

# In Our Own Words

6<sup>th</sup> Edition



Art by Robert Storf

In Celebration of  
**International Literacy Day, September, 2011.**

## **Our Learners' Stories**

**The Volunteer Literacy Tutoring Program**

A partnership between

Literacy Central Vancouver Island & Vancouver Island University

***About the artist:***

*My name is Rob Storf. I love to read. For me though, a picture tells a thousand words. Maybe one day I'll be able to express myself the same way with words, till then thanks for allowing me the opportunity to read yours.*

# In Our Own Words

Welcome to our sixth edition!

We are celebrating **International Literacy Day 2011**, with this collection of learner writings. All of the writers are enrolled in the Volunteer Literacy Tutor Program, which is a joint project between **Literacy Central Vancouver Island** and **Vancouver Island University** (Nanaimo Campus).

Some of our learners have seen their words published before and for others this is a new, exciting experience. We thank and congratulate all of our adult learners for their contributions. We also thank the tutors who encouraged their learners, helped them edit their work and assisted them in finding their voice.

Literacy Tutor Coordinators  
Margaret Ames & Jacqueline Webster  
September, 2011

Special thanks to **Wendy Chapplow** for her assistance with the publication.

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## Diving into the Adventure

David Jemphrey

I came out of the truck with my equipment to set it up. I felt relaxed because I had done this a few times in the pool. I set my equipment beside my buddy. I put out all my clothes to be ready for the ocean.

I had to strip down to my long T-shirt and long johns and thick wool socks. I put on a warm padded jacket that I would wear under my dry suit. Next I put on white cotton gloves. This would help to keep my hands warm under my dive gloves. Finally, it was time to put on



my dry suit. I felt warm with all these clothes on, but it was preparing me for the cold ocean. Then, I put my dive boots on. When I put the hood on my head, I felt as if I couldn't hear, but it would keep my head warm. After I put on my dive gloves, my buddy helped me put on my BCD vest and tank. It felt as if the tank was pulling me back, so I had to crouch over like an old man to support the weight on my back. Not only did I have the weight from my tank, but

also I had 34 pounds of weight in the pockets of my BCD; this weight would help me establish buoyancy. My buddy and I did our safety check; then we were ready to dive.

As I waddled into the water, I felt like I was carrying a sack full of rocks on my back. I put the mask over my eyes, then carrying my fins in my hand, I stumbled into the water.

When the water reached my knees, I inflated my BCD so I could float. As I was floating, my buddy helped me put on my fins, then I helped him put his fins on too. Snorkels in our mouths, my buddy and I swam out to the deep water.

Soon we were at the meeting point; then we were ready to go down. When I put the regulator in my mouth, and began to breathe the air felt dry. I signaled to my buddy that I was going down. After I deflated my vest, I began to sink below the water. I felt pain in my ears so I did what was necessary to equalize. As I looked around, I saw the other



divers sinking towards the bottom. After our group gathered at the bottom, we completed the skills necessary to pass Padi Open Water. Then we were free to explore. As I swam 60 feet below the ocean surface, I looked around and saw a

golf ball lying on the bottom. I saw a star fish, a sea horse and lots of jellyfish. I was excited to explore the water but nervous to see the depth of the ocean.

When I returned to the surface, I swam to the beach; then began to pack away my equipment. I was feeling excited and proud about passing my test, but very tired from carrying all this heavy equipment. I look forward to more fun dives and seeing more of the ocean.

Special thanks to tutor Dawn Stewart

## Beautiful Neck Point

Grace Yang



Nanaimo is a beautiful city. We have been here about six years. Here the scenery is nice. There are beautiful flowers and lots of mountains. Some of them are small, and some are a little higher. The ocean is very colorful and sometimes changeable. Sometimes the sky is black and the whole world is gone. The ocean is all black. Sometimes the water is red.

Sometimes on a shining day, the sky is a sparkling silver color and water sparkles too.

We went to Neck Point. Neck Point is a little mountain. We walked up to the beach. People were fishing in the corner and a lady was painting. I stayed beside her very quietly to see her drawing. I had read her mind. She had a beautiful sensitive mind, I thought.

I wish I had good drawing skills. I would draw scenery: the ocean, little boats, and people, but I can't. I would express my mind in drawing, but I can't. I am not good enough.

Nearby is a park. There are lots of trees. They have a path where we walked. We couldn't see the sky. It is about a 20 minute walk. There are blackberries and flowers. The path was very calm. When we came out into the parking lot, it was bright. It looked like a new world.

I am happy I moved to Nanaimo.

## A Special Canada Day Celebration Party

Yi Pang

I am Yi, I come from China. I came to Canada on February, 2011. I hope to learn more about Canada and improve my English. I attended Margaret's program (ESLSAP). Allan is my excellent tutor. I spent a special Canada Celebration Party not long after I joined the program. That was the first time for me to celebrate Canada Day!



Before the Party, Margaret gave us some material about Canada Day. Allen taught me carefully and completely, so I know the origins of Canada Day, and how Canadians celebrate the festival in detail.

At the Party, Margaret prepared lots of wonderful activities. We enjoyed singing the national song together. Margaret played the flute perfectly at the same time. We shared the beautiful cake which was the shape of the national flag. I had the first cut making it very special! I learned a lot about Canada, famous Canadians and so on. I made new friends there and had lots of fun.

I was very excited to be there. The party really impressed me and it was very memorable.



## My Daughter Carolay

Dixy Ramos

My name is Dixy Ramos. I am from Honduras. My story is about my daughter, Carolay. Her hair is black and her eyes are black. She is very happy to write, "I love playing on my bike."

Carolay is three years old. Her birthday was three months ago. Her mother gave her a shirt and pants. I sent money for her birthday and her mother bought shoes. The next day Carolay telephoned me and said, "I love the shoes you bought me. I love Daddy."





## Shopping Day with Mom

Mary Thompson

On some Saturdays, Mom and I would go and do the grocery shopping at Uncle John's store, which was called *Cochrane & Campbell Grocery Store*. We always went in the back door, because that is where the cars would park. Also, at the back, there were three staircases that went up to a rooming house.

As we went in the back door, we saw different sized boxes that were used for groceries. When we turned the corner in the store, we first saw the old wooden plank floors. In one corner of the store was the cash till. Across from that was the meat counter. Behind the counter, you would see sawdust on the floor kept the butcher from falling. You could see into the meat cooler at the counter, so you could see what they had in for the week. Fresh meat was put into the meat case every day. You could find chicken, roast beef, roast pork, pork chops, wieners, hamburger meat, sausage, bacon, ham and chicken loaf. Some of the cut meat would be used for sandwiches.

On one far wall was the produce, which included fruit and potatoes, carrots, celery, lettuce, tomatoes, cauliflower, broccoli, and corn in the summer. And down in the front of the store was a wine barrel that had apples and a few other things in them. Most of the store was set up like today's grocery stores. On another side of the store, there was a door that went through to a lunch counter. You could have lunch and get ice cream, milkshakes and pie.



Mary, her sister Betty, and their mother Eleanor enjoy Betty's birthday cake.

## Coming to Canada

Edgar Hernandez

I come from Honduras and I had to leave Honduras a long time ago. I left my family because I wanted to give them a better future and a better life. In 2000 I left Honduras with a few friends. We had to travel to Guatemala. After one day by bus we got to the Guatemalan-Mexican border. At this place we met people from all countries. Some of these people had been deported from Mexico. Some of these people wanted to make another try, and some wanted to go home. Many had tried more than five or ten times to cross Mexico to get to United States.



At this border is a river. On one side is Guatemala and on the other side is Mexico. So four friends and I tried crossing the river by swimming. We always carried a plastic bag so when we had to cross any water, we put all our clothes and property into the bag. When swimming, we carried the bag over our shoulder. We also used the

bag for sleeping on, or for sleeping in, if it was cold. On this night, the currents were deep and strong, it was raining and the water was cold. One of my friends didn't know how to swim. When I saw him in the water fighting to get out, I gave my hand to him and he almost pulled me under the water. But I helped him.

We got to the city in Mexico called Tap Chula, where we hopped a train with the intention to get to the American border. Before we got to the border we got caught and were deported back to Guatemala. So we were in the same place where we started.

So my friends and I had to decide to make one more try, and this time we made it by crossing Mexico by foot into the US. Immigration stopped us and took us to the Detention Centre. After two days they gave us a release and a court date. People

told me not to go, so my friends and I travelled to Los Angeles . We had nobody to help us, but we finally met a person who helped by giving us a place to sleep in his home. A week later, he sent me to Seattle with his friend who gave me a job in construction and a place to stay. This was when I began learning the job I know.

Later I went back to Honduras to see my family because I missed them. I stayed one year, and returned to Seattle. After some time my brother Dixy came to Seattle from Honduras. We worked for a year together and when work slowed down we decided to go to Vancouver, Canada. At that time we tried to cross the border by Blaine, Washington.

We had all our property in our backpacks. Dixy had a pair of new shoes in his pack and all his new clothes. We tried to cross at midnight, but immigration officers must have heard us walking through the dry grass and leaves.

Ten minutes later we heard the officers talking to each other. They said "I think they went this way." Some went the other way and some came our way. We ran. Dixy threw his pack in the bushes so he could jump the fence. I threw mine in a clear spot so I could jump the fence. On the other side, the immigration officers were waiting for us. When we saw them, we ran the other way, so they sent the dog in. The dog got me and bit my arm. An officer put Dixy on the ground, hit him in the face and cuffed his hands. So we got caught again. Now I had bad news and good news. The bad news was the dog grabbed my arm, but the good news was the officer brought me my backpack.

They took us to Vancouver and then they gave us a release. We stayed in Vancouver for one and a half months and then moved to Nanaimo for work. This is how I met Margaret, about ten months ago, at Literacy Central Vancouver Island, and she asked me if I could write a grocery list. I don't remember how many things I wrote, and I am not sure if I wrote right or wrong. But today I wrote this story.

## **My Grandma**

Sara Amos



My grandma was really funny. My Grandma called everyone *George* or *chum*. She would say funny things like "whattttttt!?". If she wanted something she would tap her glass or do a whining sound or do something annoying to get someone's attention. When she was in public she would do some funny rude stuff to people.

She would take us out shopping to Kamloops and Salmon Arm and buy a ton of gifts for us kids. Everyone liked to call her *Gran* for short. When she went swimming we would call her *Bob* because she bobbed in the water. At her place we would go boating and tubing around the lake. We rented a house boat to go house boating and touring around the lake. We took her to Disneyland with us as well. When she would drive she would go really fast around the corners. She would say "I smell home" and drive even faster.

She will be missed but she will be in our hearts forever.

## My Mom

Richard Stewart

My mother was born in 1941 in Skidegate, Haida Gwaii. She would have been 70 on December 21 this year.

I was very young, but I think I was three years old when she left.

She went to Vancouver and trained as a nurse.

When I was 17 I was searching for my mother and I went to Massett, Haida Gwaii and found my grandmother. That's how I got to find out who my mother was and that's why I went to Vancouver. I found her, but I didn't stick around too long. I was young and I was angry and I was not sure about what to do, so I went back to Prince Rupert.



In 1989 when I was 29, I moved to Vancouver and the next time I saw my mother was in a pub there. I needed to ask her some questions. I had supper with her in New Westminster and she told me more about her life without me asking. That's when I forgave her. It didn't take long.

Later, I spent a lot of time at my mum's house on Main St. in Vancouver. That was when I met my cousin Deb for the first time and we started to get to know each other. I really liked her and we got along well. About two years later I went to her wedding in Surrey. My mother told me that Deb now lives in Campbell River.

From 1989, each year I got to know my mother better and better. She was working as a nurse. I phoned her on Christmas, Mothers' Day and her birthday. On Mothers' Day Weekend, my mother and I sometimes went to pow-wows in a big hall near the Broadway Skytrain in Vancouver. The last time I was at this hall was in 2004 with my friends; we were listening to music and watching the dancers.

After 1992 my mother and I went out for dinner in the west end a few times and I sometimes spent the night at her place. I started calling her 'mum'.

My mother was a strong woman and well respected as a nurse. She liked to play bingo and she loved hockey. She often went to Vancouver Canucks games. She had a lot of friends. She helped out a lot of people including me. She was a really giving person.

However, in the past few years, she was very sick. Her wish was that her family could get together. When her wish came true, she had a big smile. She died in November 2010. My sister has a picture of all of my mum's kids sitting on her bed with her: Calvin, David, Norm, Kay and me. My sister had it enlarged for everybody.



I know my mum had three boxes of pictures. There is one of my brother Paul, my mum and me at our cousin's wedding. I saw this picture in the hall where we had my mum's memorial service. I am going to get a copy of that picture. My brother David is looking for it for me.

From my mother I got a native blanket. Probably it was from my grandmother on Haida Gwaii. Both my mother and my grandmother wore this blanket at dances in Skidigate.

Special thanks to tutor Barbara Johnston



## Learning About Spelling

Gary McIntyre



I have been going to Literacy Central for over two months now. The goals that I had set were to improve on my spelling and grammar. I have been shown how to say and hear the sounds of the vowels and consonants. In the beginning of my lessons my tutor could see that I could recognize words that were spelt wrongly, but I didn't know how to correct them. I have learnt that the sounding out of the words and

breaking them down into syllables is a good way to spell words that I don't know how to spell.

I have learned the rules of English spelling such as "i" before "e" except after "c"; also "es" after "x" to make a words plural (eg "box es"). Many small words can also be made into larger words, eg word ladders ("set," "setting," "upset," "upsetting," "upsets"). Many other rules and ideas have been shown to me. I have put together the sounds of the rules and the understanding of the origins of the word to help me spell the words that I find tough to spell. Here is an example of this: in the word "dismiss" the "dis" in the word means "away from" and "miss" means "send". The other rule is for every syllable you need to have at least one vowel.

I have become more aware of rules that I didn't know and some I had forgotten. I have also been reintroduced to verbs, nouns, and adjectives and adverbs. The words that I have found almost impossible to spell in the past have been made easier to spell. The new ideas to try have helped me with my confidence to attempt new and larger words in my writing. The improvements have been seen by my tutor and also by myself. I have just begun to see my improvement in my sentence structure.

## Unforgettable Memories

Kelsey Ye

After reading "Voices from the Great Depression", I remember that in 1970, way back to China, families all around the country were poor. I was four, a little girl. Both my parents got very little pay. There was no money to buy fruit for my brother and me. Luckily, we could get a small amount of rice and a little more flour from the ration given by the factory where my parents worked. We ate noodles almost every day at that time; my brother and I were so sick of eating any food made of flour. Despite the fact that we hated eating noodles, my parents still required that we not leave any food in our bowls. If a single grain of rice fell onto the table, we had to pick it up and eat it. One of our neighbors who had seven members in their family was unfortunately very much worse off than us. The rice was given only to their youngest daughter who was just two years old. The older boys and their parents had to eat the food made of corn or made of another grain that was not tasty at all, and even every hard to swallow.



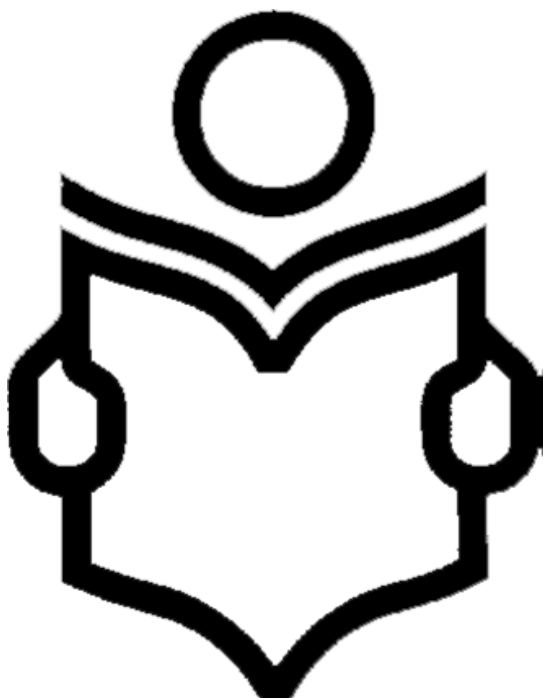
I also still have the memory of the garbage-picking woman who lived in a little town about a two hours walk away from where I lived. She came to the factory where my parents worked at least once a week. She was old, humpbacked, and dirty. I especially remember that her hair was a matted mess. She would pick things up from the ground that she felt good or worthy and put them into the pack basket, which was made of bamboo that had been repaired many times. I was so full of pity for her. I didn't know what kind of food she ate. One day I gave her a candy that I had saved for a long time. She looked at it for a while. I thought she probably didn't know what it was, so I told her that if you wanted to eat it, just unfold the wax paper. I don't want to think about the time we had experienced. I hope that such bad conditions will not happen again, but I cannot forget them.

## Finding My Voice

Marian Roper

Yesterday, I joined Toastmasters. This may not sound exceptional, but less than two years ago, when I became a "learner" at Literacy Central, the possibility of me functioning as a member of a Toastmasters group was out of reach. Why? Because I was too ashamed of my hidden handicaps: my fears of making mistakes; my inability to comprehend and remember written passages; my loss of the ability to put my ideas and thoughts into coherent sentences; and, most of all, my inability to feel safe with people or to allow them to support me. In short, I had no concept of courage, belonging, and reaching out to others. I arrived at Literacy Central healing from devastating illness. Physically, I appeared whole while mentally, emotionally, and spiritually I felt quite broken.

Much has changed since then. For example, last week when my g-mail account was hacked, I found ways to "manage" without meltdown. Less than two summers ago, Brian began showing me how to write e-mails, something I did with ease before my illness. Since 2003, I have had a handicap "sticker" on my library card, giving me access to all audio resources, as I was unable to comprehend books. Since December 2010, I have read several books with ease as I can comprehend them again. I cried with gratitude for a week when this skill reappeared. Prior to my illness, I took literacy skills for granted. After all, I had a Master's Degree! Of course, I never spoke out, except to tell my "why", my story, over and over, indelibly imprinting my "victim" persona.



Literacy Central is my Lighthouse of personal angels: Jacqueline who heard and understood my plea for help when no one else did; Wendy and Tia, for warm acceptance and assurance of a safe space without fluorescent lights to meet my tutors; Brian, for guiding me past the basics of computers; Don, who came to my home office to launch me into cyberspace again; and Ron, my inspiring, intuitive tutor who meets with me weekly. Ron said, "It will blossom," and "we speak and write our way into being," when I met him less than one year ago, and he was so right.

Through his tutelage and exposure to grammar, literature, poetry, and inspirational and timely assignments, I am thriving to the degree that even I can see the results: Toastmasters, for example, an impossibility just six months ago.

For months and months, I could only write about my sorrows and regrets, my shame, self-blame, and pain. Yet, my tutor cut through my words with a skilful, literary surgical knife identifying my "themes" of life and assigning me tasks to weave my words into being. Now assignments take on practical, tangible meaning that I am beginning to share with others. I was a leader before my illness after all! Yet, as I step back into life, the resurrected me is much more humble, present, and patient, more compassionate and caring. No longer a victim but a warrior and wizard with experiences that strengthen my purpose to make a difference for others. My tutor's leadership is a template I am imprinting as part of my own.

Words spoken, written, read, and shared--laughter, pathos, joy, and sorrow--all centered in my learning. Literacy Central gives me warm, compassionate people who have guided and continue to guide me, "one step at a time," Ron says, when I go too fast on my way into being. This from me, near death, from shame and defeat! How can I measure the saving of a soul? I cannot. I only know I have much to give others. Thank you, Literacy Central.

Special thanks to tutor Ron Bonham

# Left the Troubles

David Jemphrey

In 2004 when I was 20, I moved from Ireland to Canada. I was excited and nervous about the move. I was nervous because it was a new country with large forests, lakes, mountains and open fields. I was excited because it was new life style without tension. I was sad to leave my friends and sisters. I knew that I



I would have to prove myself all over again with new friends. I did have some background about my new country before coming to Canada. I had been to Washington, DC, Boston, Nantucket, New York City, Buffalo, and Toronto. In school I completed a project on the USA.

You may wonder, why would I want to leave Ireland? I will explain. It

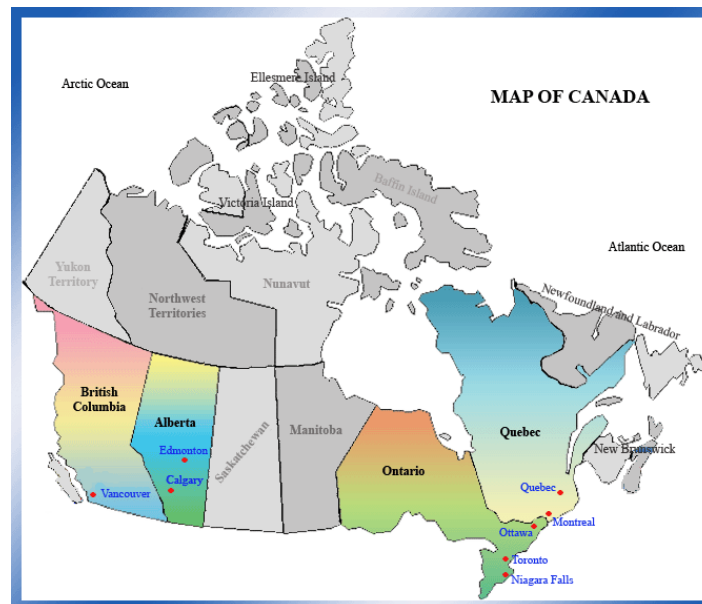
was the "The Troubles" and the nerve-racking lifestyle we were living. My Dad had worked as an officer in Belfast for thirty years. This put our entire family in jeopardy. We couldn't walk in certain parts of Northern Ireland because we would be judged as Protestant and might be physically attacked. My Mom had a bomb detector in her car for her safety. Dad had to take a different route to work each day so people would not know where to find him. In school I had to lie about what my dad did for a living because he was a police officer our family could be targeted.

The troubles in Belfast didn't just affect our family; everyone in the city had to deal with "The Troubles". On the news were reports of violence every day. On the 12th of July there was a lot of violence. The 12<sup>th</sup> of July is when the British conquered Ireland in 1690. Protestants celebrate this victory with a parade. Every year during the parade the police were attacked with petrol bombs.

The Catholics were angry because Protestants marched down certain parts of Northern Ireland where Catholics were living. It was the police job to keep the peace.

My family experienced anxiety and tension because of the troubles. Mother was worried about Dad. She didn't know if Dad would come home from work alive. Dad saw his friends die in bomb explosions. As a police officer, he did not have the freedom to unwind as you or I might. For example, if the police wanted to go to a coffee shop, they could not. They were under constant guard to protect themselves and other police officers.

I knew that when we arrived in Canada, we would have freedom to breathe. We left our troubles behind us.



Special thanks to tutor Dawn Stewart

## Thy Light of Day

Ryan L'Hirondelle



There's no hope in sight, I walk around blind,  
Repeat'n memories like I'm stuck on rewind,  
I be on the grind got a 'XXXX'em all" mind,  
You don't know me homie, ya left me behind,  
Am I insane? A twiztid mindframe?  
No simple answers, no one to blame,  
In guilt, in shame in a world of pain,  
Pray'n for sunlight, surrounded by rain,  
So mad at the world for leave'n me here,  
I ran with the dogs, can't let'em smell fear,  
Avoid'n all mirrors, hold'n back tears,  
Plead'n that my savior will help me disappear,  
Locked up at night, I started to pray,  
"God send me an angel, to show me the way",  
Wait'n for my sign, still walk around blind,  
I'm lonely and lost just hope'n to find,  
..My way to thy light of day.

## Trip to Hawaii

Lily Lee

We left home April 26 and went to Richmond and stayed at a hotel for the night. Then the next morning we caught on early flight to L.A., then we boarded the Princess Cruise to go to Hawaii. We were four nights on the ship. On the fifth day early in the morning we arrived in Hawaii. We took a bus tour to see a nice garden, we saw different kinds of trees and flowers. We took many pictures and had fun. Next day we took the bus and went shopping and the next day we took the taxi to see the Ocean Centre. We saw all different kinds of fish and coral. Looking under the sea was beautiful. On the way back to the ship we stopped and bought a young coconut. Everybody shared the coconut milk. We had a good time



on the Island. The weather was nice every day. Then we left Hawaii and we were four days on the sea then we stopped in Mexico for one day. We took

the bus tour to a wine store and everybody had a chance to try different kinds of wine. I didn't buy the wine, but I bought two bottles of extra virgin olive oil. After that we went to see an old casino that was built in 1930. It is the oldest casino in the world and everything inside is the same as it always was. In the evening the ship left Mexico. Then we were two days on the sea. We stopped at L.A. where some people got off the ship. Some new people boarded the ship but we were lucky because we were able to stay on the ship all the way back to Vancouver. We left the ship at 9:00 and took the 12:30 ferry back to Nanaimo. The whole trip was 17 days. We enjoyed it very much.



## **My Story**

### **Anonymous Learner**

I was born in Central America to Maria and Umberto, into family values where everybody helped each other. When I was two my mom said she knew I was going to be a handful. Around that time my dad brought us to Toronto to have a better life. We first lived in a place called Jane and Finch. It was a bad neighbourhood with drugs, guns and gangs. My parents were Catholic. Both of them worked very hard and went to church every Sunday. They were so caught up in trying to get us a better life they weren't around very much. I took advantage of it by getting into trouble at school and acting out.

So my parents made sure we had a family day every weekend. We went on picnics and camping trips, and I played lots of sports. I loved soccer. I became an altar boy and started to get great grades in school. But I started to pick up behaviors from other kids so my parents moved us to Milton and then Mississauga. One day when I was 10 I took the keys to my parents' car and went down to the garage with some of my friends and drove around the garage acting like I was in a race car, laughing and smoking cigarettes, weed. I smashed into a pillar. After being punished I became good for a while - played lots of sports and my grades were up. But every other week my parents got calls from school that I was fighting; I used to watch my dad fight a lot in soccer.

I hung around a lot with my dad and he had a friend who made Italian sausage and handmade foods. His friend had a son two years older than me and one day I was invited to stay over. On the second night, when I was fast asleep he barricaded the door and sexually assaulted me. I didn't tell anyone because I didn't want my dad mad at me. So I held it in and it changed me for the next 20 years. My using got out of control. I was in and out of rehab and began living a criminal lifestyle.

I few years later I got this great idea and bought a one-way ticket to Vancouver. The taxi driver took me to a hostel on Hastings. That is where I learned to steal, manipulate and use people. I became part of that society. The other society was lost. I was in and out of jail, shot twice, stabbed multiple times and hospitalized countless times from overdose. The last straw was when four guys in masks trying to make a name for themselves came to kill me. It took five surgeons to save my life, and months of rehab to learn to walk again.

Then I went and robbed a bank and got two years with time credited. Part of that time was in a therapeutic community where I decided to give myself a chance and try to heal. I worked really hard to make an honest change. When I got out I was unprepared and scared. I relapsed and re-offended and it was a relief to be back inside. But I promised myself I would prepare myself with a proper release plan.

I sent out resumes, went out for an interview and nailed a job for the first time in 17 years. I got my self-esteem back. I had my eye on the prize of going home to see my father and family after all these years. I worked really hard at my job. What a great feeling being part of society! Getting on that plane was so not real at first I had to pinch myself. When I arrived and saw my dad I cried and cried and hugged him. That week went so fast, and I believe now I should have stayed.

When I came back I was lonely and bored and then I got hurt at work. A recipe for disaster. I didn't let people in, and stopped talking to my support. I relapsed and returned to crime. But before I was re-incarcerated I met my partner who helped me realize I can be a clean and sober member of society. I want that back. It was my best success in 17 years.



I see myself in five years married, playing sports with my kids, vacationing with my family and driving a truck and being my own boss on the road. The smile and the positive energy I carry in me and know I will do my best.

## Handle with Care

Fred Conradsen

I do not live in a glass house. And I'm not made of glass either! But I've always wondered; if you could see completely through me, would you tell me all the unloving thoughts I've had about myself were untrue? Yes, I think you would. So why is it that we're more critical of ourselves than others are of us?

In the house of me, there are many rooms. I built it that way. And in my house there are some rooms I don't want anyone to see. They're the rooms of secrets and fears. I don't think I consciously planned the design. I think these rooms were created as needed from their own volition. The one thing I do know is that a long time ago when I was building my house, I had bought into believing some of the cruel misgivings of a few of the schoolyard children I used to play with. And my relationships with my father and stepfather were so abusive and unsupportive that they affected how I perceived myself. I didn't understand that I could find answers to the questions I was afraid to ask so I found space in my closet of beliefs and made sure to store them way in the back on the bottom shelf-where even I didn't have to see them.

As I grew older I began to explore the world and to compare my house with others. Sometimes I thought mine was nicer; and sometimes I thought theirs was nice too. But most of the time I didn't think mine was good enough- for I knew all about the secret rooms that no one could see. So for years I would seek out the approval from others to tell me my house had value. From time to time, when I was praised, I was critical of the acclaim and disregarded the assessments on the basis that they couldn't make a proper analysis because they hadn't seen all the rooms. And, all the while the closet continued to fill with the fragility of self-doubt and harmful self-censure. I would define myself worth solely on the opinions of others and dismiss any positive compliment as inconsequential.

And so I began to travel at an even greater speed. I would seek out substances that would garble my perception. I raced at such high speeds that I began to ignore the amber warning lights that glistened as I raced through life's intersections. Finally I realized that what I was really doing was running from my fears. My closet had become overcrowded and I knew I couldn't clean it up myself. I also knew that if I didn't stop racing it could cost me my life. So I decided to reach out and ask for help. I made a commitment to myself to go for treatment and work on my recovery and changing my future.



I've been clean for 16 months and regularly attend the 12-Step meetings. I practice being caring and

compassionate of others and myself. Recovery is a process that I find possible managing one day at a time. My confidence and esteem grows through this process. I am especially grateful that those secret rooms aren't quite as cluttered as they used to be. Actually they're rather empty today. But there are still days I sometimes find myself wishing that I was that glass house so that I could easily show you the humanity of all my rooms. For I am a human being. I am not a glass house. And I am not made of glass.

## Richard's Poem Richard Stewart



Happy, patient, friendly, caring, generous.  
Brother of Calvin, David, Norm and Kay.

Lover of walking in rain, snow and sunshine,  
of listening to AC/DC.

Who is curious about his own First Nations people.

Who still loves his mom and dad with all his heart.  
Who was afraid of dogs and walking the Vancouver  
streets at night.

Who wishes peace for the world.  
Love for all families.  
Courage for the street people.  
Housing for the poor.

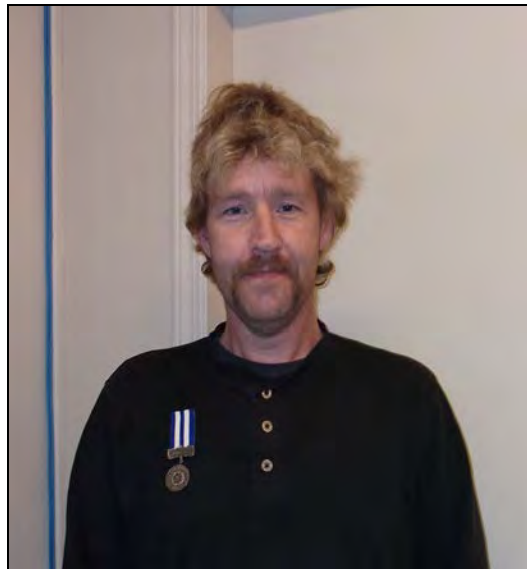
Who lives in an apartment on Prideaux Street.

## **Glen's Story**

Glen Watts

*Hero: a person of distinguished courage or ability, admired for his brave deeds and noble quality.*

*a person who, in the opinion of others, has heroic qualities or who has performed a heroic act and is regarded as a model or ideal.*



I have received a medal of bravery for trying to save the life of an 86 year old man who drove into the Millstream River. I will be receiving a medal of bravery from the Governor General of Canada in Ottawa later this year. People call me a hero. In any circumstances or situation, if anybody needed my help, I would try my best to do what I could do to help them.

I was the first on the scene. Seeing the car floating was pretty alarming. My first thought was, whoever is in the car is probably injured or trapped. I then dove into the icy cold water and swam out to the car. I noticed there was an elderly man hunched over in the driver's seat. I tried knocking on the window. The man responded and looked over at me. I yelled at him to try and unlock the door. He tried, but it wouldn't open.

At around this time an off-duty officer and another young man came to my aide. A fourth man showed up. I yelled to the shore and asked for a rock. I believe it was the off-duty officer who swam out with the rock. He made several attempts to break the side back window but could not do it. I then asked him for the rock. I tried to break the window and could not do it. Then frustration set in and somehow I got up on the back and smashed the back window. I climbed through the small shattered hole.

By the time I had gotten into the car the water level was up to the man's chest. I then tried to go for the seatbelt. I was wrestling around and then noticed the man's head had dropped and he began to take in water. I attempted to keep his head above the rising water while trying the seatbelt again. At this time the water was coming in fast. The car was going under and there was not much more that I could do. It is a pretty hard thing to do and deal with when you know somebody is dying in front of you and there is nothing you can do. I deal with it every day when I think about it. And no one will know what that's like unless you've been through it.

Special thanks to tutor Kathryn Savoie

## We Care Lady

Heather Goldston

Being new to the Island, and having to find a job was a real treat. Having been here for almost three months, I knew that a job would come along soon, and it did. One just fell right into my lap. I would be living with an 80 year old lady with Alzheimer's disease. Having only lived with my family, we all know what that can be like; I wondered what this new job would entail!

Okay the big day had come. It was a Wednesday and with butterflies in my stomach, and unable to eat, I packed my bag with only a few clothes, and my knitting, of course, can't leave home without it. I got on my scooter and off I went, heading North on the Island Highway. Speeding down the highway, with so many distractions running through my mind the exits come up very fast. Okay, maybe I don't want to do this, what was the lady going to be like! I was told that she loved to knit, but was she going to remember how? She also loved to spend time in the kitchen cooking and baking, so how bad was this going to be. We will call the lady Kathy, and she and I had many things in common. Going down the steep rocky driveway, I wondered how I was going to get up and down this driveway in the snow. At the end of the steep hill there was the large brown Rancher, which was the house I was told to look for. The garage door was open, and I parked the scooter, and went up to the door.

A very tall man of about 66 come to the door, and I thought this must be her son Sam. He welcomed me in. He was happy, like the friendly giant, and he was eager to meet his mother's new care-giver. Once in the house, there were two more ladies. One of them had white hair; she was very slim and smiling. She came over to me immediately and gave me a hug. Ah ha, this must be Kathy. This was not going to be so bad. Kathy seemed happy, friendly and seemed to welcome having a stranger in her house. Now to find out whom the other lady was. She had brown hair, was short with a medium build and she was smiling as well. This is one happy family. Sam introduced her as his wife Linda. Ok now the puzzle was complete.

After meeting all of the family it was time for the tour of the house. First I was shown where I would find Kathy's belongings. Then I went off to the spare bed room right down the hall from Kathy's room, and that was where I would be sleeping. Kathy's house was on a very large lot and there were many flowers, with not a dead one in sight.

It was time for us to say our good-byes to Sam and Linda, as they had to go home. Kathy gave hugs and kisses, but there were no tears. This was a really good sign, because Kathy was happy and she was comfortable with having someone in her home.



It was dinner time, so Kathy and I made dinner together. She was very excited about showing me around her kitchen, which was nice to work in, as it was much bigger than the one that I had in my apartment. You had so much space to work in the kitchen, which gave us ample room to work together. We sat and had dinner, and told each other stories, and



got to know each other better. Sitting at the table having dinner, it came to me that Kathy was not that affected by her disease, as she was still able to tell me stories and show me her kitchen. Then the dishes were done, PJs were put on and it was time to wind down. We sat and watched the news and some TV. Kathy sat right beside me on the couch watching me knit. That was when it hit me that she did have Alzheimer's, as she did not remember how

to knit. She had knit all of her life. Her son was at least 60, and she had knit all of his clothes. That made me think - would I lose this talent one day? How sad would that be.

It was about 10pm when we brushed our teeth and I gave Kathy her meds. Both of us were ready for bed. I helped Kathy into bed, and we said our good nights. I explained that if she needed anything I was right next door.

I climbed into bed and thought boy do I need my sleep. The house was so quiet and at about 2 am I could hear movement in the house. Kathy was up. I lay still in the twin size bed. From the darkness I could hear the words, "I know that there is a We Care lady in my house somewhere". Now I was lying in the bed with the blanket covering all of my body except for my eyes and my fore head sticking out. "I know that there is a We Care lady in my house somewhere." My heart was pounding right out of my chest. Again from the darkness the words were spoken. This time seemed to be louder and then become quieter, like she was walking up and down the hallway. Was she on the hunt for a robber in her house? Soft and slowly the words kept coming from the hallway. My heart was pounding and I was unable to get up to see what was going on. It felt like this was happening all night, but looking at the clock it was only about 10 min. Lying there, not moving and trying not to breath, I just wanted her to go back to bed. The words stopped just as fast as they had began, and she must have gone back to bed. Now for me to try and get some sleep.

With little sleep the morning came; hope it was not going to be like this every night! I asked Kathy if she had had a good sleep. Kathy had told me that she had the best sleep ever, and never moved all night!

Boy, I hope that she will have a nap, because I know that I will need one!

## A Visit to the Harbour

Lisa Jang

Lisa and her teacher walk and study English. They walk along the sidewalk, around the corner and across the street to Pioneer Park. They talk and talk about the things they see.

They see many boats, some airplanes and big ships. They also see seagulls, pigeons, geese and baby geese. They see statues at the harbour. In the water under the



bridge, they saw oysters and seaweed. Then they turned around and walked beside many businesses: ice cream shop, coffee shop and present shop. They saw many people talking and it was noisy.

After they went around to the coffee shop. They sit down in some chairs and read the newspapers. They drink coffee and talk English. Then, they go

out to the sidewalk beside the bushes and across the parking lot and up the steps. They saw a fountain with water and pennies. They joked about picking up the pennies and buying coffee. Then they walked back to their classroom.

Lisa says she is very happy learning English with her teacher.

Special thanks to tutor Judith Russell

## Learning English from a Grocery Store

Yi Pang

I hope to learn English from daily life. I found I can use very few words I learned from classes in China. Before I came to Canada, I thought it was easy to shop in a grocery store, even though I didn't know the word, I would look at the things, but as soon as I got there, I found I was wrong, There're so many new words on a label, I was confused, I didn't know what it really was, which one was better, and which one suits my family best. When Allan told me we would go to a grocery store to learn English, I was excited and full of expectation.



We went to the Thrifty Food store on July 21. It is a huge supermarket. I learned lots of things, many times more than I imagined.

Firstly, I know lots of new words .They look so strange but mean the things so familiar. I know veal is the meat of baby cow. I know the name of every part of beef or chicken, and the words about all kinds of dairy or meat products. I learned more names of fruits and vegetables which we often buy.

Secondly, I know how to choose more healthy food for my family now, especially for my little children. My friend recommended homo milk would be best for the children. Allan reminded me to look over the label about nutritional facts. Now I know about trans fats, which only makes people get fatter, not really stronger. I know margarine is better than butter. Veggie food is made of vegetables instead of meat. Organic means no chemicals. (These are all my favorite foods).

Thirdly, we talked further about food, including the origin, place it came from, flavor, cooking methods and so on. We compared the different products of one sort of food with others. I also found funny things. I often regarded bigger printed words as the names of the food, but in fact they mean other things. For example, the name I thought is a kind of beverage, actually represents a company.

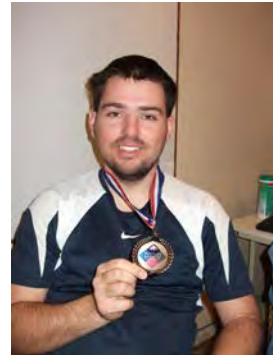
It was a good way that I can learn English more quickly and effectively. I have a picture dictionary which lists some names of food, when open I know the names, but when I close it I forget most names. This time, lots of words went into my memory, and I remembered many very well.

Special thanks to tutor Allen Epp

## My Ski Racing Adventure

Ron Greenhorn

On April 15, 16 & 17, 2011 I attended the Whistler Adaptive Ski Racing Event where I competed in Slalom, Grand-Slalom, Super G and Downhill Ski Competitions. Fun was had by all. We had a banquet dinner on the Saturday evening and on Sunday I was presented with the third prize medal for my Slalom skiing event.



Mount Washington Disabled Ski Team  
Ron Greenhorn on far left



Ron during Super G Ski Race

In addition to the medal above, I was awarded with a Spirit of the Sport Award while attending a track & field practice for BC Special Olympics in Nanaimo. Below is a description of what is entailed to receive a Spirit of the Sport Award.

(The Spirit of Sport Award is presented annually to a male or female Special Olympics BC athlete who exemplifies the true meaning of sportsmanship. At this event, Ron's coach said that " Ron Greenhorn has demonstrated time and again the qualities that make him the deserving recipient of the 2011 SOBC Spirit of Sport Award. Ron is known for his kindness, his courteousness, his dedication and reliability, his warm supportiveness, and most of all, his inspirational determination.")

Special thanks to tutor Debbie Smith

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## *Bowling in Athens: The Diary of an Athlete*

*Crystal Thompson*

### *Prologue*

*I started 10-pin bowling when I was eight years old. My Uncle Bob had gotten me into a youth league, and I bowled every Saturday. And I took to it naturally. When I was 12, I dropped out of bowling and began skating. The next year I began skating and in six months I was skating with the Special Olympics.*

*A friend asked me to play five-pin in a regular league. Then I met Ray, and he decided to do five-pin in 2007, and we began bowling 10-pin together the following year. Between October and May, I was bowling and another lady couldn't bowl in Campbell River. My average just "squeaked in" and I went on to the provincials. Now my average is around 130-131, and I get to compete.*

*I found out from the Nanaimo Special Olympics coordinator that I would be going to Greece for the 2011 Special Olympics. I totally freaked! I screamed my head off so loud that I freaked out the next-door neighbour, and she was about to call the police. It was a dream come true; I had done figure skating for the past 21 years, wanting to represent Canada. And now I was doing it with 10-pin bowling.*



*Crystal enjoys the cruise to Rhodes.*

*Friday, June 17, 2011*

*Nanaimo, BC*

*Today I got up at 3 a.m. and was ready to go an hour later. Aunt Betty and Uncle Neil phoned to say that they were on their way. In order to catch our flight, we left home at 4:30 a.m. for the 6 o'clock flight. Fifteen minutes later we landed in Vancouver. After a delay there, we arrived in Toronto about 6 p.m. People met us, and we took a school bus to the university—where we got hats, extra t-shirts, water bottles, and sandals (although mine did not fit).*

*After dropping things off, we went to dinner at the dining hall. There we had a Greek meal: chicken or pasta, Greek rice, and pita bread. After dinner, Jennifer Campbell—the chef d'maison, welcomed us. She introduced the "head honcho" from Telus, who gave us brand new cell phones, and each one had 100 minutes. We also met other dignitaries, like Darryl Sitler. After all the speeches, we had entertainment in the form of Greek dancers. And I got up to boogey, too.*

*Saturday, June 18, 2011*

*Montréal, Quebec*

*This morning we got up at 5:30 a.m., got ready, ate breakfast, grabbed our gear, and boarded the bus. Angela, one of our coaches, had left her passport on the plane from Vancouver to Toronto, so she couldn't travel with us. It cost her a lot of money to replace it!*

*When we landed in Montreal, we took our carry-on baggage into the international area. We boarded the Air Canada flight to Athens in the evening. On the way, I wrote in my diary and solved word search puzzles.*

## *Bowling in Athens: The Diary of an Athlete*

*Crystal Thompson*

**Friday, June 17, 2011**

**Nanaimo, BC**

Today we arrived in Athens, Greece after a long flight—almost 10 hours. When we got off the plane, we were met at the gate by the welcoming committee. After they got our bags, we were taken to the Welcome Centre. Apollon, our mascot, was based upon Apollo, the Greek sun god.

There I bought a pin for my sport (our logo and the mascot bowling) and a keychain of Apollo, the mascot. (Apollo was the Greek god of the sun.)

By this mid-afternoon, we took a bus to get on the ferry to Rhodes. For that long trip, Ray and I got to share a cabin with bunk beds—he had the top and I had the bottom.



*Crystal and Kristin meet mascot Apollon.*

**Monday, June 20, 2011**

**On the Aegean Sea**

By 2 in the morning, we left our room so others could rest there. We got to Rhodes by 10:30 a.m., and the Boy Scouts met us as we got off the ferry. When we got to the Hotel Apollo Beach Inn, the first thing I did was to have a shower. It felt good. After that,

I had a buffet-style lunch and went back to my room to have a sleep. But, they didn't want us to sleep, so that we would get over jet lag.

Instead we went for a swim in the ocean and then in the big square pool. It was nice and cool. Then I washed the salt out of my hair and got ready for dinner.

**Tuesday, June 21, 2011**

**Rhodes Island, Greece**

Today I got up at 6 a.m. for a breakfast of crepes with strawberry jam at 7. Afterwards, I got my bowling bag and waited for the rest of my team. Instead of a bus, we walked out of the hotel and down the driveway to see the bowling alley. I bowled very well in the practice session. Then we rested at the hotel and had Greek food for lunch: meat and phyllo pastry. It was very good.

Then I asked Lynda, my coach, if I could look around at the gift shop at the hotel. I found some things but decided not to buy anything. By 4:30 I was up and ready to go.

Dinner was good, but the desserts were "yummy." Then I went upstairs to get my camera and water bottle. All 200 of us on Team Canada rode buses to the Medieval Village, which has a castle and old streets of Rhodes. We did some shopping; it was really cool. I bought something for me and something for my mom.

Then we went to an outdoor nightclub. When I was videotaping the room, suddenly I saw Ray dancing in a conga line. Overall, I had a good time.

## *Bowling in Athens: The Diary of an Athlete*

*Crystal Thompson*

**Wednesday, June 22, 2011**  
**Rhodes Island, Greece**

Today I got to sleep in, because we had the day off. First, we went to the pool and then to the sea—and everyone got into the water. After that, we changed into pants and our bowling shirts for the team pictures, and I got to sit on a chair instead of standing.

Then our bus took us to Lindos for the Law Enforcement Torch Run (LETR). There I bought two postcards, light lime green and white seashell earrings, and a picture for my Aunt Betty. I also did some pin trading. I bought a pale, grey-blue dress—strapless and covered with flowers. Ray whistled at me; he really liked it.

**Thursday, June 23, 2011**  
**Rhodes Island, Greece**

Today my team went to the bowling alley to practice before getting our bags. First, though, I had to buy a fan to cool myself off; it was really hot. We went back to the castle for the second day of the law enforcement run. And back we went to the ferry.

**Friday, June 24, 2011**  
**Rhodes Island, Greece**

The ferry crossing was not smooth; many people got seasick. There were too many people on the boat, so that Team Canada had to be up on deck. Because of my health condition, I had to sleep in a stateroom, but I would have liked to sleep outside. Today I got up at 3:15 a.m. and started trading pins at 7 a.m. One woman from Team Ireland gave me 5 Euros for a friendship key ring that I made. I like to make stuff! I thought that that was so cool.

At 2:30 p.m., we arrived in Athens, and Team Canada waited until other, larger teams got on the bus. I was tired that day.



*Crystal and her teammates win the bronze.*

**Saturday, June 25, 2011**  
**Athens, Greece**

I was the first one up, and I got my things together for tonight's opening ceremonies. I was excited and wanted to make sure I had everything ready, and my camera fully charged. I went back to bed for a while, and then got up for breakfast, pin trading, and videotaping. I took some pictures.

Then the bus took us into the city for the opening ceremonies of the World Summer Games. Vanessa Williams and Stevie Wonder were special guests. Tim Shriver gave a tribute to Eunice Kennedy Shriver, who began the Special Olympics. By the time it was over, we had spent seven hours there.

Every single team came in, one by one. The bus driver kind of floored it to get us back to the hotel by 4 a.m.

**Sunday, June 26, 2011**  
**Athens, Greece**

This is the day we bowled to see what division I would play in. I bowled a 138, a 168—and the last game I don't want to say.



## ***Bowling in Athens: The Diary of an Athlete***

*Crystal Thompson*

*I was exhausted. After bowling, we left our bags in a special, well-protected spot. Then we went to Canada House, the Canadian ambassador's home. Instead of dinner, we had many appetizers. One was salmon; there were so many and I was so hungry that I didn't even take pictures.*

*The CEO of TELUS personally flew from Toronto to Athens to say that the board had decided to make our cell phones good until the end of September (at first, we had only 100 minutes).*

*I also got my picture taken with Dr. Hayden, who started Special Olympics Canada.*

***Monday, June 27, 2011***

***Athens, Greece***

*Today was a day off for the bowling team, so Serge made plans for some of the athletes' families to have lunch with us. Mags, one of the coaches, locked herself into the bathroom. They actually had to break the door down to get her out. We took a sky train to lunch, and I had moussaka. It was okay. After lunch, we went to see the Parthenon. There I had my picture taken by Dwight, the one fellow who got to take his camera. When I came down, I started to get sick; the moussaka didn't agree with me. I bought myself a keychain, fan, and two necklaces.*

*Back at the track, I got something for my mom. I traded with many people; some of them weren't athletes.*

***Tuesday, June 28, 2011***

***Athens, Greece***

*Today I got up to go bowling. Serge took the six of us to the bowling alley; we had to do the doubles. Michele, Dwight and his partner, Viateur, and I came away with the fourth place ribbon.*

***Wednesday, June 29, 2011***

***Athens, Greece***

*Today was a quiet day around the hotel.*

***Thursday, June 30, 2011***

***Athens, Greece***

*I did some pin trading before bowling began, and I got a nice fan from a lady from Team Japan. When I bowled, I got 117, 140, and 128 and got sixth place. When I asked Ray how he did; he said two people cut him off so he got fifth place. I just started crying, because I was so disappointed and know that he can do better. So, for me it was a good day and for Ray a bad day.*

***Canada Day, 2011***

*Since it was Canada Day, we put maple leaf tattoos on everyone. Then we went to Healthy Athletes, where you have eyes and everything else tested.*

*I found Ray and found that he had gotten second place in the 200 metres. He focused his anger from yesterday on running today.*

## *Bowling in Athens: The Diary of an Athlete*

*Crystal Thompson*

*Saturday, July 2, 2011*

*Athens Greece*

*For the team event, I took my camera for pictures. I had a good day of bowling; all my games were over 130—and I got third place.*

*When I got back, I met Ray and he got fourth place in the 4x4 relay race.*

*We went to Athletes Village so Darbe could get new hearing aids. Then we went to watch power lifting. One of the volunteers was wearing a volunteer hat; I traded one of my pins for his hat. That was cool.*

*Then we went to the Special Olympics Village for more pin trading. Overall, it was a good day. When we got back to the hotel, I packed both of my bags so that I could go shopping the next day. After dinner, the hotel put on a dance for all the athletes. They gave us free ice cream, hats, and a pouch.*

*Sunday, July 3, 2011*

*Athens, Greece*

*We went to the Parthenon again, because some of the athletes had not been able to see it before. When I was there, Angela took a picture of me—and then Mags took one of Angela and me. When we went shopping, I bought a pretty white blouse with blue embroidery.*

*After changing at the hotel, we went back for closing ceremonies. A friend from New Zealand gave me a present: a tea towel with a map of her country. All in all, I had a good time and hope to make the team again in four years.*



*Crystal makes friends with medieval fighter*

The first Special Olympics was held in the summer of 1968. Since then, the Special Olympics involve 3.1 million athletes with intellectual disabilities from 185 countries. The 2011 Special Olympics World Summer Games was one of the largest sporting events of the year. The more than 7,500 athletes included 140 Canadians. R.G.

Special thanks to tutor Rebecca Garber

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