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Whether spying on Native Americans, meeting Pope John Paul II, stealing Grandpa's rusty pickup truck or surviving the Blizzard of '78, *Fallen Timbers* Middle School youth got an earful when asking relatives for a unique story to share as part of the *Grannie Annie* Project.

An international writing contest, *Grannie Annie* encourages youth to interview relatives to discover family histories. For the sixth year in a row, fifth-grade *Fallen Timbers* LEAP students had their works chosen for publication.

So far, FTMS has had 21 published authors with nine others receiving honorable mention, said *Grannie Annie* co-founder Fran Hamilton.

The five chosen for publication this year include:

■ "Touched by a Saint" by Alli Hanna tells of how her mother Debbie was 11 years old when she met Pope John Paul II in 1980. With her father working at the American Embassy for two years, their family lived in Italy. One day, Debbie's class took a field trip to the Vatican. She wiggled her way to the front of the crowd and managed to have the Pope shake her hand.

"Just like everyone else, she was thrilled!" Alli wrote. "When he was walking away, my mom shouted 'Ja Cie Kocham!' which means I love you in Polish. Pope John Paul II was the first and only Polish Pope. My grandma is 100 percent Polish so this Pope was very special to my family. My

mom was shocked when the Pope turned around, walked towards her, smiled and put his hand on her cheek. This was a very amazing moment."

Debbie thought none of her friends or relatives saw it, but a week later, Grandma got a phone call from a friend. It turns out the Pope's photographers had taken a photo at that exact moment. Grandma bought the picture and it still hangs on the wall.

John Paul II died in 2005, and is on his way to becoming a saint, Alli wrote, so that means her mom has been touched by a saint.

"This has become a huge part of my life and my faith," she said later.

■ "Who Tricked Who?" by Blaine Instone tells of an encounter his great-great-great-grandfather Gorman Siler had with Native Americans at his two-story log cabin near Defiance in 1872.

The Native Americans wanted some of Gorman's hard cider from the barrel in his barn, but Gorman didn't want to give up cider for his own family, or see the men get sick from drinking too much. So he made a deal: he handed them a wicker basket and told them to take all the cider they could carry in the basket – figuring it wouldn't hold.

The Native Americans took the basket, shaking their heads. But they came up with a plan.

"They had dipped the basket in the water of a nearby creek a number of times. By doing this, the basket froze, filling in all the gaps. They now had a basket that would hold liquid!" Blaine wrote. "Gorman was a man of his word. The men filled the basket and walked

away with all the hard cider that the basket could hold, happy that they were able to get some at all."

■ "Don't Drive the Truck!" by Brock Wertzbaugher tells of how his grandpa Doug Wertzbaugher, his older brother Chuck and younger sister Lulu lost their father's rusty brown pickup truck in the mud near their small Colorado town.

"When their mother and father weren't looking, they would get in the pickup truck and start driving it." Brock wrote how the children, ages 9 to 11, couldn't reach the pedals, so one would operate the pedals while the other brother would steer.

One day, they invited about 20 neighborhood children to ride in the bed of the truck and eat popsicles. But the truck got stuck in a muddy ditch. The three went home and acted like they didn't know where the truck was.

But the next day, Lulu suggested it might have been taken by a thief into one of the fields. Sure enough, father found it in the ditch and saw, in the bed of the truck, popsicle sticks.

"After that, the children didn't see the truck for a while, or popsicles, or what life was like outside of their rooms," he wrote.

■ "My Mother, The Bear" by Jane Robertson tells of how, in the winter of 1948, there were rumors of black bears wandering Northwest Ohio.

After milking the cows and doing other chores, Joey – her Papa – would head to the outhouse, which was about 150 yards from the house.

"With black bears loose, Papa would run as fast as his legs could carry him to the

outhouse. He would then do his daily routine of reaching inside the outhouse, feeling around the familiar area to make sure that there was nothing or no one inside of it," Jane wrote.

One cold, windy night, he reached in and felt fur instead of emptiness.

"My Papa screamed and froze in his tracks. Suddenly a familiar voice came from within the outhouse." It was his mother, wearing her large muskrat fur coat because it was so cold. He had thought that fur coat was a black bear in the outhouse.

"His brothers and sisters thought it was very amusing, but being a 12-year-old, he did not. Years later he was able to laugh and tell stories about his scary night of meeting the 'bear' in the dark outhouse."

■ "My Mom and the Birch Tree Bridge" is about Nolan Bishop's mom who had an encounter with Native Americans near her family's Northern Wisconsin lake home.

"They had been warned many times by my grandparents to never cross the birch tree bridge that led to a Native American reservation on the other side of the rocky creek. However, on that warm and sunny day my Mom let her curiosity get to her. While my uncle Dave was smart enough to turn back, my Mom walked straight past the No Tres-

passing sign and into the thick woods."

She saw some old trailers, a large fire pit and some homemade totem poles, then got scared and ran home. But someone must have seen her white blonde hair – because a few minutes after she returned, two Native American men pulled up in a pickup truck to talk to her dad.

"My mom was worried they were coming to behead her!" But she learned that the men were concerned for her safety – as the land she had walked through was filled with animal traps.

"After realizing she wasn't going to be on a totem pole herself, my Mom decided the punishment for crossing the bridge didn't sound all that bad. She mastered how to clean out an outhouse for the winter that day!"

Earning an honorable mention, and publication on the website, are stories by Robert Nicely, Jordan Pack and Hayden Evans.

■ "Blizzard of '78 in a Small Town" tells how Robert's grandmother Sabra Laberde weathered the blizzard with four children, no power or heat, and eventually no firewood. Yet Robert's mother Lorrie and her brother Rick eventually tunneled out of the second story to play with friends, and the two older children delivered food to neighbors in Hoyt-

ville. Eventually, the National Guard delivered food and dug out homes and roads.

■ "A Day to Remember" takes place in 1963, when Jordan's grandmother Victoria Avent was 15.

Victoria's father was in charge of bringing a guest speaker to the Toledo Foreman's Association. That guest was the famous African American runner Jesse Owens. Being afraid of how Jesse would be treated at a hotel, the Avents had the man stay at their home.

"My grandmother said getting to meet Jesse Owens is something she will never forget. It really was a day to remember."

■ "Washed Away" by Hayden Evans tells how his great-grandpa Will and great-great uncle Charles left their Hancock County home in 1908 to head to a barn sale after a rain had ended. But upon returning home, the bridge was gone.

"The bridge was a fairly primitive bridge, not too fancy, but Will never would have guessed that it would wash away in just a rain storm." The men found their way home in time for supper – and with a story to share.