



# **Tales from West 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue**

## **The Pearson Residents Writing Project**



## **CARMA**

### **Community and Residents Mentors Association**

**March, 2006**

## Sponsors

We would like to acknowledge the invaluable support provided to the Pearson Residents Writing Project by our sponsors:

- Vancouver Coastal Health SMART Fund
- BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD)
- Community and Residents Mentors Association (CARMA)

### Vancouver Coastal Health SMART Fund

The Sharon Martin Community Health Trust Fund was conceived in 1997 as a major tool for new investment in health improvements. The Fund supports innovative, cost-effective community based initiatives that promote and improve the health of residents in the Vancouver Coastal Health Region.



All projects supported by the SMART Fund work to build capacity within their respective communities. This is accomplished through recognizing and enhancing the expertise and participation of their members, and involving the development of new partnerships, networks and contacts within and amongst communities. The SMART Funds's vision is 'People in communities have equitable access to health resources, make healthy choices and work together to create community-based solutions to health issues.'

The Fund is named in honour of the late Sharon Martin, the founding Director of Community and Public Involvement for the Vancouver/Richmond Health Board, one of the predecessors of Vancouver Coastal Health. Sharon was a passionate believer in nurturing healthy communities through community development and public involvement. The SMART Fund is a tribute to these beliefs.

### BC Coalition of People with Disabilities

The BC Coalition of People with Disabilities (BCCPD) is a cross-disability umbrella group representing people with disabilities throughout BC. The organization's mandate is to raise public and political awareness around issues of concern to disability communities and to create change. Through its work, BCCPD hopes to improve people with disabilities' access to all aspects of community living.



## **CARMA (Community and Residents Mentors Association)**

CARMA was inspired by the experience of people with disabilities who left care facilities and established their lives in the community.

In the process of making this transition, they learned how to plan, where to go for information and who to ask for support. Most often, they relied on other people with disabilities who had taken a similar path.

The purpose of CARMA is to identify this network of peer support and to facilitate building relationships between mentors in the community and residents of George Pearson Centre.



These mentoring relationships will in turn enable people with disabilities who are at Pearson Centre to dream, to plan and to pursue their life goals. For some, this will lead to resettlement in the community. For others who choose to remain at Pearson, it will help them to take more control of their lives.

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## Introduction

### Tales from West 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue: The Pearson Residents Writing Project

Over the last 7 years, the Community and Residents Mentors Association (CARMA) has been working with the residents of George Pearson Centre to help them to reach their goals. George Pearson Centre is a large care facility on West 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Vancouver, British Columbia, that houses people with disabilities of all ages. CARMA's mentors are former residents of Pearson Centre who wanted to stay connected to the people they left behind when they themselves moved into the community. CARMA's mentors help residents to make goals, both big and small, and then support them to realize those goals. Sometimes the goal

is to leave Pearson and sometimes it is to stay and feel good about being there.



*The Carma Team:  
Heather Morrison, Christine Gordon, Taz Pirbhai*

One of the strategies that CARMA uses to encourage Pearson residents to hope and to dream is by finding ways to build bridges to the world outside.

**Tales from West 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue: The Pearson Residents Writing Project** is one of those bridges. Assisted by students from the neighbouring high school, Pearson residents spent many months over the spring and summer of 2005 crafting their stories, poems and biographies. It took time be-

cause many people didn't think that they had a story to tell and others needed the assistance of letter boards or lite writers to tap their stories out.

What you will find on the pages of this website is a work in progress, the first installment of **Tales from West 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue**. There are many more stories to tell and many more residents who might decide to write them. This website provides a way for Pearson residents to reach the residents of the wide virtual world and for those outside to communicate back to West 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue. It also provides a unique opportunity to get to know people who are mostly out of sight. We hope that you will take this opportunity.

Taz Pirbhai, Heather Morrison and Christine Gordon  
Community and Residents Mentors Association

March 2006

## Acknowledgements

It took a whole community of helpers and supporters to assist Pearson residents to tell and publish their stories on this website.

CARMA extends thanks and sincere appreciation to all of these supporters:

- **Lillian Ireland**, CARMA's Coordinator of Transition and Community Development, who galvanized everyone into action and painstakingly organized every detail of the writing project from its launch, which featured a big Hawaiian party with Hula dancers, to facilitating the matches of students with residents and encouraging everyone to keep writing.
- **Cynthia Khoo**, CARMA's 2005 summer student who interviewed, edited, coordinated and photographed and brought order and style to the creative efforts.
- **Angel Sun, Angela Wong, Chris Tam, Dhanisha Parekh, Ellen Nam, Eric Fang, Jennifer Law, Jennifer Luo, Tiffany Chan, Betty Zarazus, and Allison Lee**, all students of Winston Churchill Secondary School, who spent many hours interviewing residents, transcribing their stories and interpreting their intent and meaning.
- **Allie Taub**, a University of British Columbia student, and **Karen Martin** who developed strong relationships with Pearson residents and helped them to tell stories when they did not think they had any stories to tell.
- **Rheta Ogilvie**, a CARMA mentor who loves reading and writing, and whose enthusiasm for the writing project never waned.
- **Lezlie Wagman**, the Coordinator of the Sharon Martin Trust Fund at Vancouver Coastal Health, who suggested that Tales from West 57<sup>th</sup> Avenue have its own website and then found the funding to make it happen.



Cynthia Khoo



Lillian Ireland with some of the student volunteers from Winston Churchill Secondary School



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## Cheerleader

by Jane Ashcroft

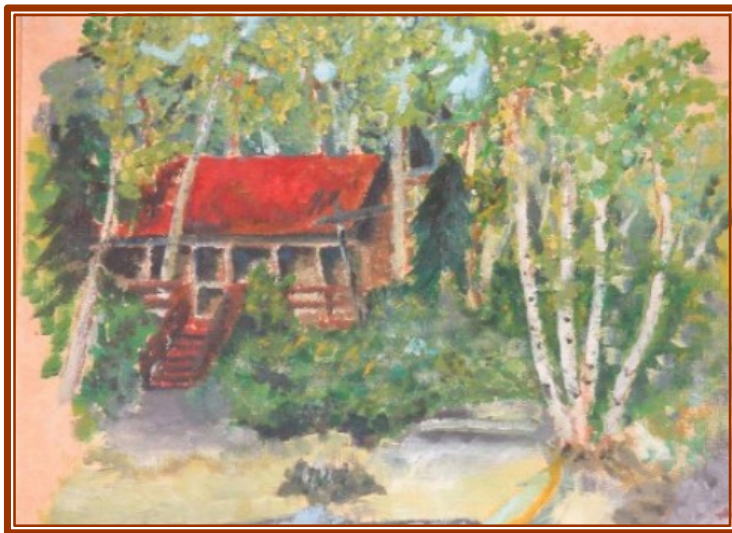
I love gardens. I have one right outside my room that my sister, Linda, gardens for me. I have an owl in my garden. He hoots and keeps the crows off the cherry tree.

Laney is my other sister; she lives in Florida. I am very close to my sisters. I also have one brother, named Bruce. I grew up in West Vancouver, and it was wonderful growing up there. My mother and father were both born in Saskatchewan and they moved to West Vancouver when they were in their late 30s, because they'd decided that they wanted to live in BC. My father was an ophthalmologist; he was a very bright man. My mother was a nurse.



Jane Ashcroft

Every summer I would go water skiing with my family at Christina Lake in the Kootenays. It was the most beautiful place in the whole world. When I was fifteen we stopped going because my dad wanted to buy a boat. I really missed Christina Lake.



Christina Lake by Jane Ashcroft

I painted a picture of that place. It's on the wall in my room. I like painting; I started it when I was five years old. I always feel great when I paint. I also painted a portrait of my son and step-daughter when they were children, and that's on my wall, too.

I was a very bright young person and in school I became a cheerleader for West Van High. Then I continued being a cheerleader when I went to the University of British Columbia (UBC). It was so much fun. I made friends doing that. I can remember some of the cheers, but I can't do them anymore. I was in the UBC physiotherapy program for two years, but I didn't finish because I got bored. So, I became a dental assistant for a West Vancouver dentist. I worked for him for many years and I enjoyed that. I was very good at it.



*Portrait of Children by Jane Ashcroft*

I got married, but I didn't have a lot of friends - I had a lot of acquaintances, but not a lot of friends. My husband and I moved to Ocean Falls, way up the coast. It was a hole in the wall. I didn't work when I was in Ocean Falls because I was pregnant. We lived there for two years and then we moved to Prince George, which was almost as bad. I left my husband in Prince George and went back to West Vancouver. It wasn't a very hard decision to make; Prince George wasn't a very nice place to live, so I was glad to return to West Vancouver. After I came back I lived with my mother for a long time and continued to be a dental assistant, as I had during my marriage and while I was living in different places.

I gave up my first child for adoption because I'd left my husband. I tried to find my son years later, but I never managed to locate him. I remarried. Les was my second husband and he was a pharmacist. I don't remember how we met - I think I chased him. We had a son, David, and I gained a stepdaughter, Lisa. Les and I aren't married anymore.



# Happiness

by Kaethe Tahirah Batdorf

Faith and Happiness, Happiness and Faith.

Faith, not in the sense of religious faith, but faith in the beauty of the world that the Creator has given us. The flowers, the plants, the trees, the animals on land and in the water, the fish in the water, and the birds. All who communicate in a way we don't understand.

It's miraculous!

Happiness, not in the sense of a chuckle at a joke, but in the sense of happiness of the world.

One can think of oneself as a lump on a bed or as one's spirit that covers the world.

Or is that faith?



*Two Bolas by Kaethe Tahirah Batdorf*

# I Loved Bowling

by Susan Brown

I remember going to a dude ranch in Aldergrove during the summer. Holiday Acres was the name of the place. I was maybe ten the first time I went. You could pick out your own horse to ride, and there were hayrides, and wiener roasts. I made lots of friends, and I had a crush on the camp leader; Robby was his name.

I went to a Beatles concert at the Empire Stadium when I was twelve years old. My friend's mother took the two of us. At that age, I don't think I really appreciated it. You couldn't even hear the Beatles it was so loud, not a word they were singing or a note they were playing because of the girls and women screaming. You could hear the girls screaming miles down the street. I still have the ticket and the Canadian dollar bill with "the Beatles" written on it.

I loved bowling. I was four years old when I started, five-pin of course and then later ten-pin. I was part of a bowling league and I had an excellent coach. I did that all through my teenage years; I was the second best bowler in BC when I was thirteen years old.

When I was fifteen, my brother got a job doing work with a Newfoundland company that was building a fish plant on the Island of the Dead. So, we drove across Canada together. At that age, I got a good start at seeing the country, but I didn't appreciate it then. We learned the hard way that you don't make a right turn on a red light in Montreal—we got stopped by the police. It's the silly little things that I remember, like how in Toronto, my brother had university friends who lived there. They were living in a rooming house and I remember on one of the big main streets downtown in Toronto there were go-go girls on the balconies of buildings.



Susan Brown

Newfoundland was a hard place to be in for a long time. There was nothing green: no trees, no grass. It was a rock; you couldn't plant anything there. The town we were in had a total of about two hundred people. They were all people working on the fish plant, with their families. I met a girl there, Linda Green. She was the same age as I was. I couldn't understand one word the people there said because of the Newfie accent. Also, the people there never knocked, they would just walk into your house. Linda did that one day, yapping away at me and I didn't know what she was saying. I found out that she was asking me if I wanted to go to a show with her and her sister. The theatre was actually a barn and in the barn there were benches you sat on, and there was a screen up. There was an old movie called *Ten Thousand Bedrooms* playing. I was in Newfoundland for three or four months and then my brother flew me back on an airplane. I returned and went back to bowling and babysitting and my friends.

When I got out of school, I worked in insurance and in a bowling alley. I worked behind the counter at the bowling alley. Then they put in a coffee shop and so I was giving out bowling shoes and then working in the coffee shop making hamburgers. The bowling alley is torn down now. Richmond is all new now; everything is new, changed.

I've been married twice and I have two children. I'm very good friends with my first husband, John, who is now a retired bus driver in North Vancouver. He's the father of Richard, who is now 31 and lives in England. Richard is a landscaper and he's been doing that ever since he was young. He's married now and his wife is just twenty years old. Robyn is my daughter and she's not had a good time. She's 27 and has one child, Courtney, but Courtney is living in Squamish with her other grandma, who has temporary custody. So, I don't see Courtney very much. She's a very intelligent kid.

When my kids were young I took them bowling a lot. My son was not interested in bowling one bit. He was into music. One time he was in a band competition and they came in first. His father was a musician, and so was Bob, my second husband.

John and I divorced after nine years. I was in love with him, but I had always wanted to be with Bob. Bob had gone back east though, and John was similar to Bob, so maybe that is why I married him. I met Bob when I was sixteen, and I had been in love with him ever since.

## On My Life

by Eunice Colwell

### On Family

I was born in Ontario, in Toronto. Ontario was okay. I like British Columbia better. My sons like British Columbia better than Ontario. My kids are the most important thing in life. Tina, Rick and Ray, they're my daughter and two sons. Tina is tall, she's just as tall as you are [just under five feet], comes up to your shoulders. She likes skating. Rick's my son, comes up to my shoulders. Ray comes up to my shoulders, too; he's my boy. I love my kids. I love Tina, Rick and Ray.

### On Media

I like drums; I like listening to them. I listen to the radio all the time. It's funny sometimes, that's what makes it good. As for books, I pick up all of them off the shelves, and then put them back down. If it's funny I laugh, if it's not I won't laugh.

### On Sports

I like bowling. I sit there and watch it. If they ask me to go bowling I go and help. It's really good. You get a ball and you throw it and knock down some pins. They got pins down there and they give you the ball. And you throw it down and if you hit them [the pins] you're lucky and if you don't hit them you're not lucky at all. I was part of a bowling team. It was really good. I didn't like it that much; it was okay, I got on the team anyway. It was for fun, not for championships or anything. I liked it; it was okay. My son was on a bowling team. They both were, Rick and Ray. They liked it. I played baseball when I was younger. I like swimming, when I get to it.



Eunice Colwell

### On Living at George Pearson Centre

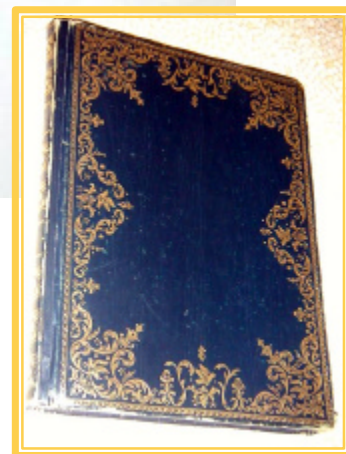
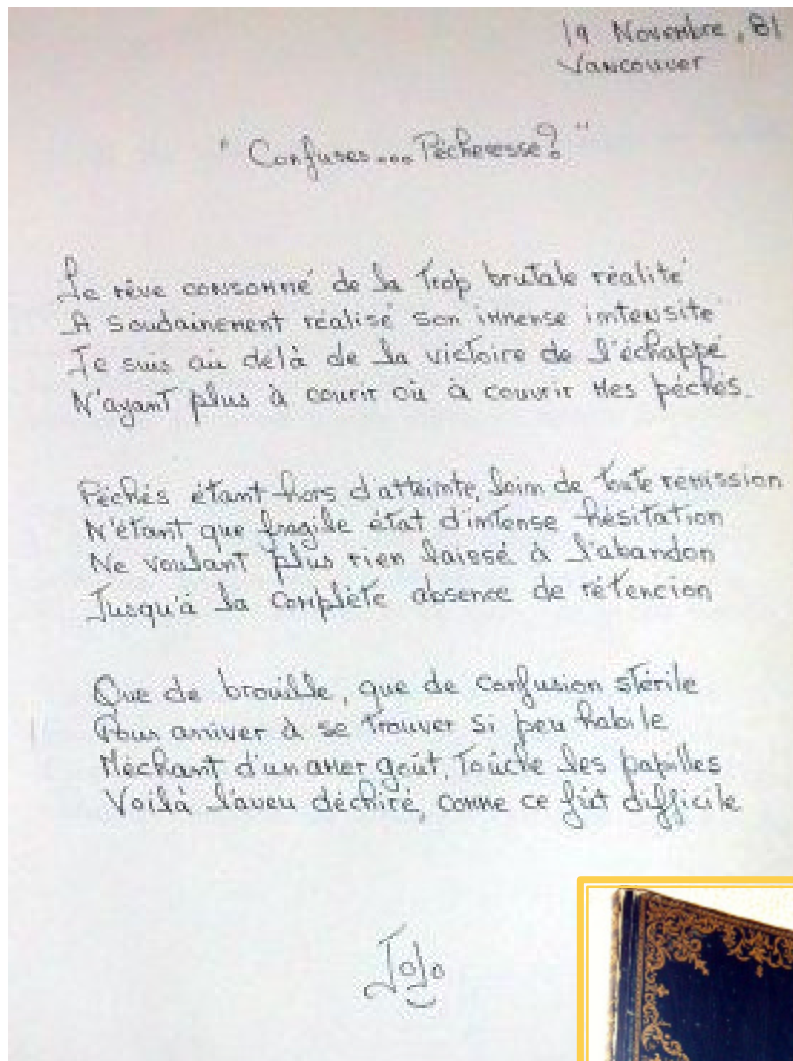
I've been here for about a year. I used to be a waitress. It's fun sometimes, but not all the time. Well, I have thought about [moving out], but I'm not

going to. You think about it but don't do it. I think it's nice here. They take me bowling. It's a nice hospital. I don't go out much anymore. I stay here and go bowling and stuff like that. The people here are very polite. I have one special volunteer. She comes with me and takes me down [from bed]. Also, my sons come up to visit. Tina comes up when she can, when she's not working. She works as a waitress, and she bowls once in a while, when she has time. My husband bowls, too.



## Confuses ... Pechesesse?

By Johanne Cote



## Cherry Trees Outside

by Eileen Culham

I come from Shawinigan Falls, Quebec. I graduated high school, then studied nursing in Montreal, then got on a train across Canada and saw the Rockies. I took a train on the CPR to go all the way out West. I love trains, and I would like to be able to travel on trains all the time. I like them much better than airplanes.

I was in Girl Guides and all that, when I was very young. I learned how to macramé. One thing I can't do any longer is paintwork, because my paints were stolen, my paints and my brushes. I have no idea where they went. I personally purchased these paints, and so it really makes me angry.

I had no money; my father was an alcoholic. I went on my brother's ski-doo once. Now he's dead. He was an alcoholic. I never touched alcohol. How can I? Don't have the money to get alcohol! Alcoholics are very vicious people. It's a sickness. They're very, very sick.



*A view of Pearson*

I was a nurse. I loved being a nurse. Nursing is hard work, not like typing. Then I wouldn't have become handicapped like this. It's nice to have people generally appreciate me. I made a great friend in school, but I never see her anymore. Do you know where she is? She's very healthy, very old, and she's wonderful. My friend and her daughter, they're doing very well, both of them. She's a physiotherapist.

I studied nursing and then I skied with this friend. It was a complete disaster, that's why I'm in this bed. A steep fall, rolled around, I don't know how fast I was going. My brains weren't working: I didn't slow down; I kept going. I barely remember it, I'm telling you. I was paralysed, completely paralysed. I've been here (at Pearson) a *long* time, since I was nineteen years old.

I also have multiple sclerosis (MS). The doctor had very strong suspicions of MS when I was nineteen, but they didn't make a diagnosis until much later,

when it hit me like a ton of bricks. I have a pressure sore right now so I have to stay in bed. I don't know if I can still sit in my chair. No...no, I can't.

My jewellery was all stolen from here. It's terrible, you shouldn't trust a soul. This watch on my wrist, it's from my friend. My other watch, which my aunt gave it to me-that got stolen. It took a long time to get enough money for a new watch. Also, the food here is grim, very grim. I was a very good cook; I know what I'm talking about. If I could stand up on two legs I would've studied to be a chef, not a nurse. I cooked all kinds of soups. This is actually a fairly decent place, but these large institutions, they all have their faults.

To keep myself occupied, I read a book. The one I'm reading now is called *Never Cry Wolf*. It's a true story, about the Eskimo in the Arctic. It's by a writer called Farley Mowat. Once I went up north in Quebec, in a log cabin. Oh, it was just gorgeous, with a fireplace. What more can you ask for? At night I opened the door and I could hear the wolf go "aroooooo!" We were by a lake, Lake Français. It was really beautiful, and lovely. I was about 21 then, or younger. I get lakes confused because I love lakes. I love lakes. The purity. The ocean, I hate. It was a beautiful cabin, beautiful. I love nature. I love to look out my window; there are cherry trees outside.

I spoke French with Joanne Goudreau. I came from Quebec, so I was bilingual. I don't know if I still am. It's lonely here because I love people, all kinds of people. I used to share a room, but not anymore. I befriended Johanne Cote. We arm wrestle together. She's strong, and she usually wins. It's more exciting today because two people are here!

I used to play tennis. That's how I met my husband, when we were both playing tennis, in Vancouver. I was 24 when I got married, in England. I didn't have a very happy marriage. My husband was an architect, and a very talented painter. Since I didn't go to university, and he did, I always felt inferior. When I left him, I wanted to be independent. I wanted to do some soul searching, and socialize with other people.

I also used to skate, swim, and hike. I really enjoy the outdoors. To be free! Manning Park is one of my special hiking places. I just remember the water, swimming. I used to be a very good swimmer in those days. You can see it in my shoulders; my right arm's strong, my left arm is weaker. My legs are now



*Spring on the Farm* by Joy Kjellboton

useless because of my spinal cord. I used to have beautiful legs; now they're gone. You have to just lift your arms, and kind of propel yourself. I can't go in the water anymore, it's very sad. I was swimming, and a moped was coming at me. They frighten me now; something happened but I can't recall the story.

I was an athlete, but I'm not a very good competitor; I don't like competition at all. I came in third place in a race once, racing two other girls. They were two short girls and they could *run*. I was amazed at how fast they could run.

The best thing that has ever happened to me was my daughter. Her name is Kathleen, and she has a daughter of her own, named Hawthorne.

## Every Tornado has a Sunny Day

by Terry Duemo

I grew up in Toronto, Ontario, with fourteen siblings (five brothers and nine sisters). My house was built in 1910. I was born in my home, but I was not the only one. Some of my siblings were born at home as well.

My favourite game was hide-and-seek; we had a really big house to hide in! I remember that when it was summer, it was really hot. I went into the house and hid behind a big chair. My mom called the police; everyone was looking for me. I had no idea they were looking for me-I had fallen asleep. I woke up at about six o'clock, and we'd started playing at about one o'clock! I was sleeping though, so I did not get in trouble.

I remember back in 1950 we had a tornado, in Toronto. The sky turned orange, and the wind blew hail the size of baseballs. There started to be lightning and thunder, and lightning hit our big oak tree. It split it like it was a toothpick, and that was a *big* tree. I wasn't really scared though; I was always safe in the house. It felt like the house wrapped us up in a blanket. It turned into a nice day, and the sun came out.

My favourite subject in school was music. I learned how to sing. I love to sing. After I graduated in 1965, I came to Vancouver, when I was seventeen. My first husband died in 1965, in Kitchener, in a blizzard.



*The Source by Kaethe Tahirah Batdorf*

He and his best friend were driving home when they were hit by a train. The train hit the car, and both of them died. So young. It was tough. It took a long time for me to heal, but life goes on. I met my second husband; his name was Robert Garbo. We had two children, one boy and one girl. He died of an overdose.

So, I went it alone. I went to work at a restaurant for thirteen years. I ran it, as the manager. I raised my babies until they were finished school. My son drives buses in Vancouver, and he makes good money. My daughter works in a bank. I don't have to worry about them; they're fine. I'm proud of them.

I met my third husband in Calgary. I'd gone there with two of my sisters to celebrate my sister's birthday. We all went to the horse racetrack, and that's where I met my husband. We knew each other for six months before we got



married. We've been married for 25 years, and still are. His name is Bernie, and he works for Microsoft. Bernie and I adopted two daughters; they're married now.

One thing that I have learned is that God loves me. He took care of me. I used to get angry with God, but I have had an interesting life, and I am thankful. The stroke I had when I was 55 sent me to George Pearson Centre and I see much caring for us here. I've been here for four years, and I feel very thankful for Pearson.

I've had three husbands, and I loved them all. I'm lucky. My husband comes every two weeks and phones me everyday, from Seattle. He was just here, and he's a father, so you can see why I am so happy. He loves me, and my family loves me.

If I had the chance to do it all again, I would. I wouldn't change a thing.

## Valentine's Letter

by Pat Forget

*Pat Forget wrote this letter to her husband just before Valentine's Day in 1997*



*Pat Forget*

As Valentine's Day approaches I recall my life with my husband of almost 25 years. He was my first real boyfriend (and my last). He spent nearly three years convincing me that I should marry him. When I finally decided to accept him we overcame many obstacles to have the "perfect" wedding. He spent a large portion of our first wedding anniversary at my bedside in the hospital, as he had every day for the previous three weeks, and would for the next eight (and would repeat this often). For the next year he put up daily with my excruciating headaches and "morning sickness".

I recall our camping weekends when he managed to convince me to take time away from my studies geared at re-educating myself to a career a disabled person could manage. I was lucky when he joined my company. He drove me to and from work, and almost carried me upstairs, allowing me to work for at least a year longer than I could have managed using public transit.

When I finally was forced by circumstances to accept the wheelchair I had fought against for so long, he also got a wheelchair so he could dance with me. He was constantly searching for things we could do together, while other husbands pursued "able-bodied" activities, leaving their disabled wives at home.

I think of the ten years he woke every two or three hours night after night to turn me, and of the three nights a week he still does so I can spend a few days at home. I am thankful for the countless times he has fed me, cleaned my teeth, and done other things for me that most men don't want to think about, never mind do.

We still enjoy being together, and constantly look for new things to do. I made the best decision of my life when I agreed to marry him, and he must be reasonably pleased at his choice because he wants to renew our vows on our silver anniversary in June.

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY, HONEY

## Very Tired

by Vy Foulds

I am 92 years old and I have lived in George Pearson Centre for 28 years. I was born in Saskatchewan and lived on a farm there with my six brothers, five sisters, and my parents. My parents were originally from Winnipeg, Manitoba. One of my chores was to feed the chickens and the turkeys; we had 36 turkeys on the farm.

I was very close with one of my older sisters, who I lived with for five years before coming to George Pearson. My sister has recently passed away. I never married, but I have lots of nieces and nephews.

Over the years I have enjoyed taking part in the different activities here, but I don't participate anymore. Now I just want to rest; I am very, very tired. I do have two nephews who come to visit me regularly, though, and I enjoy that.



Grapes by Joy Kjellboton

## To Whom It May Concern

by Karen French

To whom it may concern:

I just lost my best friend. In a way, I'm sad and in a way, I feel free because she expected a lot out of me but not so much that I minded. She will go on like the rest before her—dead and buried.

I miss her smile. And so, I try to go on with the rest of my life without her smiling back at me.



*Karen French*

## Chester

by Joanne Goudreau

When I came out of the hospital  
I really wanted a cat  
Four months after I moved in  
My friend Heather found me a cat  
He wasn't very fat and is white and orange  
He got to be a beautiful cat  
And everyone just loves Chester  
I really love my cat



*Joanne Goudreau*



*Cat by Kaethe Tahirah Batdorf*



# Autobiography

by Allen Grant

My name is Allen Grant. I was born on June 20, 1964. I was a sick baby, born with hydrocephalus, or “water on the brain”. Mr. And Mrs. Gotall fostered me when I was only six months old. I never found out anything about my birth parents because welfare lost the papers, but this doesn't really matter to me. I was very happy growing up in North Delta.

The first school I ever went to was Simon Cunningham Annex in Surrey. It was a small school for handicapped children. In Grade 4 our class was transferred to the Simon Cunningham Elementary School. I was put into a regular class and my report card that year read: “Allen next year will be in modified Grade 4 or 5.” I found school hard, especially because in those grades I had a battleaxe of a teacher; she gave us tons of homework. I used to take it home and not be able to do it, so I would ask my mom, and she couldn't do it, so I would ask my dad. One time I asked my dad for help and he gave me all the answers, but the next day at school I found out that they were all wrong!

I had two good friends from elementary school. In Grade 6 we would always go to my friend's place after school. A lot of the times we would chase girls. I got sent to the principal's office all through elementary school.

After leaving elementary school, I went to William Beagle Junior High. The school's logo was Snoopy, from Charlie Brown. I went through Grades 8, 9, and 10 at that school. In Grade 8 I was a Casanova; I had a bunch of girl friends. I remember some Grade 10 girls wrote in my yearbook, “He's the sweetest little guy in our homeroom.”

After Grade 10, I'd had enough: I didn't want to go on to Grade 11 or 12. My parents said to me, “It's your life,” and so I decided not to go back to school. However, it just so happened that we lived right in front of a senior high school, and that summer I had a guilty conscience. I reconsidered my decision and thought, “Might as well give it a go.” I went to senior high for one month in the fall, but it was just too hard. I stopped going. The school phoned our house to see why I wasn't coming to school anymore, and my parents told them the reason.

I started working for my dad; he was a roofer and did shingles. I used to pick up the junk he threw down from the roof. I did this until I was about twenty. Eventually, I stopped that job and went to Art Knapp's Nursery. I wanted to be independent. My job was loading and unloading semi trucks and cars with plants. The plants were heavy and I would come home covered in dirt. Mom would order me to take my clothes off and get upstairs. I would grab my housecoat and then come back down for a shower.

Besides working, I hung out with a couple of friends I had down the street. We would go around on a pushcart and get all the little kids to push us.

I met Debbie, who is now my fiancée, through a social club for the handicapped. We went to a bowling alley with a group. I got the nerve to ask her for her phone number. Her phone number was on my table for the longest time, when finally I got the nerve up to phone and ask her out. I was really chicken, but then we started phoning each other a lot.

She invited me back to her place, but she had a roommate. Whenever I would go over there, her roommate wouldn't give us our space. She wouldn't leave us alone. Eventually Deb got her own place by herself, in White Rock. I started going there every now and then; my dad would drive me up there. My parents really liked Deb.

In 1982, we went traveling across Canada in the motor home. PEI was my favourite place. We had family there and on the last night my dad played the guitar, my cousin played the violin, and my other cousin played the piano. I broke down and cried because I didn't want to leave.

That Christmas, my dad let me fly back to visit. My cousin and I slept in the basement. To get to the bathroom you had to run across a cold cement floor and run up the stairs. It was a cold winter, but on Christmas morning I went upstairs with my cousin and went to the window and there was no snow outside! It was alright though, because after Christmas there was lots of snow, and my cousin and I played in it. I stayed for two weeks, and at the end I was sad to go again. After the trip my cousin and I started writing back and forth to each other.

In 1986 there was Expo in Vancouver. Deb's parents were going to take us. We went there and walked around. We went on a few rides; there was a log ride, a parachute drop, a space shuttle, and a rollercoaster called the "Scream Machine" (I was too chicken to go on that).

I worked at the nursery for two years (until 1987) before the accident happened. One day when I was climbing into the trailer, I lost my balance and fell backwards. I woke up at Shaugnessy Hospital in the spinal cord unit. The first face I saw was Deb's. I was in intensive care and I had tubes up my nose and a respirator. I had gone from walking fine to helplessly lying flat on my back. I was scared.

My mom and dad came, and I was so happy to see them. They were worried about me and I didn't want them to leave. My dad could come by every evening to see me because he was working in Vancouver. I learned how to control a chin wheelchair, and they took me into the chapel to learn how to drive because there was more space there. In the beginning I kept crashing into the platforms and pews. Eventually I got good enough to drive down the halls.

I was at Shaugnessy for a year. After leaving the intensive care unit I went into another room with four beds and was there until I came to George Pearson Centre. There was a nurse who had a boyfriend in one of the other beds. I

started going home for a couple of hours every so often. The nurse would drive me home in her boyfriend's van, not as part of her job, but just because she was kind.

In 1988 I came to George Pearson. I was living in Ward 7, the respiratory ward. Soon I was mobile enough to drive all over the place. I started going home more often once we got our own van that my dad would drive. Dad also learned how to suction so that he could take me home for a couple of hours at a time for dinner. It was good to be home.

Sometime in the 1990's, the whole ward was moved up to Ward 2 and I finally had a private room. I had missed the privacy in the big open area of Ward 7. Deb still came to see me and she liked my private room-we could smooch in private. Dad would come here everyday after work and mom came on the weekends.

Eventually I asked Deb if she would marry me. I had a blanket over my knees, and under the blanket I had the ring. One day when she came in, I told her, "Look under the blanket," and she did, then I asked her to marry me. Deb didn't want to get married because I was in a wheelchair and on a respirator. We would have to live close to the hospital and I would need care all the time. We decided to still be friends and we are still engaged. It's hard on me sometimes because she's way out in White Rock and I'm here in Vancouver. I'd go over there-I have a driver-but I can't go right now because I don't have a nurse to come with me.

## A Good Life

by Kelly Green

I was born in England in 1919. My parents brought us from England to settle in the Okanagan Valley. We settled in Kamloops to begin with, and then around the railroad in Coquitlam. I was just a baby when we came. We were out on the land during the Depression, so it didn't hit us as hard there. My parents had one boy and three girls; I was the oldest. My oldest sister died, now I have two. They live in Vancouver.

My father was a blacksmith. He made anything out of steel, and he worked on the railroad. He used to play in the church choir; he played the organ. He did a lot of that stuff. My mother was—she was busy! My wife and I went to high school together. We've had our problems. My family was British; hers was American. My dad became okay with it, but not my mom. She wanted me to marry an English girl.

I was about 25 when the war came along. I didn't go into it till about 1944/45. I was conscripted when I went in, kept till the end because I was a family guy. That was the only time I went back to England. I went as a soldier, and I met all my relatives.

I was in signals. I went to England, and they shipped us to Germany in the occupational force. I was there about a year. It was interesting, meeting new people. I wasn't nervous, there were good people there, who were real good to us. We did nothing much. The German people were okay. I don't think they wanted the war, didn't do them any good. I got back home in 1946. I'd left my family, it was hard on all of them; it wasn't very good for us. Got out of the army as soon as I could, and started working in Squamish.



*Kelly Green*

I've worked since I was fourteen. After the war I came down to Squamish. It has a different climate from the Okanagan. I was a logger around the railroad, for about ten years. It was all right. I made up the booms. It wasn't very hard; you just learn it and do it. Booming, that's the part that I liked. I just worked by myself. I worked at the Britannia copper mines but I never went underground. There were other jobs that I liked. Had to look after myself.

I was 32 or 34 when I came in, with polio. It just hit me overnight. I got a headache to begin with. The next day, I couldn't move. I don't think the doctors knew right away. I couldn't even breathe, that was the worst part. It's funny how you can get used to anything. It floored me for a while. I can't move anything. It's very frustrating. Oh, there's no use being angry; just take it as it comes.

I was in the iron lung for one year, and could breathe a little bit on my own when I came out. I don't think it's [George Pearson Centre] better now. It's been a good place. We've all been together for so long, some for a lifetime. I've been here for about fifty years, since 1952. We were the ones who tried out the first iron lungs, the first ventilators. It [Ward 7] was better down there. More open. I don't make friends anywhere, but I get along with everybody. Pearson is a good place.

On a typical day...well, you eat and sleep. Nothing happens, you know. Sitting outside in the summer, that's what I like. Just getting by from day to day, one day to the other. My sister comes to visit me. I do a lot of reading. Once in a while I go home. I stayed at home before I came here, after I got polio. We had some machinery at home so I could live there.

I'm keeping busy. I learned leather crafting here. I taught myself how to do it, just from books and stuff. I've made wallets, handbags, you name it, anything. I could never keep up with the orders. It's all hand-made. I decorate them sometimes; I carve designs into the leather. I just make them up. I never made anything for myself.

Also, I've been doing photography for about twenty years. I just wanted to do it, so I learned from books, books and practicing. Good composition, the way you put the picture together, how you arrange it-that's what makes a good photograph. Also, you've got to have good light. I like to take pictures outdoors, anywhere outside. I don't do it very often anymore. I have no way of getting out now. I need somebody to take me out; I don't have a car of my own.

I used to play baseball, football, basketball, and I skated. It's one of my best things. I taught my kids how to skate, got 'em going. We had a frozen lake half a mile long, skated there all winter. Pretty much got the kids in skates as soon as they were able to walk. I have three girls and a boy. They're all grown up now and have their own families. I have great-grandkids. My wife and kids are still in Squamish; my wife was born there. We did things as a community quite often.

I don't think I'd change anything, if I could. I've had a good life.

## On Valentine's Day

by Valerie Hubbard

I just had a birthday on Valentine's Day. Now I'm 65! It doesn't feel very good. I feel old!

Last weekend, we rowed our boat out on the ocean. Jane Ashcroft, my roommate, was out there. We've had it for a long time, bought it from some man who wanted to sell it. It was just something to do. The man who we bought the

boat from chipped in on it for us. We went to Spanish Banks one day, and somewhere else the next. That was nice. We could go out on the boat; Flo's boyfriend could row. Flo's my girlfriend.

I've got a rotten flu today. It seems I'm never healthy in this hospital. I'm sick everyday.

I was born in Vancouver, BC. I had a good childhood, but it seems so far away. My daughter Jane is 44 already, and I'm 64.

My single best memory would be the very first time I saw Jane as my daughter. She was eight months old, and that was, god, exciting. I adopted her from the hospital. Jane herself could just have one, so she adopted some babies. She's got three girls now. We only had Jane.



Valerie Hubbard

She was adopted, her and my brother.

Dennis-that was my brother-and I used to fight over the cat, William, all day, just about who gets to keep it and play with it. We got that cat from the SPCA. That's all we fought about. Now he's dead...that makes me so sad. You wouldn't think you'd think about people after they were dead, but you do.

Did Jane have any pets? Oh my god, she had about seven or eight. She had three dogs, guinea pigs-she had 50!-and 6 cats. She used to have some fish and a bird. She used to come to me and say, "Mommy, can I get some more guinea pigs?" I said, "Yea, you can get some more guinea pigs if you get up and look after them all yourself." So she did. She was good at that. I remember one



of the guinea pigs got out and got into her bed. I guess it just stayed in her bed. We couldn't afford veterinarians.

In high school I took French. When I graduated, I could've put down that I'd like to speak French, but I didn't. So I graduated, but I didn't speak French. After graduation, I was still working as a telephone operator for BC Tel. I worked there till I was twenty, and then I went back to school, Richmond High. I studied everything: biology, French, English, spelling, music...I can't remember what else. I used to find studying kind of boring, but it's different for me now, since I can't write anymore, and I can't walk. I used to do the high jump. I used to run, when I could run. I used to ice-skate. The best time of my life was when I was a teenager. It was just the teenage parties we used to have. What are the teenage parties like now?

Something I really remember, what I really enjoyed, was coming back to Vancouver after living in England, which I hated. I found England very *small* and oh, tiny. I just didn't like it, and I didn't know anybody there. You see, you can be quite lonely if you're somewhere and you don't know anybody there. And I didn't know anybody there. I used to go out and just...I was very bored. But I did go to the biggest city in England, London. It was very nice.

I lived there for six years. My ex-husband-I must have been nuts marrying him!-he'd lived there before we got married, and he wanted to be a gambler. We were married for 26 years and have been divorced for twenty, and we used to have lots of money, but we don't now. Oh, I've had a life! Maybe I should say something to my first husband, but I don't know what.

I was married to my second husband for 21 years, in Richmond. So depressing, living across from a hospital. My second husband used to be a painter. I was just thinking of Dennis, and he said it would be fun to be a house painter. You forget things like that and it makes you feel sad. It's so hard to accept when someone dies. I just don't know what the trick is. Oh, well. Life is tough.

My wheelchair tipped over on me one time. The girl that was looking after me wasn't watching, and just left. So, since I'm very impulsive, I came very close to standing up, and walking all by myself. And if I'd done that I'd be dead. When I leaned forward, my wheelchair tipped over. I can't stand up because I've got multiple sclerosis. I'm all numb from the waist down. My arms, my hands are numb, that means I can't write anymore.

I came to George Pearson Centre right away. It made it easier to cope, because you've got nurses to help you. I couldn't manage all by myself. It's alright here. I read romance and mystery novels. Did you ever read Nancy Drew? I used to read lots of Nancy Drew. I used to read a lot. It's just what I don't do now, and I should. I haven't really thought about moving out, because I don't know where there'd be to go. No, I probably wouldn't, I don't know anybody. See, I know everybody in here.

I was wondering if you could tell me what'll happen to me after this. Will I be here for the rest of my life?

## Little Mrs. Mao

Little Mrs. Mao. She was from Hong Kong. She was 100, and she died. Little Mrs. Mao. I haven't any idea how she did it. Seeing as she couldn't speak English, it was kind of hard to talk to her, because I could only speak English. I never did learn Chinese. She had lots of children. She had about seven girls, no boys. She died about eighteen years ago. She was so sweet.

But she couldn't speak English. She was very smart, she could've; she could've learnt it, but she didn't. She couldn't speak English, but she was very smart. You could tell, by what she said, for example, how she said it. You know, she'd ask me if I wanted any bread. She was only about 4'7". My mom was short, she was 4'8". I'm 5'3". Jane, my roommate, is 5'1".

Little Mrs. Mao.  
She was from Hong Kong.  
She was one hundred when she died.  
Little Mrs. Mao.

I haven't any idea how she did it.  
Seeing as she couldn't speak English, it was kind of hard to talk to  
her, because  
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She couldn't speak English,  
But she was very smart; she could've.  
She could've learnt it, but she didn't.  
She was very smart.

She was only about 4'7".  
Little Mrs. Mao.

## Two Poems

by Lorne Kimber

### *A Poem*

Ask me why,  
I'll tell you nil.

Nil is nothing.

Nothing is something.  
Something has a meaning,  
Which is unknown.

Knowing is thinking.  
Thinking hurts.

Hurt is pain.  
Pain I dislike.

Dislike I do many,  
People, are busy.  
Busy with nothing.

My but you are strange.  
No strange I am not.

Life is strange.  
But death is the answer.

### *Love*

Love is a dream,  
Which I share with myse  
If,  
In the emptiness of my mind.

Love is the feeling only a father  
Can feel on the birth of his first child.

Love is the years of turmoil and strife  
Of life's end loves left behind.

Love is a jewel, its essence so rare,  
To possess it one must be a thief.

Love is at last in death's embrace,  
The incomprehensible tear.



Lorne Kimber

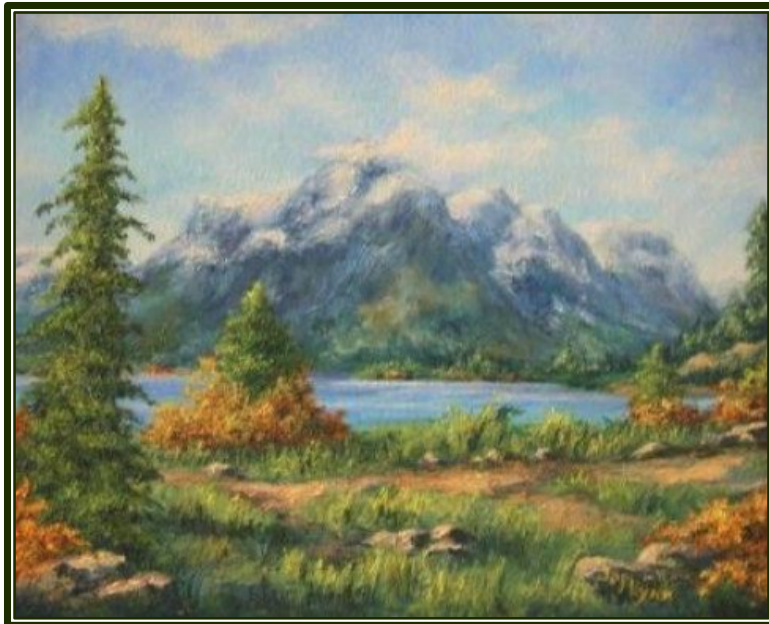
# Alone

by Joy Kjellboton

He's gone!  
And with him went a part of me  
An essence no one else could see  
Reserved and special just to be  
His own.

No more!  
His gentle touch or voice to hear  
His laughing eyes to chase a tear  
His strength and love that kept me near  
And safe.

The pain!  
A desperate longing I can't hide  
Alone and empty deep inside  
A vital part of me has died  
With him.



*Mountain by Joy Kjellboton*

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## Belle, The Therapy Dog

by Bill Linakis

When I was about three months old I was given to the SPCA in Davis, California, so I could be adopted. Nobody has been able to tell me why this happened, though I have my theories: as a Walker Hound dog I am supposed to be a hunter, but I am afraid of the noise that guns make. Soon, I was adopted by a family who took good care of me. Unfortunately, the parents' marriage ended less than a year after my adoption, and I was returned to the SPCA. I was placed in foster care with several other dogs and some cats. Since this happened just before Christmas, I remained there for about six weeks waiting for a new home. On weekends I was taken to a pet supply store where I was put in a fenced-in area with a young girl, so people could see me.



*Bill and Belle*

After a few weekends, I was adopted by this guy who was a chaplain in the California Youth Authority. He adopted me both to be his friend and to work with him as a therapy dog. Since I had not heard of therapy dogs back then I was not sure what that involved. It was a Saturday afternoon in January of 1998 when I went home with him to an apartment in Sacramento, California. Early the next morning he woke me up and took me for an hour's drive to the California Youth Authority in Stockton.

Quickly, I realized that being a therapy dog means visiting with people, being petted by them, and playing with them. That is a wonderful job for a dog like me who really likes people. The guy who adopted me had taken care of a previous therapy dog, so at least he knew how to live with a dog, but I did have to give him some training. For example, soon after I started living with him, he baked some

brownies, put them on the kitchen table to cool, and went and took a shower. I, of course, climbed up onto the table and ate the brownies. He is a quick learner and did not leave food unattended again.

After working for a year as a therapy dog in the California Youth Authority, I moved with my human companion to Harrison Hot Springs, BC, so the two of us could work in a federal prison nearby. The prisoners there were adults. An older

man who I particularly liked was in a wheelchair. He would pet me and play with me, which was fun. He did, however, call me “Fleabag”, which I found insulting.

Before I was even born, my human companion used to live in Vancouver. Once we visited there from California, and sometimes on our days off my human companion and I would go into Vancouver. When we lived in Harrison Hot Springs we spent much time in Vancouver, where there were people to visit, along with lots of other dogs and a wonderful place called Stanley Park. Often we went hiking in the woods. Because there were bears in the woods I had to have a bell attached to my collar and my human companion carried bear spray to protect the two of us.

I can still remember the day when I was told we would be moving to Vancouver and would be working in a place called George Person Centre, as long as I passed some kind of a test to show that I was a good therapy dog. Since I had already been working for a couple of years as a therapy dog I could not understand why I would have to take a test. On November 3, 1999, our first day of work at George Person Centre, I was taken by my human companion to a room where a woman was waiting for us. During part of the test she got several other women to be in the room as well. The people there did all kinds of strange things to see how I would react. Since I knew the test was important for some strange reason, I was my usual well-behaved self, but I thought that the test was weird. Towards the end of the test a German shepherd dog came into the room so the people could see how I would react. I really wanted to play with that dog but that was not part of the test. Finally, the test ended and we were told that I had passed and was now accredited as a St. John Ambulance Therapy Dog.

Next I was taken with my human companion to a room to have my picture taken for my hospital ID badge. Since not many dogs get hospital ID badges at Pearson, it was not set up well for us. I was lifted up onto a table where I had to sit still while the picture was taken. Finally that stuff was over and I got to start meeting the people who live and work at Pearson. I quickly learned that anyone in a wheelchair is a friend, so even when I am not at Pearson I try to go over and visit them. Sometimes on the street my human companion stops me from visiting them, but I don't understand why.

At night I sleep enclosed in a dog crate, which is my den, in the bedroom with my human companion. I know when he gets up in the morning and takes a shower right away it's going to be a good day because we will soon be going to Pearson. Often I sleep in the car on the way there. Once we stop in the parking lot I am ready to visit my friends-after I water the grass, that is. We then walk to my office, which I share with my human companion. Usually on our way there I see a few of my friends. In my office I have a blanket and a bowl of water. During the day I go there and take naps.

While I enjoy visiting my friends at Pearson, I particularly like it when people pet me. Some of the people at Pearson have dog treats for me and I love to eat treats. Unfortunately, my human companion limits how many treats I get.



Sometimes I am allowed to get in bed with a resident, which is always fun. Occasionally I have to go to meetings with my human companion. When a meeting gets too boring, I snore loudly as an editorial comment on it.

I am fortunate that my human companion works in Spiritual Care since it is an area in which we therapy dogs excel. When we visit with people we accept them unconditionally, while at the same time pointing them to things beyond themselves. We are wonderful listeners who help people get closer to nature. We reach a certain part of people that some call their spiritual side.

On Monday afternoons I go with my human companion to visit people at the Dr. Peter Centre Day Program. It is near where we live so it takes only a short walk to get there. Since we have been visiting there for over five years, I have a lot of friends to see. Before we leave we go to a room with lots of crumbs on the floor, so I do my best to clean up the place and then I visit some more friends.

Sometimes I walk with my human companion from our apartment in the West End of Vancouver to a drop-in centre in the Downtown Eastside where a human friend is the director. I always enjoy sniffing around and looking for food whenever I am outside. Once on our way back to our apartment my nose got cut on a broken bottle and started bleeding. When we got home my human companion cleaned out the cut so it would not get infected. A few days later while I was at Pearson my nose started bleeding again. My human companion took me to the employee health nurse, who is one of my friends, for treatment. She took good care of me and I was her first dog patient.

When I have finished a day of visiting my friends at Pearson I sleep in the car on the way home. When we get to our apartment I get another dog treat and then sleep for a while. Being a therapy dog is a lot of fun, but it sure is tiring.



Belle

## My Story

by Linda McHale

I was born in Vancouver and grew up there. I have one brother who is younger than I am; his name is Ray. There used to be lots of bushes in Vancouver for us to play in when I was a kid.

I didn't like going to school and was happy when I graduated. After I finished school, I worked in a jewellery store. I never had a family of my own, but I always liked children. I used to baby-sit when I was younger. I liked playing with the kids. And of course, I was interested in boys; I liked the boys.

I've been in George Pearson Centre for a long time, too long. I like to take part in the activities here, though. I go to the Ward dinners because the food is always good-very good. I have friends here, and I love God.



Linda McHale

## To Pearson From Pakistan

By Asif Muniwar

I was born in Pakistan. It was good, growing up there. I went to school, then college, then university. I graduated in 1974. After, I flew to Germany, because I'd read many books about Germany, and by the end of 1974 I was living in Frankfurt, Germany.

First, I went to school to learn German, and after one year I met a good friend who I married, because you cannot stay in Germany if you're not married; there's a law. I married in 1983-she died in a car accident. I started drinking myself away. Her mother came to me and said, "Now why are you killing yourself? Your wife won't come back. You need to go back and see your family."

So in 1983 I went back to Pakistan. My mother and father also knew my German wife, because one time I visited Pakistan with her. Then, because I had a permit to all of Europe, I went to Holland, and worked there because I had learned hotel management in Germany. I worked there for three years.

In 1986, my sister-she lived in Surrey, in Canada; she phoned me all the time, and I phoned her-she said, "What are you doing over there? Come to Canada."

I said, "I can only come to visit, I cannot stay in Canada."

But then she told me, "I know one family, they have two daughters. One of the daughters is my friend, she can sponsor you."

So my second wife sponsored me, and I went back to Pakistan, my country, then I went to the Canadian Embassy. In 1987 I came to Vancouver. I had permission to stay in Canada if I got married in three months-I married in three weeks!

I worked in a hotel pub as a bartender. Then, in 1993, I had a stroke: my whole right side was paralyzed. First I went to the Lion's Gate Hospital, and was for three months in a coma. For three months my wife came to see me everyday. After three months I woke up. I was dreaming, so I thought that I was in Germany, then the nurse told me, "This is Vancouver, Canada."

So I said, "Can I phone someone?" I phoned my wife, and she came to visit me, and my sister came to visit me, too. Then from this hospital [George Pearson Centre], a physiotherapist went to the Lion's Gate Hospital. She introduced herself to me and she told me, "We have a hospital in Vancouver. If you like, you can come there." And then I came into George Pearson Centre.

My wife still visits me here, still today. You know, a funny story when I first came here, when I was in Ward 6. The doctor, a psychologist, was my friend. I

told my wife, "You are young. I don't know why you're still here in the hospital. You should marry someone else."

Then the doctor said, "Come to my office."

I went into his office, and then he said, "Why are you talking stupid? Your wife loves you, she comes to visit you everyday!"

So I said "sorry"!

Then, I moved up to Ward 5, when they changed the wards and everyone was moved around. I was there for five years, and then I came up to Ward 3, for three years. I've been in this hospital a total of twelve years.

I like it here, it's better than the other hospitals. I know many people; I am social. You are lucky you found me here. I have to go to the canteen everyday, to talk with friends. Also, I go to physiotherapy, and do my job: I am the mailman there, I collect the mail. I've done it everyday for six years. I go at 9:30 and Maggie-do you know Maggie?-she collects the mail for me. I get the mail and go to physio, deliver the mail and do my exercise. It's volunteer work, and one time they gave me a certificate and fifty dollars to buy whatever I want in the canteen.

## My Team

by John Nyce

They call me every night reminding me of practice, they call me every night to remind me about the tournaments, and they call me every morning to practice each and every move. They are the members of my motorsport team and have been a major part of my life for the last 25 years. Their faces never change and they are my friends. They know my every move and I know theirs like the back of my hand. Every time I am out in a game with them I gain a sense of community and feel a new strength course through my body. These people are my friends and in a way much like a second family. They are my team.

National tournaments are very important to my team and I. Several months before a tournament I meet with the team to discuss our game plan. We discuss our game plan, talk about training, and just joke around. There are two new female players on our team, and I hope to get along with them well.



John Nyce

## Left to Die

by Andy Pierre

Ever since I was a small boy, I was always in jail with my mother. My mother and her friends drank a lot, and I used to go to jail with them. I was very small at the time, two to three years old. My parents had drunk all their lives and they didn't look after my brothers and sisters. They just went drinking all the time.

We had nothing to eat in the house. We had to go to my grandparents to feed all of my brothers and sisters. I had seven brothers and four sisters. We had a hard time of it, until I was fourteen years old. My grandfather and grandmother started raising me when I was fourteen. I stayed there till I was seventeen or eighteen, then I started working. My brothers and sisters had to be given up to welfare. They were raised in a welfare home.

I started working in a place near Prince Rupert, BC, piling lumber. I looked after chip cars and chip boxcars. I had to run back and forth, looking after the chippers at the same time. That was my first job. The chip cars were about three or four blocks away from the chipper, and you had to fill up the cars with wood chips and move the ones that were already filled. Then I went and worked on Buck River, trimming lumber and "drop shouldering", where you separate the good lumber from the bad lumber. We built small log cabins and we lived there right in the middle of everything.

I used to hunt all the time, when I was working, on the weekends. I used to go hunting for moose. On Saturdays and Sundays, we stayed in a bush looking for moose, my friend and I.

I also fished when I was working. I would put a fishing net into the river in the morning and then I'd go back to work, and in the evening, after work, I'd go back to the river and check the net. I often caught sixty or seventy fish. I had to gather all the fish up and haul them three fourths of a mile, uphill. I would drop the fish off at my next-door neighbour's. She worked and she knew that I'd bring the fish up. Later she smoked them. I'd just drop the fish in a big bathtub filled up with water and let the water run, keeping it cold. Then we'd cut the fish all up. Lots of people wanted to buy some fish, but we told them that they weren't for sale. We smoked the fish and we dried them and we half-dried them-you freeze them half-dried. Same with the moose, you dry them or char them.

I was working on Buck River when I met this woman from my hometown. We had a couple of kids. My kids are all grown up now. They phoned when I was working and when I came home my wife was gone. I said to my kids, "Where's your mother?" They'd known about it all that time since before they phoned: she'd taken off to Kelowna. Three months after, I got a phone call from the kids, my daughter and my son: they were with my wife. So, I had to go up there and take them home to their grandmother. I took the day off and went by



bus to pick them up. Their mother died when they were still small. She killed herself because her boyfriend had taken off on her.

I used to ride to work on a bike, eight to nine miles from home. It was a mountain bike and I rode it to work everyday. After my wife died, I kept working at my job. Sometimes I'd tell my foreman that I was going to work somewhere else, and I worked in Prince George for a while, traveled around for a while and dropped the kids off at their grandmother's. I worked for Lepaul Lumber for a year and then went to McKenzie the next summer, where I worked for F.F.I. (Friendly Forest Products). I stayed with my sister, who was working up there. I stayed there for two years and then I told my sister that I had to go back home. My boss took me back and then I worked for Steve Logging. I stayed there the rest of my working life, until I got hurt.

I was hurt in 1993-car accident-while I was working. I was sitting in the backseat and two of the men were sitting in front. The guy that was supposed to be driving fell asleep, and the guy that drove for him was 25 years old. He didn't know how to drive; he didn't even have a license. He lost control, and we bounced to one side and bounced off to the other side. I remember when we were bouncing around the door opened, and I hit the door and the door slammed shut again. That's how I broke my neck.

I could've died there, but people phoned the cops. They shipped me to Vancouver right away. I've been here ten years, since I was forty or fifty. The guys who were driving the car took off, disappeared. I don't know what happened because I was knocked out. They left me to die, and they never went to court or got charged. From seventeen years old to the day I was hurt, I worked all the time, and I never got sick in my life. I never got sick, until I got hurt.

# I Like Computer Games

by Michael Pogulis

I've only been in George Pearson Centre for two weeks. I came here from Vancouver General hospital (VGH), where I was for three weeks. Before that, I was in a group home for two years. The group home was in a nice house. There were four people living there, including me, and I made friends there. It has been a big change for me to come here.

I grew up in Toronto, Ontario. It was nice growing up in Toronto. We lived right in the city. I liked climbing on the jungle gyms outside at school. One time I fell off the jungle gym, broke my arm, and had to wear a cast. My mom was freaking out; she wasn't happy at all about that.

When I was young, I used to go camping every summer with my parents and my sister. We went camping in lots of places. We often camped near a river and went fishing. My family and I also used to like to play board games together, like Parcheesi or Snakes and Ladders. I was very good at board games. We often went to visit my grandma in Scarborough and I really enjoyed those visits. I remember one year for my birthday my mom made me a huge purple cake in the shape of a cow. That was fun.

I worked in Barrie, Ontario, as a mailman. I remember one time when I was delivering the mail, someone had left a lit cigarette in the delivery van and the van caught on fire while I was driving it, so I had to call the fire department. They came and put it out and everything was all right. Another time, the little girl of a family I delivered mail to gave me a Valentine's Day card. I kept that card.

I moved to BC twelve years ago. My girlfriend's brother had been out here and it sounded nice, so I put in for a transfer. It was a spur of the moment sort of thing, something new, a change. My girlfriend came with me and we moved into Kitsilano at 4<sup>th</sup> and Trafalgar. There were nice trees on the streets there. We used to watch the fireworks every summer, with friends.

I like computer games. I play an online game called Ever Quest. A million people play this game, so you get to know lots of people. Ever Quest is a role-playing game where you get to play different characters. It's fun because you can cast spells and kill monsters. When you cast a spell, you can do it using first-person perspective, where you are actually doing everything, or you can be watching your character from behind, while they take all the action. I used to play Dungeons and Dragons, too. I had a wizard character that casts spells. I used to play with a regular group of friends; we had so many role-playing adventures.

## Highway in Time / Ice Age

by Guy Powley

### *Highway in Time*

When I crossed the line  
And realized  
I'd left the past behind  
It was no big loss

The demons were excommunicated  
Sent where they belong  
Because I didn't know it then  
But soon they would be gone

Sometimes living is easy  
Life like the warm sun in my eyes  
Practically pleasing, good to be alive

If the breakdown was fated  
Then who knows why  
No reason to complain  
The full moon still shines

### *This is the Ice Age*

This is the end of a road  
Where the polar icecap remains  
Sometimes it changes  
But basically it stays the same

It's not an easy place to find  
It's not a place to hide, either  
No predators or prey around  
Just the missing fire we had

[I play the role I hold] *refrain*  
Who am I today  
Criminal, con man or saint  
I really couldn't say

I play the role I stole  
Who am I today  
Criminal, con man or saint  
I really couldn't say

So take my word on this  
For better or worse.....  
You best believe in the only thing you have  
Yourself

## Childhood Memories

by Alan Pallister

My name is Allan Pallister and I was born in Revelstoke, British Columbia. I enjoy playing the drums, and played them for five to six years. It is through music that my ideas are expressed. I like listening to the Beatles very much, and I also appreciate it when nearby schools come to Pearson and sing songs in a choir or play in an orchestra. Singers like Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan captivate me, and I admire both of them.

I love going outside and being with nature. I am very active, and love watching the Canucks play. My favourite colour is red. However, I also enjoy reading, listening to music, and watching TV and movies. I think the Simpsons are hilarious. My favourite movie is "Million Dollar Baby" because it is very intense, but my favourite actor is John Wayne.

When I was fifteen and a half years old I moved to Vancouver to have some operations. During that time, I moved into Pearson. The first time I was here, I thought the people were really old because they were around 65 to 83 years old. Getting used to it really took some time.

I went to the school at Children's Hospital in the mornings, and came back to Pearson in the evenings. I went to school there until I was 21 years old, learning subjects such as math, science, and social studies. We used to sometimes go to different places as well, such as museums, Stanley Park, and the Vancouver Aquarium. At Pearson we would go to picnics in different parks during the summer.



*Alan Pallister*

I remember a time from the Children's Hospital school when we went out on a big yacht up in Indian Arm and cruised around the harbour. They had members of the BC Lions and the Canucks on that trip. Gene Kiniski the wrestler was

also there, as well as members of the Vancouver Blazers team in the World Hockey Association. That's a great memory of mine.

I also remember how when I first went to school, I would get in a bus station wagon and get driven by a fireman. One time the fireman left my coat on the roof, and it fell off into the middle of the street! That really made me laugh, but we just went back and got it. Back then I was in a manual chair all the time.

I think that throughout the years, I've learned to get along with people who looked after me, and I've become a better person because of it.

## Growing Up in Hong Kong

by Chun Hung Seto

I was born and raised in Hong Kong. I like Hong Kong; I like many things there, such as the food, and religious freedom. I like everything I can do in Hong Kong.

I have three sisters. They're younger than me; I'm the eldest in the family. I only have sisters. Yau Duk Wa is the oldest sister. The middle sister is Melody, and the youngest is named Yuk Se To. They're beautiful and very nice.

My parents come from China. They love money and good things to eat. They like big houses, but we don't live in a big house. I'm a very poor guy. They are very good to me; they always buy good food and good clothes for me. I'm not a rich boy. I would buy a lot of things if I were rich. Sometimes, if I really needed to buy things, then I would choose which items I needed and buy those.

Sometimes we went to buy books for reading. There was no library. I don't like writing, but I like to read many books, many kinds of books. I don't like history books or love stories. I love war stories. I love reading because I can learn many things from books which I didn't know before, like things about Chinese Kung Fu fighting. One particular book I like to read is not about Kung Fu, it is about a gentleman. His name is Confucius, but he is not the Confucius who is well respected in China. He is a cartoon character, who has little hair and a pair of glasses. I like the book very much because it is easy to read and the drawings are funny.

We also collected seashells. I could never find a single seashell in Hong Kong, but I always tried to find one. There were always lots of people on the beach. Hong Kong has a very small beach and many people go, so there is a lot of pollution.

Summer is my favorite season because it is very hot and many things can be done in the summer. In Hong Kong, summer begins with summer vacation. I go with my friends to the shopping mall. My friends like me. We go to the beach and then run around the shopping mall. The most important thing for me is running around the mall, looking at all the things that you can buy.

There is no snow in Hong Kong during the winter, but the weather is still cold. There is lots of dim sum sold on the streets. Everybody celebrated Chinese New Year. I liked it; there was more food, and everybody traveled on buses to visit relatives. I gave money in red envelopes to my parents; I was too lazy to buy gifts. We ate Chinese dumplings and Chinese noodles, and food we didn't usually eat because they were expensive.



We also celebrated Christmas. Not many people did. We would walk around in parks and go to expensive restaurants, or someplace else. I never believed in Santa Claus, though.

I went through four years of college, and studied the subject of property valuation. I can only remember spending many hours during the day studying. Most of almost all my days were spent studying. In Hong Kong, if you don't spend time studying or get good grades, you cannot obtain higher education. Hong Kong has about four or five million people, so there is a lot of competition. In my college, there was the same number of girls as guys. I can only remember up to the year 1997.

I graduated from Hong Kong Polytechnic University. In Hong Kong, there is university, and then there is college. Polytechnic used to be a college. It was a very good college, the only one in Hong Kong and the second best institution in Hong Kong (Hong Kong University was *the* best institution). I had to work very hard to get into that school. My family was very proud of me because I was the first person in my family to go to Polytechnic.

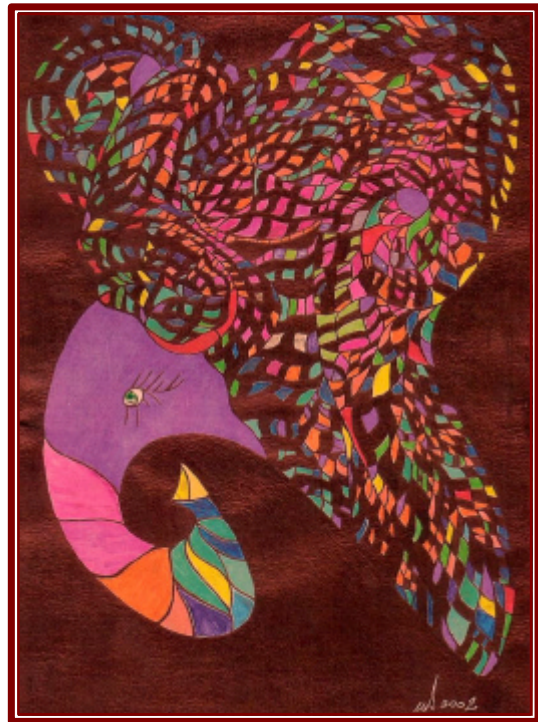
## Such a Long Journey

by Wendy Sinnerud

*I'd like to dedicate this story to my mother, Kathleen May Sinnerud.*

When I was a three-year-old girl, I had an older brother named Sterling who I looked up to for strength. My brother was a very investigative boy—he was five years old. My grandfather and father owned a logging company. He (my brother) wanted to know what they (my father and grandfather) were doing, and he was with my dad all the time. On the morning of March 19, 1954—it was the day before my fourth birthday—my father went to the shed to sharpen his power saws. He got the chainsaws and started sharpening them, then stopped to warm up the cabin by pouring gas onto the wood in the pot-belly oven, to start it up. My brother didn't realize the dangerousness of fire, and he saw the little can of gas that had been used to start the fire. He picked up the can and poured it over the flames. I don't know if he realized what he was doing. Over the years, I've wondered if he really knew. Because of what he did, the fire exploded.

He was engulfed in flames almost immediately. My father turned around to see where the scream was coming from, and I was sitting on the porch playing in the snow. When I looked down the lane, I saw a ball of flame coming up the road. His upper torso was on fire. I ran to my mom and cried, "Sterling is on fire! Sterling is on fire!" She rolled him and herself in the snow to put the flame out. When it was over, she brought him into the cabin (we lived in a cabin with a canvas roof and wooden walls). She tried to take off his clothes, using the snow to sooth the wounds because gasoline can burn very deeply. When she was done, she dressed the wounds with some ointment and what she could find from the first aid kit. I didn't understand why he was crying so loudly, until later, much later. My father came running and saw what had happened.



*Elephant by Wendy Sinnerud*

My mother had third-degree burns on her upper body, arms, and hands. But that didn't seem to bother her; she was more intent on taking care of Sterling. My mom said, "We have to get this boy to the hospital now." We had to take the fastest transportation possible, and there were two choices: the speedboat or the crew boat (we lived across Lake Okanagan from Nakusp).

The lake was very choppy when we all got into the speedboat. My father thought he saw a dead head in the lake (a dead head is a waterlogged log that is stuck in the mud at the bottom of the lake, with five or six feet of it sticking upwards), but he wasn't sure, so he continued on. Unfortunately, there was a dead head, and we hit it head on. The boat spun twenty feet in the air and flipped over, throwing my mother, holding Sterling, into the water. My father went through the windshield while I was stuck in the speedboat. The only reason it stayed afloat was because of an empty 15-gallon drum placed to hold the nose of the boat in the air. My dad came to get me without realizing that the windshield was already broken, so he came down really hard and broke my collarbone while pulling me out.

We were all treading water to stay afloat and in all the tragedy, my mother let go of Sterling, into the water. He sank noiselessly to the bottom of the lake. My mother told me years later that he was already dead when he hit the water. This was a very tragic event in our family. My mother carried this for many years, for ever. My father made friends with a whiskey bottle. We all met grief differently.

My grandfather wondered where we were because we hadn't called to tell him that we had arrived across the lake safely. He got into the crew boat and started out on the lake searching for us. We tread water for two hours before he found us. When he did, my grandfather took us back to the camp, and as we settled down with dry clothes on, I remember my parents telling him what had happened. He wanted to know, of course, where Sterling was. So, my mom explained what had happened and he immediately returned to the crew boat with four or five lumberjacks. They dredged for his body for almost nine days. The RCMP looked along the shoreline to see if his body had floated. After a while, we stopped looking.

The day after my birthday was the first day of spring. Mother said I was screaming really hard. She had to explain to me that Sterling was gone and with God. She picked me up in her arms and I cried so hard. She wasn't aware that my collarbone was broken. After she realized that there was something wrong with me, we went to the hospital. We had to take the road to Nakusp, as she wouldn't get back into the boat. When they took me in, the doctor X-rayed my shoulder and realized what had happened. We went to Grandma's so I could recuperate.

My grandma was very sad and I can still remember her holding me so close that I couldn't breathe. I understand now that she must have been so scared that she would lose me, too. We stayed for two months and Mom de-

cided not to go back to the woods because it was too dangerous for children. So, we got a little house on the outskirts of Nakusp and we lived there for four and a half years.

My mom became pregnant during those years with my younger brother, Randy Nelson Sinnerud. My mom had kept me so close to her for 4 years; I couldn't go anywhere or play with friends. I didn't have any friends because she was so frightened that something would happen to me. Realizing that she couldn't keep me under her wings forever, she loosened the strings at her heart and let me play with others and grow up.

I had made a friend who lived across the railroad tracks from where our house was. This little girl lived on a farm with a horse and other animals that I had never seen before. I was amazed and scared at the same time. They had a horse that was very gentle and tame. The kids would ride him all the time, and he would get his head in through the kitchen window to drink from the sink.

Once I tried to get up on him by climbing his tail! The horse was not aware of what was climbing up his tail, so he kicked me in the head, and I went flying across the front yard into the door of the barn. His shoe almost kicked out my left eye, which had been pushed out of the socket and remained hanging by my left cheek. My friend's mom phoned my mom and she came running. She said to me, "Not you, you can't die, not you."

At the hospital, the doctor wasn't available, so only the nurses were there and they told my mom, who was ready to give birth, that I had to get my eye sewn up before the numbness was over. I can still remember them coming at me with a hooked needle and thread. After that, I passed out.

The scar is still here, and this is why I have to use glasses now. My dad came and brought me home. I remember him picking me up and saying, "My girl, my little girl."

When we got home later, I remember my father giving me a bottle of Orange Crush. I'd never had it before. For some reason, my memories of that time are sharp and very clear. The strength I felt from my dad when I was a girl was so protective, I felt safe as long as my father was there.

My brother was born on June 10, 1956. I was overwhelmed by this little person, after being alone for four years. I didn't realize the impact of Sterling's death until Randy was born. I was now the oldest one. Being four and a half years old, I realized that my family meant the world to me. I knew that I had to teach my brother that sense of belonging, that family is the most important thing in the world. By six years old, I knew my responsibility.

One morning, while my mom was changing Randy, I wanted to help. She told me to get the baby powder on the counter. It was up too high and I wasn't able to reach it, so I pulled the drawer out and stood on top of it to reach the powder. By standing on the drawer, I was unbalanced and I fell. My chin hit the counter and I almost bit my tongue off. My memory of this is cloudy as I had

knocked myself unconscious. I remember waking up with blood in my mouth and not knowing why.

At the hospital, the doctor joked, “Not her again. What did she do this time?” I opened my mouth and my tongue fell out and he said: “We can’t stitch this, it will have to heal on its own.” He told me to hold my tongue and drink soup with no food and rinse it with warm salty water three times a day for a week.

After going through that ordeal, we went to stay with my grandmother, on my mother's side, in Edmonton. It was around Christmas. I can still remember the smell of her kitchen: the sweet sugar-tinted smell of cookies, and supper cooking on the stove. There was also the mesmerizing red floor where we would play for hours. It was a sweet and comforting smell and it felt like an enormous hug from my grandmother. She was a gift from God. There were always lots of treats at her house and my cousins were all around. It was always the same every time we went there, warm and comforting. In my grandma's house, if the women did the cooking, the men would have to clean up!

After Christmas, we went back to Nakusp and my mom decided to send me to school. I never went to school until I was seven years old. We moved to Grand Forks in the interior of BC, and lived in a large house next to a sawmill. I can still remember the smell of the wood being cut and the sawdust floating in the air. The dust settled everywhere in the house and soon, my mom became concerned about its effect on our health.

My parents decided to build their own house, right outside Grand Forks in a large field, close to the airport and a big asparagus field. During that time, I started first grade. There was no such thing as kindergarten during my days. The first year of my education was not much fun. Learning how to read and write was difficult. As I look at it today, I feel that it must have been then, learning how to read and write a language, that I first understood how other people feel when they have difficulties and are struggling to learn things that they can't comprehend as well as others. It gave me the patience to see and listen with more compassion and understanding.

My story has lots of sadness and sorrow, but each of those stories helped me carry on and gave me the strength that I have today. I find myself more aware of the difficulties people have in their lives. Many people have said to me, “Wendy, you're too lazy, you don't try enough,” or, “Wendy, you're too fat, you should lose weight.” Of course, those harsh words made me sad and angry, but I always forgave those people who would say such hurtful words. They didn't know who I was and what I had gone through.

Sometimes, it became so difficult that I didn't know what to do, but my mother was always there to teach me to be forgiving, to be understanding, and to be able to turn the other cheek. She always told me to try to find out the reasons for which people would lash out at strangers. By listening to her words and putting them into practice, I gained a tremendous amount of strength.

I believe that all people are good if you look closer-the people in wheel-chairs, people who are mentally challenged, or people who are just different. I have gathered all the wisdom my mother gave me and with it I try to help others. We all have had unspeakable sorrows, we all have had happy times, and we all have endured both dark and bright periods in our lives. If we gather the strength within ourselves and see it clearly, we can become better people.

I think that in today's society, we don't have patience for others. We look at people in such a way that if they're different, we treat them with anger and coldness because they don't fit into our perception of a perfect world. In today's society, it is so hard for me to sit in my wheelchair and watch young adults grow up and lose themselves; to see the anger, fear, and disgust in their eyes when they strike out at a handicapped person; to see that they feel cool because they can, because they have the power. But I know that when they become adults, some of them will look back with guilt and confusion. This simple act of lashing out at others might destroy who they're trying to become.

In today's society, if I can help people to understand that a handicapped person isn't someone to be afraid of, and help them understand a handicapped person, then I have done my job. Believe me when I tell you that it is easier to listen and take a breath rather than running away.

Everyday I tell myself to stay strong; to remember the lessons my mother taught me; to absorb the other lessons that have been taught to me along the way; to hope always for the best; and to be careful what I wish for.

*{Transcribed by Jennifer Luo}*

## Ray's Story

by Ray Stull

I was born in Guelph General Hospital, Ontario, in November 1958. My family has five boys and two girls, with me being the second youngest. I was raised on a dairy farm. In summer time, I used to do a lot of ploughing and working in the fields, getting them ready for sowing in the fall. Back then, I had to work even on holidays. I went to Waterloo Public School, where my brother John and I got a cleaning job. Sometimes at school, I got strapped because I couldn't absorb my lessons like my peers did. Somehow, teachers always picked on me. I was born with one blind eye.

At the age of seven, I started dressing up as a woman, thinking that I was supposed to be one. My family couldn't understand me, let alone give me

emotional support. One of my brothers dressed me up to see what gave me that idea. They still couldn't find out. The only time I could dress up like a girl was when the rest of the family went out. Eventually, they took me to a doctor, yet the doctor couldn't understand the root of my problem. Around Grade 5 or 6, our school got closed down. So we moved to a school that was three or four miles away from the highway.



Ray Stull

When I went into Grade 10, the school administrator basically came up to us and said, "If you have

a job, go for it." So, I got a job. My mom hated me for coming home late because of the job. Back then, I was paid \$2 per hour. I still remember the hockey games going on between different companies. I was on a winning team four times in a row.

During my stay at the company there, I didn't feel right doing the job. I worked there for ten years. When I left, I went back to dressing up as a woman. They all cried because they knew they were losing a good worker. My problem was getting the better of me. I went to psychiatrists and doctors. Nothing seemed to help. They put me into hospitals.

Later, I came out to move into an apartment in Ontario. Something happened one day. Two or more robbers came and tied my legs to the top rails of my balcony. They made me undress and urinated on me. They destroyed my favourite chair.



Somehow, I got loose, and ran to a Superstore naked. The clerk phoned the police. However, the thieves got away in a taxi. Eventually, they did get caught. They only had to stay one year in prison.

After that, I moved to Vancouver, but the police were looking for me. They told me to go back to Ontario for the court case, and the crown attorney flew me in a special plane all the way back there. I still had my problem; it never went away.

One day, when I was out on a beach in Vancouver, I looked up into the sky and asked where I was supposed to be, when a little girl came to me. Her mother talked to me about God, and I decided to go to church. I prayed to Jesus Christ for support. The priest hired me to clean the church.

Not long after, I went to find another job, which was working in a restaurant. However, the boss's wife was coming onto me, so I had to quit. Then, I worked for a while in the Salvation Army, where I helped to pick up clothes. I was getting a lot of money. I met this girl later and we ended up getting married. Even though she was pregnant when she married me, I still treated that kid as my own.

# Autobiography

by Maurice Timothy

I've been here a few years and it's not too bad since there are activities to do. I like the food here and feel comfortable in this facility. My favourite season is summer because it is warm, and plants and flowers bloom. Salmon and crab are in ponds.

I like to study all different types of religion; I think this is important. I believe in the religion of the Salish people. All religions have similar morals.

I went to school in Powell River and completed a journeyman carpentry course in college. I have renovated some schools, worked on the Sky Train beams, and worked at BC Place changing lights and speakers. My hobbies are fishing, sports, going to movies and concerts, and watching hockey and football games. I am a big hockey fan and my favourite hockey player is Wayne Gretzky. I read anything (such as documentaries, non-fiction, fiction, and political works).

I've travelled to the States a lot. I have three brothers and four sisters. One sister has a house near UBC that is near the house of Phil Collins, the singer. My mom lives in Sechelt, an hour away from Vancouver.

In my family, I have members with important jobs that help the environment, such as tree planting, which is what my brother does. He makes contracts all over BC to replenish the trees in areas that have been clear-cut. I also have family members who work in the fish plants and cultivate fish eggs by the millions and put them into the ocean to live, wild and healthy. The reason I feel it is important to notify the public is because I feel that our people, the First Nations, are noticed through the media only in a negative manner. People must understand that we fish only a small percentage of what is cultivated in fish plants and put into the ocean.

I also believe that there should be a memorial day for the First Nations people who were killed in the past during the Depression years. There should be a holiday like Remembrance Day for First Nations people.

I think that Christopher Reeves wasn't given proper care. He was Superman. Over-exertion drained his protein and energy, which led to bad pressure sores. His trainer overworked him, and that led to his death. People were trying to make him lose weight, which was inappropriate because a lack of body fat causes pressure sores. I hope it doesn't happen to anyone else.

I feel very lucky with the treatment that I get here. I am very pleased and feel fortunate to be living in Canada. I talked to a friend of mine from Germany who said that the disabled people there don't live in a facility. They are sent home to care for themselves.

## Beauty for Ashes

by Lorraine Tran

My name is Lorraine Tran and I am temporarily living at George Pearson Centre in British Columbia. I was asked to participate in a writing project taking place here at Pearson and if I would share some of my life story. With great excitement, I obliged. We all have our own unique stories. I'm not telling this to bring recognition to myself but in hopes of encouraging another individual.

Sometimes we don't always understand what lies ahead of us, whether it's good or bad. In this story I will tell you how I've been blessed with both. I know you might wonder, how can I say that a bad thing is a blessing? Well, give me a moment and I will hopefully help you to understand my meaning behind this. I will have to take you to the beginning to bring my story into line. I will call this Chapter 1 of my life.



Lorraine Tran

You see, my biological mother was an alcoholic and gave birth to me in an alcoholic state, so it wouldn't take a whole lot for me to follow that same destructive path. I was soon given up for adoption. My parents today are my adoptive parents to whom I am heavenly grateful. They gave me a good, honest upbringing, but as good as a parent might be, we, as growing independent teens, still make certain choices. Unfortunately, for many years they were the wrong choices for me. When I grew older I found myself in bondage to certain destructive forces, namely two: alcoholism and drugs. As a result, damage was done, in more ways than one. I had low self-esteem and evident slow comprehension, as well as a loss of memory.

For years I had wanted to complete my Grade 12 education, but being bound to alcohol, this was not an easy road for me. In fact, I tried to take this road many time before, but failed miserably. I didn't fail intentionally-I don't think anyone fails intentionally-but I was up against a power greater than myself. Life was but a blur of working from job to job, morning hangovers, and sobering up to silent tears and prayers of inner pain and sorrow. I had no solid foundation.

Finally, a day came when I did truly recognize my desperation and sinful nature. My undisciplined lifestyle was drawing death ever so near and I sensed it. When life was at its lowest my desperate prayers were heard, in December of 2000. A Friend bailed me out of a miry pit and placed me on a solid foundation,

which I walk on today. That foundation is the word of God and that Friend is Jesus and for this I give my eternal thanks. I was born again, not of the flesh but of the Spirit. My sins are forgiven. "I am a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). "Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

I have now a real inner peace and joy, not as the world might give but only what God can give. Alcohol, drugs, and all the other sinful things I used to do are no more a part of my life. My friends have changed, though I love them dearly. My whole destiny of life has been shifted. However, although we are children of the living God, we still have our trials and tribulations. This takes me to Chapter 2.

The word of God says we are to be Holy as He is Holy and we are to be Christ-like. Giving my life over to Christ is the best choice I have ever made. Going to church, attending Bible studies often, hanging out with many Christian friends, and yielding to the wooing of the Holy Spirit was and still is a big part of my new life's education. I am learning new ways to live a proper life. The old ways given up, my journey had begun and what a journey this would be.

The Lord promises that He will give us our heart's desire. It was not until soon after I gave my heart to Jesus did my life take a turn for the better. Over a short period of time I was able to follow my heart's desire: I was a carpenter's helper, achieved some computer skills, and received my Grade 12 diploma. Of course, this walk was not walked alone. The encouragement and prayers from many of my new friends were very important and cherished, as well as all the teachers that were full of encouragement and wisdom. I thought that the cat was in the bag...until...

It was two days before my graduation pictures when life took one of those twists. It was late and I was driving into town. He was huge and dark and there was no way of driving around him-I hit the MOOSE, dead on. "Yea, though I travel through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil" (Psalm 23). My neck was broken at C3-4, completely; the doctors said I would not feel from the shoulders down.

"All things work together for good to those who love God, who have been called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). Well, I know I love God and I believe I am doing what I am called to do and that has always been to encourage others and to share God's word. My gift of encouragement, as well as prayers, visitations, and a word from God, has kept me above many down-spiralling waters. From the beginning of my accident I've always believed that Jesus heals. I do not blame God nor do I say this was an act of God, though I have found myself many times with mixed feelings of depression, anger, confusion, and uncertainty. I have not strayed from my belief, even though things look bleak. One of my favourite scriptures and the one that I hold on tight to is: "We should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raises the dead" (2 Corinthians 1:9).

There have been many good things that have occurred since my accident. I have had the opportunity to meet many wonderful doctors, nurses, care workers, and volunteers, as well as the other residents and their families. I've had many opportunities to do what I do best, which is to share the gospel and to encourage and pray for people. Lastly, but most importantly, the accident has drawn my dad and I closer together and opened the door to the relatives I never knew.



Lorraine Tran

Jesus said, "What is impossible for man is possible for God" (Matthew 19:25-27). My memory is being restored and my comprehension is improving. I don't know what is in store for me, but what I do know is: "The thief come not, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

Just to sum things up, I've been blessed with experiencing the good things of life and the not so good things of life, as well as with the understanding of the evils of leading a life without God. "Beauty for ashes, so that He might be glorified" (Isaiah 61:3) to me means that God, "the great I AM", can turn a bad thing around for the good, for His glory. I still try to help others, whether it's with just an ear to lend or some humble words of wisdom to share.

Psalm 23 was given to me before my accident happened and is very special to me as the words are very true and comforting. I would like to share this psalm with you:

*The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.  
He makes me to lie down in green pastures;  
He leads me beside still waters.  
He restores my soul;  
He leads me in the path of righteousness  
For His name's sake.*

*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,*

*I will fear no evil;  
For You are with me;  
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;  
You anoint my head with oil;  
My cup runs over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me  
All the days of my life;  
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
Forever.*

## Always Be Positive

By Jennifer Van Nostrand

My name is Jennifer Van Nostrand, and I was born in China. I lived right on the wall of China, in Fujian on the mainland. For a while, I lived in a village. That was terrific. All the people were very kind to me. It was beautiful. Everyday I spoke and listened to English and Chinese. I used to be able to speak and understand Chinese; I still do, occasionally. The people there spoke a lot of English, so I started to speak English. I found it challenging, but I could do it so I pursued. It was fun. I enjoyed it enough to write it. I'd decided what I wanted to do, and so I did it.



*Jennifer Van Nostrand*

I was sent to China with my parents. My father sold candy and snacks, and he was a very good Chinese salesman. My mother was a nurse. She was a good nurse, a very consistent nurse, very kind, warmhearted-and was very strict. It wasn't easy to be her daughter. I had to reach her standards, and she set them really high. I just laughed and made it through. Laughter is one of life's best medicines.

I have two sisters. One of them died of cancer. There's Betty, Cindy, and me, Jennifer. We fought, but you do when you're kids. Stupid things you say. It was fun, we had lots of fun. We all got along very well. It was great.

I lived in China for three years. I wrote an autobiography, in 1948. It's called "My Two Sisters and I". It was very hard to put together, very difficult. I'm a Liberal, I like music, and I played the piano at a fairly high level. I like to go to plays and concerts. My favourite artist is Josh Groban, because he's very positive and upbeat.

My graduation was very exciting. It was unbelievable, and just a lot of fun. I was on the planning committee. Very hard work, but it paid off. It was enjoyable.

I went to UBC. It was very hard on me. They set the goals pretty high, but I survived. In a class of kids, I had good experience, and experience shows quickly. One piece of advice that I always give is: try things that you haven't done before, and always be positive, to the best of your abilities.



I always wanted to be a teacher. I love teaching. It's a highlight. It cheers people up when they're down. My sons are a good example. One of the nurses here was my student. It's terrific. I loved being a teacher, with a class. It was a very high-standard class. It felt good to tell my students how good they looked. I never put them down. Putting people down is a dreadful thing, and it's not part of me; I don't do that. I put people up, and tell them how good they look. That's a good thing, to put people up rather than down.

I taught in the Okanagan; I moved there when I was quite young. I taught French and English 10, 11, and 12. It was very interesting, and very challenging. There were some classes that were really difficult, that were not all that great. They wouldn't want to listen to you. They weren't paying attention; they were distracted. I could handle them all. I'd do something really stupid, like make a stupid face, get them to laugh. You learn how to get their attention. I personally have a great sense of humour. I like to make people laugh by doing something very silly. They didn't think I was that bad, so the students listened. I wasn't that bad; I was kind of good.

I've been here for three years, and I like it. Unfortunately, I get tired pretty easily. What comes around goes around. If you're positive with people, they'll be positive with you, I hope. It's very rewarding. The fact that you're talking to me is good for you; I hope you feel good about it. I feel very lucky.

“Bless you” is a good statement. I'm very fond of that statement. Just try to stay positive. Try to keep smiling. Always be friendly, no putting people down. Always try and cheer them up, to the best of your abilities.



## A Love Story

by Cathy Walker

It was a cold and rainy day when Cathy woke up one morning. She wanted to see her boyfriend, but she had to wait. He was the one who understands Cathy, and he was waiting for her to come by, as well. He was very romantic, and had flowers in his pocket. He had a diamond ring, too, which he'd forgotten to put on her finger!

He had proposed to her at church, with a lot of witnesses. He'd put the ring on top of the flowers and then he'd kneeled and said, "Cathy, will you marry me?"

She said, "Yes, I will, Linus."

Then Linus brought the ring out-and forgot to put it on Cathy's finger.

"I'm sorry!" he said, three or four times, "I didn't want to hurt you!"

He didn't hurt her. Linus and Cathy were almost engaged, when, thinking that they were having too much fun, the security guard booted them out. They were talking and when they were found, the security guard thought that they were doing something wrong.

Except they weren't doing anything wrong. Linus told the security guard their story:

"We met in a singles bar  
And exchanged phone numbers  
And glances."

The security guard let them go. Linus and Cathy held hands for hours on end.

### ***In the Classified Ads:***

#### **Wanted:**

One single  
Man  
That will also  
Understand disabled women.  
Are you disabled  
Yourself?  
As you know,  
You can't buy  
Love.  
You must be 43 to 47  
And most of all,  
No children.  
Do you enjoy fishing  
Or mating?  
Do you have a car  
Or truck?  
How do you like your steak?  
Well done  
Or very rare?  
Are you a tea  
Or coffee teetotaler?  
How much  
Sugar? Do you  
Believe  
In God?  
If so, He's always in  
Your heart,  
Your pure heart.  
What church do  
You  
Go to?  
When you  
Kiss,  
Do you see  
Fireworks?