

Something You Should Know About Me

**Students' Stories
for Students**



LAUBACH LITERACY OF CANADA

Something You Should Know About Me



Students' Stories for Students

Editor: Rachel Mansfield
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Introduction

Adult students are encouraged to continue with their studies when they read stories written by other students. "If they can do it, so can I!" This book is for them.

There are essays which describe the difficulties of those who could not read or write, and sometimes the ways in which they hid their inability. And then there is the freedom and sense of wonder given to them when they could read a simple story for themselves or to a young son or daughter. They could even fill out a job application or read instructions relevant to their work.

Some are stories written by adult students as their reading and writing skills improved. What a sense of satisfaction this achievement gives them. Several of these stories are creative and imaginative and show abilities which would have been undiscovered if these students had remained unskilled in reading and writing.

This book is a tribute to all tutors who give unstintingly of their time and efforts to their students.

Gladys E. Neale

Note: Some of these essays and stories have been slightly edited and some names have been omitted to preserve the anonymity of the writers.

Something You Should Know about Me

When I was in school I was pretty bad. The teachers didn't know I had a problem. I didn't know I had a problem and my parents didn't know. I couldn't read. I couldn't spell. I gave up trying. I was always in trouble. If I couldn't do the work, I goofed off. It was easier being the class clown. I had no problem getting jobs but sooner or later I would have to do paper work. I would get a co-worker to help or I would quit, because I would not want to admit that I could not read.

In 1990 I started at Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) in basic literacy. I did the work and I still didn't believe I had a problem but this year I finally realized I had a learning disability. It is something I have to live with and I have to work hard on it. Admitting it has made it easier to live with.

Next year I hope to take a course at the Technical Center. I know that I will have to work twice as hard as the other students because I have a disability but I am learning ways to deal with it.

My Job

I think I should write about my job. It's hard waking up in the morning now that the weather is getting colder. It's nice and warm under the covers. But I say to myself, "Get up, I need the money". So my body gets up but my mind is still sleeping.



Once I'm up I get ready to go to work. I walk into my factory. I see the same faces, the same people doing the same thing day after day. I wonder where that is going to take me.

Don't get me wrong, I like my job but I would like to work in an office doing paper work and being a secretary. So I tell myself I can't get that job until I know how to write and read better. That's why I'm learning how to read better and maybe I'll become a somebody.



Sound of Christmas



Open your eyes to the sound of Christmas.
Hear the snow hitting the ground.
Feel the beating of little hearts of children
 around the world.
Feel the joy of being alive.
Feel the joy of the Holy Spirit and
 open your hearts to your fellow man,
 for God has given us the best gift of all -
 His love.



Your Smile

Did you ever think that the smile you wear
is never out of style,
fashions may change
your clothes or hair.
But never change your smile.

You can take it with you wherever you go
with never a thought of cost,
it's always ready to use and show
with never a moment lost.
Just remember to use it.

Don't pack it away or think it's not worthwhile,
for the very thing in vogue today
is your bright and cheery smile.
So remember to smile.



Learning to Read

Before learning to read I found it very difficult because almost everything in life involved reading. I could not fill out job applications, read newspapers, magazines, menus, road signs, etc. I had to get someone to read my mail to me. At work they would ask me to fill out time cards and I would get upset because I could not do it, and I thought everyone would find out I couldn't read and make fun of me. There were jobs that I would not even think of applying for if I knew it would involve reading and writing.

Now that I have learned to read I am not as self-conscious and I feel it will help me in my everyday life, especially with little things such as grocery shopping. Now I can read the labels and not just look at the pictures. I can now read newspapers and magazines like the Buy, Sell and Trade. I really enjoy that one. I find lots of little interesting things in it.



I am now out looking for a job and I feel a little more confident about what I can attempt to work at. Probably the most important reason for learning to read is for my new-born son Kendal. Now I will be able to help him learn things by reading and read him bed-time stories.

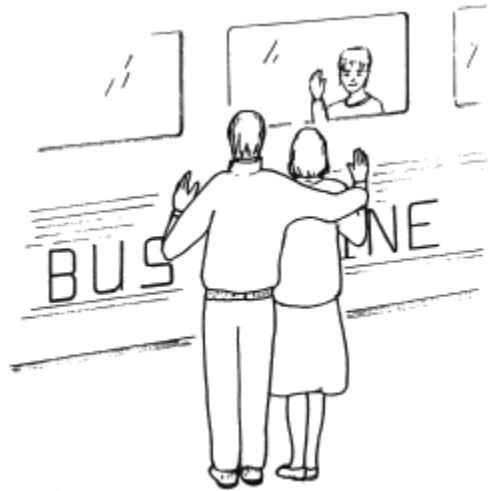
Since learning to read I feel a lot better about myself. I still need quite a bit of practice, but hopefully now I will continue to try, now that I have the tools to work with.



Our Daughter

This week was a sad time for my wife and I as we sent our daughter Kelly off to university for her third year. Already we are missing her being around the house. The loud music, the phone ringing, and clothes thrown about her room were things we were always yelling about and are now being missed. We are very proud of her for continuing her education and try to encourage and help her all we can.

We love her dearly and can hardly wait until next May when she will be home with us again for a short while.



Boy Scouts of Canada

I am a scout leader for pack #5 in Waterloo, Ontario. We have 15 boys age thirteen and fourteen.

The meetings are Monday from 7:00 to 9:00. We salute the flag and have games. Last time we had our meeting we tied knots with rope.

We took a trip to the photo studio. We will go camping in the summer. I am scout leader because I want to give back my time to the community. I like working with the boys.



Never Too Old to Learn

At the age of forty-one I got involved with the Laubach Literacy of Canada program.

As a child in rural Manitoba the lack of money and farming caused a lot of absences from school. I came from a large, poor farming family. Education was never encouraged and reading materials were not available. I dropped out of school during grade eight to help on the farm. I have always been an unskilled labourer, but managed to work my way to a secure position in my field. Before I got involved with the Literacy program reading was not my favourite pastime because I was a “workaholic”.

At one time I held two jobs for a period of three years. I could read the newspaper but did not fully understand that reading. At the age of forty-one I had to make a career change, but I could not enter a vocational school because I could not understand the questions on the application. I was advised to get in touch with the Transcona Literacy Centre.

I've been involved in the Literacy program for two years. My upgrading has been a big success. The basic skill of asking questions had given me a very positive attitude. In the two years I have been with this Literacy program I have worked my way through the Laubach Skills Series books. I also took mathematics, which I was very successful with. I started at a very low level and in six months I progressed to the level of algebra.

In my activities for the past two years I've become the student representative for the Transcona Literacy Centre. In two seasons with the Manitoba Theatre for Young People I learned to do scene study and participate in small plays. In two years with Toastmasters I've made five speeches. I was asked to help organize a Literacy Workers' Alliance of Manitoba conference. The committee elected me as the secretary and I was also the Master of Ceremonies for the conference.

I was nominated to the Laubach of Manitoba executive board as a vice-president.

I am married and my family consists of two boys, ages seventeen and twenty.

Over the two years that I have been involved with Laubach I am now able to stand up in front of a group of people and read and to speak to them. Also I have learned to read and to write. I have finished the entire Challenger Series and I intend to continue my education.



A Letter to Santa

One winter night five days before Christmas a little girl named Cindy wrote a letter to Santa. Cindy was 8 years old and as far back as she could remember everything she had asked for she got. Santa always came through for her. Why, one year she asked for a new bike and a play house, with all the furniture. Along with a lot of other neat toys she got what she asked for. So Cindy had very high hopes that her Santa would come through for her this year. After saying her prayers with her Mom, she was content. She went right to sleep.

Next morning Cindy gave her letter to her Mom to mail. Then Cindy went off to school.

Mrs. Carver was sort of laughing as she opened the letter addressed to Santa. Mrs. Carver was sort of moved as she read the letter addressed to Santa. It said:



Dear Santa,

This year I am asking for something very special. I know you can do this for me 'cause you always make my wishes come true. You can do anything. So Santa, there is a little girl in my class at school. Her name is Wanda. They say she is poor. She wears the same clothes to school and only brings a sandwich for lunch. Some days she brings nothing and she says she isn't hungry. Maybe she doesn't know your address. So bring her the things you would bring me and some new clothes and make sure she has a big lunch every day. I already have enough.

Thank you, Santa.

I Love you.

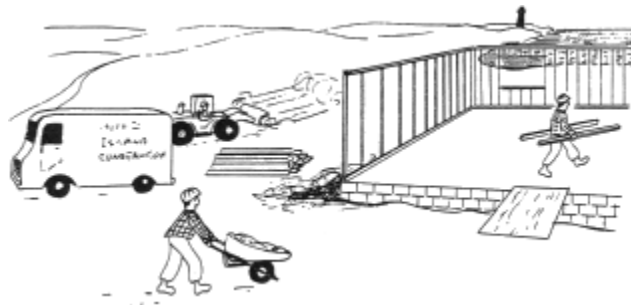
Cindy
XOXO

Cindy always got what she wanted for Christmas and this was no exception.

A Letter from Grant

I was asked by my tutor to write a letter to the Literacy of Canada. When I went through the school system in a country school this schooling did not work for me. I was a slow learner and the teacher did not have time for me. My father got sick and I had to quit school to work on the farm. After a few years I lost interest in the farm.

At the age of sixteen I went to Toronto looking for work. Because of no education I went to work at a restaurant, where I cooked hamburgers and went to night school and learned welding. This required very little education, mostly work experience. I passed this course and worked for a while at welding, until I became lonesome for Prince Edward Island.



I came home, went to work with a construction company where I worked for thirty years. I became sick and had to leave my job. This left me in a very poor situation. Because of no schooling there was no work for me. I went to see someone about going through a Literacy course; I received a phone call from a man saying he would be willing to be my tutor.

My tutor is a special person. I owe a great deal to him and to the co-ordinator as well. I wish to thank them very much and the Literacy Council. I would encourage anyone with reading and writing problems to go through with this course. There is nothing to be ashamed of. This has given me enough confidence to register at Community College for an upgrading course.



A September Morning

Early dawn the sky turns from black to grey mauve and shades of pink, as if someone had taken a giant paint brush and dry-brushed swirls of pink into the grey. Puffy dark and light grey clouds form. In the east, the sun rises and a new day begins. But the day looks to be unsettled. Rain is in the forecast, still the sun looks promising.



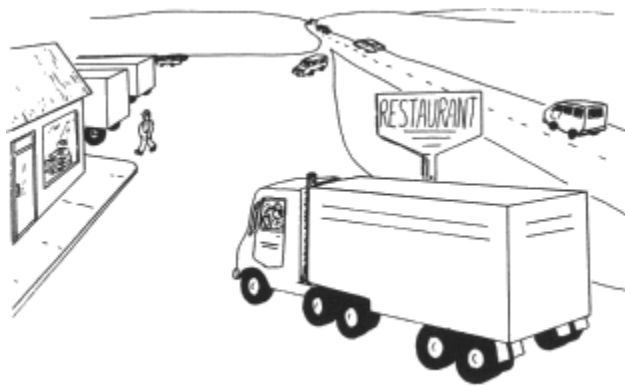
We were very tired after driving all night, but we had to wait four hours before the truck could be loaded. We tried to rest. As we dozed, large trucks were going in and out, so sleep did not come easily. Soon it was time to load our truck. After one hour, we had twenty tons of shavings on and we were en route home. It was now high noon and it was hot. We were dirty and hungry but we had to travel about eighty miles more before a rest area or restaurant.

Finally we stopped and washed up and had a quick lunch. We set out for our long journey home. As I sat listening to the steady hum of the motor and wheels, I became very tired, but I couldn't go to sleep. I had to keep my driver company so that he wouldn't fall asleep at the wheel.

Miles went by and my driver became very sleepy. We pulled over and got a drink and a snack, stretched our bodies and away we went again.

After 126 kilometres, it started to rain and the traffic was heavy. I began to think the day would never end. My driver was very tired, but he had to meet a schedule. On we went. Finally after about 21 hours we arrived home. We were so tired all we needed was a hot shower and sleep.

I don't know how to drive a truck, but being with my son and seeing how a driver must be alert at all times and fight traffic with a large trailer truck; go so far from home, with fast food and little sleep, that was my experience of what a truck driver must go through. I would not want to be one. A trucker's life is not easy.



What Learning Meant to Eric

I still remember my first day of school. I was ten years old and very eager to learn. For the first two years everything was fine. I was feeling smart and learning fast. Then my parents moved. I had to go to an English school. They put me in grade three, gave me all kinds of books I couldn't read, not even the first word. At first, the teacher tried to help me but I was unable to understand her. She had a classroom of eight grades to teach and after a while she gave up on me. It was at that time that the feeling of being "dumb" started to fill me. My mother and father didn't know more English than me.

In grade five, I came back to my French school I had forgotten most of what I had learned in French and wasn't able to keep up with the class. The teacher had a class of eight grades and didn't have any time to give me. I became more shy and quiet. I went to school every day until I was 16 because in the meantime my father had died and in order for my mother to receive her widow's allowance, I had to attend school. I lost my eagerness to learn and found a way of closing my mind to everything around me. They had classified me as "dumb" and I had accepted it. The less noise I made, the less they would notice me. I became a very quiet guy.



WANTING TO READ

I was so relieved when I left school. I almost forgot that I couldn't read and had no desire to touch a book. Where I was working, I only needed to sign my name on the back of my pay check and it was okay. Then the plant where I worked burned down and I was without a job and no trade. My wife forced me to try to learn. She got a huge pile of books from the public school. To please her, I sat down every day and tried to study. I found the experience very hard but managed to learn to read a little. To my great relief, the plant was rebuilt. I said good-bye and good riddance to all my books.

For a few years, I was happy enough until my wife started to get involved in all kinds of courses. The same old feeling of "dumb" came to haunt me. I wanted so much to be part of that world but not being able to write and read was making it very difficult. Each time that I was thinking to learn to read, I was having a vision of a trap door dosing over my head and being in a dark cellar with no way out.

LEARNING TO READ

One day a friend of ours, noticing my illiteracy, told me bluntly to get rid of my handicap. To my biggest surprise the fear that I had went away and I decided to really put an effort to learn to read.

Then I got laid off for eight months. I announced to my wife my desire to learn. We heard of the Laubach Method. She took a Workshop and the two of us went to work, her as my teacher and me as her most willing student. I cannot say that it was easy but by August I was going to the

library and was reading 4 to 5 books a week (10-14 years). I read about Champlain, Columbus, Bell, etc. My world was beginning to expand.

REAL ACIEVEMENTS

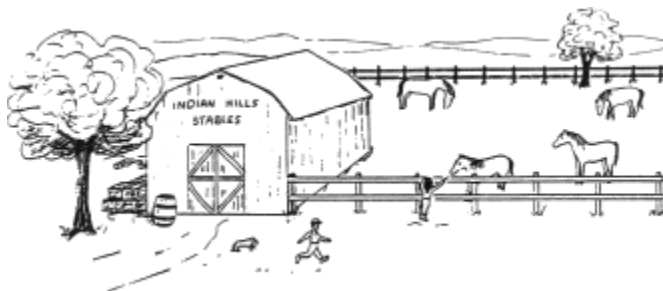
My biggest thrill was about a month ago when my wife and I decided to take a First Aid Course from the St. John Ambulance. Not knowing what was going on, we registered, paid our fees and went to class on Friday night. There they told the twenty persons present to read in our twenty-hour course, ten books, listen to some explanations, look at films, and pass three written tests. The passing mark was 75%. My first reaction was to run away. I didn't feel ready for that but having paid \$35.00 for the course I decided to stay and try. I cannot say it was easy. I was always the last one to finish reading the book and it took me a good ten minutes more to write the tests than the others but I passed with a 78%. To see the pride and joy in my wife's eyes, the encouragement of the instructors and those sitting at my table, I walked on Cloud 9 for a few days after.

I still have a long way to go. I am planning to attend the Community College, hopefully next year and if it is God's will take an Orderly Course. By learning to write and read, a whole world is opening up to me. I am 48 years old but my grandfather lived to 104 and I intend to break his record and learn until I die.



Indian Hills

Mr. and Mrs. Hill live at a stable. They have two children, one boy and one girl. The boy's name is Cal, and the girl's name is Liz. The name of their stable is Indian Hills.



They have four horses in their stable. Liz is going jumping on one of their horses. She gets up on her horse, his name is Ned. Liz and Ned are going to the River Quenn in the valley.

At the river Cal and his pup are fishing. The pup's name is Sam. Sam looks up and runs to Liz and her horse. Cal yells at Liz, "Look at the pup".

Sam runs under Ned and the horse is kicking him. Liz yells to Cal, "Look for Sam, he's hurt". Cal looks for Sam, and Liz and Ned run to the stables. At the stables Liz looks at her horse. He is not hurt and she gives him an apple.

Cal gets Sam to the stables and puts him in a box. Mr. Hill looks at the pup and says, "Cal, he has hurt his leg". Cal and Liz put Sam in Mr. Hill's van. They are going for a check up.

Cal and Liz listen to Mr. Hill. He says, "No horses and jumping at the river, and you two are going to give a lesson to Sam."



Wanting to Read

Knowing how to read is very important. Reading is taken for granted by those who know how and don't do anything with it. For those who don't know how to read, it's like living in a nightmare. You can't read food products that have no pictures. You can't find the bus to go home. You don't know where to look for work. You feel like a prisoner with walls of words all around you. Everywhere you turn you are frustrated and fed up. You feel in a shell. You have no self-esteem.



You depend on people for so much, you cannot function alone. You can't read your medicine bottles. You can't help your children, who may also be struggling in school.

The biggest problem of all is neighbours who know that you can't read when they tell others who think you are slow mentally. Your children may seem ashamed to tell anyone that one or both parents can't read, because people will laugh or think of you as nothing. I am learning how to read and write. This is how a lot of us feel.

For some who went to school years ago, many who had problems were pushed ahead or forgotten. Let someone else worry about the students who can't read was the attitude.

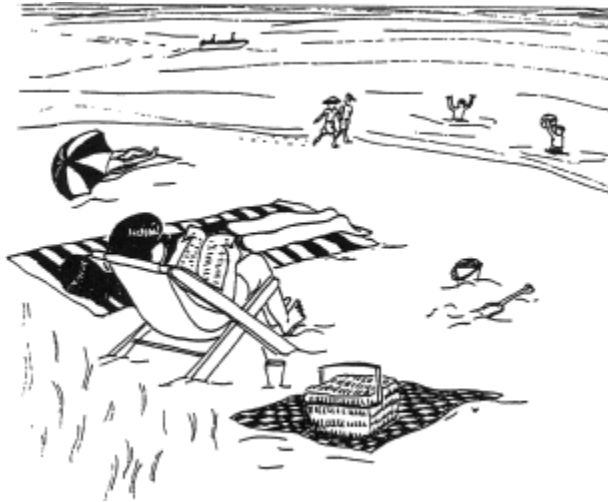
People from poor countries, families here that were isolated from school and people who just were too ashamed to admit they had a problem are now asking for help to read. Don't turn us away. Give us hope to see like the blind when they learn to read braille.



Krista's Day in the Sun

Krista woke up one morning to bright sunshine and blue sky. There had been many rainy days in the past, so she decided to enjoy the sunshine.

She packed a picnic for herself and a friend and they drove to the beach. They spent the day swimming and sun bathing. When she came home that night, she felt very happy to have spent her day having so much fun.



The Four Seasons in Canada



Canada is located at the north of the United States, and together with Mexico, these countries comprise North America. There are four seasons in Canada: spring, summer, fall and winter. The weather is usually very cold in the winter, and it can be very hot in the summer.

Winter has a lot of snow, icy rain and cold winds. It is easy to slip on the icy street, if one cannot balance his body well. Of course, children have a good time playing in the snow and making snowmen. Besides, people can enjoy the wonderful and happy Christmas spirit.

On the other hand, summer can be very uncomfortable, because of humidity, or hot dry winds. However, this is the season which some people enjoy the most, for travel, swimming, etc. Certainly spring and winter are the nice seasons to pass through. We can see flower blossoms everywhere, and birds sing in springtime.

In fall, some birds fly away, and leaves drop onto the ground. Leaves change to beautiful colours, especially maple leaves, in the orange series. Those colours of nature cover the streets. The maple leaf is the symbol of Canada. Fall and spring seem so short, between summer and winter.

Richard's Story

My problem in life started when I got tired of working in the woods and wanted to work somewhere else. I could not fill out a job application so I told the people that I had another appointment to go to and I would bring the application back in the morning. I got someone to help me fill it out and took it back.

I started work in a plywood mill and helped set up the dryers. I convinced the manager that I would be a good foreman for the dryers because I helped put them together. I got the job and had to keep time for 25 people. That was not bad it was mostly math, no reading or writing.

Then it happened. I had to start filling out reports, so what did I do? I called home and got my wife to help me, and if I couldn't call I took it home at break to get it done. That was not all the problems I ran into. I had to attend meetings and take notes. So to get by this problem, I got a tape recorder to tape the meetings. The manager thought that was a good idea; he did not know I could not read or write.

Then something else happened. My son and daughter were in school and they started asking me, "What is this word?" Of course, I did not know, so I told them to ask their mother. This was like being in prison in my own home, not being able to help the ones you love the most. This is when I realized I needed help. My wife and I had a meeting with Renee Herron and she placed me with a great tutor and she started teaching me how to read.



Not being able to read to me is like a person in a wheelchair not being able to walk, not being able to do the simple things in life. I still find it hard to put things down on paper, but that will come.

In ending this little life story, I would like to tell everyone that reads this:

If there is someone you know that cannot read, ask if you can help them. And remember, you were in their shoes once too.



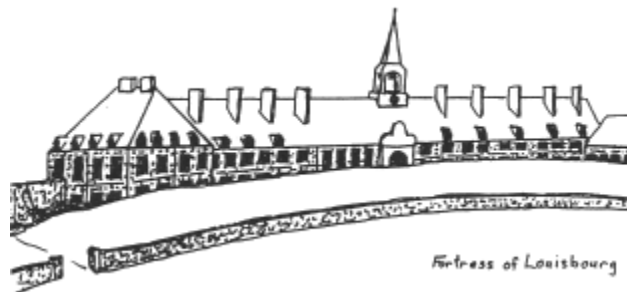
A Trip to Nova Scotia

This summer we went to Nova Scotia. We drove the car all night on the way. In Halifax, we stayed for two days at my mother-in-law's place and visited relatives. We went down to Peggy's Cove where there are rocks piled up high and very big waves.



On the fourth day we went to Yarmouth to visit family on my side. The following day we took the valley route where we saw lots of fishing boats and my kids went swimming.

We returned to Halifax for two more days and then went along the Cabot Trail. We spent a day in North Sydney and visited Fort Louisbourg. There we went back in time a few centuries back. We ate an old-fashioned dinner of bread, pea soup, cheese, juice and hot chocolate. We walked around all the buildings. Every hour they had gun salutes. The people in the Fort were dressed like in olden days. They showed how things were made in those days.



After the tour, we returned to Sydney and spent the remainder of the day in the hotel.

The next day we went to look at the ferry that goes to Newfoundland.

We saw the summer home of Alexander Graham Bell, who made the first telephone. It is a museum now. Then we drove back to Halifax and for the next few days we toured all around Halifax and saw lots of things.

We returned to Ontario after a nice holiday.

This Is My Story

I was sixteen when I quit school. I thought I knew it all, so I quit. I quit in grade eight. I didn't want to learn math. I didn't figure that I needed school, so I quit.

I got married at the age of eighteen. I had my first child at the age of nineteen. Then my second one at the age of twenty-one. My marriage didn't work out. So then I had to think about supporting my family.

I tried and tried to find a job but I couldn't. "You don't have enough education." "You are not qualified." That is all I heard every time I went job hunting. "You only have grade eight," was another thing I would always hear. I am on social assistance. It just gives me enough money to pay the phone, the hydro bill and rent. Not enough for extras.

I found someone special in my life. But it wasn't special enough. I had another child. He left! I was twenty-four years old with another child to feed and clothe, and still on social assistance. I was feeling pretty low about myself by now.

I got to thinking: I need to get more education to find a job. I went to social assistance to find out about getting my grades. The people they sent me to helped me to set a goal of what I want out of my life. They helped me to find the Adult Literacy Program. I left where I was living. I came back to my home town with my children. I searched and searched until I found the Literacy Program here.

When I found it I didn't give up hope. They were really good people. They welcomed me with open arms. They didn't make me feel dumb or stupid. They know how to make you feel good about yourself. They really praise you up when you do good or bad. If you do badly, they make you feel as though you didn't.

The Literacy Program is a really good program. Even though I have finished the program, they are still there for me. They call to see how I am doing and to see if there is anything I need.

Give the Literacy Program a chance. It works! They work with you. If you don't let them help you, you won't get anywhere to change your life. The Literacy people will help you anytime, if you let them. So give it a try. I did! I also feel like I am someone now. I feel I am doing something with my life and for my children too.



My Family

My name is Evelyn Hernandez. I'm 26 years old. I was born in El Salvador, and I'm living in an apartment with my husband Nelson and our two children, Cynthia and Geoffrey.

Nelson was born in El Salvador too. After we got married we left our country and we went to Houston, Texas. This is where we lived for two years and where our daughter Cynthia was born.

We came to Canada five years ago and we are really happy here. Nelson is working painting new houses outside Cambridge, and he enjoys doing his job. His hobby is playing soccer, now he is in a Spanish soccer team and he coaches and plays in the team.

My daughter Cynthia is six years old and she is in grade one. She really likes to go to school; she has a lot of friends.

My son Geoffrey is fourteen months old, he walks now and has started saying some words like: bye bye, mama, papa, and more.

This is my small family and I'm really happy to have them, and I thank God for keeping us together and alive.

A

Rainy Day

It is a very rainy day so that the boys and girls cannot go outside to play. They have to play in the house, like playing card games, dice, play house, and try to help you to cook meals.

I have always told my children and grandchildren that when it rains God is washing the earth nice and clean.

After it rains everything looks nice and green and very bright. Like flowers are blooming and they smell so sweet.

You know that God is with you every day of your life, when you look all around you. God has blessed us with children and grandchildren. You can always be very happy when it is a very rainy day.

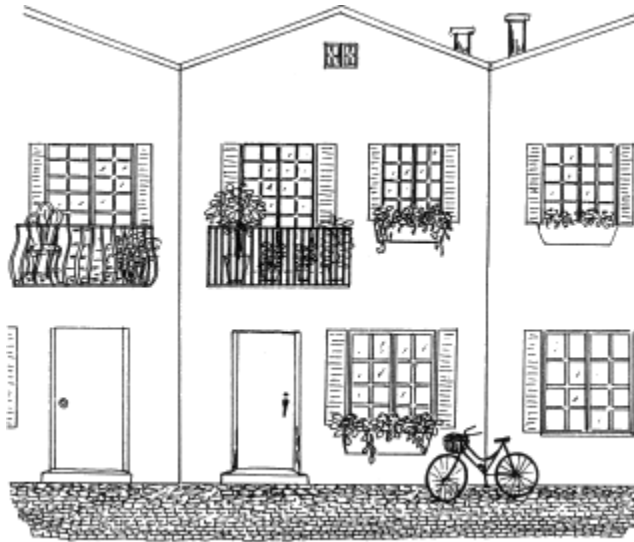


Mafalda

I was born to my mother, Luisa and my father, Umberto in Cosenza, Italy, 02/6, 1939.

My house was small and beautiful, lots of pictures and plants and lots of flowers on the balcony. My neighbours were friendly. Next door lived my Godfather and Godmother and I was in their house all the time. My Godfather played the guitar and I sang with him.

I have two sisters, three brothers and my little niece. The first brother loved me very much and he spoiled me.



I liked my family very much. My family was very happy and very close. My mother and father told us lots of stories. I played with my sisters, my small brother and my friends. We played at dressing up and pretended to get married.

In my house I played records all the time. I like music and singing. I had lots of fun, especially at Christmas time. My family has lots of traditions.

I remember the first day I went to school. I was happy and then got a fever. I went to grade nine. When I was in grade six, I went to a dance with my sister at my friend's house and met my husband.

At grade nine I quit school. My father and mother and brother liked to see me go to school because I was very intelligent and I told my parents I wanted to be a teacher.

I went to work at a big store on the coast. At eighteen years old I married. After I was married, I took the bus and went to my mother's house every day to see all my family and my little niece. I love them very much.

Jeannette Fichault

(Cantin)

I was born in Corbeil, Ontario I lived on a farm. I started school when I was 7 years old in Corbeil. In that school they had one teacher for grade one to grade eight. I went there for three years and didn't learn anything. Then at nine years old, I moved to North Bay.

LOST GOING TO SCHOOL

My Mom enrolled me into St. Marie School. The first morning my Dad drove me to school and dropped me at the wrong place and I was lost. I couldn't speak English at all. I started walking around and couldn't find myself. A man working on the railroad asked where I lived. I didn't know my address or my phone number. I sure was scared. I was crying. That workman helped me find my way home. The next day my Dad made sure to drop me at the right school and pick me up after school. When I started school, I was nine and they put me back in grade one. I was very mad.

HELPING IN THE STORE

Mom and Dad had a store and Mom got sick and I was in grade five and I had to quit school to look after the store and the house.

When I was about six years old my Mom and Dad bought me skis and about two years later they bought me skates. That was a big surprise.

My older brother had a guitar and when I was young and when he was gone, I took it and played it because he didn't want me to play it. That is the way I learned how to play the guitar.

WHEN THE HORSE TOOK OFF

My other brother sat me in a wagon with a horse and the horse took off and I sure went for a ride. I was so scared, I was crying and yelling, "Stop", but the horse didn't stop until my brother called him.

When I was young, I didn't do anything interesting. My Mom had too much work because my Dad was sick. So that's the end of my story.

Therese Hotte (Cantin) also contributed a charming story about her childhood. Unfortunately, we do not have space to include it.

Rama

CHAPTER 1

I was born in Harley Township, about twelve miles northeast of New Liskeard, Ontario. The only school I ever attended was a little one room school, with about twenty students and one teacher.

I am the youngest child of a family of sixteen. My mother and father were married April 22, 1903 in Madoc, Ontario, which is near Bancroft. My father was a cheese-maker by trade. Pressure from my maternal grandparents enticed my father to come to Northern Ontario, where there was plenty of land. So in the year 1908, my parents, along with four children landed in New Liskeard. They had come by train, which my mother said was hard for her and the children, ages four years to four months.

The next day they rode north by horse and sleigh as there were no roads, just the train through the bush. They arrived at my grandparents' farm and stayed there until spring of the next year.



My father claimed a piece of land and built a small log shanty there. This was their home until 1916. Then there was a forest fire. They all survived, but lost their home and all their belongings. By this time there were three more children and again they had to go and stay with my grandparents until they could build some kind of home.

The next year, with help from the government, they were able to build a nice two-story house, a new barn and granary. Things were going a whole lot better for everyone.

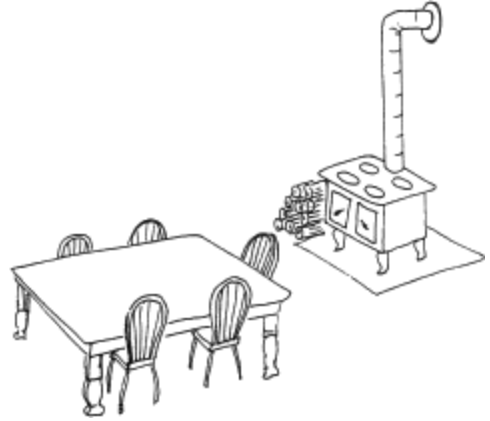
Then in 1922, just six years later, tragedy struck again. Another forest fire robbed them of everything. By this time, they had eleven children, with no home and no clothes or food. Later on that next spring, the baby that had only been two months old at the time of the fire, took sick and died after about three or four days. This was an awful shock for my parents. My Mom said that the baby was bigger and fatter than all her other babies.

Again with government help, they were able to build a makeshift home, which was never really big enough for such a large family. There were five more children born in this home. This was the house where I was born and raised. My parents were getting on in years. Dad was fifty-three and Mom was forty-seven when the last child was born.

With all the hard work and discouragement my Dad suffered, he became crippled when I was just a baby. I can't remember him walking without crutches or a cane.

Due to Dad's disability, all the responsibility was put on poor Mom. She had to look after him as well as the children and the farm.

When I was about five years old, Mom applied for and received Mother's Allowance. The cheque was forty dollars a month. You must remember, there was still about ten of us at home. This amount of money was for food, clothes, and wood for the stove. My three older brothers were only eleven, nine and seven years old.



CHAPTER 2

After being crippled for fourteen years, at age sixty-eight, my father passed away. My Mom never recovered from all the hard work and she seemed to grow old overnight. I suppose as long as Dad was alive, she felt she could not give up. Believe me, he was not easy to look after; you know the male ego. I suppose he felt he was useless and took most of it out on her.

Mom, my two brothers and I remained on the farm. My two brothers took over along with Mom's help. We decided to try to become musicians. Being country music lovers, my older brother, who could not succeed at all in school, at age fifteen, made his own violin and learned to play it. My other brother and I learned to chord on the guitar. Can you imagine what my poor mother must have gone through, listening to all that noise? But we got to be pretty good. We were invited to play on the Kirkland Lake radio station.

We also played every Saturday night at the dance hall and were also hired for wedding receptions, etc. This went on for about five years, until my brother got married and had other interests.



Mom being in ill health, moved into town, close to the doctor. She lived with my eldest brother and his wife. She fell and broke her hip. I was called upon to help look after her. She was never able to walk again. I lived there for five years helping.

Then when I couldn't handle it any more, I wrote and asked my sister in North Bay if I could come and live there, which I did. After two months, I was hired as a cafeteria waitress at the Psychiatric Hospital. I was employed there for thirteen and a half years.

CHAPTER 3

In October of 1971, I became pregnant and delivered a healthy baby girl; the joy of my life.

Being single, I was very worried because I had no home or money. I went back to work when my baby was only seven weeks old. It was hard to leave her, because I had to be to work for 6:05 a.m. I had to board her out for a week at a time. I had her home about ten days a month.

After about two and a half years, I decided to quit and stay home. I applied for and received Family Benefit, which was barely enough to live on. When my daughter was in grade one, she was in school all day and I was lost. The time was so long.

I took a baby-sitting job to help kill time. I sat for the same wonderful family for ten years. In July 1987, I moved to Ferris, which made it impossible for me to baby-sit for them. I missed the children terribly. I tried sitting for another family but there wasn't the same closeness.

That is why I have decided to try school, which I hope I will succeed at.