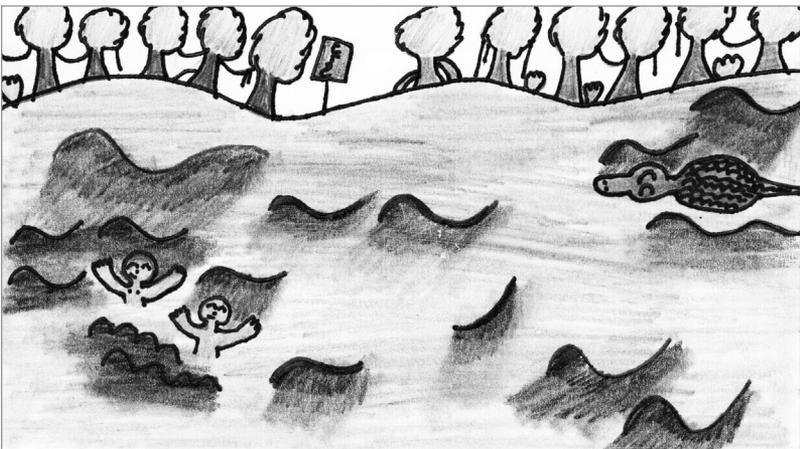
Warning: Crocodiles Ahead

c. 1943
Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Did you know that crocodile attacks kill approximately three thousand people a year? The crocodile is one of the most deadly animals, and it has no predator except for humans. The crocodile has a famous way of killing its prey. First, the crocodile comes out of the murky water and seizes its prey. It takes the prey back under the water and begins rolling beneath the water until the prey is dead.

My great-grandparents went to the country that is now known as Rwanda, in central Africa, in the middle of the 1930s. They were there as pioneer missionaries. In the beginning of the 1940s, they were trying to return to Sweden for a furlough, but World War II was raging in Europe, so instead they traveled south. They were driving toward South Africa for some vacation.

Halfway through their journey, they stopped



Baylee Dornbach

at a hotel near the mighty Zambezi River. Later that afternoon, my great-grandpa took my grandpa, who was a young boy then, down to the river for a refreshing swim. Before they jumped into the river, they saw a sign, but my great-grandpa was new to the English language, so he couldn't read it. They then swam and played in the river for about an hour. When they were walking up to the hotel, they met a man who said, "Tell me that you haven't been swimming in the river; it is full of crocodiles. Yesterday a woman lost her dog to a crocodile there." Then they walked back to the hotel, stunned.

That night my great-grandpa had a dream where he saw himself and his son swimming and playing in the river. Surrounding them was a circle of crocodiles. When he looked closer at the crocodiles, each one of them had a white rope tied around its jaws. Then my great-grandpa woke up, amazed, and thanked the Lord for the protection.

This story truly proves that even though crocodiles are feared, there is someone with greater power. Also, even though we are not always aware of the dangers ahead of us, God is there to protect us.

Joe Sandahl
Idaho, USA

A Close Call

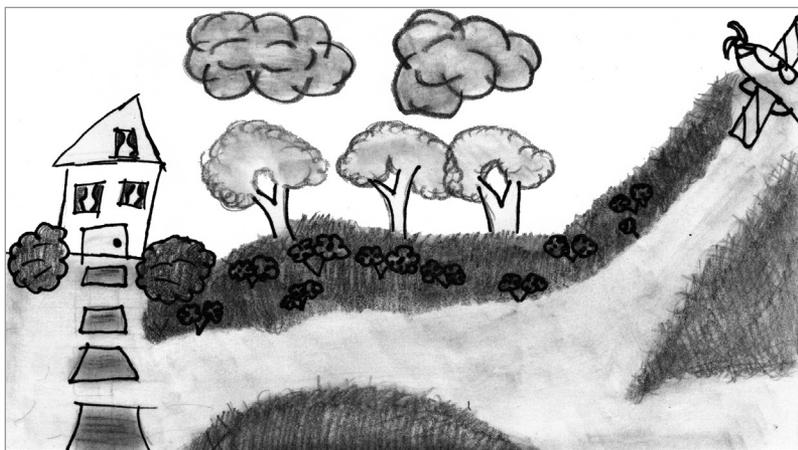
c. 1943
Moran, Michigan, USA

“Everyone down!” Every light was off in the house because of the danger of a bombing. It was World War II.

My father had just heard—then he saw it—a bomber plane. He didn’t know if it was German—and he didn’t want to find out.

Oh, I almost forgot. My name is Wayne, and I had just turned seven. I was the oldest in my family. I lived with my mother, father, and brother, Mick. He was five.

The engine spluttered. The plane flew low right behind our house and landed on a field behind our forty acres. The next day my dad found out what had happened. He came back and said that everything was okay. The plane had been flown by some American pilots whose meters had gone crazy, so the pilots didn’t know where they were.



Rickie Sanford

The next day the pilots ordered parts. A few days later, when the parts came in, they repaired the plane. A few families from our area came to see the plane before it left. The pilots let us climb inside the airplane and showed us what it was like inside. I got to sit in the pilot's seat. It was really fun! I got to see all the meters and steering levers and everything.

Then they cleared everyone away. They took off on a road near our land. No one was supposed to be too close to the road, but Dad took me into the woods, where we watched the plane take off. It lifted off the ground right in front of us! I was so excited I almost forgot and ran into the road. I remembered just in time.

My grandpa told me this story about his childhood. I like it, because I like to learn about planes and about World War II.

Isaac D. Aderman
Michigan, USA

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. 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!* Her mother said she would never have enough sugar to make marmalade, but she would put some aside every week to save for it. Soon enough, 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!

* 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

The Big Different

1943

Warren, Arkansas, USA

My great-grandmother grew up in the 1940s. She went to a school in Warren, Arkansas, where she and her three brothers walked two and a half miles every day to get to school. They walked through colored town into white town to get to the church building, where school was held. “The church wasn’t much, but it was a good place to be.” It was a one-room building, where all grades were taught at the same time.

My great-grandma said life was hard in Warren, Arkansas, for colored people. “The white folks called us out of our names* and thought they were much better than us, but as many names as the white folks called me wasn’t going to stop me from getting my education. All white folks weren’t mean—just the ones that were brought up like lions and were taught to look at us like prey. People thought that we would be scared walking through white town every morning and afternoon, but we really weren’t.”

My great-grandmother said walking to school in the winter was the worst thing about going to school. “The schools today are much better about transportation.” Having to walk two and a half miles in the snow as deep as her knees was horrible.

“The white folks had a better school. The school was located in their part of town and was much warmer than ours. All we had was a potbelly wood heater to keep

* To *call out of name* means to use an insult in place of a person’s name.

us warm.” As far as my great-grandmother had to walk, they deserved a better school with more textbooks.

My great-grandma always wanted to go eat in a restaurant where she could sit anywhere. She always dreamed about it all the time when she stayed in Warren, Arkansas. In 1946 she went to a restaurant in St. Louis, Missouri, where she could sit anywhere she wanted to eat—and do it in peace.

My great-grandma caught the bus to school when she moved to St. Louis. She went to Washington Technical High School, where she took a business course and finished school in January 1949.

Keyonnia Austell
Missouri, USA

Jumping Wonders

c. 1944
Yixing, Jiangsu, China

Imagine if your father had passed away when you were only two years old, and you had to care for the sheep, raise crops, and walk to school—no matter how cold or hot it was outside. How would you feel if you had to do that—all of it—by yourself? That is what my grandfather had to do when he was a boy and he lived in the countryside. He was an extremely hard-working boy.

Among all of the sheep he had, there was a petite black sheep. She was the only black sheep he had. My grandfather called her Xiao Tiao Tiao,* Chinese for “Jumpy.” Xiao Tiao Tiao would follow my grandfather everywhere while jumping at the same time. There was barely any time that you would see my grandfather without Xiao Tiao Tiao. The faster Grandfather went, the more Xiao Tiao Tiao bounced.

When Grandfather needed to go to class, he would tie Xiao Tiao Tiao to a tree on a mountain. Xiao Tiao Tiao would wait there patiently, waiting for Grandfather to come back. When Grandfather was finally dismissed, Xiao Tiao Tiao would jump with sheer joy as she saw Grandfather coming to untie her. Xiao Tiao Tiao was like an imitation of an extremely loyal dog that has wool for fur and hooves for paws.

Xiao Tiao Tiao grew into a beautiful sheep with fleece that was as soft as a chick’s down and colored like

* The Chinese characters are 小跳跳, pronounced see-ow tee-ow-tee-ow. Their literal translation is “Little Jump-Jump.”

a midnight without stars. My grandfather is still a hard-working man. From this story I learned that humans could be friends with animals of any shape, fur, or size. It doesn't matter who your friend is. All that matters is how much friendship you have.

Aleesha Shi
Missouri, USA

Hero

1945
Springfield, Illinois, USA

“I don’t think we should do this anymore.”

The robber rolled his eyes. “Of course we should do this. Do you know how much these gas stamps* are worth?” He said, “Now come on. Let’s hit this place already, before the owner comes back.”

It was 1945, a Sunday to be specific, and I was busy 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

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

was sure something wasn't right when I saw Mr. Morris, 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

The Independence War of Israel

1948
Jaffa, Israel

In 1948, at the time of the Independence War of Israel, my safta* was fifteen—too young to be in the military. But she and her friend Aliza were determined to help. So the military employed them as deliverers. That’s how they came to be delivering supplies and food to Israeli soldiers fighting in Jaffa.

On the way to the soldiers, they were very careful, knowing that they were walking in a war zone. Since they had no backpacks, they carried the packages—several packages of food and two closed boxes, probably guns. Two fifteen-year-olds, carrying guns and food in a war zone—alone, with no armor—would be very easy to kill. But, in spite of this, they made their way carefully to the house where the soldiers were, without any problems. They were thanked and told to “get out—it’s too dangerous.”

They came to Alia Street while exiting Jaffa. “Is it safe?” Aliza whispered to my safta.

“I think so,” she whispered back.

“Then let’s go.” The two girls darted forward.

BANG! BANG! Their progress was interrupted by the sounds of shots.

“Run!”

BANG! BANG! BANG! The sound of shots followed them as they ran for cover.

BANG! DANK! A bullet ricocheted off an electric

* *Safta* is Hebrew for “grandmother.”

pole. Glancing down, my safta noticed blood gushing from a hole in her ankle. The bullet that had ricocheted off an electric pole had hit her in the ankle! She crumpled, and Aliza dragged her to safety.

My safta was in a hospital for days following this. Although my safta has only a scar, this story will always remind me of the brutality of war: the wounding of civilians.

C. Abraham Rosenthal
Colorado, USA

The Santa Hunt

c. 1952
East Jordan, Michigan, USA

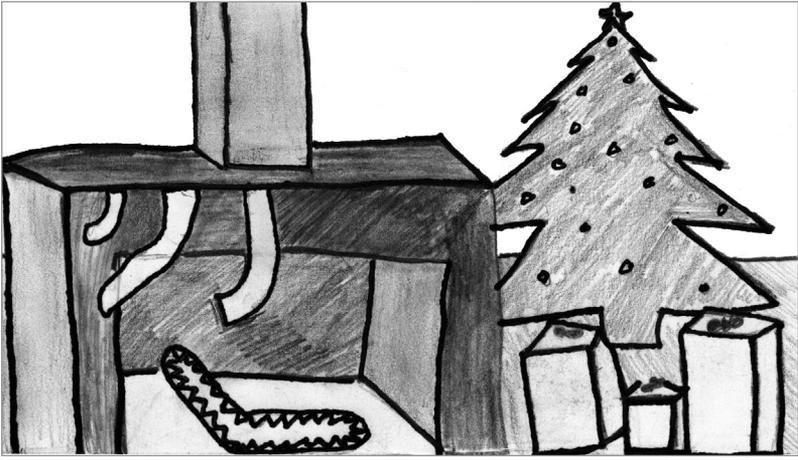
When I was about four years old, I started in on the old family tradition of trying to catch Santa. My family had been trying to trap Santa for almost sixty years, and I would be the fourteenth child to join the hunt.

My uncle John remembers when it all started. It was on Christmas Eve in 1952 in East Jordan, Michigan. Everyone was in the living room hanging stockings with the expectation that Santa would come sometime during the night and fill them with presents. That's when my granny and grandpa told the kids about a new thing that they would do—they would try to trap Santa.

They all gathered around to see the trap. It was red and green, and when it was open, it formed a circle with teeth on the sides. It snapped shut when something hit the center. Everyone worked to set it up by the tree so that when Santa set out the presents he might accidentally step into it and set off the trap—and they would catch him.

John was about six years old at the time. He was excited by the idea and very, very eager to set the trap. He truly believed in Santa Claus and thought they might actually catch him. His older sister, Penny, might have had her doubts, but his younger brother and sister were excited, too.

Everything was done. They had put out cookies and milk, the tree was finished, and of course the trap was ready. The night passed with dreams of the presents they would receive and of Santa in the trap. They all got



Tanja Marinkovic

up super early and waited for my granny to wake up my grandpa so that he could get up and go downstairs to make sure it was safe. All of the kids lined up on the steps, oldest to youngest, waiting eagerly for the “okay.”

When Grandpa waved them down, they raced to the trap first. There, caught in the teeth, was a piece of red fabric from Santa’s pant leg. John was surprised and would be surprised again every time—when they caught a piece of white fur trim from Santa’s suit, a piece of boot, or even a bit of his beard. It always added a bit more magic to Christmas. No one knew it then, but that magic would continue for sixty years more.

Now, John’s grandchildren look forward every year to catching Santa, although no one has been successful yet. Older children pass the hunt on to younger ones.

John guesses that Granny and Grandpa bought the trap, but he has never seen another like it—no one in my family has. So we all keep it very safe. It is an important family relic.

Bergin Downs
Missouri, USA

The Swimming Hole

c. 1954
Stuttgart, Arkansas, USA

My granddad Trinnes Brickey was born in 1943 in Stuttgart, Arkansas. His family was poor, with ten brothers and sisters. Sometimes there wasn't much to go around, but they always got by. I love to listen to my granddad's stories.

One story that makes me laugh happened during the summer of 1954. The kids in Granddad's neighborhood would go to the local swimming hole. They would tie a long rope to a big old oak tree. Then they would swing out over the water and drop in with a big splash.

One day the kids decided to have a contest to see who could perform the most creative dive. Each kid had to name and perform the dive. The first kid to go was Willy. He called his dive "the go out farther and higher than anyone else dive." The next kid was Stanley. His dive was called "the high-flying Superman dive." Then it was Granddad's turn, and he did "the complete flip dive."

Raymond was the last one to dive. He had been bragging to all of the others that he was going to do the best dive of them all. Raymond was very skinny, so he had to use a string to hold up his pants. He named his dive "the complete 360 turn and come down headfirst Geronimo dive." Raymond yelled loudly the name "Geronimo!" as he launched his most incredible dive. It was the best dive by far. He nearly made a complete spin while coming down headfirst. All the boys went crazy

with cheers, until they noticed his pants floating on top of the water.

The boys decided to play a joke on Raymond, since he had won the contest. Stanley grabbed his pants and Granddad took his shirt and towel, leaving Raymond only the string from his shorts. The boys all ran for home. Raymond was known as “The Streak” from that day on.

Clearly, my granddad had a wonderful childhood, and I’m glad he shares his stories with me.

Noah L. Brickey
Missouri, USA

The Bear That Read the Comics

1954
Great Smoky Mountains National Park, USA

My great-grandpa and great-grandma often went to the Smoky Mountains to go camping with their five kids, all around seven to thirteen years old. There often were wild bears there—it was not unusual to see a bear with gaggles of little children behind it. The bears might turn and growl at the little children.

One time my grandma was in the front seat of a car reading the Sunday funnies she had taken with her. She was quite engrossed in the comic she was reading, so she did not take to mind the hot breath that she heard and felt on the back of her neck. She thought it was her sister reading the comics over her shoulder.

When my grandma finished reading her comic, she looked up and saw her father, pale as a sheet, mouthing the words “Do not move.” She followed directions, because she did not know what was happening. So did the rest of the camp. They were all so quiet that you could hear the soft green pine needles hit the ground. Since the huge five-foot bear sensed that the camp was not moving, it knew that there would be no fun at that place. It got out of the back door of the car and rambled away as the entire camp let out a sigh of relief.

My grandma, on the other hand, was rather scared, because she had no idea what was happening until the bear ran away—and she was rather shocked to see that her sister had turned into a bear. Then she realized what

had just happened. She now looks back and laughs about the case of the bear that read her comics.

Travis Black
Missouri, USA

The Aftermath of Rheumatic Fever

1956

Warrenton, Missouri, USA

“Ed, the pond froze. I need you to go chop up the ice so the cows can drink,” called his father, Harry.

“Fine,” Ed replied dully. He weakly grabbed the ax, went to the pond, and broke up ice for an hour. When he finished, he was coughing and freezing. He felt sick. His sore throat seemed more painful than a normal cold.

“Dad, I don’t feel well,” Ed croaked.

“I know you’re faking it,” Harry angrily accused. “You’re always trying to get out of school.” His father didn’t know, nor could he have known, that Ed had strep throat. And neither of them realized that this was the beginning of an illness that would never truly end.

Six months later as Ed lay in bed, wishing he was at school, he heard footsteps approach. His mom was bringing his daily soup, prune juice, and penicillin. His strep throat had morphed into rheumatic fever, a terrible sickness that makes you weak with fever. It also causes severe heart problems.

As she walked in, Ed asked for the fifth time that day, “Mom, how are my brothers and sisters doing?”

“Oh, Ed! The same as this morning!” said his mom, exasperated but with sympathy in her eyes.

Ed swallowed his penicillin and asked, “Do my brothers believe me yet that I’m sick?” Before she could answer, Ed gagged on the medicine’s taste and began spooning his soup. His mom seemed to forget his question and left to continue her work. Drowsy from the

warm soup, Ed decided to take a nap. The clock read 1:00 P.M.

Soon he saw a beautiful white light; it felt comfortable and peaceful, desirable and pleasing. Ed did not even feel sick. This was the best feeling ten-year-old Ed had had in months. He noticed that his dead grandfather was speaking to him.

“Ed, you can stay or go. It is your choice,” he calmly said. Ed was tempted to stay—it was so nice and peaceful, and worry-free. Then with a sudden jolt he knew he had to go back. He awoke and stared at his clock: 1:01 P.M. He had only been asleep for a few heartbeats.

That was fifty-five years ago, and my grandpa Ed still suffers the consequences of rheumatic fever due to his damaged heart valves. He also still remembers the dream like it was yesterday and tells me the story ever so often.

I am now ten, the same age my grandpa was when infected by strep throat. Just the other day my best friend’s little brother was diagnosed with strep throat. When I think about Grandpa Ed’s lingering heart problems, I’m glad changes in medical attention mean few children today will have to share this experience.

Although the aftermath of rheumatic fever will never leave him, Grandpa Ed is still living a long happy life with my grandma. They have two children and six grandchildren.

Ellie McCrary
Missouri, USA

Sweet Home Alabama

c. 1960s

Demopolis and York, Alabama, USA

RING! We rushed out of the school doors to our parents waiting in the car. School was finally over, and we were going down south.

“Hey, Mama. Hi, Daddy,” Denise, Jerome, Kevin, and I said in unison. Our grandma Niecy P. lived in Demopolis, Alabama, while our grandma Mary Ellen lived in York, Alabama.

As we cruised down the highway, my excitement grew larger. “I can’t wait to see Trey and Anthony!”

“Shut up, Yvette,” yelled my sister, Denise.

“Yes, girl, hush,” my mother added. Little did I know that my excitement would die before we even got to Alabama.

We stopped at a rest stop in Tennessee. As we stepped out of our green LTD, everyone’s eyes turned toward us.

“Why are they staring at us?” asked my little brother, Kevin.

“Well, Kevin, because down here some people don’t like us,” my daddy answered.

“We ain’t even *from* down south. I don’t know about you, but I believe our license plate says ‘Missouri,’” snapped Kevin.

“They don’t like us ’cuz we black. Come on, Kevin, keep up. Don’t act like you don’t hear the news about down here every day,” Jerome yelled. Three white families turned around and stared. We looked right back

at them. They stared at us with a fire in their eyes. It was like they were trying to burn a hole into our skin.

“Now you quiet down with all of that, Junior. Yvette and Denise, turn around this way before I slap the press out of your head.”

“Yes, ma’am,” we said as Mama passed out chicken and cornbread. When we were finished eating, we left.

There were only a few miles until we got to Demopolis. I tried to stay awake, but I couldn’t. I slowly drifted to sleep. Kevin and I woke up just in time to see the WELCOME TO ALABAMA sign.

“We’re here! Denise, Jerome, we’re here!” I yelled.

“Okay, we get the point. Denise, stop dropping yo’ slob on me,” Jerome said.

The only way to tell you were in Demopolis was when you saw the dirt roads. Once we saw the red clay road, we got happy. We pulled up to Grandma Niecy’s house, and we all jumped out. Our grandmother was waiting on the old porch swing for us.

“Granny!” we yelled as we ran over.

“Hi, babies.”

“Hey, Mama,” my daddy said.

“How you doing, Cleophus? America?”

We spent a whole week in Demopolis. During the day Denise, my mama, and I stayed near Grandma, while Jerome and Kevin played with the little boys down the street. As for Daddy, he slept the whole week. On our last night Denise and I got some old Mason jars and went to catch fireflies. Kevin and Jerome attempted to throw a ball around in the dark with my daddy.

We did the same thing in York, but my mama was

called “Tot.” As I look back on our trip that year, I would have to say that it was the best one yet.

Kaytlyn Sneed, daughter of Yvette
Missouri, USA

The Annoying Parrot

c. 1960s

Weatherford, Texas, USA

This story happened in Texas. One annoying parrot, my father, and my father's boss—that was a bad combination, one that would lead only to trouble.

When my dad was sixteen, he worked in Texas. He was a very good, very hard-working ranch hand. He herded the cattle, broke the wild horses, and cleaned the stalls.

There was one chore, though, that he hated. His boss bought and raised parrots. There were many different types of parrots. There were green parrots. There were blue parrots. There were also the common red ones.

There was one parrot that was the boss's favorite, and that parrot lived in the boss's house. When the phone rang, the parrot would answer, "Hello!" When someone knocked on the door, the parrot would say, "Come in!"

That parrot always tricked my father. When Dad called on the phone to talk to his boss, he would hear "Hello!" Then the parrot would say either "Nobody home!" or "Just a minute!" When Dad went over to the house and knocked on the door, the parrot would say, "Come in!" There were many times when Dad's boss would be sleeping or in the shower or not even home when my dad walked in because of the parrot's invitation to come in! Most of the time, the boss didn't even know that Dad had knocked on the door before going in. Dad almost lost his job because of that parrot! That parrot

enjoyed getting people in trouble. From my father to the buyer coming to pick up cattle—the parrot tricked them all!

There were many times when the parrot would turn on the television and startle everyone in the house. The parrot especially liked old western movies. The parrot acted like he was a cowboy on television. He would ask people, “Where’s my horse?” There were many times when a person walked in and the parrot squawked, “Put your hands up, or I’ll blow you away!”

Whenever the parrot escaped from his cage, he enjoyed dive-bombing people, calling out, “Where’s my whiskey?” Sometimes he would actually hit people and then call, “Get out of my way!”

The parrot could not only talk, he would also do a very good evil laugh. Whenever someone walked around the house at night, the parrot cackled an evil laugh as they passed his cage. It could be very unnerving!

It seemed, to Dad at least, that the parrot especially liked to play tricks on him. There were times when the boss was gone and my dad had to take care of the parrots. Every time, this clever parrot played tricks on Dad. The tricks would range from making a fake phone call to the house, to letting someone in when Dad was out taking care of the other parrots.

This story of the clever, annoying parrot is a family favorite that always makes all of us laugh. All of us except my dad, that is!

Lane T. Brown
Nebraska, USA

A Big-League Dreamer

c. 1960s–2008
Eldred, Pennsylvania, USA

My great-uncle Jim grew up in the small town of Eldred, Pennsylvania, in a house with about an acre or more of land in a hilly area of the Allegheny Mountains. It was the mid-1960s, and there were few modern ways to entertain yourself. There were no computers, no game systems, and no cell phones.

Because he didn't have any neighbors to play with and his older brother was in college, ten-year-old Jim would entertain himself with his love of baseball. He liked to toss the ball off the slope of the roof and catch it on the other side. He would also throw to a "pitchback" that would bounce the ball back to you as you threw it. He even played a game called dice baseball, where you simulate a game of baseball by rolling dice and scoring a game.



Marissa Pineda

When his dad would come home from a hard day working on the highways, Jim would beg him to hit a few pop flies out in the yard. Jim would run and dive for each catch. One time the ball went into some weeds, and he got poison ivy. When it would get dark and Jim's dad would say it was time to go in, Jim would always say, "Just five more, Dad." Five would turn out to be ten or fifteen or twenty more—until it was too dark to see the baseball anymore.

Jim went on to be a very good Little League, and eventually high school, baseball player. People who watched Jim play knew that he had great potential. Watching one of Jim's games, his grandfather said to another man, "That boy's gonna be in the major leagues someday." Unfortunately, a broken leg Jim's junior year of high school prevented him from following this dream of being a big-leaguer.

But that did not stop Jim's love of baseball. He went on to become a college baseball coach and eventually a professional baseball scout for the Tampa Bay Rays. In 2008 the Rays earned a World Series ring for winning the American League Championship. Jim gave this very expensive and rare ring to his mother and father to thank them for all that they had done to inspire him. Included with the ring was this note:

Mom and Dad,

Thank you for letting a little boy chase a baseball around and giving him every opportunity to make a career out of something he loves.

This ring for me more than represents an American League Championship. It symbolizes all the balls Dad hit to me in the backyard, the games we used to listen to on our radio and the baseball trips we used to take together.

This ring belongs much more to you than it does to me.

Your son,

Jim

Since the sad death of Jim's dad, his mother still holds the ring with pride and honor.

Rogan Pransky
Ohio, USA

Fishing

1962

Lake White Cloud, Michigan, USA

Once when my mom was a kid, she was taken with her brothers on a fishing trip to Lake White Cloud, Michigan. When my grandpa and my uncles were setting up the lines, getting bait, choosing who would get what rod, what line they would use—all the things you need to do in order to fish—my grandma and my mom were going around the shore picking flowers. Then my grandpa yelled, “Hey, Marjorie, it is time to fish!”

My mom replied, “Coming, Dad.” And then the fishing began.

My uncles, my mom, my grandpa, and my napping grandma had been sitting there for a while when my uncle just spontaneously shouted out, “Hey, Dad, I think something is happening with rod #3.”

“Good eye, Dave; I think that is your line getting a tug.” And so it turned out that my uncle Dave got the first fish—and it was a beautiful trout. My grandpa was very proud. He was thinking to himself, “That is my firstborn son.”

All that changed, though, when my other uncle got his first tug on line #2, but he had a harder time pulling in his catch, because he was not as strong as his older brother. But eventually Dan got his catch in. It was even more amazing than Dave’s fish, because Dan caught a gigantic walleye. Then my grandpa changed his mind and thought, “That is my favorite son.”

The fishing continued, but line #1 never got a tug. My mom especially waited and waited, but nothing happened. The rod just sat there sleeping. When my grandpa started to take the line out, he handed it to my mom saying, “Here. This is for you.”

My mom hesitated for a second, and as she was reaching for the rod, a humongous blur pounced out of the water. Everybody stood in shock and awe as they stared at what looked like a rainbow. It was actually a stunning rainbow trout waiting in cold, dark silence on the hook. Everybody broke out in “Ooooooooooooooh” and “Ahhhhhhhh”—except my mom. She was like the fish, sitting in silence. This time my grandpa didn’t just think it but shouted out, laughing, “That is my favorite daughter! Who would have thought this girl right here could fish?”

It was great hearing this story because of the comedy and the lesson that you never give up. If my mom had not hesitated, the fish would have missed the hook and swum away.

Adi Elinoff
Colorado, USA

The Key Lime Pie

c. 1964
Gainesville, Florida, USA

My mom tells me this story, time and time again, about the key lime pie.

Once upon a time there was a family of four. In our story we only meet three. Their names were Marc, Karen, and their mother, Richelle (my grandmother).

One day Richelle decided to make a pie—not any pie, but a key lime pie. Richelle worked very, very hard on this pie, putting on whipped-cream puffs and key lime slices, and trying to make it perfect.

She tasted some of the pie right as it finished, and then found out that she had forgotten the sugar! The pie was so sour that you could not eat one bite without exploding. It was sour beyond belief! But since she had worked very hard on it, and because it was so beautiful, Richelle couldn't bear to throw it away. She kept it, hoping she would find a good way to use it without throwing it out.

Every morning Marc would find some leftovers from dinner and take them into Karen's crib, and he and Karen would eat them for breakfast. Sometimes it was spaghetti, sometimes it was meatloaf—whatever they'd had for dinner, the leftovers became breakfast.

The morning after Richelle made the sour pie, Marc found it and decided, "Hey—pie! That's good; we'll have this for breakfast!" (not knowing that Richelle had forgotten the sugar). He took the pie and went into Karen's crib with a couple of spoons.

Later Richelle went to Karen's crib, expecting pasta or something. Instead, she found an empty pie tin, two full toddlers, and a couple of crumbs. She was so surprised that Marc and Karen had eaten the entire sugarless pie all by themselves! Richelle was astounded that her two toddlers had eaten an entire pie that was too sour for even a grown-up to bear.

To this day, it is a mystery how two toddlers ate the sour key lime pie. This story is a story that my mom always tells guests whenever we are having key lime pie for dessert. This story isn't very meaningful, but our family always loves to tell it. This story is meaningful to *me*, because my mom has passed this story on to me, so I will pass this story down to my children.

Jonah R. Defez
Colorado, USA

The Termite Storm

1966–1968

Graie Town, Nimba County, Liberia

When my aunt Linda was twenty-one years old, she joined the Peace Corps and traveled to Liberia in Africa. She was going to Graie Town in Nimba County to help with education. She taught elementary grades, such as first and fourth. Everyone wanted an education, so the students would walk miles and hours from their homes, carrying their chairs on their heads. The students' grade levels were determined by how much English they knew, so the first graders ranged in age anywhere from five years old to thirty years old.

In Graie Town, there was no electricity. The people did not have clocks; therefore, they went to bed when the sun went down. There was one road, and the town was no bigger than a city block. There was only one store, and all of the houses were mud and stick structures with either a thatched or a tin roof.

My aunt was in Liberia for two years.

One year, just before the first rain, thousands and thousands of termites would all fly up into the air. A person would be stationed in an open area to watch the termites all night long. If the termites landed, then the person would run through the swirling black hurricane and wake up the entire town.

The next step would be to dig a giant hole and lure the termites in. They did this by taking a stick with fire on one end and putting it in the pit. After the termites were killed by the fire, they would be spread out onto a

mat and dried by the sun. Then, after they were dried, they would be tossed into the air. In the air, the wings would blow off and away, and the bodies would fall back down to earth. Then they would be cooked and salted. The people of Graie Town loved these termites. Even my aunt tried them and liked them. These termites were a great source of protein and energy.

My aunt Linda loved her time in Liberia and wanted to go back. But when she arrived in America, a huge civil war broke out in Liberia. She couldn't go back. She was very concerned about her friends that she had made in Liberia. My aunt was afraid that they might have gotten caught up in the violence.

My aunt stayed in America, but she will never forget about all of her wonderful experiences in Liberia. She hopes that others can understand the importance of sharing and helping others in our world.

Hannah Marvin
Missouri, USA

Super Dog

c. 1968
Wolbach, Nebraska, USA

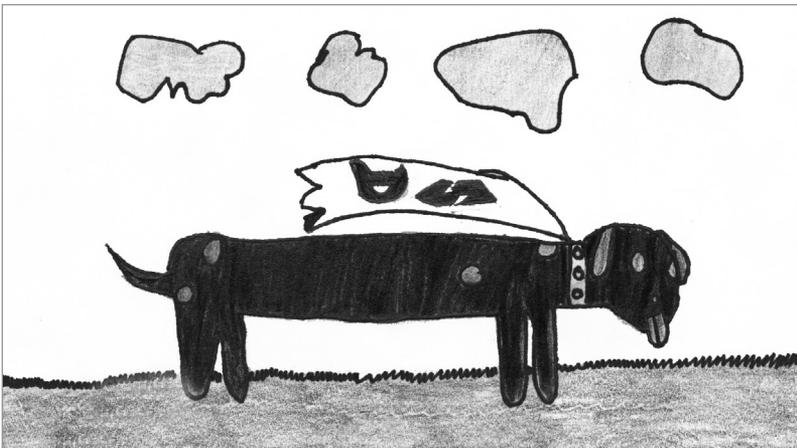
It was 1968 in the outskirts of Wolbach, Nebraska. My mother's family consisted of her parents, her brothers (Steven, Kevin, Larry, and Alan), her sister (Connie), and a dog named Sparky. They were in for an exciting day. They just didn't know it yet.

BOOM!

The family was in the house when everyone was startled by a loud, unusual noise. Sparky, the brown and white farm dog, went completely crazy and began to run around the house. Grandpa said, "What the heck are you doing? Stop running in the house, Sparky!"

The dog knew, however, that something bad was going to happen that day, but he wasn't sure when. He was, however, going to do something about it!

The six children were in the living room playing games when Sparky came running through and trampled



Breanna Radosh

their board game. All the kids yelled, “*Sparky!* You just ruined our game!” Sparky ran to the window to see if anything was going on, but all was silent. No grasshoppers were chirping; no birds were singing. It seemed like the family was the only one left in the whole world.

Sparky had been thinking about how he was going to save the family from the storm, but first he had to learn what kind of storm it was. He had guessed it was a tornado because of the way the other farm animals were acting. The cows were all huddled in the corner of the pasture with their backs against the fence. That was when it hit Sparky: He knew he needed to lead the family to the storm cellar.

When the storm came, it was fiercer than a raging bull. There was a huge gale of wind. The rain sounded like bullets hitting the house. Sparky knew it was time to save the family. He started to scratch frantically at the door. Grandpa said, “I think he is trying to tell us something!”

The family started to follow the barking, yelping dog. Sparky quickly led them down to the underground storm cellar. All of them rushed into the cellar just in the nick of time. The deadly tornado hit the farm with tremendous force! They could hear it ripping and tearing the whole farm apart. The family was shaking in fear and praying that the house was still up.

Suddenly, it all just stopped. The wind was no longer blowing; the rain was no longer pelting down. The cows were mooing, and the horses were neighing, sounding as though they were relieved to be living.

The family came cautiously out of the underground cellar. Huge trees had been torn up by the roots. The

fence was completely wrecked. But the house was still standing. The main relief, though, was that they were still alive, all thanks to Sparky. They all grabbed Sparky, hugging and petting him. Everyone cried, “Good dog! You saved us!”

Sparky, the “super dog,” was happy with himself and happy that the family was safe.

Michael Schumacher
Nebraska, USA

Bronto on the Beach

c. 1968
Oshkosh, Wisconsin, USA

My grandpa likes to tell stories. This is one of his favorite stories—and mine, too.

“In about 1968, when I was in high school, some of my friends and I were part of a drum and bugle corps called the Warriors. One night two of my friends, who had been drinking and were not thinking straight, were walking by a Sinclair gas station. They saw the large brontosaurus mascot on the top of the building. They thought it would be fun to cut it down and transfer it to Lake Winnebago, which was three or four miles away.

“A few weeks later, I snuck out and borrowed my dad’s truck. One of my friends borrowed his dad’s snowmobile trailer. We drove to the gas station, where some of us went on top with bolt cutters to cut the heavy cables that held the dinosaur down. As we took the dinosaur over the edge of the building, it swung against the metal building and made a lot of noise! This was at 1:00 A.M. We were able to hold on to it, despite it swinging. We got it on the trailer and covered it with a tarp. We drove to Lake Winnebago, and some of us rode the floating dinosaur, since it was full of air, fifty feet into the water.

“The next morning a patrolman found the dinosaur as it appeared out of the morning fog on Lake Winnebago’s beach. Someone called the newspaper, and they took a picture of it. The picture appeared on the front page of the newspaper. My dad saw the newspaper



April Jewel Johnson

and thought it was pretty funny. He did not know, of course, that I had used his truck to do it.

“A few weeks later my friends and I went to a party. All the girls and boys from the drum and bugle corps knew what we had done, so they cut out the article from the newspaper. We did something really stupid—we autographed the articles. The worst part was that one of the boys’ uncles was the chief of police! I think that is how the police found out about it.

“A few days later I was sleeping late when the phone rang. My mom answered it, didn’t say much, and hung up. She came into my room, where I was still half asleep, and said, ‘Mark, do you know anything about a dinosaur?’

“Nervously, I replied, ‘Yes, I know something about a dinosaur.’ We went to the police station, where I had to pay twenty dollars for destruction of property, probably to replace the metal cables.”

My grandpa and his friends were also going to steal a large plastic rocket from the Rocket Olds car dealership and put it in someone’s tree. Because of this experience, they decided not to. This story was funny, but you really should not do this. My grandpa was fortunate that all he had to do was pay twenty dollars.

Elisabeth G. Knutson
Wisconsin, USA

Uncle Bob to the Rescue

1970
Greeley, Nebraska, USA

This is one of the stories from my mother's childhood. It is very exciting, and it makes me realize how important she is to me. Her life-risking story stars her heroic uncle.

It was 1970, Easter Sunday, and my mom's relatives were at her grandmother's house for their Easter gathering. Everyone was inside and enjoying a huge feast.

After their meal, Mom and her cousins went outside for an Easter egg hunt. After finding all the eggs, they started climbing the huge hill to get to the old jeep they always played on. It was the only vehicle up on that hill, and no one knew why it was there in the first place. The steep hill was very bumpy and rough, and was very hard to climb. At the bottom of the hill was the house, and just beyond the house was a huge twenty-five-foot-deep ravine.

Mom and her cousins started wrestling around in the old jeep, having a really good time. One of the cousins pretended he was driving the jeep. He was playing with the gearshift when he accidentally put the jeep into "drive." Suddenly they all felt a jerk, and then they started rolling rapidly down the hill. Everyone in the jeep was scared to death and hung on to anything they could find. Then all of them started yelling for help, but no one inside the house heard them. They were all sure they would go over the cliff and that would be the end of them.



Tanner Beck

From inside the house, Mom's uncle Bob just happened to glance out the window. He saw the runaway jeep flying down the hill, so he yelled to everyone else in the house as he dashed outside. The jeep was almost at the bottom of the hill and was heading for the cliff at a high speed.

Uncle Bob ran after the screaming children as fast as he could go, but the jeep was still gaining speed. He ran as hard as his legs would carry him and finally reached the jeep. He jumped inside and slammed on the brake as hard as he could. He stopped the jeep right before the edge of the cliff!

The children all gave out a sigh of relief, but they were still shaking and crying. After Uncle Bob calmed all of them down, they went to find their parents. Their parents were grateful that no one was hurt, and thanked Uncle Bob for his heroic act. They asked him how he did it, and he didn't even know the answer to that question.

Everyone knows still today that if Uncle Bob hadn't stopped the jeep and saved their lives, no one would ever have seen their children again. Yet no one knows how Bob got to the jeep when it was going at that rate of speed. They do know, though, that Uncle Bob is a true hero.

MaKenna Rother
Nebraska, USA

Real Storms

c. 1971

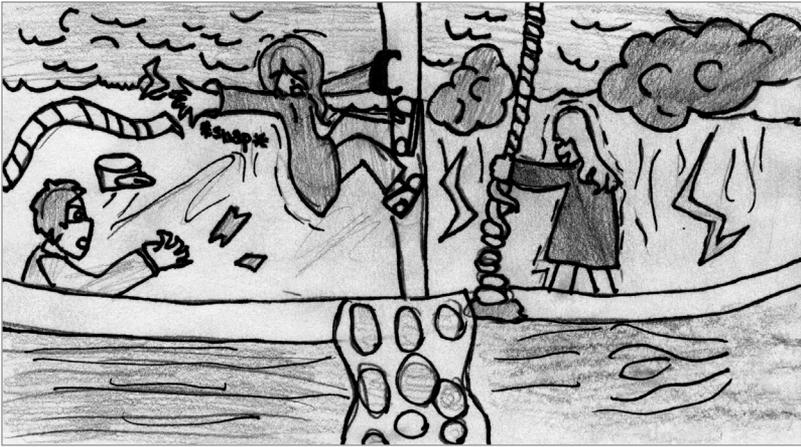
international waters between Sweden and Denmark

If you asked my parents, they would both tell you they love sailing. You could ask them if they've been in storms, and they would say yes. But you have to understand, when they say "storms," they mean real storms—like seriously-injure-or-kill kinds of storms. Especially with my mom.

My mom grew up in Germany. When she was thirteen, she found an article in the newspaper about a nonprofit organization that renovated old windjammers (a type of sailboat) and took on crews of teenagers to be supervised by a few nautical officers on a long sailing trip. She thought it sounded fun, so she sent a letter with her application. Well, they accepted her, so she packed her bags and went to the rendezvous point, a small town in Germany called Travemünde, just north of Lübeck. From there, they departed in a restored 100-year-old wooden windjammer with three or four sails.

When they went aboard, they were welcomed and taught the locations of the bunks, the galley,* etc. There were about fifteen kids living on a boat that was approximately 120 feet long. They were assigned four-hour shifts for the watch, two shifts apiece, six kids on watch at all times. The plotted course would take them around Denmark through the Kattegat and the Skagerrak, the bodies of water separating Denmark and Sweden.

* A galley is a ship's kitchen.



Ida Simone Casmier

As they were heading into the Kattegat, the officers saw storm clouds gathering, boiling up into a harsh, thundering mass of darkness. The officers began listening to the weather radio and confirmed their worst suspicions. The wind continued to build, making the waves choppy and severe, so the crew started reefing* the sails. Then the storm hit. The captain quickly realized that reefing the sails wasn't going to be enough, so he roared into the gale, "All hands on deck! You four, take down the sails!"

My mom was part of the group the captain told to take down the sails, so they started heading to the bow** to take down the foresail,*** but in the confusion of trying to take down the sail and battle the waves and listen to the captain, they lost control of the main line that held the foresail to the bow. The wind was the ringmaster, the rope his whip, snapping back and forth. One of the

*Reefing means folding or rolling up part of a sail so that less of the sail is exposed to the wind.

** The bow is the front part of a ship.

*** The foresail is a sail in the bow of a ship.

girls reached out to restrain it, but with one swift crack, it snapped her arm like a twig. Several officers came forward and helped tie up the sail. They then doubled up into groups of eight for the rest of the sails.

The storm blew them off course, and they had to sail even farther off course to the nearest hospital for the girl with the broken arm, but at least she was alive and well, more or less. And the next time, when they hit storms that were even worse, they were ready.

Alex Souris
Texas, USA

Hide Away

c. 1975
Greensburg, Indiana, USA

It was a cool and crisp Indiana day. In Greensburg a small group of fourth graders had gathered in a small field in the corner of their playground to begin the fourth grade boys' baseball World Series. My dad was playing for the "Cincinnati Reds" team, and, true to the name, the day before, he had bought a brand new red bat at the general store down the street. Skipping occasionally to avoid the burs, he ran to his position behind the batter; he was the starting catcher.

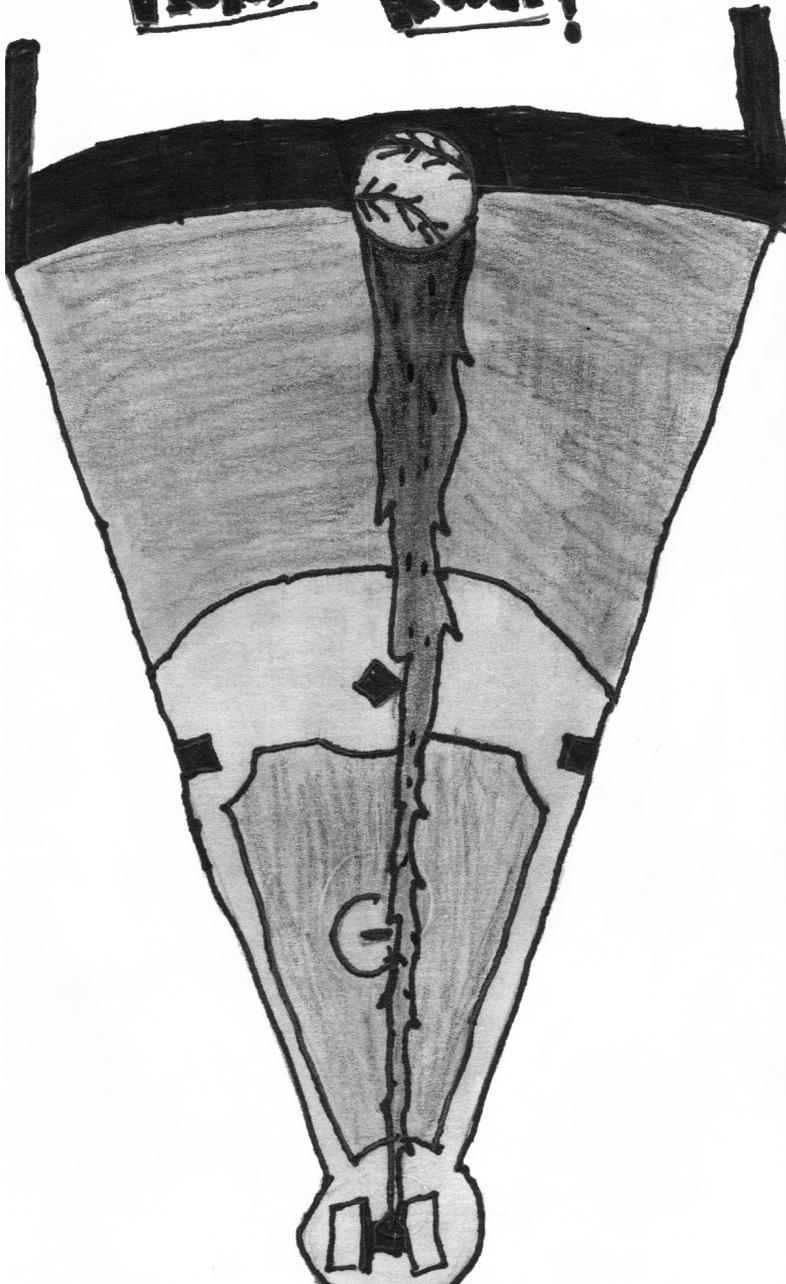
Since the boys only had a thirty-five-minute recess, the pitcher quickly threw the ball. BANG! It smacked against the fence. "Foul!" The game continued this way until the eighth inning. The score was Reds 5, Mets 7.

SCREECH! A huge whistle sounded, and echoed around the playground. It was Ms. Plat, or as my dad's friends called her, "Policeman Plat." After about thirty seconds of whistling, the batter sarcastically remarked, "I guess she wants us to come in now?"

"Boo—" he declared. "Who cares about her? This is the *World Series*, after all. Plus, this isn't fair," he said, stomping his foot into the sand and creating a whirlpool of dust. "I'll bet you that we [the Reds] could wipe you guys off your feet and win if we just had ten more minutes."

"Okay then," someone named Ryan said. "Bet's on."

Home Run!



Matt Hurt

Before anyone knew what was happening, Ryan pulled his teammates down and into the scraggly bushes, leaving the Reds players standing alone in the field. Seconds later Ms. Plat, after making sure everyone had gotten the message, turned to face someone. This is what the Reds needed. Pulling on each other's "crafty" homemade jerseys, the remaining players crashed into the brush. They hid until the last sounds of voices disappeared into the building and the last helpless students had been marched in.

Slowly, one by one, all fourteen boys stumbled out of the foliage, whispering to themselves in silent wonder that their mission had been successful. Even though the building lay very far in the distance and the real chance that any teacher in the building would ever be able to hear them was extremely unlikely, the boys still began their game ever so quietly.

Ten quiet minutes elapsed, until the ecstatic Reds found themselves winning the game. Soon each Reds player emitted a surprisingly loud victory cry, yelling, "I told you so!" too many times to count. In fact, it was so loud that they didn't notice the looming figure until it was too late.

"What are you children doing here?" Principal Lundry boomed.

The group shriveled. "We . . . we . . . ," my dad faltered, "we didn't hear her. We were—uh—too concentrated. Yes, that's it. We were too concentrated."

So our story ends with the students being marched inside and yelled at. My dad and his friends continued to play baseball, but never again would they hide away.

Sarah Holdeman
Texas, USA

Innocent Punishment

April 8, 1975
Gbanlin, Ouesse, Collines, Benin

You might think that getting money from his teacher was a great thing, but my dad learned otherwise. In the end, there were an empty backpack, the word *expelled*, and a dreadfully long whip.

In the spring of 1975, when the trees were tall and the mosquitoes large, my dad was in third grade. Being in the only school in three villages made going to school hard. So if you dropped out of school, you might as well drop your chances of ever going to school again and pick up your farmer's hat.

The main thing that would get you in trouble was playing poker with your money. Back then, if you played cards or any sort of gambling game while you were in school, you were bound to become a thief or some other sort of criminal.

So my father's teacher gave each student in his class different amounts of money. Some would get what would equal two United States dollars; others got what would translate into barely fifty United States cents. He passed the money out to see who would play cards with their money.

But the students caught on easily. Those who had accidentally played cards with their money would replace it with their lunch money the next morning.

There were days when the teacher checked to see who had their money. And then there were *the* days when he checked to see who had their money—the days when

the teacher's eyes gleamed like the brightest stars in the sky, the days when his whip looked the most monstrous. That happened one day when my father was at a class president meeting with the principal.

Fabi, the only other person who sat at my father's table, was also the main card player of the village. So, naturally, he had spent the money given to him. On that special day of the week, that day when every student's heart was beating miserably, he hadn't had enough time to replace the money.

So, seeing my father's bag on the floor, Fabi grabbed it and did the only thing he could to save his own back: He stole my father's money. When my father came back and was asked to show his money, he confidently strode to his bag, only to find it empty. He got the worst beating that teacher had ever given out, because he was supposed to be a role model to the others.

With every lash he got, my father would scream that he hadn't done it, until finally even Fabi couldn't take it. He stood up and declared that it was he who had played cards and had stolen my father's money.

So instead of continuing the beating, the teacher apologized to my father and expelled Fabi. If you find Fabi today, he is probably somewhere farming. But my father ended up graduating.

Adinawa Adjagbodjou
Texas, USA

Temporary Home

1975–1979
St. Louis, Missouri, USA

When my mom, Stephanie, was five years old, her mother left her, her sisters, and her brother. Her family was different from most families in 1975. They had four girls, one boy, and a mom and dad who were both alcoholics. When her mom left, her father didn't know what to do with five kids. He didn't know how he would take care of them. He wasn't sure if he could provide food and care for all of them.

My grandpa couldn't afford to take care of five kids all by himself. He had to send them all to different homes where people could take care of them. Two of my mom's sisters and her brother went to a foster home. She and her older sister went to an orphanage. My mom saw her family every other weekend at her dad's house. They were always excited to see each other. She knew they wouldn't see each other for two weeks. My mom and her siblings would always ride bikes and play in the creek all day when they saw each other on the weekends.

When Stephanie was sent to the orphanage, she didn't know what to expect. She thought it would be dark, old, and scary. She thought wrong. It was more fun than she had expected. She had to share a room with about fifteen other girls. The orphanage had 100 to 150 kids. The orphanage had both boys and girls. The ages that were there were supposed to be six- to twelve-year-olds. But they took five- to seventeen-year-olds, because some kids would never leave. There was always someone to play with.

My mom had fun and some good memories there. She always had plenty of toys to play with and people to play games with or jump rope with. My mom loved playing with Little People play sets, jumping rope to songs, and playing with a miniature kitchen set that she loved. She also loved when it was summer, when they got to go swimming in their pool. There were volunteers that would take some of the kids to places like the circus or the park for the afternoon. They would get a lot of donations from people who would give toys, books, clothes, and shoes.

There were also some sad times. She didn't like going home on Sundays, because she had to leave her siblings and dad. She didn't like hearing the sounds of kids crying at night because they missed their families. It made her sad that some kids would never see their families. There was never anybody to hug or kiss good night. She didn't like that her sisters and brother couldn't live with her.

Although it wasn't like a normal home or a normal family, my mom grew up with a good family and good people who cared for her and loved her—and made her the wonderful mother that she is today.

Molly Newport
Missouri, USA

One Last Test

1975
Fort Smith, Arkansas, USA

When my grandma was pregnant with my mom, she felt like the happiest woman in the world. My grandma went to the hospital for a check-up about every month so that the doctors could make sure that my mom was healthy and there were no problems with her.

When my grandma went for her check-up around the third month, she took a test to make sure she was pregnant. The test came back a few days later. And no one was ready for what happened next: The test came back negative.* My grandma was devastated.

The doctors thought that my mom was cancer.

My grandma just couldn't believe that she wasn't pregnant; she just *knew* that she was pregnant.

About a week later my grandma wanted another test. My grandpa said, "If the doctors say it's not a baby, then it's not a baby." But my grandma demanded to have another test. So my grandpa drove her to the hospital. The doctors did the test. My grandma and grandpa were really nervous. It was a long five days before they got the result of the test, and it felt like five years to my grandma.

The test result finally came in, and my grandma didn't even want to open it. Once she opened it, she started crying, because the test was positive. My grandma was the happiest she has ever been in her whole life. She had known that she was pregnant, and she was. My grandpa and the doctors were amazed.

*A negative test result meant she wasn't pregnant.

And that was the time the doctors thought my mom was cancer. And that one test saved my mom's life. If you think about it, even with all the technology we still make mistakes. And we will always make mistakes, no matter how much technology we will have.

Michael Salley
Texas, USA

A New Land, A New Life

1977–1979

Madrid, Spain; Tampa, Florida, USA

When the world says, “Give up,”
Hope whispers, “Try it one more time.”

—Author Unknown

Have you ever been treated unfairly because you were different? Felt isolated and alone because nobody understood you? That is how Sergio, my dad, felt every single day.

Another school day in Madrid passed, and when Sergio reached home, his mother said, “Sergio, *sientate*.” As told, Sergio sat down.

“*Nos estamos moviendo a los Estados Unidos.*”

“We’re moving to the United States?!” Sergio exclaimed (in Spanish). He felt excited, but nervous; happy, yet sad; full of wonder and anxiety all at once. Am I going to make any friends in the United States? What school will I be going to? Countless questions swarmed in Sergio’s brain like millions of bees in their hive. One thought kept coming back to him repeatedly like a broken record: I do not know any English.

The first step into a new world began with the first step onto a plane. Sergio peered out the window and gazed at the land he would be fleeing. Eight hours later he awoke to burning rays of sunshine blinding his vision, and new scenery overwhelming him in Miami, Florida. The “new American” could not believe that he was actually in America on July 4, 1977.

Before long, Sergio and the other students filed into Pearce Junior High School with one debilitating difference between him and them: He did not understand their English chitchat. He tried to blend in and nonchalantly search for his classroom, but to his surprise, he was assigned to a special-needs trailer where the kids who needed to learn English spent their days.

This separation made Sergio feel like even more of an outcast. As the days wore on, staring became commonplace, whispers increased, and Sergio realized that he was the target of this negative behavior. Suddenly, immigrating to America was not the exciting adventure it had started out to be.

Every day Sergio wound his way through the maze of kids staring, glaring, and x-raying his entire body. Students laughed and pointed, called him names and bullied him until penetrating his innermost feelings. As the weeks passed, the bullying continued, turning into vicious comments and false rumors. Sergio felt alone and friendless, like an insignificant ant trying to conquer an entire jungle. Everywhere he turned, he heard “retard,” “stupid,” or “Duh, I no speak English!” Sergio felt beaten up and isolated just because he spoke a different language. Surprisingly, he also felt determined to conquer the English language and silence the ignorant, shallow bullies.

Those early days set the foundation for a future that may not have happened otherwise. Overcoming relentless bullying and isolation, Sergio took the negative and used it as fuel to propel him to success. His endurance and perseverance turned the impossible into

possible, and in no time he was speaking fluent English. Ultimately, the voice of hope and persistence rang out above the world's voice, and Sergio proved that anyone could succeed if they set their mind to it.

Madeleine Cuan
New Jersey, USA

Life-Changing Journey

c. 1978
Coahuila, Mexico

In his head he thought, “We are approaching.”

When my father was sixteen years old, he decided to cross the border into the United States to find a better life, a better job. As the days passed, my father thought more about whether he should do it or not, because it would be risky. But in his head he thought to himself that yes, he would be doing it.

When he knew he would be doing it, he quickly looked for a “coyote” (which is someone who smuggles people across the border into the United States) that wouldn’t be too expensive. One day he told his friend about his major problem, and his friend said he knew a guy who could do it for a low price, so my father said (in Spanish, of course), “Okay, man. Thanks for hooking me up.”

His friend said, “No problem, man.” After that, he never saw his friend again.

The next day my father met the man, who said, “We will smuggle people next week.”

My father asked, “But how will I know when the time comes?” He gave the man his address, and the man walked off. My father felt like yelling at him, but knew it was hopeless.

The next day my father told my grandmother he would be leaving in the coming week, and she begged him not to go. Over the next few days he packed all of his stuff in his backpack.

In the next six days there was a knock at the door. A boy said, “Are you Jose Rojas?”

My father said, “Yes.”

“We’re leaving today.”

My father sighed, because he didn’t really want to go, but it was his only choice. He told the boy to wait a minute. He got all of his stuff. Then came the hard part—telling his mother and father. He walked into their living room and told them that that day, right then, he was leaving. His mother cried, but his father stayed strong. From his father’s eyes, though, my father knew he was sad, too.

My father got into a van that the boy led him to. Surprisingly, there were already six people in the van. After five minutes of dead silence, except for the van’s engine, my father said, “So where are you guys going to?”

One said, “Houston.”

Another said, “Sacramento.”

And another said, “Dallas.”

A couple of the people stayed still, not saying a word. The ride to the border was quiet.

They passed through Piedras Negras. They went through a “back” crossing. When they got there, the border guy went to the window. They exchanged information. Then the man let them pass nicely. They drove to Houston, and that’s where the coyote dropped them off. After the van sped away, my father said bye to the other men. He had no money because he had spent it all on the coyote.

That’s how my father crossed the border illegally. Today, though, he is a *legal* immigrant.

Jose Enrique Rojas
Texas, USA

What Sticks, Half-Lick?

1978

Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA

My mom was ten years old in the blizzard of 1978. My mom and her two brothers, Dave and Nick, were home alone, because they had another brother being born that day. Since there were several feet of snow, my grandparents had to call 911, because my grandpa's car couldn't get through the snow to the hospital. A four-wheel drive Scout vehicle had to come pick them up, because the ambulances couldn't get through the snow either.

That particular day, the snow was finally letting up. It had snowed so much during that blizzard that it was hard to get out, as the snow had drifted up high against the doors. But the emergency crew had shoveled a path for my grandma, so since my mom and uncles had been stuck in the house for a few days, they got bundled up and went outside to play.

They had only been outside a few minutes when they heard their dog, Fluffy, start to cry. The siblings went over and saw that Fluffy's tongue was stuck to the storm door! All three of them started to panic. Dave tried to gingerly peel Fluffy's tongue off the door while my mom and Nick tried to keep the dog calm.

But it only seemed to make the dog more restless and scared. Then they tried to let Fluffy pull her tongue off by herself, but it wasn't looking so good. They watched in horror as the dog's tongue started to tear!

Then my uncle Dave started to realize that maybe water would help. Well, the dog's tongue was stuck to the door they had come out from, and all the other doors to the house were still blocked by snow. So my mom had to hold Fluffy while her brothers eased open the door so Dave could get some water.

When Dave came back, he had a cup of warm water in his hands and started to pour it on Fluffy's tongue while Mom and Nick pulled at the same time. Fluffy finally got unstuck from the door, but the part of her tongue that had originally started to tear ripped completely off! A little piece of Fluffy's tongue was still stuck on the storm door. And from that day on, Fluffy was always known in their family as "Half-Lick."

Olivia Thomas
Ohio, USA

Karma

1979
Chicago, Illinois, USA

It was 1979, Chicago. The autumn leaves were falling, and the spirit of Halloween was in the air. My name is Cheryl, and I was about nine years old when I went trick-or-treating that year.

“C’mon. Let’s go! I want to get good candy. They always give out good candy first,” said my friend Traci. She was an angel; my other friend, Tori, was a bumblebee; and I was a big fat clown with white make-up, the big red nose, and three pillows inside the fabric.

“Okay, guys, have fun!” said my mom. This was the first year I got to go out around the neighborhood without my mom. So then we went trick-or-treating in my neighborhood, alone.

About forty-five minutes into trick-or-treating we went to a house and rang the doorbell, but no one came. “Hey, look here,” said Traci. “There is a bowl that says to take one piece of candy.” Traci crouched down and took one piece from the bowl; so did Tori. I took all the rest.

“Hey, Cheryl! It says to take *one*,” snapped Tori.

“But they are not home, so it does not matter, Tori,” I replied. So we just went on trick-or-treating.

It was getting dark. I got a little scared, so we headed home. We were almost home when we passed by some teenagers. “Hey, where do you think you’re going?” said one of them.

“Home,” I replied. “I have a huge bag of candy, and I’m tired, so I am going home.” They had this weird



Diana Reyes

little look on their faces. One of them came for my candy bag, and I hit him in the face with my full pillowcase of candy. Then another came and snatched it right out of my hands. I couldn't fight them off because of the big pillows inside my costume. I was really fast, so I ran to try to catch them. But I couldn't—I was in my heavy clown costume. Instead, I walked home feeling sorry for myself.

I slammed the front door behind me as I barged into my house.

“What's wrong?” said my dad.

I didn't reply. My friends came through the door behind me and told him the story. I wasn't sad; I was just so mad! I then thought about how karma would come around to those kids. But wait—could it have been my own bad karma from when I took all the candy? I didn't leave any candy for anyone else, so I guess maybe I deserved what I got.

Matthew Leigh, son of Cheryl
New Jersey, USA

The Magic of Writing

c. 1980–2010
Houston, Texas, and St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Did you know that writing is a very helpful skill in life?

Well, when my father, Lihong Wang, was in high school, he thought that writing was needless. Aspiring to be a scientist, he thought that all he had to do was to list equations. Since he believed writing had no use, he didn't bother learning it and was a horrible writer.

In 1988 my father became a graduate student at Rice University in Houston, Texas. He was asked to write an abstract for a conference paper. My father just put things down in random order, not even caring if it made sense. His advisor, who later won the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, nearly rewrote the abstract. The abstract looked terrifying, filled everywhere with red pen markings and circles. In fact, the advisor numbered all the sentences and reordered them.

My father then realized the importance of writing, even for a scientist, and was shocked at how much he needed to improve his writing. His advisor didn't say his writing needed improvement; but based on how many marks there were, my father was definitely alerted and motivated. He took time studying books on writing, learning from good papers, and understanding edits on his mistakes.

Gradually he became much better at writing and ended up writing a book on physics at Texas A&M University. In 2010 my father won the Joseph W.

Goodman Book Writing Award, which is only given out once every two years. He received that award in San Diego, California, and met Professor Goodman, a highly respected book writer himself.

Five years ago my father got a new job at Washington University, so my family moved to St. Louis. At Wash U my father is a distinguished professor. His students frequently ask him to edit their papers, even after revisions by Wash U's professional editors. He makes very good corrections, and one of the editors even said, "Dr. Wang, your corrections are dynamite!"

Because my father worked hard and was persistent, he is now an amazing writer. Writing has helped his career immensely. He has published three books and 250 scientific papers in journals. He has won twenty-seven research grants totaling thirty million dollars. I hope to be as successful, and to write as well as my father someday.

Julia M. Wang
Missouri, USA

Omul în Zbor

Romanian

c. 1984

Bravicea, Călărași, Moldova

Copilăria tatălui meu a fost plina de peripeții năstrușnice și.

Odată, pe când bunica era la serviciu, tata cu fratele sau mai mare și cu 2 mai mici au decis să zboare cu parașuta. Nu chiar cu parașuta . . . căci nu o aveau. Atunci au găsit niște cearșafuri care stăteau să se usuce afară la ger. După ce au legat la fiecare colț al cearșafurilor câte o funie, au prins-o la brîu și au început să sară pe rînd de pe casă pe o căpita cu fîn. Au sărit cu parașuta pînă au rupt-o. Nu aveau de gînd să o rupă, dar ca să nu fie pedepsiți, le-au ascuns sub cărbunii de după casă.

Bunica cînd a venit i-a întrebat unde-s cearșafurile. Din spusele lor, bunica a înțeles că au fost furate, dar tot erau dubii. Au scăpat ca prin urechea acului! Așa credeau ei, însă adevărul era mai amar.

În primăvară, cînd zăpada s-a topit, iar cărbunii erau pe sfîrșite, bunica a găsit cearșafurile negre ca tăciunea și terfelite de ziceai că au fost roase de cîini. Tata i-a prevenit pe toți și au fugit în pădurea de lîngă sat cu gîndul să-și caute de treabă pe acolo pînă seara, cînd totul va fi uitat.

Cînd se înserase, nu au avut curajul să intre în casă și au intrat cînd deja toți dormeau.

Dimineața, cînd bunica s-a sculat, i-a vazut cum dormeau pe paturi parcă erau aruncați din avion. Bunica i-a fost milă să-i trezească și i-a lăsat să doarmă. Pe la

amiază, totul era uitat. La urma urmei, erau copii, iar faptele lor rele nu erau intenționate.

Așa a încercat tata să zboare cu parașuta. După acea faptă, au urmat și altele, dar tot au scăpat nepedepsiți.

Catalina Ecaterina Tarasov
Călărași, Moldova

The Flying Man

English Translation

c. 1984

Bravicea, Călărași, Moldova

My father's childhood was full of funny misadventures.

Once when my grandmother was at work, my father, with his older and two younger brothers, decided to fly with a parachute. Not really . . . because a parachute they did not have. They found some sheets that were hanging outside, drying in the frost. After they tied a rope to the corners of each sheet, they attached the rope to their waist and began to jump, one after another, from the roof of the house onto a haystack. They jumped with the parachutes until they were ripped. They hadn't meant to rip them, and in order to avoid punishment they hid the sheets under the coal that was kept behind the house.

When my grandmother came, she asked the boys where the sheets were. From what my father and uncles said, she understood that the sheets had been stolen, but she doubted their story. They had a narrow escape! So they thought, but the truth was bitter.

In spring, when the snow had melted and only a little coal remained, my grandmother found the sheets that were as black as ashes and torn as if a dog had scratched them. My father warned his brothers, and they all fled into the forest near the village, thinking to find something to do there until evening, when everything would be forgotten.

When dusk came, they didn't have the courage to enter the house, so they entered later when everyone was already asleep.

In the morning when my grandmother woke up, she saw my father and his brothers sleeping on their beds as if they had been thrown from an airplane. She felt sorry for them, so she didn't wake them up and allowed them to sleep. By the afternoon everything was forgotten. After all, they were children, and their bad deeds were unintentional.

So this is how my father tried to fly with a parachute. After that, other incidents followed, but the boys escaped unpunished.

Catalina Ecaterina Tarasov
Călărași, Moldova

Stop! Grandpa! Stop!

1985
Spring, Texas, USA

My dad had been saving up money ever since he was fifteen for one reason: to get a car. One day my grandpa took my dad to a car dealership. He was looking around for a car he liked when he saw the one he wanted. It was a \$2,400 brown Plymouth Horizon.

“I want this one,” he told my grandpa. My grandpa agreed, so they went inside to do the paperwork. After that, the dealer handed my dad the keys, and my dad drove home alone.

When he got home, he parked the car in the street and ran inside. “Hey, everyone, I got a car!” he shouted.

“Cool. Can I see it?” said his grandpa Charley.

“Sure,” said my dad, and they went outside.

“I want to park it in the driveway so I can wash it,” my dad told his grandpa.

“Can I park it for you?” asked his grandpa.

My dad said, “Sure!” and they both got in the car to do so.

His grandpa turned the key and pressed on the gas. They slowly started to advance forward. They were going faster now, and they started to reach the end of the cul-de-sac. My dad assumed that his grandpa would turn right, but instead of turning right he slammed on the gas and turned left.

“Stop!” yelled my dad as they hit the curb and barreled into someone’s yard. “Grandpa, stop!” my dad screamed. They smashed a lamppost, flattening the

bottom half of it. The top half flew over the car, but still the car didn't stop. THUD. They hit a mailbox. Speeding left, the car made a sickening grinding sound as the bottom of the car scraped against the curb. They were back on the street! My dad let out a sigh of relief, only to realize that the car wasn't stopping. The car hit the curb on the other side of the street, and they flew up in the air. Time seemed to slow down as they hit the grass on a set collision course for a giant oak tree.

"*Stop!*" shouted my dad, screaming at the top of his lungs. But there was no such luck. The car flew straight into the tree and did what it hadn't done before. The car stopped. For a minute my dad just sat there, dazed by the whole experience.

Finally he spoke. "Why didn't you stop?" asked my dad.

His grandpa answered glumly, "I couldn't find the brakes."

Not even listening to what he said, my dad opened the door and jumped out of the car. He stepped back to see the damage. The whole front of the car was flattened. He started walking back to his house. He never got to wash his new car.

Now my dad is a lot more careful about who he lets drive his car. And he makes sure they know where the brakes are.

Isaac Eastlund
Missouri, USA

Tiananmen Square Crackdown

1989
Beijing, China

My parents lived in China in 1989, which was a time that most Chinese college students wanted to be free from the Chinese government's harsh rules. Rules like having only one child per couple were greatly enforced.

Many people didn't like these rules. They wanted to vote for their rights and to be able to have more than one child. They wanted a democracy.

Then the *students* realized that they wanted a democracy. They wanted the people to speak for themselves instead of having a dictator decide.

Soon the students started to protest, waving signs that said FREE US! or WE WANT INDEPENDENCE! Trying to catch people's attention, the students paraded around Tiananmen Square.* The protest worked, all right. People listened, and more people protested with them, and they stayed there for days.

One evening at nightfall, people could see lights in the distance. "Tanks are coming!" the people screamed. People gathered together in front of Tiananmen Square. They weren't about to let the government come in and ruin their protest. My dad stood there with his friends, bracing themselves against the tanks as hard as they could. Some people climbed on top of the tanks and yelled into bullhorns. "We want freedom!" they chanted. They blocked the tanks with all their might.

* This is the largest city square in the world. Hundreds of thousands of people were involved in this seven-week protest.

The tanks fired, but my dad and his friends didn't dare back down. Many were hurt badly, and some were arrested. A couple of Dad's friends died. Dad was scared like most people were. Anything could happen; his life could be hanging by a thread. He could be arrested and forced to leave his family, but he didn't back down. He wanted freedom, he wanted to have more than one child, and he wanted to have rights that he could vote for.

So did my mom. She worked in the hospital during the fight. She led doctors and nurses into hiding the patients so the government wouldn't find them. She had an important job to do. If she hadn't hidden the people, they would have been arrested.

The night was long; many people were injured, killed, or arrested. Soon people began to lose hope. The government took control of the streets, and no one was allowed to protest anymore. The government also took away school rights. They said they wouldn't fund the school if students there were learning about democracy. People were scared and were left without hope. Some left to go to places with democracy.

Three years after the crackdown, my parents moved to America. They wanted to live in a democracy. As much as it hurt to leave their family and friends, they wanted freedom. My mom and dad were happy with the life they had in America. They had three children, and they could now vote for their rights. Meanwhile, in China the government has slowly been improving, but the country is still not a democracy.

The Tiananmen Square crackdown will be a memory my parents will hold forever. For them it was a

great step toward finding what they really wanted, and accepting it.

Shirley Yu
Missouri, USA

Mother Knows Best

1995

Mexico–United States border near Brownsville, Texas

In the summer of 1995 my parents were not yet married. My dad had already proposed. My mom had said yes, but there was one big problem: My mom lived in Mexico City, and my dad lived in the United States. It was going to be hard to bring my mom to America without a marriage visa. Along the way my dad learned many lessons. The biggest lesson was *You should have listened to me*.

My dad drove from St. Louis, Missouri, to Mexico City with a small trailer to pick up my mom and half brother, Jose (who was nine at the time), and all their belongings. Driving from St. Louis to Mexico was the easy part. The hard part was getting them from Mexico across the border to Brownsville, Texas.

They arrived at the checkpoint with their car and a full trailer. My mom suggested that she and Jose should walk across the border. My dad said no, because he was afraid they would split apart. They all went into the customs house together. They told the man that they were going to visit some friends—and they were—but while they were there, they were also going to get married. They got permission to go across, but the guy had not seen the trailer full of stuff.

They left happy and relieved. The car next to them was being sniffed for drugs by guard dogs. They watched the dogs for two minutes too long. The guy ran out and knocked on the window and said, “You are not

just visiting. You're not going anywhere. Give me your visas." Without her traveler visa my mom could not cross the border or get married to dad.

My mom, dad, and brother went back to the customs house. They waited for the supervisor to come. The officer was furious, because he felt they had lied to him. He had called the supervisor, hoping she would send them back to Mexico City. When she arrived, she asked questions in English to my dad but in Spanish to my mom and brother, trying to see if they were lying or telling the truth. My dad was so nervous he turned very white; he almost threw up and fainted. My mom, on the other hand, was cool, calm, and collected. They could kind of tell that she knew what they were doing. To their relief and surprise the supervisor said, "Okay, you are good to go." The officer, on the other hand, was even more upset.

My mom, dad, and brother went straight to the car, turned on the engine, and left without waiting one more second. Once they crossed the border, they had a sigh of relief and were smiling and laughing. Then my mom said, "You see—you should have listened to me."

Veronica Zapiain Luna
Missouri, USA

My Epic Journey

1995

Srebrenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina

The hardest part of my life was living through the Bosnian War. It was a horrible time. I still get images in my head about it. Just thinking about the war gives me goosebumps. It was about fifteen years ago, but I remember it like it was yesterday. The loud sounds of gunshots filled the air, cannons were fired, and different parts of houses were found everywhere.

I was sitting in my living room with my family when a cannon hit the top corner of my house! I ran to the door, but it collapsed on my left leg. When we all got out, I had to stand there and watch my house fall apart. It was awful. I just wanted to get out of that place as fast as possible, but I couldn't because the Serbians surrounded the whole country. There was no way to escape. There was no food to eat, and it was hard to sleep because shots kept being fired. Also, I worried about my kids every day, hoping they were alive. Can you imagine that? You are hungry, tired, and worried all at the same time. It's a lot to take on all at once. The thing that kept me alive was the food that was dropped down from the airplanes. It really was a sight to see.

The U.S. Army came with buses. They picked up kids and women, and took them to a different area far away. Men had to walk six days straight to get there. The bus took us to some sort of campsite. There were more than one thousand people there! We all had to stay there for eight days. We were fed and we got rest, but we

hadn't showered for weeks! All I had to sleep on was a rough blanket on the grass.

After eight days at the campsite, the bus took me and several others to a gigantic gymnasium, where we slept on mattresses that were lined up one by one on the ground. We got food, rest, and shelter. More than one hundred people were there! We all stayed together in the gymnasium for three months! As time went on, houses were rebuilt, and I, my youngest son, and my new daughter-in-law all moved into a house. My granddaughter Almira Mujic was born in that house. We were there for about two and a half months. We later moved into a bigger house in a bigger city and stayed there for about three years. After that, we decided to move to America.

I lost much during the war. I lost my oldest son, my youngest sister, and my nephew. But I also gained a few things. I gained courage, strength, and stability. The war made me appreciate how lucky I am to have healthy food, a nice shelter, good hygiene, a medical program, and so much more. I went through a remarkable experience.

Almira Mujic
Idaho, USA

A Lucky Day

1999
Beijing, China

My parents weren't born in America. They were both born in China but decided to move to America later. However, to do this, they were each required to obtain a visa first.

My mother was a good scientist who would benefit America, so she was allowed to obtain a visa along with my father. They went to the embassy in Beijing after working very hard to set up a date and waiting a very long six months. But then my mother fell into a state of panic and desperation as she remembered something: She needed evidence that she was a good scientist worthy of obtaining a visa—evidence that my mother did not have with her at the moment.

The evidence (publications, discoveries by my mother, etc.) was in my mother's office in Tianjin. My parents were in Beijing. They couldn't go back after painstakingly applying for a date to obtain their visas! What could they do? Fortunately, my grandmother was with my mom. Also fortunately, there was a store with a fax machine and a phone very close to the embassy. With these two elements, my mother hatched a plan.

The plan went like this: While my mother waited in line, my grandmother was to go to the store, phone her friends in Tianjin, and ask them to fax the evidence over to the fax machine in the store. There were a lot of papers, so my grandmother had to take a pile of pages as the rest of the evidence was being printed, take it to

my mother (who was standing in line), run back, and repeat. (They had to do this because who knew where my mother would be in line after all one hundred pages were printed?) As my grandmother did this, the people in the embassy and store were all probably wondering why a fifty-year-old woman was sprinting up and down the street. There was only one flaw in the plan: The store owner asked my grandmother to pay. But after much intense arguing, the store owner eventually let my grandma have the pages for free.

As my mother waited urgently—as she slowly moved to the front of the line—my grandmother came rushing in with the evidence. My mother handed these papers in to the person behind the counter, who asked a few simple questions to verify that this evidence was legitimate. My mother answered these questions easily. After all they had gone through, my parents were finally allowed to obtain their visas!

My mother was incredibly lucky to have been granted a visa, considering the circumstances. She was lucky to be a good scientist, lucky to have my grandmother around when she was waiting for her visa, lucky that the embassy was near that little store with the phone and the fax machine, and very lucky to have thought of that idea. Because of the luck that my mother experienced on that lucky day, she is now living happily in the United States of America.

Jinghang Zhang
Missouri, USA

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Timothy Marshall; Ohio, USA

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Shannon Flynn; Missouri, USA

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Surprise Endings

Victoria Vatter; New Jersey, USA

A War Hero

Bryce Wood; Nebraska, USA

Invitation to Participate

Please join us for the 2011/2012 Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration. The submission deadline for *Grannie Annie, Vol. 7*, is February 1, 2012. Complete [details](#), including the required entry form, are available on The Grannie Annie website.

Praise for The Grannie Annie

I am always on the lookout for ways to share my students' writing and am thrilled to have discovered *The Grannie Annie*. Everyone had so much fun finding out about past family events, and I'm proud of the stories the students produced.

Beverly Miller, Teacher; Alabama, USA

The *Grannie Annie* challenged my students to go beyond their comfort zone, to write for a broader audience, and to see that learning goes beyond the four walls of a classroom.

Ann-Marie Harris, Teacher; Maryland, USA

The *Grannie Annie* is a good start for kids to get published. And I love the way *The Grannie Annie* helps people understand their family history. It also helps children get closer to their families.

Andrew Malphurs, Author of the *Grannie Annie*, Vol. 5, story "Grandpa's Saddle"

Stories connect people in families and communities, giving them a common language and understanding of the present as well as the past. Through *The Grannie Annie*, generations connect as students take time to listen to the stories of their older relatives—and learn from them. Then, as the students write and share their stories, the connections multiply.

Amy Glaser Gage; Children's author, writing teacher, and consultant to *The Grannie Annie*

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. The interviews have the dual benefit of preserving the history of our

ancestors and giving our younger generations the chance to ask the questions and consider the issues that are important to *them*.

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

The Grannie Annie is all about connection. As it hearkens back to the original Grannie Annie, it continues her tradition of oral storytelling to link generations and cultures. Grannie Annie family stories written by young people illuminate a long span of history, often revealing family values honed from adversity or triumph and tempered by humor and love.

Janet Grace Riehl, Author of *Sightlines: A Family Love Story in Poetry & Music*

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

As I'm sure is the objective of The Grannie Annie, this was a lovely experience, and now memory, for Andrew and his grandpa. There are no words for that.

Susan Barton Malphurs, Parent; Georgia, USA

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; Nebraska, USA

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.

Brian Billings and Laura Amburgey, Teachers; Ohio, USA

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.

Jodi J. De Luca, Ph.D., Parent; Florida, USA

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

The Reading Tub™, www.TheReadingTub.com

Grannie Annie is a beautiful collection of stories—educational, funny, exciting, touching. . . .

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

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

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; Indiana, USA

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; Texas, USA

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; Texas, 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*

Our son's *oma* is overwhelmed that her “story” is in print in *Grannie Annie*. She is thankful for the opportunity to tell it! Every family member and family friend has a signed copy.

Karie Millard, Parent; Indiana, USA

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

The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration

Young People Learning and Sharing Family Stories

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