

## Special Writings

*by Special People*

*Writings by Adult Learners from  
Upgrading Programs - 1998-99*

Antigonish County Adult Learning Association (ACALA)

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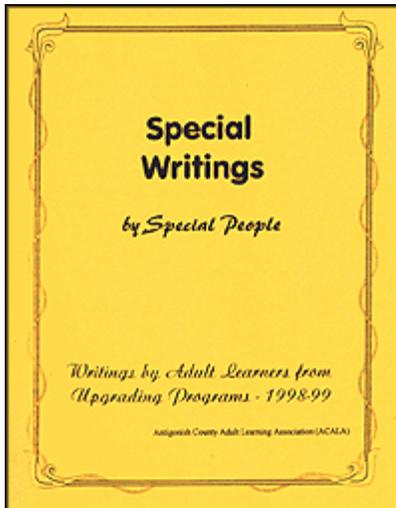
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Nova Scotia Provincial Literacy Coalition

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# In Memory of

RODERICK HEFFERNAN

Roddie enrolled in an Antigonish Adult Upgrading program for the first time on January 17, 1996. At that time Roddie said his reason for wanting to improve his education was " for my two kids, and to keep up with changing times."

Roddie made great progress while he attended upgrading classes. He was getting ready to write his GED tests when he had to discontinue classes to babysit his children while his wife worked, and to attend to his sick mother. Shortly thereafter he became sick himself. Roddie died of cancer this past year.

Roddie was a gentle, sincere person. While with ACALA he had experienced the joy of learning as an adult. He gained a great appreciation for education, and wanted to be a good example of learning to children and adults alike. He was that.

Today we would like to dedicate a large print dictionary in memory of Roddie. This large print dictionary will be especially useful to persons with disabilities. Each year the this dictionary will be placed in one of our adult upgrading classes for everyday use by adult learners. Should there ever be no upgrading classes in Antigonish Town and County, the dictionary will be presented to Roddie's family for their use.

Roddie, you made a positive difference just by being with us.

Thank you for your contribution to adult literacy in Antigonish.

Sincerely,

Judy, Raylene, Diane, your fellow students, and the ACALA Board members.

June 23, 1999

# ***Dear Santa***

by Roddie Heffernan

Halloween is no sooner over when they put you to work.

The demand on you seems to be getting greater every year.

Sometimes, Santa,  
I think we are losing some of the Christmas spirit  
at the check out.

Santa, I remember when you came to visit me,  
some forty years ago.

We didn't have a TV, but I would find you in the Wish Book.

You couldn't give us much, but we sure enjoyed what we did get.

One of my fondest memories was going to Midnight Mass.

My uncles would pick me up with their horse and sled,  
and the conversation would quickly turn to YOU.

It was such a peaceful time.

Well, Santa, no matter how fast the world goes today,  
we still love you and look forward to seeing you.

So take care, eat properly, and watch the blood pressure.



# PHOBIAS

BY Roddie Heffernan

Most people in life have a particular fear of something.

Some of these fears can be set off by snakes, spiders,  
or heights, to name a few.

These phobias are real to the person, and some people will  
go to the extreme to avoid it.

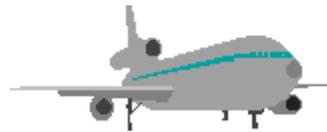
It is interesting to hear people tell of their experiences.

One person told me he ran across the highway,  
in front of a car,  
when a co-worker held up a snake.

Another older gentleman, who was scared of heights,  
said he hasn't seen the upstairs of his house  
for twenty years.

My biggest fear in life is writing stories.  
No, not really.

I have a fear of flying.  
I would sooner stay close to the ground when travelling.



I remember in the early seventies,  
I had to fly from Vancouver to Halifax.

To make the flight more bearable,  
I indulged in a few shots of whisky.

This, of course, didn't work, because when the plane landed  
I had a headache to boot.

I have read that a lot of athletes dislike flying.

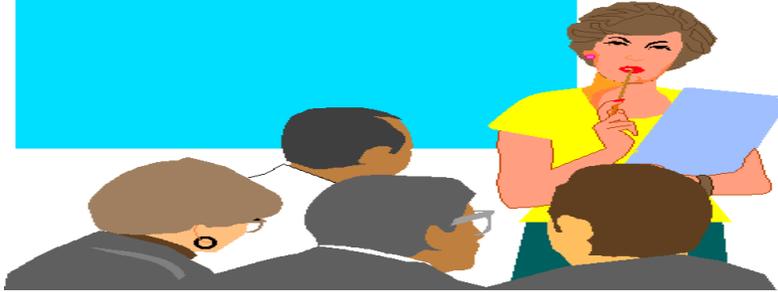
They have to fly all over North America,  
and they sometimes have a hard time with it.

There are programs to help people with their fears.

Personally, I would sooner travel by land.



However, if someone offered me a free trip to Florida,  
my fear might ease somewhat.



## What Coming Back to School Means to Me

*By Melinda Skinner*

Going back to school was never on my mind. I was always afraid to do it because I thought it was going to be hard and I wouldn't understand the school work. I knew that it was holding me back, and I thought that giving it a try wouldn't hurt. So I told myself that it would be good to try at least.

So I did try it. I am so grateful that I did, because I have learned that even if it is hard, things were going to get better and easier for me. As I went along in my upgrading, I learned to have self-confidence and feel very good about other things in my life.

Then I started a new program, Spell Read. I really like this program because it will help my reading, and hearing sounds that I normally would not hear. I feel it will help me with understanding the math and other subjects which were hard to do. Reading, writing, and spelling were tough for me at times.

Since I came to the ACALA upgrading program and to the Spell Read program, reading things have gotten so much better. I am looking forward to coming back next year and hope to write my GED in the near future. I would like to say a special thank you the teachers and volunteers in the adult learning programs.

# Hockey Card Collector

*by Jay Euloth*

I am a hockey card collector. I have two boxes full of hockey cards at home. I have them grouped in teams. Some of the hockey cards are valuable. I plan to keep the hockey cards for some time and sell them when they are worth a lot of money.

The card I like the most is Felix Potvin. I think it's his team Canada rookie card. I think he is the best goaltender that Toronto ever had.



I am looking for three special cards: Wayne Gretzky's, Tim Horton's, Partrick Roy's, and Bobby Orr's rookie cards.

## Thank You

*by Tina Snyder*

I want to thank Raylene and Cheryl for giving me the chance to try to learn again. My teacher teaches me well. She is a good teacher. She teaches me new things that I did not know.

I thank them for helping me. If I hadn't called ACALA, and if it wasn't for Raylene getting hold of Cheryl, I wouldn't have a chance. I thank them for giving me a chance to try. ACALA is doing good things.

# Being an Adult Learner

*by Glenda*

How to survive being an adult learner is quite easy if you are totally serious about wanting your education. I left the school system over thirty-three years ago before I completed my grade twelve. I have had a variety of jobs, none of which paid great, mainly because without your grade 12 education there are not many opportunities for good paying jobs.

The best choice I ever made was to return to the learning system through ACALA, one year ago. First I took my level two, and now I am in level three with the hopes of completing it in June. My plans are to further my education through a computer course in Business Management the Nova Scotia Community College. I owe a great deal of thanks to Judy Cairns, Raylene Bowman, Diane Walsh, and volunteer tutors Heather MacDonald and Cindi Power.



# Why I Came Back For Upgrading

*By Brenda Desmond*

I came back to upgrading classes for a second year because I found that there were more skills that I needed. I needed more help in math and other subjects that I was a little weak in. Also some things were really confusing to me, so I decided to come back to improve my skills and understanding.

My goal is to get a better education. I also want my children to have a good education so that when they get older they can make something out of themselves. I feel that coming back a second year really helped me. I want to reach for the top.



# Getting My Grade 12

*By Karen Roode*

I am a person who didn't finish high school. I went out into the world thinking I didn't need to finish school. I thought I could get work no problem. Yes, there was work, but it was only minimum wage, and not what I wanted.

I was not very smart in my choice then, but I guess it was because I was young and had no responsibilities. Now I have matured and have responsibilities. Now I just cannot think of myself, I have a child who is relying on me everyday.

I came back to school in October 1998. I am happy that this choice I made was the right one. I needed to do this for me; for my self-esteem. I have learned math, and I want to learn everything I can while the chance is there for me.

I made the wrong choice of leaving school years ago, but right now I am looking into writing my GED tests to get my grade twelve certificate. After I get my grade 12 I will see about getting a job I want. It will be a job I enjoy doing.



# Going Back to School as an Adult

*By: M.W.*

I think it is a good idea for adults to go back to school to upgrade their education.

I would really like to upgrade my education because I want to go to community college for graphic design. If I go into graphic design in community college and finish the course, I would probably get a job as a cartoon artist for a local newsletter. I really like to draw and think I will be very good in graphic design.



I would tell all adults to go to school to further their education. I think that when I finish this reading course and take upgrading it will really help me to get into community college.

## Upgrading

*by Lisa O'Hara*

Learning in a small group is better than learning with 20 or 30 people. Not having a lot of people in the class has made it easier to learn. The teacher always has time for each one of us. You can definitely learn more when the instructor has time for you one-on-one. Our group is small but very interesting. Learning here has been a good experience for me.

# Reaching Your Goal

*By Delma Desmond*

All my life I have thought about finishing school. I want my daughter to look up to me and see me as a role model, not as a failure who never finished school. Having a daughter made me realize just how important an education is in today's society.

I have to struggle every day living on social assistance. The rate of employment is very low in our community. Waking up every day, I wonder if I can ever overcome this struggle. I believe it is time for me to be independent and to find a job. The first step is an education.



From attending this course, I have taught myself to think positively and that if I can see my goals, and believe in my goals, I can achieve my goals. I will achieve my goals! I have also learned that you're never too old to get an education because it's an on-going process.

I would like to give thanks to Mrs. Raylene Bowman and Mrs. Cheryl Mycroft for helping me to complete my education. Also I would like to wish Raylene the best of luck with her baby to be. "It's a boy." Have a great and happy summer.



## Going Back to School

*by Mary Anderson*

I started with ACALA in October 1998. I wanted to get my grade twelve. I want to be able to get a better job with a higher education. I'll be able to do that now. I also come to school because I have two kids who are in the younger grades right now. When they reach high school I would like to be able to help them with their homework.

By coming back to school I find it much easier to read, and to do math and science. It was hard at first to be going to school with a family to look after and a home to run. I made up my mind to go back to school, and I went for it.

After I get my GED I want to take a computer course. Someday I would like to be an accountant and have a small business in my own home.

I am glad I went back to school because I am no longer struggling with my reading, math, or science. If I can do it, I think anyone can do it.

I owe it all to ACALA.

# You Are Never Too Old

*by Darlene MacPherson*

About four years ago I was interested in coming back to school. My niece went to night school a year earlier, and wanted me to go with her. She almost had me convinced to go. Then I started thinking I was too old to start again. I was afraid that I would be the only adult there. I didn't want to be seen with a bunch of 20 year old people, so I chickened out.



Then one day, a year later, I was listening to the radio I heard a lady talk about an adult education program that you could do at home in your spare time. It really sounded interesting. I waited a few days, and then I gave her a call. She took my name and address and asked a few questions. Then she sent me a test in math, writing, and grammar. I was doing the home school program for about a year and a half before I saw a teacher. I was still too afraid to be seen, and let people know I wasn't educated.

But last year I decided to go to school all day. I was having problems with my math and I needed extra help. So that is when I met Raylene Bowman and Judy Cairns. Raylene used to write to me in the learn- by -mail program.

I am glad that I came back. I was really surprised at how many mature people come back to school. I didn't feel alone. I found out that I can learn more by being in a group with other adults. The instructor really helps you when you need it. They are really patient when you can't get it. You work at your own speed. You don't have to feel like a failure.

When I am finished upgrading and write my GED, I would like to take a computer course, and then take Hotel Management. I would like to start my own business by building a hunting and fishing lodge.

If I can do it, so can anybody, when they put their heart in it.

You are never too old .

# Starting Over

*By Sharon Cunningham*

Life is worth living  
And full of zest,  
With a good education  
You can demand the best

The higher the education  
The better the pay,  
A good education  
Is a lot today.

I'm here because I wanted to learn and to get a higher education. I want to go out into the real world and get a job, to help myself become a better person, to have more choices, and to have respect for myself and others around me.

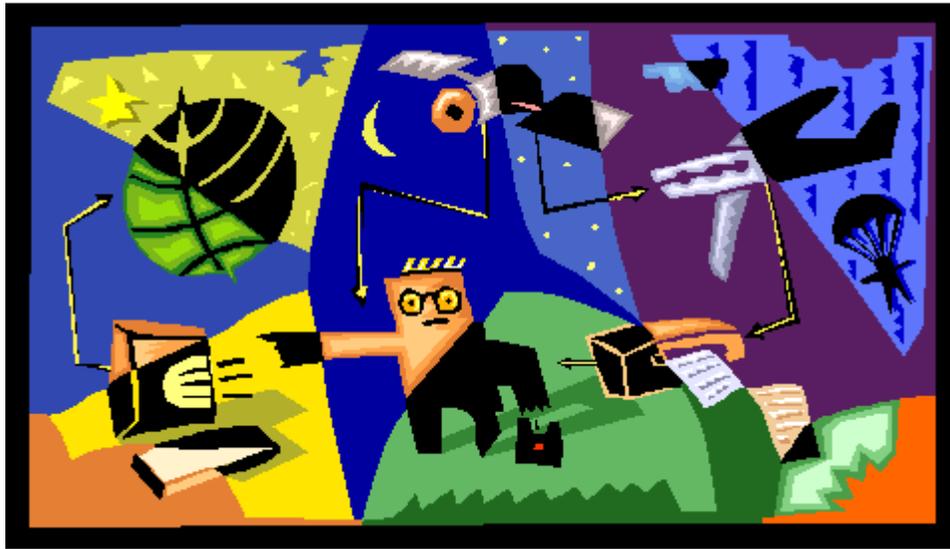
It has helped me to understand that achievement is not as important as the effort you put in it. Once you put your whole being into education, you'll find that you can do things that you never thought you could do. And no matter how hard the situation, I just believe in myself and I'll reach my goal in whatever I have become. I would like to thank Cheryl Mycroft, and Raylene Bowman, for their encouragement, and a whole lot of fun and work.



# Getting Upgrading Help

*By James MacDonald*

I started with ACALA in February 1999. I came to ACALA to get help with my reading, spelling, grammar, and pronunciation. The one-on-one helps me understand how to write better sentences. The one-on-one also helps me with my other upgrading program. Kathy helps me understand what I need to learn to get my grade 12 education.



## How Upgrading Has Helped Me

*by Connie Pelley*

Upgrading has affected my learning in a lot of ways. It helped me understand how to study better. In a small group class you have more of a chance to get the help you need in different subjects. It is a lot easier when the teacher has more time to spend with you on a one-on-one basis. There is no pressure to learn. It is up to you to learn or not to learn. It is easier to take an upgrading class than to go back to school.

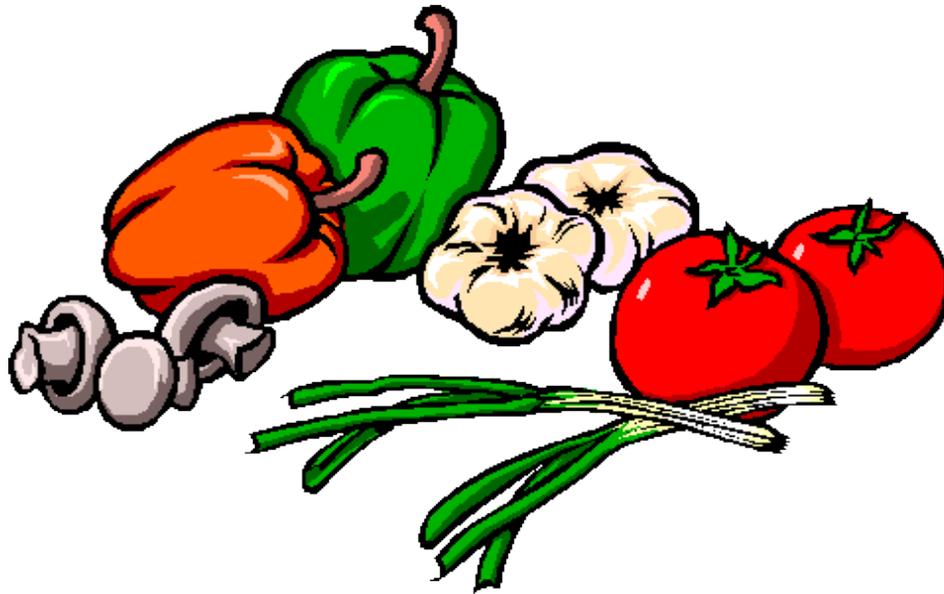
# Returning to School

*by - Anonymous*

In September 1998 I decided to attend an upgrading program at ACALA. The reason for this was to upgrade my skills in various subjects like math, grammar, English, and science.

After being out of school for some time we tend to forget most things we learned in school. In today's world things are a lot different. I intend to enroll in Community College when I am finished with the upgrading program. The trade I plan to take is unclear at this time, however, I have plenty of time to think about what I want to do.

I do honestly believe that the ACALA program is a wise choice in accomplishing your goals and going forward to bigger and better things.



# Small Group Learning is Better

*by Michael Delorey*

I find that small group learning is better than when you have about thirty or so people in a room. When you have more people it's hard for the teacher to come to you. In a small group you don't have all those other people bothering you. I found that it helped me out because I learned a lot more than I did in a big classroom because it's more quiet, and everybody helps each other.

I learned how to write a resume and a cover letter which I didn't have the slightest idea how to do before.



# Being a Adult Learner

*by DMD*

A long time has passed since I left school. Sometimes you pick up bad habits along the way. Most of the time you have to start over.

In class if you can't grasp a question you have to be shown the proper way to do it.

Some people learn slower than others. The volunteers are so good to share their time with you.

# Going Back To School

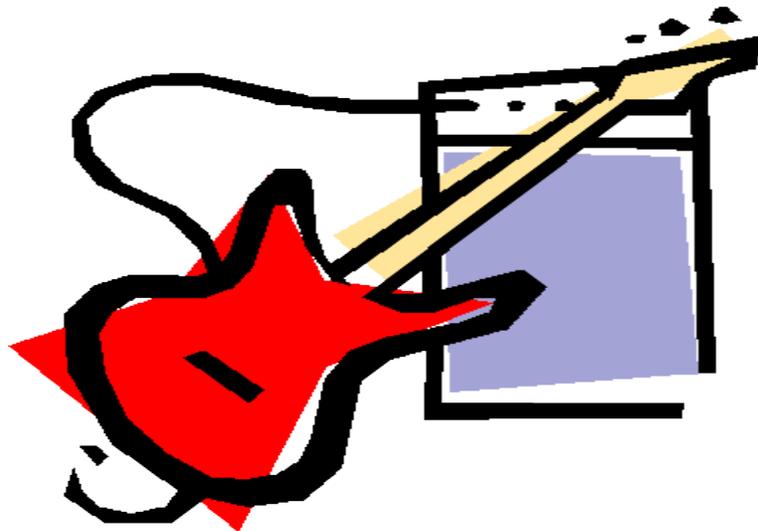
By Ellsworth DeCoste

In January 1999 I was first introduced to the Spell Read program. This was all very new and exciting to me. Previous to this program I had very little writing and reading skills. I left school in grade 6, some twenty-five or more years ago. I recently tried Community College, but without understanding how to read and spell I could not succeed with it. After four months with the Spell Read program my instructor told me I was ready to move on to upgrading classes.

I found this to be a very frightening experience at first. But after weighing the pros and cons, I realized how good it was to be able to read my own mail. I also realized just how much the Spell Read program was helping me and my other class mates.

I see now how the Spell Read and the upgrading program is a whole new way of learning. I would like to give special thanks to my instructors, Jessie Hogan and Raylene Bowman, who have been most helpful, along with the whole organization.

I would highly recommend these programs to anyone looking to upgrade their education.



# My Upgrading Years

*By Brenda MacLellan*

I would like to call this my upgrading years because I came to a fork in the road that would change my life forever.

I was in the year 1996 that my father died and I was left with the decision of what I would do. I knew I would have to go back to school, but didn't know where to start. Finally I enrolled in an adult upgrading program. This would be the beginning of my journey to better myself and get my GED.

I worked very hard. There were stumbling blocks along the way, and my math was the biggest. As a child I had a very hard time with math, so I built a wall around it, and told myself I couldn't learn or deal with math. In my upgrading classes my instructor got me to see math as not the enemy, but instead my friend.

I decided to write my GED in the spring of 1997. I got my marks back, and had passed everything except the math. I was disappointed, but my instructor told me to try again. I just had to rewrite the math part of the GED exams. In June of the same year I made another attempt at it. I received my mark back, and even though my mark had improved, I still had not passed the math part of the GED.

Most people by this time would have thrown in the towel, but somehow I found the strength within myself to keep trying. It was in the spring of 1999 when I went and wrote my math again. This time was different. I was not as nervous as the last two times. My instructors told me I had it in me to do it, and I went in believing that. I wrote the math test and waited for the results.

I got a big brown envelope in the mail soon after. I opened it up and there was my GED diploma along with my math results. I had finally passed. I was astonished that I had passed it. However, I now have a new lease on life, and hope to go on with the rest of my journey.

# ACALA

*by Margaret MacMaster*

When I am in a small group upgrading class I feel relaxed, and I am able to speak out more. This class helps me to have confidence in myself. You can get help from other's in class because you feel comfortable asking for help. It is better because you are older and have more experience with life. You learn at your own speed, and this helps me to keep on trying my hardest.



## The Drop-In Classes Work For Me

*by Melinda*

I am an adult learner with ACALA. In the drop-in classes I get a great deal of help with my math, which is one of my poorest subjects. Without the support of the volunteers my self-confidence would not be as great as it is today. I would like to say thank you to everyone who helped me.