

Hey Wendy Watch This!

An East of Adelaide Childhood



DEBRA ROGERS

Illustrated by DOUG ROGERS

HEY WENDY WATCH THIS!

AN
EAST OF ADELAIDE
CHILDHOOD

Debra Rogers

Illustrations by
Doug Rogers

Copyright ©2016
DEBRA ROGERS
www.heyrogers.net

Illustrations
Copyright ©2016
DOUG ROGERS
<https://plus.google.com/+dougrogers>

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means - electronic, mechanical, photocopying, and recording or otherwise - without the prior written permission of the author, except for brief passages quoted by a reviewer in a newspaper or magazine. To perform any of the above is an infringement of copyright law.

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication
Rogers, Debra Lorraine, 1955 –
Hey Wendy Watch This: An East of Adelaide Childhood

ISBN 978-0-9951992-0-0
Printed and bound in Canada

Second Digital Printing, London 2020
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

To the memory of my dear friend
Keith Bantock
1956-2016

~ I can still hear you laughing! ~

~ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ~

First and foremost, I wish to thank my editor and motivator, Karen M. Huiberts who gently but persistently encouraged me to write, all the while knowing that if I *write*, she must *edit*. Thank you for your hours of work, laughter, ideas and those little nips of whiskey and maple syrup now and again!

Thanks also to the team of readers: Valerie Morrison, Nancy Poole, Mary Redekop, Doug Rogers and Joan Tevlin. I listened to your input and appreciated your thoughts and time devoted to the creation of this memoir. As you read this final copy, you will see your suggestions in print.

The artist is my brother, Doug Rogers. It was easy for him to know what to illustrate as he participated in many of the stories included in this book and knows the EOA area and characters very well. Thank you for your talent.

~ *What are we creating next?* ~

~ PREFACE ~

EVERY CITY HAS AN INFAMOUS EAST PART OF TOWN that because of years of labour and dust earned a reputation for being notorious. These areas are always east of a discerning landmark like *east of the tracks*, *east of the river*, or in my case, *East of Adelaide*.

It is with pleasure I profess that I grew up in London's *ill-famed* area known as EOA, because in a strange and extraordinary way, *East of Adelaide* contributed significantly to the person I have become.

The events in this book occurred between 1955 and 1974, and reflect the social and cultural behaviours of my world as an EOA child of that era. These are my stories.

While growing up EOA, I was surrounded by fear, danger, wrong doings, curiosity, kindness, laughter and discovery. And although my childhood might seem a little odd, as witnessed by the stories that follow, it was fun, wild and fascinating.

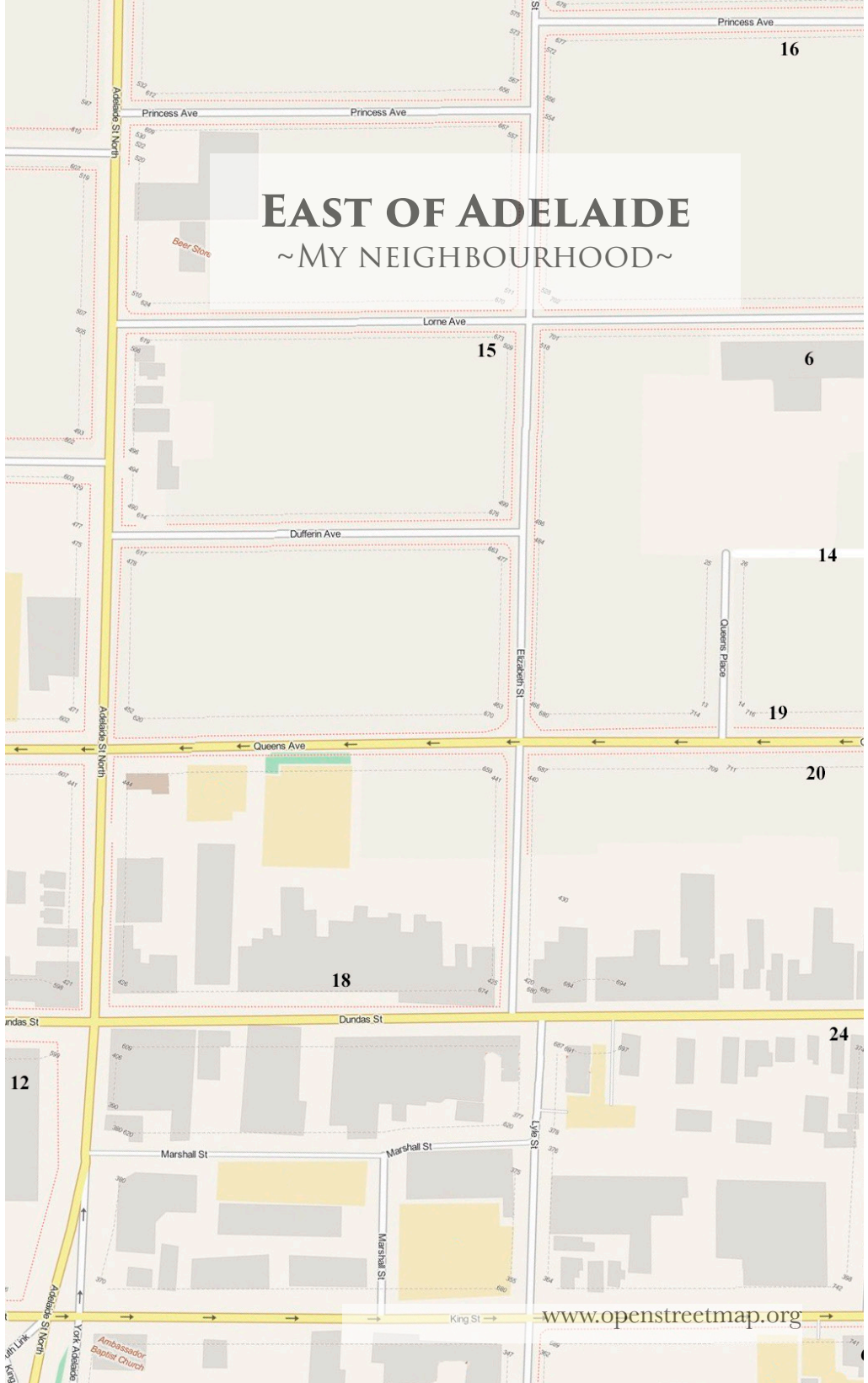
Deb Rogers

CONTENTS

May 2, 1974	1
Before My Time	3
One Hundred Years Later	5
Ice Cream	10
Kindergarten	13
Sewers	17
Queens Avenue House	19
The Neighbours	36
School Days	42
Old Man Shannon	44
The Teachers	46
Lunch Time	55
Salvation Army Girl Guides	57
Weekend School Break-in	66
Skiing on the Front Lawn	78
Dyson's Lane	80
Two Sets of Friends	86
True Crime	91
Catholics	95
Quelqu'un parle français?	98
The Transition	101
Hey Wendy Watch This!	108
The End of Our Reign	113
Appendix 1.....	116
Appendix 2.....	117
Appendix 3.....	123

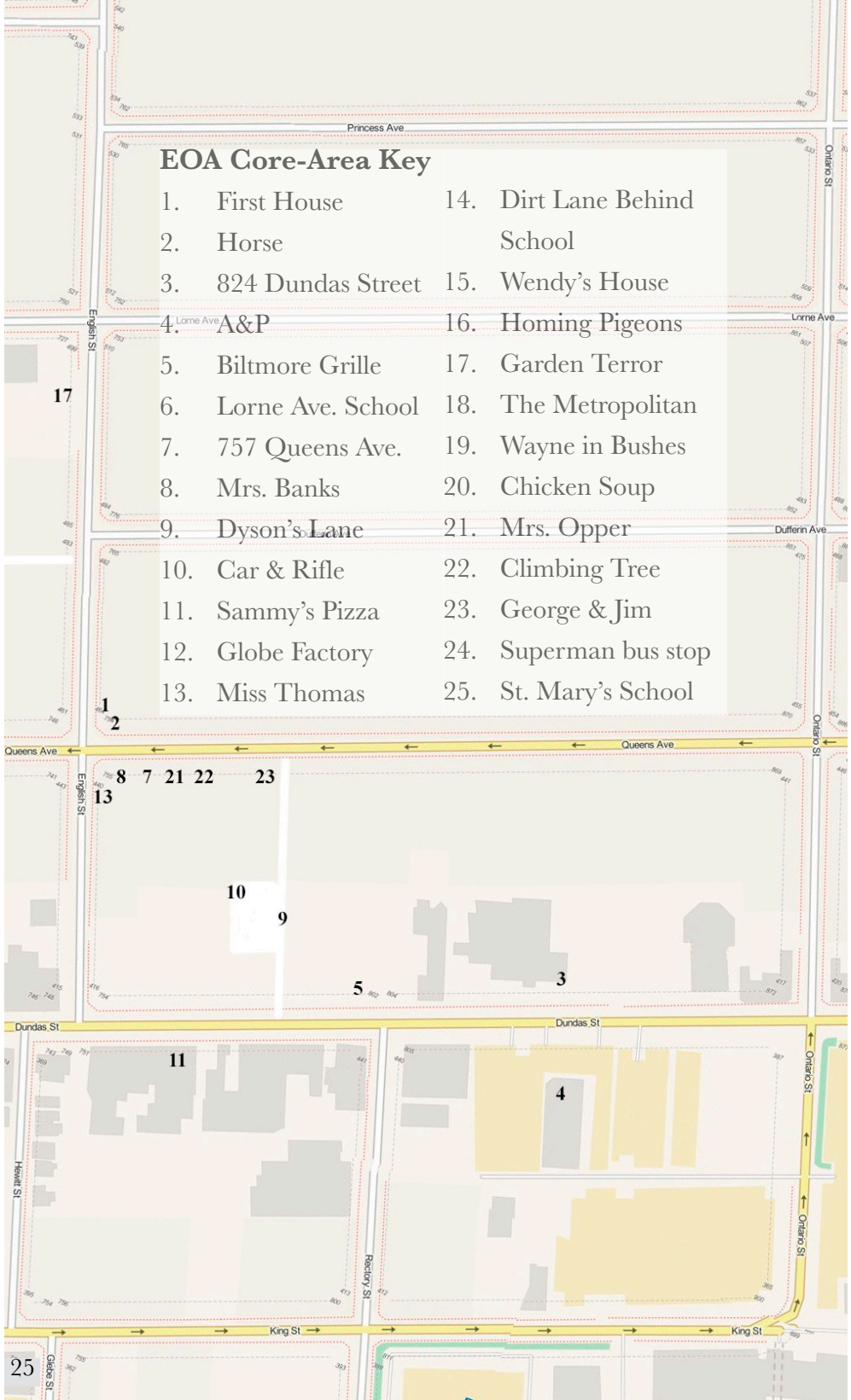
EAST OF ADELAIDE

~MY NEIGHBOURHOOD~



EOA Core-Area Key

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. First House | 14. Dirt Lane Behind School |
| 2. Horse | |
| 3. 824 Dundas Street | 15. Wendy's House |
| 4. A&P | 16. Homing Pigeons |
| 5. Biltmore Grille | 17. Garden Terror |
| 6. Lorne Ave. School | 18. The Metropolitan |
| 7. 757 Queens Ave. | 19. Wayne in Bushes |
| 8. Mrs. Banks | 20. Chicken Soup |
| 9. Dyson's Lane | 21. Mrs. Oppen |
| 10. Car & Rifle | 22. Climbing Tree |
| 11. Sammy's Pizza | 23. George & Jim |
| 12. Globe Factory | 24. Superman bus stop |
| 13. Miss Thomas | 25. St. Mary's School |



~ MAY 2, 1974 ~

WITH MY HEART POUNDING LOUDLY IN MY EARS, I slipped my smooth, worn key into the tarnished brass lock of the heavy wooden door. It creaked on its hinges as it gracefully floated open presenting a foyer of saluting silence. I stepped through and clanked the door closed behind me.

The house was empty. Bare walls revealed after-image silhouettes of mirrors and paintings that had been carefully removed. The exposed hardwood floors breathed under a fresh light having been released from years of burial under rough and lumpy carpeting.

The lighting in the vacant living room seemed magical as a soft afternoon luster tumbled in through the delicate leaded glass window. I admired the beauty of the hardwood trim that framed the doors and followed the wooden lines upward to rediscover the excessive height of unreachable ceilings.

I was immersed in my thoughts, without words as I slowly strolled through each empty room. Silence followed me. My fingers trailed gently along the walls of the dining room as I progressed from one side to the other.

From the kitchen, I scaled the stairs to the second floor and with a short hesitation stepped into my empty bedroom. With my arms folded securely in front of me as if to make me steady, my thoughts drifted to fear and joy, disappointment and resolve, laughter and sorrow. I gazed through the paint-chipped bedroom window to see the familiar landscape of the neighbours' houses and our tiny yard below. I visualized the faded Union Jack being delivered into my reaching, waiting hands, and with a fragment of memory, again I felt its weight.



Queen Adelaide

~ BEFORE MY TIME ~

1855

ADELAIDE STREET GRACEFULLY AND SILENTLY
DIVIDED LONDON EAST FROM LONDON.

The street was named after Adelaide Amelia Louisa, a 25-year-old-young woman who married herself off to the aged British King William IV. According to legend, he was a miserable old sot who, although the father of many, needed a legitimate male heir to the throne. No other woman on the British continent would have him for a husband. But for some reason, he became her choice.

Together, the pair of them reigned over the colonies at the time when the new land survey was made in London, Canada. Since these monarchs were in the right place at the right time their names were forever bequeathed to the two humble, dirt-laden streets of William and Adelaide.

London, west of Adelaide, was historically where the white-collar businessmen settled with their families. These men owned the biscuit companies, steel factories and oil refineries that were built and operated east of Adelaide Street. The men of London built large, multileveled, brick houses

with highly decorative stained glass, keystoned, and leaded windows. Highly polished cherry and oak floors presented sparkling pathways through dentil laced and other highly decorative exotic wood trimmed entrance ways. Hot running water, butlers, footmen and dumb waiters were a natural part of the lives of these families. These west of Adelaide people were POSH, *hoity-toity* Conservatives.

London, east of Adelaide, presented more of an industrial town with moderate to humble homes built by the families of the biscuit bakers, locomotive builders and oil refinery workers of the companies that were owned by the west of Adelaide businessmen. For the most part, these blue-collared, stained-shirt men of the east side owned comparatively small one level, brick or clapboard houses, with rough pine floors, outhouses and broken windows. Many of the men were beer slugging, bootlegging, reformers.



Mom and Dad: Lorraine and John Rogers

~ ONE HUNDRED YEARS LATER ~

1955

NINETEEN FIFTY-FIVE WAS THE YEAR I WAS BORN and carried home to a small apartment in the back of a tiny bungalow on English Street. The house was east of Adelaide by two blocks, and north of Queens Avenue by one house. It was next door to the local black horse that lived in the only remaining barn in the area.

Dad was a Commercial Artist who worked hard and could draw, paint or build anything without effort. Even though we lived east of Adelaide in the historically blue-collar district, he always wore a white shirt, black tie and black pants to work. He was tall and thin with black hair, mild mannered, gentle, passive and kind. He played with us after work each day and read stories to us at bedtime. He didn't make very much money, and sometimes he didn't make any money.

Mom was a young and pretty stay-at-home mom. She suffered from epilepsy and her seizures weren't under control very well back then, which made some things difficult for her.

Doug, my brother, is my only sibling. He is two years older than I am.

My first memories are of life after we moved to 824 Dundas Street, which was located east of Adelaide by two and a half blocks. It was a white (yellow) brick, Victorian house with a little Queen Anne decoration thrown in for good measure. It had a respectable front porch with railings and spindles. It was located directly across the road from the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, known as the A&P.

The house had been converted from a large single-family house into three apartments. We lived in the apartment on the top floor, which we reached by climbing a flight of outdoor wooden steps at the side of the house. It was a small apartment with two bedrooms, a workroom for dad, living room, kitchen, and shiny oak floors for everyone.

Living with oak floors was so much fun. As I grew to be four years of age, we discovered that we could launch into an extraordinary running slide in dad's wool socks and land a wicked, snapping shock on whomever we touched with the end of our fingers. This activity became family entertainment.

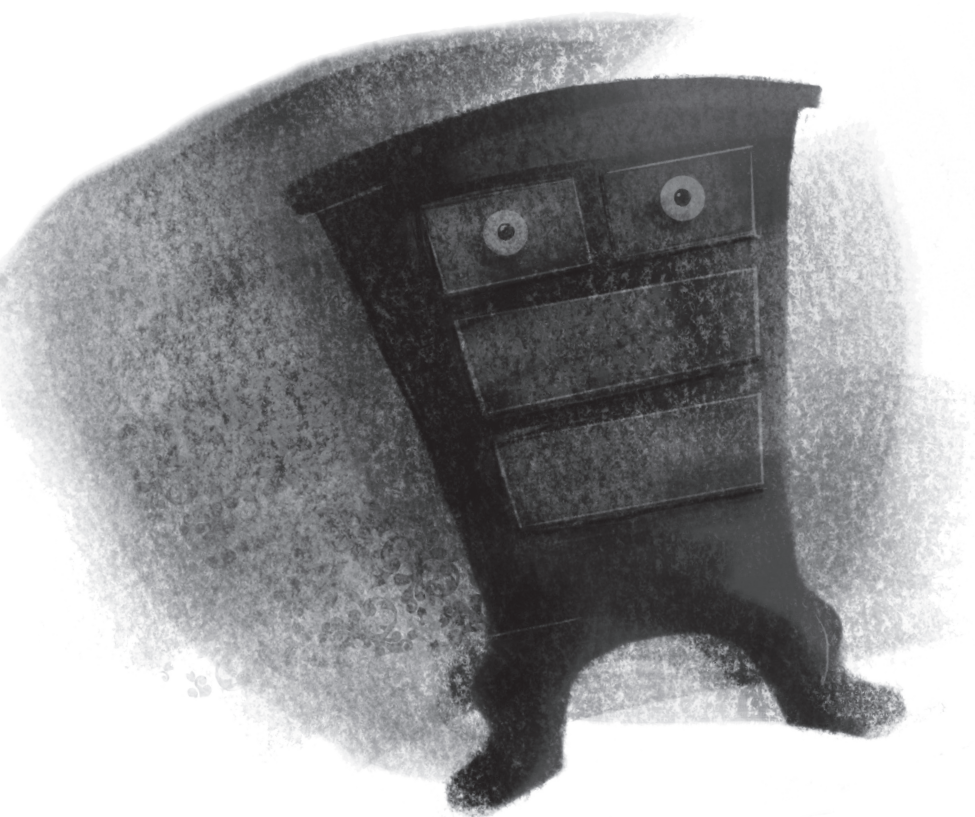
Doug and I would pull Dad's big, grey socks up to our thighs and get into ready-position in front of Mom and Dad's bedroom door. Dad would turn out all the lights. He and mom would stand somewhere in the darkness of the living room in wait. While gripping the socks, Doug and I would

run at full speed like hysterical penguins, through the hallway into the living room, release the socks and slide. Our arms would flail wildly around us as we tried to balance and reach for whoever was standing in the dark. We didn't know who was going to touch whom first. Would Dad touch me on the nose or would I touch his wrist? Would Mom sneak out from behind and tap us on the ear? They always seemed to know where we were and they would, most often, touch us first. Snap! Right on the end of the nose! The electrical snap would be instant, loud and painful. A brilliant white light would sparkle in front of our eyes with a streaming burst of blue glowing from the tip of our nose. The snap the person felt on the end of their nose hurt just as much as the snap the finger of the other felt. It was so much fun that it became our regular Friday night entertainment before bedtime. We slid and laughed until Doug and I were exhausted and carried off to bed.

Doug, and I shared a bedroom and my bed was against the east wall. When I was tucked in each night, I could see directly into the living room, squarely viewing a much larger than me, black, wooden dresser which stood with its back pressed firmly against the opposite wall. It was a tall dresser with large bottom drawers leading up to two smaller drawers at the top. Each night I lay in bed, perfectly still and glared at the dresser before I fell asleep. Each night the dresser would glare right back at me and miraculously come alive as it lunged towards me. The top of it tipped from side to side, left, right, left, right, lean, lean, closer, closer, waddle, waddle, until its wheelie tipped toes stood itself squarely and boldly in

the bedroom doorway blocking my escape. It leaned its head forward and directly over my head with the handles of the top two drawers glowing like Martian eyeballs inches from my face! At this point, each night, I would scream for Mom with a petrified voice, “Mom, the dresser is getting me!” Mom would brush me off by yelling from the living room, “Oh Debbie it is not, go to sleep!”

With the lack of a saviour, I was fossilized and left to deal with it alone every night. I couldn’t understand why my parents would torture me this way and let the dresser plague me so.



Eventually, I got used to the nocturnal horror and would squeeze my eyes shut so I could fall asleep before it advanced itself to the doorway and before its horrifying eyeballs could frighten all the strength and being out of my pint-sized body. I never turned away from the dresser as it approached because that was too terrifying. Surely death would happen if I turned away.

When morning arrived my first duty was to stare directly at the dresser to be sure it was back in its daytime resting place.

It always was.

The dresser finally stopped haunting me when I started to get regular nightly visits from a full-grown, man-sized grasshopper, who each night, stood at the head of my bed touching me on the shoulder with his front legs.

I had received no support from my parents about the dresser, so I knew there was no sense even mentioning the presence of the grasshopper.

~ ICE CREAM ~

ONE VERY HOT SUMMER AFTERNOON IN 1959, three friends similar in age and I were playing on the sidewalk, in front of the Biltmore Grill. The Biltmore Grill was a diner attached to the Biltmore Bowling Alley on Dundas Street near Rectory. A tall, thin, man, wearing a dark hat was leaning against the front of the diner watching us. He came over with money in his outstretched hand and offered it to us to buy ice cream. We said we weren't allowed to take money from strangers. He said well then, he would buy us the ice cream instead. We discussed it and agreed that it was a good idea if he bought us the ice cream as opposed to giving us the money because this way, we wouldn't be taking money from a stranger. It made perfect sense to us and we thought we couldn't possibly get into trouble for our actions.

The man opened the door and took us into the diner. We were each given an ice cream cone. He handed the money to the waitress then sat on one of the chrome and red stools keenly watching us enjoying the treat. Before we were finished we decided that it was time to wander home. We happily dilly-dallied our way down Dundas until we reached 824. Along the way, we decided that we would not go into

the house with the ice cream and we would especially not tell my mom about it as she was in charge of us for the day.

We turned the corner of the house, climbed part way up the outdoor steps, wiggled our skinny legs between the steps and sat in them as if they were school desks. We had just become settled into place when the youngest of the troop announced that she had to pee. We told her to eat her ice cream first. She said she couldn't wait that long. We tried to take the cone from her hand before she went inside, but she held it firmly and wouldn't give it to us for fear of our eating it. She went up the stairs with her ice cream in hand.

We heard the door to the apartment open. She gave the ice cream to my mom to hold while she used the washroom. Mom quizzed her and was extremely angry when she found out that we had talked to a stranger and that the stranger bought us the treat. We were all called into the house. I explained that we didn't actually take any money from the stranger. But my explanations and pleading didn't stop what happened next. Systematically, we had our underwear ripped down to our ankles, were laid over a chair and spanked with a large, wooden yardstick. Five angry smacks sharply addressed our bare bums. Each of us with welted bottoms and tears welling out of our eyes were then sent outside to sit on the steps and finish eating our ice cream cones. It was hard to sit and hard to eat while sobbing, but we did, and the ice cream was worth it.

It was years later that I learned a young girl, named Susan

Cadieux had been found dead after going missing from St. Mary's Catholic School three years prior to the time when the nice man bought us ice cream. St. Mary's School was just down the street from us by a couple of blocks.



Susan Cadieux

This murder case was well on the minds of all parents and is still unsolved.

More information and these images can be found on the London Police website:

www.londonpolice.ca



Suspect

Male, white, 30-40 years, tall, thin, and unshaven. He was wearing a light brown long overcoat which was unbuttoned, black galoshes which were unbuckled and flapped openly and a dark Russian style or army Melton hat with ear flaps.

~KINDERGARTEN ~

1960

WHEN I WAS FINALLY FIVE AND OLD ENOUGH TO GO TO KINDERGARTEN my first day of school arrived. Mom fed me, dressed me and sent me out the door with my brother. Doug took my hand, led me down the wooden outside staircase of the house and walked me to school. He knew the way as he had been walking himself to school ever since his first day of kindergarten when he was five. We walked down Dundas Street, and rounded the corner to English. We crossed Queens and said hello to the horse who was standing with his head over the fence toward the sidewalk, watching the children go by. We crossed Dufferin and then made a left turn towards the school. There were no crossing guards. There were no traffic lights. As we approached the school my brother and I watched mothers holding their children's hands, taking them to the school. I had never seen so many mothers and children. I didn't know why mothers were taking their children to school. Maybe those kids didn't have a seven-year-old brother to show them the way.

Our walk to school was uneventful, but the morning changed when the sound of a high-pitched bell pierced the air. Doug abandoned me at the bottom of the high, ominous, concrete, kindergarten stairs and ran across the playground into a door labelled *Boys*. He left me alone to proceed on my own, up a giant staircase I had never seen before, into a building I had never seen before. My feet froze themselves onto what seemed to be red-hot tar. I folded my hands in front of my belly and started to cry. A woman stared down at me from the top of the stairs. I looked up at her. She looked down at me. She waved her arms in a motion suggesting that I approach the steps. I didn't move. She did it again. I still



didn't move. She went into the building and closed the door. I looked around and realized that I was the only person in the yard as everyone else had already gone into different parts of the building. I stood alone with my pigtails awkwardly bouncing up and down as I sobbed. Eventually, the door at the top of the steps opened and a boy came out. It was my brother. He came back to save me!

He descended the concrete flight and when he was beside me, took my hand and led me up and inside the building. He stayed with me until I finally stopped crying. Once I could breathe again and focus on my surroundings I was fascinated with the colour, bright lights and sounds of other kids.

The kindergarten room was the largest room I had ever seen. It was full of kid-sized chairs and tables that were covered with paints and crayons. Brightly coloured alphabet letters and numbers hung on the walls and large red and blue circles were painted on the floor. The walls sparkled and the floors gleamed as bright lights bounced around the room exaggerating the vividness of everything. The room was fresh, vibrant and completely filled with kids wearing shiny shoes and new clothes. Some kids were laughing with their faces filled with delight. Others stood motionless and examined every detail and kid in the room just as I was doing, evaluating from a distance, taking it all in.

As it happens, kindergarten turned out to be a lot of fun. It seemed that we could draw, colour and paint all morning. We learned the alphabet and how to count to 100.

My first lie at school happened while I was in kindergarten. It was nap-time and I was wearing my favourite plaid blazer and kilt. I loved that outfit because it made me feel special and dressed up. I loved the way the colours crisscrossed in a repetitive, exact matching pattern and I loved how the weight of the jacket rested on my shoulders. I especially loved the buttons that, when fastened, made the patterns of the plaid

fit together perfectly like a completed puzzle.

Every day at nap-time, each of us was to line-up to pick a nap-mat out of the big pile of plastic foam-filled mats, and place it in our spot on the red circle on the floor. Once the mat was placed, we stood at the head of the mat and were made to take off any extra clothing like sweaters or jackets before we were allowed to lie down. On this day, I quietly slid onto my mat without taking off my jacket.

I was comfortably lying on my back stroking the front of the jacket and caressing the buttons when Miss White came to me and said that I must take off my jacket. I didn't want to take off my jacket. As I lay there with my face gazing up into her slim and beautiful face, I looked directly into her eyes and lied. I said, "My mom told me I have to leave it on today." She asked me if I was sure my mom had said that. I looked into those eyes once more and lied again as I replied, "Yes."

She went away and I remained comfortably in my plaid outfit. It was then that I determined it was easier to lie to teachers than it was to lie to parents. I just had to keep an innocent look on my face and look directly at them.

I was pleased and still patting the front of the jacket as I fell asleep.

~ SEWERS ~

IT WAS IN 1960 that the City of London engineers started to install new sewers on Dundas Street from Ontario to English. Installation of sewers meant that the street in front of our house was completely dug up. Huge mounds of brown and golden dirt barricaded us from the deep and inviting hole that ran the length of the street. Sporadically placed massive concrete cylinders balanced themselves along the edges of the trench at street level. Other cylinders were joined together forming a colossal concrete tunnel in the cavernous hole below.

Doug, a bunch of kids, and I, lined up beside each other at the edge of the ditch and evaluated the area. We sited the perfect spot to hustle over the pile of dirt. Like wild mountain climbers we scaled up and over the mounds of soft, loose, golden soil and then down the other side, deep into the hole below.

One by one we squeezed our bodies through an open junction hole of one of the cylinders and landed, headfirst, inside the lengthy concrete tunnel. It was dark and it was huge. It was amazing! None of us could touch the top of this tunnel as we ran full speed with our arms straight up over

our heads. As we stared through the tunnel to the far end we saw that glimpses of light filtered in through the odd junction hole; otherwise it was completely black.

We scampered and scuttled in the darkness from one end of this tunnel to the other, from English to Ontario and back. We ran up and down the curved sides from one to the other banging our feet hard against the concrete and yelping with delight. We lost our balance, fell and scuffed our knees. We squealed as our voices and laughter bounced and echoed loudly! We stuck our heads out junction holes and squawked and screamed. As we poked our heads out, we reached and dug into the sidewalls of the sandy trench, grabbing fistfuls of dirt and throwing it through the pipes and into each other's faces. We played until dinner time when Mom came looking for us. We heard her voice calling. We stuck our heads out the junction holes one at a time in answer to her call.

We got the yardstick again that night!

~ QUEENS AVENUE HOUSE ~

ONE EVENING DAD ANSWERED THE TELEPHONE AND WAS TOLD that our Dundas Street house was sold and going to be demolished. A new Western Tire store was going to be built on the land. Western Tire was a store similar to Canadian Tire. Dad had designed the corporate logo for it but he didn't expect that once the logo was complete our lives at this location would also be complete.

It was for this reason, when I was still in kindergarten that we moved to 757 Queens Avenue. 757 was located on the flip side of the same block as the Dundas Street house but west by a half block. It was east by two blocks from Adelaide.

It was a large, side-by-side duplex with four floors if you counted the basement and the full attic. We lived in the west side. The main floor consisted of a living room, dining room, kitchen and hallway. The ceilings were twelve feet high. Substantial trim and baseboards framed all the edges of windows and walls. Hardwood floors throughout allowed us to continue our Friday night wool-sock-shock entertainment. A large hallway led from the front door and wrapped around the living room leading to the dining room. A beautiful

wooden staircase with a bannister conducive to ceaseless sliding down was in the front hallway. Tucked away between the hallway and dining room walls was a large paneled, oak sliding door that when slid closed separated the dining room from the front portion of the house. The hallway and living room had beautiful leaded glass windows. It was a huge house for us and I was lost the very first time I went up the front stairs and then down the back stairs that led to the kitchen. How could a house have two sets of stairs? It was unbelievable. This was a special house.

Besides the door that led into the kitchen from the dining room, there were two additional doors. One door opened to the two-story back shed, which was built of the same concrete block as the rest of the house. The shed had stairs leading to the backyard, and another set of dark, stairs leading down to the outside basement door. If you turned left once more while at the very base of the shed stairs, and if you were small enough and brave enough, you could squeeze and crawl into the dark, cold, dusty space under the stairs, in the very bottom corner of the house and hide secret things, like matches and cigarettes.

The second door from the kitchen opened to the stairs leading to the basement. There were three rooms in the basement all as large as the rooms on the main floor. The basement ceilings were high enough to allow a person to stand tall.

The first room, at the base of the stairs had a lovely antique

wood burning potbelly stove in which we burned scraps of wood to heat all three rooms. We used the first room as a laundry room and later as the meeting room for Dare Devils' Den; the neighbourhood kids only club, which my brother and I invented.

Dad painted a large mural on canvas that ran from one side of the room to the other that boldly stated in big red letters: *Dare Devils' Den*. Red and yellow flames edged the letters and adorable smiling devils with putti-like bodies were flying everywhere on the canvas and peeking out from behind the flames. Doug was the president. I was vice-president. Jim Parker was the secretary because he could print nicely on lined paper and he owned his own pen. The neighbourhood kids George, Jim, Bruce and Joanne were members too.

To be a member of Dare Devils' Den you had to pass a series of entrance requirements. First you had to climb the tree in Bruce and Joanne's backyard. You had to ascend all the way to the top where the branches became very small and not strong enough to hold your weight. You would not be allowed down until the rest of us who were staring skyward from the base of the tree, could see your terrified body swinging around in the tips of the fleshy green twigs.

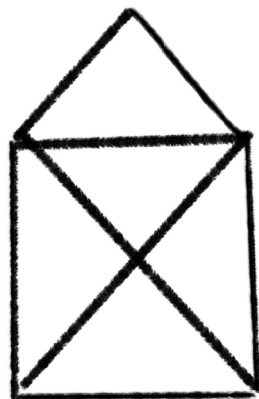
The second test involved balancing skills. We each had to walk completely around the top of our backyard picket fence without falling off. The fence was four feet tall and the top crossbeam was the wide side of a two by four. This initiation test was started by the west side of the house where

it was easy to climb up onto the fence by using the garbage bin as a boost. Once up, you had to control your balance by extending your arms horizontally like a trapeze artist. A quick glance to the ground would start your head swirling with dizziness, as it was at least seven feet in the air. Everyone knew that if you fell you would be gouged through the belly by one of the pickets and then because of extensive bleeding and weakness you would fall on your head to the ground and probably be dead. The group of us witnessing the act would stand motionless in the middle of the yard, holding our breath, as the candidate on the fence slowly and delicately placed one foot in front of the other. Jim Parker had his notepad and pen and carefully documented the event as you only had three tries and we didn't want to lose count.

The final evaluation was a measurement of IQ. It was a test that consisted of a series of pictures to identify, riddles to solve, optical illusions to draw and a bit of math.

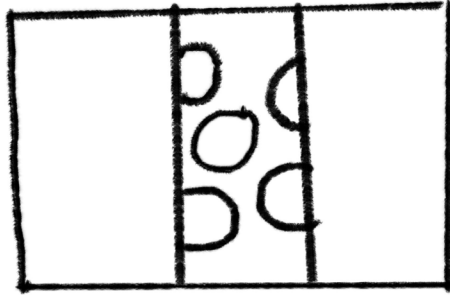
Mandatory Dare Devils' Den IQ. Test

1. If an airplane crashed on the border of Canada and the United states where would you bury the survivors?
2. Draw this image without lifting your pencil off the paper and without moving your pencil over the same line twice.



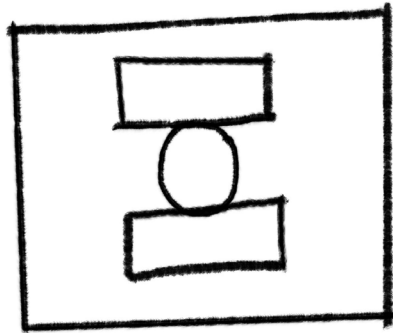
3. List the order of the planets.

4. What is this?



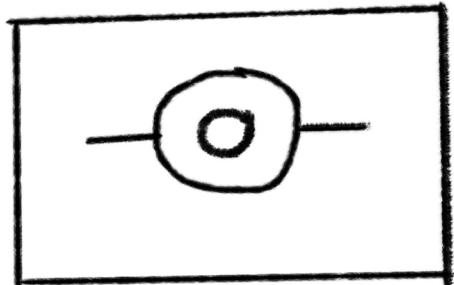
5. How can a pant pocket be empty but still have something in it?

6. What is this?



7. If the wind is blowing from all directions at a peanut tree which way will the peanuts fall?

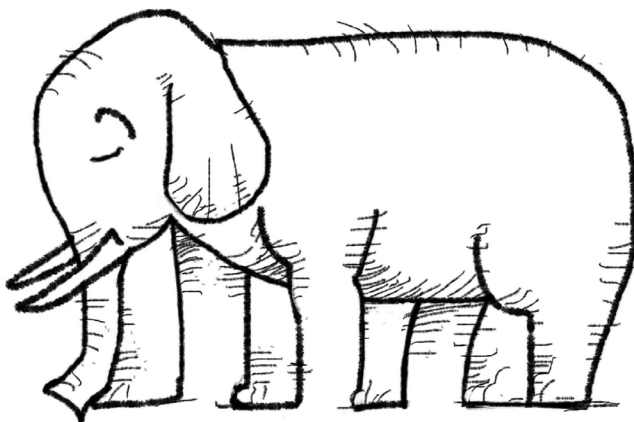
8. What is this?



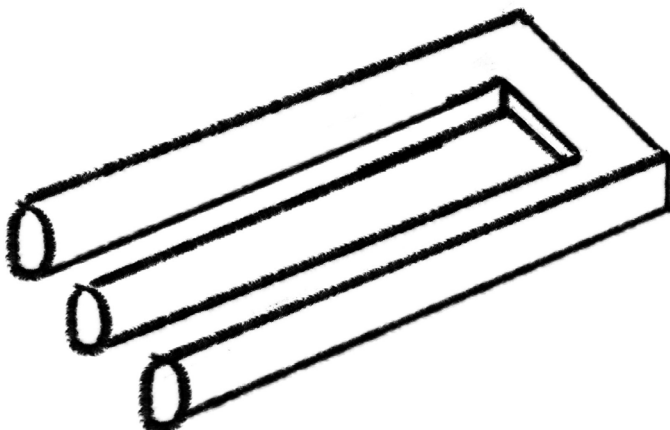
9. What is black and white and read all over?

10. Is it legal for a man to marry his widow's sister?

11. How many legs does the elephant have?



12. Draw this:



13. What is $2 \times 4 \times 8 \times 0$?

*The answers are in the back of the book in Appendix One.
You need at least eight correct answers to be accepted into the Den.
Your answers will be sent to Jim Parker for evaluation. Good luck!*

Once you passed the entrance exam and became a member you got to plan activities. We would sit in the clutter of the laundry room, facing the banner and mostly plan water fights. We then ran up and down Queens Avenue with squirt guns and buckets full of water while Jim Parker wrote it all down with his pen.

We also liked to play tricks on the drivers of cars that went by on Queens Avenue. This activity involved two Dare Devils. Together, we would stand in the middle of the road, face to face with our fists together knuckles to knuckles and wait for a car to approach the base of Dyson's Lane. Once the car started to get close to us, we would each take steps backwards and pretend that we were unrolling a piece of wire from our hands. We were very good at this and our choreography was excellent. As we each backed to the curb, we would step up, stand firmly and tighten our grips on our invisible wire. The driver would have been watching the whole process and as they approached would slam on the brakes before whatever it was they thought we were holding ruined their car as they drove through it. They would roll down their window and yell at us as we ran away in opposite directions, laughing hysterically.

The basement middle room was filled with a very large, monstrous, spider-like sprawling, oil furnace with large dusty

pipes that reached to all corners of the house. It originally was a coal-burning furnace that had been converted to oil before we moved in. The nasty smelling oil tank sat in the far corner of the room leaving a small dark space beside the furnace and a smaller darker space behind it. A single pull-string light bulb hung nestled in the cobwebbed crossbeams above.

The furnace was frightening and even more frightening to me on a dark winter night when Dad would tell me to go downstairs and, “Water the furnace.” I dreaded hearing those words but I would do as I was told.

At the base of the furnace at floor level, was a small steel door that was big enough for a scary, hairy, fat rat to fit through. To water the furnace, I had to open that door. With my finger, I had to lift up slightly on the lip of the door to open it and as it shifted upward the hinge would become free from its locked position allowing the door to drop to the floor and become a spout.

We didn’t have any rats in the house, or in the neighbourhood for that matter. I had never even seen a rat but I knew that one was going to burst out of the door every time I opened it. I would slowly stoop low to the door, lift, open, drop then leap backwards into the darkness. Cautiously, I would move toward the furnace with my bucket of water, lean in close to its side and pour the water into the spout. I poured so quickly that more water spilled onto the floor than what actually managed to get inside the furnace.

The water that made it to the inside flowed from the spout into a steel ring that was shaped like a moat, which edged the flames that heated the house.

On the side of the furnace was a large, heavy, steel, hinged door that opened to the flames. I opened it periodically to look at the roaring fire. Opening the door made no sense but I seemed compelled to do it like I was trapped in a late-night horror movie zombie-trance. The door was right out of Alfred Hitchcock's brain and was as horrifying as the furnace itself. It was big enough to fit the body through of a young terrified girl, who was just doing what she was told with a bucket of water.

As the pouring water gurgled into the spout I knew that a murderous man wearing black shoes was lurking behind the furnace by the smelly oil tank waiting to grab me, throw me inside, and slam the door closed. Watering the furnace was a chilling chore.

Dad built Doug and me our own drafting tables in the furnace room, on the east wall, so we could create, paint, explore things and develop our creative side. I enjoyed working at my drafting table when someone else was in the basement, but I could never relax as I always kept one eye on the furnace behind me. I would never work at my table alone because I knew the man behind the furnace was always watching and ready to make the grab.

The third room, at the front of the house, directly under

the living room, was Dad's room. It was his workspace, his creative space, and his own space. This was the room where he designed buildings and signs. He created board games like *Canadian Football*, *the Haunted House*, and the *Yogi Bear Game*.

He built an incredible electric-car racetrack for us. It was four by eight feet in size and covered with green flocking for grass. It had ponds made out of baby-blue *Plexiglas*, ceramic wildlife, bridges, buildings and even people. All the neighbourhood kids would come over to play race cars. There would be ten of us sitting on the floor and crammed into the corners of the room waiting for our turn to choose the car we wanted to race.

The walls of Dad's room were lined with all the centrefolds from *Playboy* magazine. He even had the centrefold of Marilyn Monroe from the first *Playboy*. All his centerfolds were carefully mounted in black three-dimensional frames that he had created out of *Bristol* board. As each monthly magazine was published, a new centrefold went on the wall.

I never thought anything of the pictures as they were just there. The neighborhood boys on the other hand, always stared at them when they were racing their cars. They were too busy with the ladies' curves on the walls to realize that they were at a curve in the racetrack and needed to slow their car down in order to turn the corner successfully. As they were gazing at the girls, their car would reach the curve, fly off and tumble to the floor. Because they were staring at the ladies all the time I used to win race cars a lot. Also when

they were looking at the women I would wedge a small shiny finishing nail into the groove of their track causing the track to short-circuit. Their car would stop dead. Not knowing the reason for the engine failure they would thump their car and bang the track, all the time whining, as my car would speed past them. I was good at race cars!

As for the centrefolds, Dad used them for me as teaching aids when he talked with me about portrait composition, lighting and the beauty of the human body. “The women,” he would say, “are not naked, they are nude, and there is a difference.”

In 1968, Dad bought an enlarger and started to develop films and pictures. When he bought a new Miranda camera he gave me his old Minolta. He and I would each throw a roll of black and white into our cameras and go out on photo shoots. He taught me about shutter speed, aperture settings and composition. We would then stand in complete blackness in his room and load the film into the developer tank. I had the most difficult time trying to thread the film into the tiny ridges of the reel. When the film was developed we would dry it with a hair dryer because I was too excited to wait for it to dry naturally. We spent many hours together developing films and printing photographs.

Also in Dad’s room, to the right of his drafting table was a large cabinet with a massive wooden drawer filled with useful papers. He called this drawer, *the morgue*, because it held *dead information*. He said any printed document was dead the day after it was printed. Anytime I needed information for

a school project he would tell me to, “look in the morgue.” I would go downstairs, hold my breath and run past the furnace as fast as I could so the man couldn’t even get a glance of me. With both hands and all my strength I would heave open the musty smelling drawer. Sure enough Dad would have something on the topic I needed carefully filed away in the depths of the morgue. I would grab what I needed and sprint past the furnace in the other direction.

The upper floor of the house had three bedrooms, a hallway, washroom and the door to the attic.

Doug’s room was at the side of the house. Outside Doug’s window, a few feet away, was a thick woven black cable about three inches in circumference that ran from just under the eaves down to three feet above the ground. We had no idea what the cable was for but we discovered that if we did a flying leap through the air from Doug’s second story bedroom window ledge, we could reach the cable, grabbing it tightly, swinging in the air with it for a couple minutes until it settled. When it was stable we would scale down the outside wall of the house to the ground just like Spiderman would have done if he’d lived there.

Mom and Dad’s room was at the front of the house, with French doors leading out to a railed balcony, which overlooked the front lawn and provided a great view of the street and neighbourhood. I would go out onto the balcony in the darkness of night with Dad’s 10 x 40 binoculars and peep into the windows of all the neighbours. It was fun.

There was always action in the house directly across from us. It is amazing what you can see at night when no one knows you're looking.

I had my own pink bedroom at the back of the house, beside the washroom. The window of my bedroom opened onto the roof of the back shed, which of course, beckoned me to sit on its peak. I would throw open the window, climb out onto the rooftop and admire my backyard kingdom as, once again, I peered into the neighbours' windows.

Unfortunately for me, I could only climb onto the roof for a short time, as the bedroom was mine alone until the middle of grade one. Aunt Ruth, one of my mother's sisters, appeared at our front door with a bundle of suitcases in hand. I now had to share my room with a woman who appeared to be ancient, although she was probably only in her forties. Her bed was in front of the window.

Aunt Ruth worked at Cold Springs Turkey farm in Thamesford, sucking the guts out of turkeys with a big vacuum sucking hose.

As the turkeys sped by her hanging from a big conveyor belt system, she would stick the hose inside the bird and suck out the innards. At night, on a regular basis, while she was sleeping she would have nightmares about the swinging line of raw, fleshy birds breaking down. From a dead sleep in her loudest voice, she would scream, "Hal stop the line!" I would jump out of my own chicken-skin from the other side of the

room, having been awakened by the scream. She never woke up when she did that and I never got back to sleep.

When it got close to Thanksgiving or Christmas she would see a juicy turkey zip by on the line and decide she wanted to bring that one home for dinner. Turkeys were graded on their quality. Grade A meant everything about the turkey was perfect; it had flawless skin, both wings, both legs, and no unusual marks anywhere. Employees were not allowed to purchase Grade A turkeys at a discount. So she would select a Grade A turkey she wanted and as it was dangling in front of her on the line, she would slice off a piece of skin from the chest or whack off a leg. This meant that it was an Economy Grade turkey and she could buy it. We always had good-sized quality turkeys for holiday dinners.

Aunt Ruth smoked a lot and rolled her own. I would open the bedroom door to go to bed at night and the room would be billowing with smoke. Cigarette butts and dirty ashtrays lined her bedside table. When she was out of *rollies*, she would send me to Joe's Variety or the Embassy Hotel on Dundas to buy her a pack of *Export A* cigarettes.

When she wasn't working with turkey guts, she would do our laundry. We had a modern wringer washer that had a big tub into which you threw the clothes then filled with water. A centre cylinder-like device with attached plastic buttresses would slosh the clothes back and forth in the water and the dirt from the clothes would melt into grey, liquid mud.

To start the laundry process, we would separate the clothes into colour piles on the floor of the Dare Devils' Den. We put the white clothes in first since they had no colours that would bleed out into the water. Once she said the white clothes had sloshed around long enough we would fish them out of the water with our hands, flatten them so they were the thinnest each garment could possibly be and then scrunch them through the wringers one by one. The wringers were made of two rubberized cylinders pressed together horizontally which squeezed the water out of the garment as it passed between. There was a safety feature built into the wringers so that if I accidentally stuck my finger between them while jamming the clothes through, the wringers would pop apart and stop spinning. They popped apart a lot!

Once the clothes were freshly squeezed we sloshed them through two wash-buckets of clear water to rinse them, then squeezed them through the wringers again. We would take the wet clothes out the basement door to the backyard and hang them on the clothesline to dry. Once the whites were finished, we stared at the piles of clothes on the floor and found the next lightest colour pile to pitch into the washer. This method of colour selective washing continued until we reached our final load of black. When it was time for the blacks to reach the washer, the water was a murky grey colour but we threw the clothes in anyhow.

By the time I was in grade seven our wringer washer had kicked-the-bucket and we had an automatic washer with matching drier. It was exciting having an automatic because

it meant that I threw the clothes in the tub of the machine, pushed a button, closed the lid and it would run through a process of timed events all on its own. The old wringer washer got tucked away behind the furnace.

Since we didn't need the washtubs for rinsing the clothes anymore, dad built a gutbucket for me. He drilled a hole through the base of one of the tubs, inserted a long copper wire, tied it on the inside of the tub, flipped it over and tied the loose end of the wire to an old wooden broomstick. I would then place my foot on the



bottom of the tub, which was now at the top, place the loose end of the broomstick on the base of the tub, tighten it and pluck away at the copper. The farther I pulled the top of the broomstick away from the bucket, the higher the note was that the copper would resonate. Even though I constantly asked for a piano, this was the only instrument I was ever given. I would lug it from the basement to the kitchen where Mom, Aunt Ruth and I sat around the table singing every hillbilly song we had ever heard. Someone would get out some spoons, another would bang on a pot and we would laugh like crazy as we crooned our way into the night.

The new laundry method with the automatic washer initially worked well but the process fell apart when the automatic drier was thrown into the picture.

Instead of ascending to the yard to hang the clothes on the line as we had always done, we now had a drying machine. To use it you removed the freshly spun clothes from the automatic washer, threw them into the automatic drier and pressed the *On* button. There were various temperature ranges that could be selected so the drier released the appropriate amount of heat for the type of articles being dried, but Aunt Ruth never used that button. It seemed that she dried every article of clothing on the *bake and shrink* setting. She shrank everything; no matter how much it cost or how many times it had been worn. The clothing only existed in its natural size once and then it became baby sized. Many of the clothes I wore to school looked like I had outgrown them years before I ever put them on.

~ THE NEIGHBOURS ~

MRS. BANKS LIVED AT 755, WHICH WAS THE HOUSE ON THE CORNER NEXT TO US, on the west. It was a large, solid, red brick house, full of deep, rich, oak trim with a magnificent fireplace. It was immaculately well kept. It was full of beautiful antiques and all the glass and silver in her china cabinets shone as the rooms sparkled with light. Mrs. Banks was a tiny framed, white haired widow. Her son Harry, who owned 757 and 759 was our landlord.

Mrs. Banks was very nice to me and sometimes when I was home for lunch would give me a piece of fruit. One time she gave me a peach and told me not to choke on the pit. As I was walking at the side of the house, eating the peach, the pit flew out of the peach and lodged itself directly down my throat. I stood still so I could figure out how to get the pit out. Her words echoed through my mind – *Don't choke on the pit*, and here I was at the side of the house choking on the pit. I didn't try to breathe. I decided that since it wouldn't come up, it had to go down. I swallowed and swallowed until the pit slowly and painfully slid down my throat scratching the sides of my throat on the way down. I was so happy that I didn't die with the pit stuck in my throat because I didn't

want her to feel bad about giving me the peach. But what worried me now was that I would have a peach tree growing in my stomach and I thought perhaps I should see a doctor. I went back to school instead.

A family with a gruff father who constantly swore and yelled lived in the east half of our duplex at 759. I discovered that if I put my ear on a glass, and pressed the glass onto dining room wall that separated our side of the duplex from theirs; I could hear really well what he was yelling about. I used to eavesdrop on a regular basis and report back to my family what was being said. The family eventually moved out and when they did, Dad and I snuck into the empty house through the basement door to see what their side of the house was like. It was completely opposite to ours and made everything, including the placement of my feet feel like I was in a house of mirrors. I held on to the walls to balance myself as I walked through every room. When I was exploring in their basement, I found a sawed-off shotgun that they must have forgotten to take with them. I gave it to Dad. Dad gave it to the police.

Mrs. Alma Oppen lived in the house east of the duplex at 761. She was the widow of W. E. Oppen, the former principal of Lorne Ave. School. He was principal when my mom was a pupil at Lorne Ave., and his picture hung in the front hallway of the school. He died when I was in grade one and Mom gave me a sympathy card to slip through the mail slot of her front door. After that, Mrs. Oppen always wore a tightly buttoned to the neck, long black dress and

black over-the-ankles, fancy heeled shoes with loop buttons and laces. She wore this outfit even when she was gardening in her front lawn. I didn't have much to do with Mrs. Opper as a kid as she seemed rigid and always gave me a scolding because our dog Scotty Rogers, liked to pee on her bushes.

Directly across the road from us on the corner, was another well-kept, large duplex house. It was the one with the big black horse that lived in the barn. It was the same horse I saw that morning on my way to kindergarten and the only horse I had ever seen up close. I was absolutely delighted that a horse was my neighbour and I fed him handfuls of grass as often as I could.


Two houses east from the horse house was a doctor's office and farther down was Miss Fran's hairstyling. It was rumoured that Miss Fran was *divorced* and whether true or not, all the kids on the street knew this information. Her house was painted bright pink, which apparently screamed divorcee to all the adults in the neighbourhood. The talk on the street was that husbands wouldn't allow their wives to get their weekly hair-do by a *divorced* woman for fear that divorce was a contagious disease that might afflict their own wives. Instead, the fearful husbands' wives had to go to Tony's Beauty Salon on Dundas Street.

Miss Fran's pink house and its visitors always fascinated me. I would creep out onto our balcony as if I was one of the spies from *Spy verses Spy* in *Mad* magazine. I would slide my feet across the warped tin floor of the balcony so I could move

slowly and not make any noise. Next, I would sneak up to the railing, crouch beside it, and hide behind the spindles. Once in position, I would peek my head above the railing and through Dad's binoculars watch the women as they were going in and coming out. They never looked disease ridden when they came out. In fact, they always looked pretty and happy with their hair piled up high. I clearly didn't understand.

Our backyard butted up at the side fence against the backyard of Miss Edith Thomas who lived at 440 English Street. She had always lived in this house; it was the home in which she was raised. She was small, frail, grey, quiet and kind. She had a boyfriend for 60 years but they wouldn't marry because he was Catholic and she was Protestant. To marry meant that one had to switch to the other's religion and neither was willing to do that. He would go to her house after work every night for dinner and then they would hold hands and sit beside each other in a double swing on her front porch. I often sat on her porch steps and talked with them. At the end of the evening he would walk down English street to his own house.

When Doug and I were six through ten years old, we used to play marching games in our backyard. We made marching zones and we made flags out of paper and sticks to carry around with us as we marched in the zones. We built military forts out of huge cardboard boxes that we had slogged home from Dyson's Lane.



One summer day when I was alone in our yard,
Miss Thomas came outside into her yard.

She was holding something in her hands. I
looked over to her and could see that it was
a perfectly folded and slightly faded Union
Jack.

She called me over to the fence and
told me that her father had proudly
for his country, for our country,
carried this flag as he led the
troops in the First World War.

In a whispering but solid voice,
she said it was an important
flag and that I could have it,
“If and only if, I never let it
touch the ground.” I paused,
and with what seemed
to be the weight of the
commonwealth and
generations of soldiers
on my shoulders,
reached upward to
the top of the fence
as she gracefully
released the
flag from her
ancient hands
into mine.

I held it in amazement.

It seemed to be such a light piece of material that presented to me immense weight. It immediately filled my heart.

I carefully carried it into the house to show Dad. He mounted it on a proper pole and built a flag stand. Each morning from then on when we were playing we would unroll the flag, put it into its stand and salute it. Sometimes we even sang *God Save the Queen*.

At the end of the day we would gently take it down, roll it neatly around the flagpole and store it safely inside our bike shed.

It never once touched the ground.

**~ SCHOOL DAYS
AT
LORNE AVENUE ~**

LORNE AVENUE SCHOOL WAS ONE OF THE OLDEST SCHOOLS IN LONDON. It was a large Romanesque Revival structure, built of bricks. Initially the bricks must have been white, but turned black over the years probably from all the oil refinery dirt floating around in the East of Adelaide air. A large white block stone arch supported the front entrance of the school.



Photo by Victor Aziz, 1969

This building, as I knew it, was demolished in the summer of 1969 after I graduated from grade eight and the current, horizontal, red brick, *Frank Lloyd Wright* version of a school was built replacing history, stories, people and structural omnipotence. The eastern-most end of the current building has the only classrooms remaining in the building that were there when I was a student.

In the old building, large, sparkly, energy inefficient, standard board-issued windows provided enormous, inviting portals for all the kids inside the building to transport their thoughts and daydreaming minds out through the windows and into the neighbourhood. Our bodies may have been physically inside the walls but our attention was directed to the blue sky and fluffy clouds on the other side of those grand panes.

Inside the massive stone arch of the front entrance, worn oak floors unfolded into a perfectly balanced, symmetrical, and soundly designed wooden staircase. The most beautiful, shiny, oak bannister framed each side of the dual entrance staircase, which ascended great heights to the second floor. Boys lined up on the west side, girls did the same on the east. Single file. No running, no pushing, no touching, no gum chewing and definitely no talking. As we navigated up or down the staircase the oak railing begged our tiny, explorative, hands to stroke and smooth its shiny curves and edges into historic, aged, beauty.

~ OLD MAN SHANNON ~

OLD MAN SHANNON BECAME THE PRINCIPAL OF LORNE AVENUE SCHOOL IN JUNE OF 1961, when I was in kindergarten. None of us knew his first name: from day one he was *Old Man Shannon*.

I remember the day when George C. Jarvis, the centurion vice-principal, brought Old Man Shannon into the kindergarten room for show-and-tell, to introduce him to the class as the new school principal. George C., as we liked to call him, was a very elderly, shaky man, thin, with pure white hair. He always wore a loose suit with big baggy pants hoisted up to his chest that were held in place with red suspenders. Perhaps his pants fit him years before when he taught my mom at Lorne Ave., but they sure didn't on this show-and-tell day and not any day after that. His pale, skinny, crease-filled neck was adorned daily with a bright red, crooked bow tie. Over the years his pure black hair had faded into white as gracefully as the school's ancient white bricks had transformed to black.

Old Man Shannon was probably in his late thirties when he was introduced to us that morning, but his short army style haircut and white hair made him look rather aged to us tiny kindergarten; crayon grasping, glue-eating rug-rats. He was

bigger than anyone's dad I had ever seen and he was wearing a perfectly pressed, shiny, silver, striped suit that reflected light in vertical streams.

Upon introduction, we stood rigidly still. We were perfectly silent, tight mouthed and with wide eyes staring at him as he towered over our kindergarten domain. Miss White made us show-off to him by forcing us to stand, side by each on the large red circle that was painted on the floor, and count out loud to one hundred. Each kid started eagerly with a loud "one", then slowly slid into a mundane tone by the sixties and complete mumbles as the nineties finally started to roll out of their nervous but accomplished lips. When one kid was finished, the next kid in the circle started.

It was my turn.

He smiled at me.

I looked him straight in the eyes and started the count.

I knew from the moment I saw him that he would be trouble; I just knew it.



~ THE TEACHERS ~

IT SEEMED TO ME AT THE TIME, THAT THE MAJORITY OF WOMEN TEACHERS at the school were all age appropriate grey haired, spinsters who were devoting their lives to selfless community involvement after the deaths of their fiancés or husbands, in WWII. Teaching was now their calling; they had nothing else but the needy children of Lorne Ave. We, the *East of Adelaide* children of the public school system became the children of their private lives. They needed us and although we didn't know it, we needed them.

Kindergarten: Miss White and Miss Dreaseaman

were two typical board-issued kindergarten teachers who were young, vibrant and consistently perky! They were perpetually smiling even when they had to quickly scoop a kid high into the air and with urgency hasten him or her into the adjoining two-seater washroom so he or she wouldn't poo in the middle of paint circle! They were both quite adept with and nonchalant about grasping and running with the distressed child firmly in their arms. It was an urgent yet graceful and melodic movement. The rest of us knew what was going on. We knew that there was going to be a big BM accident but it didn't faze us at all as the kid flew over our

heads and we continued with whatever it was we were doing. The relieved child was returned to the group quietly and without incident, and there was no teasing about it, as we all knew that it might someday happen to us.

These two teachers were always calm and composed as they wrenched the mint flavoured glue pots out of our fingers so we would stop eating the paste. Their hairdos were always stable enough to withstand the wrath of wild paint brushes, pick-up sticks and getting caught in the big safety pins we would wear on our faux Scottish kilts. They were the dream teachers of all children with qualities that drew kindergarten minds eagerly into the education system.

Grade One: Miss Hubble was tall, thin and beautiful, just like the telescope, which wasn't invented yet. She married during the year and became Mrs. Mitchell. We grade ones, didn't know what really happened with the whole marriage concept we just knew we had to call her by a different name. She was always happy even when she was trying to be stern with us. She was very good at teaching us to read and offered extra help during recess to those in need, of whom, I was one.

Grade Two: Miss Edith Tompkins was a delightful senior lady with her grey-brown hair always sculpted tightly into a bun. Everybody loved her but no one knew anything about her. She smiled all the time and was very gentle with us. She had a calm and soothing manner when dealing with pee and poo accidents in the classroom, in the desks, on the

floor and in kids' shoes. She always smiled when dealing with bodily accidents. She obviously had no sense of smell.

Grade Three: Miss Grace Baker was an absolutely wonderful lady. She taught us hymns like *Fairest Lord Jesus* and *God Sees the Little Sparrow Fall*. She taught us about the pyramids in Egypt and showed us a picture of a man with a goiter. She taught us proper cursive and insisted that we each own a dictionary. She lived at 832 Dufferin Avenue, her childhood home, with her sister Lillian, who was the school secretary to Old Man Shannon. Everyone loved the Baker sisters. It was a joyous day the day I passed out of grade two and knew I would have Grace Baker for my grade three teacher. She influenced my life as much as a grade three teacher could influence an *East of Adelaide* child. She was charming and life changing by always showing me the goodness in life.

Grade Four: Mrs. (B) Oswald was widowed and at least 400 years old. She always signed her name with the “B” in brackets. We never knew why she did that. She had some sort of disease that made her head turn to the right and shake. We had to get used to the fact that when she was standing at the front of the room talking with her head turned to the right looking out the large school windows, that she was actually talking to us! Once we figured that out, we would not turn our heads to look out the window when she was looking out the window because there was really nothing to look at out there.

I made her scream on April fool's day when we had a student teacher at the front of the class. Mrs. Oswald was sitting behind me observing the student teacher. When she wasn't looking in my direction for a moment, I put a very long rubber worm in her tissue that she had set on the desk in which she was sitting. We all thought she would have a heart attack and die right in front of us when she blew her nose and the rubber worm freely swung around her face smacking her on the lips. But she didn't die, first she screamed, then she laughed as the worm hung from her fingertips. She didn't even confiscate it from me; she handed it back to me in front of the whole class with a big smile on her face. I put the worm away in my desk.

It was Mrs. (B.) Oswald who introduced me to Maple Syrup. It was springtime 1965, and we had just learned about a clear liquid called sap that came from a tree. She brought in a square metal can that was filled with syrup and had all the kids line up, single file, by the sink at the back of the room. She poured a little syrup onto a spoon and slipped it into each kid's mouth, rinsing the spoon under tap water between kids. I waited patiently in line. It was finally my turn. I had no idea what to expect; I had never heard of eating anything from a tree before. She poured the golden liquid onto the spoon and lowered the spoon to my mouth. The burst of flavour that filled my mouth was the most incredible thing I had ever tasted in my whole nine-year life. It was unbelievable. It couldn't possibly be true that this liquid was from a tree!

Grade Five: Mr. Joe Styles was a retired cop who lived in St. Thomas, Ontario, and drove to Lorne Ave. School every day to be our teacher. I couldn't understand the driving concept since I had barely ever been in a car. Not many families East of Adelaide could afford a car, nor did many of the houses in the area have driveways. I didn't know why a guy who lived in a *Saintly-named* town taught at our school in the first place, in the *public* school system ...after all weren't you some kind of *Catholic* if you lived in Saint Thomas? Shouldn't he be teaching at St. Mary's the local *Catholic* school? He was a good teacher and he used to treat my classmates and me like adults; so I thought. I felt very mature as we discussed social and political issues with him. I also knew that he was a cop, and therefore, not to disobey him.

Grade Six: Mr. Lorne Davis started teaching at the school in 1966 and he was so cute! All the girls thought he was adorable! Short, dark cropped hair, black rimmed glasses; a young man, fresh out of teachers' college with a nice build and good sense of humour. In the olden days ('60s) you could go to teacher's college right out of grade thirteen, so the new teachers were all around nineteen years old. Heck, some of the senior boys in grade eight were seventeen years old; almost the same age as our new teacher! We thought the school was named after Mr. Lorne Davis. Sometimes we even called him by his first name to his face, so we could say *Lorne* out loud. We felt rather special having the namesake of our school as our teacher. He played games with us at the end of the day on Fridays. If we figured out whatever on earth it was we were supposed to figure out in

the game, we got to leave the classroom five minutes early, slide our hands down the smooth bannister and run like rabbits out of the building. We didn't know why or how we got it right. We never stopped to ask, but when he gave us the nod of correctness, we just ran and headed for that staircase!

He would say a food word, like *carrot*. The first kid would say a word following the word that Davis had said. If the word was correct, Davis would give the nod to leave. If it wasn't correct he would look at the next kid seated in the row. That kid would say a word and so on. It was hit and miss for us.

At the end of the year he explained the game. There were two methods.

Method One: If you said a word that started with the same letter that the previous food word ended with, you were correct. Not only did we need to know the logic but we also needed to know how to spell. It didn't matter if the kid sitting in front of you got the nod to leave or not, as long as you said a word that began with the end of their word you were a winner!

Method Two: If you said a food that started with the same letter as your first name you could leave the room.

Grade Seven: The grade seven teacher was known to us as *Bug-eye*, because he always bugged his eyes out of his head and looked down the girls' shirts. He never looked down my shirt because I had nothing to look at; but we all watched

him *google-eye* down the shirts of those who did. He made the girls with the biggest bazookas sit at the front of each row. He would lean on the girls' desks almost eye to eye with them, make his arms go really straight and he would stare right down their shirts.

Bug-eye was a violent, crabby man whom you did not cross. If he was angry with one of the boys he would pick the boy up by the front of his neck, slam the back of his head against the nicely painted brick walls of the hallways and hold him against the wall by his throat. He would tighten his fingers under the boy's jaw and press his face within inches of his, yelling at him with spit flying everywhere as he screamed. The boys couldn't move. Their arms hung at their sides and their feet dangled in the air. It was horrifying to watch.

In other fiery moments in the classroom, he would throw chalk or chalk brushes at people's heads, or grab people by the shirt and heave them out of their seats onto the floor. He would walk around the room and slam a yardstick loudly on the desktops or onto the boys' knuckles. One never knew when one of his forceful outbursts would occur.

There was a public display of his violence one afternoon when the entire class was walking back to the school from the annual Kiwanis Music Festival. We were at the corner of Queens Avenue and William Street. A procession of classmates was already crossing William Street inside the crosswalk area. I was straggling along toward the end of the group just about to cross. A woman driving a rather large

sedan stopped her car at the corner to wait for the kids to continue crossing, but the nose of her car crossed over into the crosswalk area. *Bug-eye*, who was behind me, raced up to the side of the car, raised his right knee high up to his chin and with heel of his leather shoe, kicked the driver door several times, all the while yelling at the woman to back up and let the children cross. The car door was a mess with significant dents in it. When he had stopped kicking, the woman backed her car up and stared at him while the rest of us crossed. We, who saw the incident, were in just as much shock as she. *Bug-eye* crossed the road and walked to the school as if nothing had happened.

Needless to say, I didn't do well in grade seven.

Grade Eight: Mr. Emile Dukovac came to us from working in the gold mines of Timmins and always told us stories about ending his work day at the mines by walking naked through an exit area and having other men look up his butt to be sure there were no nuggets up there! Well, we all knew there were nuggets up there but we never imagined that they were gold!

His favourite saying when our class was wild and noisy was, "Silence Prevails." He would whisper it, so we all had to stop immediately and listen to what he was saying. He would stand at the front of the room lurching, with his arms hanging limply at his sides and silently stare at us. His slick black hair glistened from the light blazing through the large school windows, subdued only by the dullness of his

always-present black suit. He would start his *Silence* routine and we, the entire class, would mockingly purse our lips in fish-like form to make fun of him when he started to say “Preeeeevails!” Then we would continue to laugh hysterically as he tried to gain control of the situation.

Dukovac did very well as a teacher considering the students who were in his charge. It was a class of wild renegades and rebels of all ages. I think our oldest classmate was seventeen years old. Our class was so wild that finally our French teacher, Monsieur Dubois, who came in once a week, refused to teach in our classroom, but Dukovac stuck it out for the whole year!

~ LUNCH TIME ~

WHEN DOUG AND I WENT HOME BETWEEN MORNING AND AFTERNOON SCHOOL for lunch we had the freedom to eat whatever we wanted. We ate a lot of pure white bread sandwiches smeared with butter and laced with white sugar. If we didn't feel like a sweet lunch we would cover white bread with butter and ketchup. If we had toast, we covered it in brown sugar and cinnamon. Sometimes we would just eat sugar right out of the bowl. Once *Pop Tarts* were available we ate a lot of those and we ate *Fruit Loop* sandwiches held together with corn syrup. As I got older I would fire up our gas stove, fry some bacon and eat grease-laden bacon on white bread.

One day, while in grade three, I was invited for lunch to the house of classmate named Rosemary. She lived on Queens Ave., on the west side of English in a white, wooden, well-kept house. She took me inside and we sat at a large table decorated with place-mats and silverware. Her mother brought us yellow liquid in a bowl. I asked what it was. She replied "Chicken Soup."

I had never seen or tasted soup before and I didn't know what to do with it. She leaned close beside me and showed

me that it was hot, and how to drink it with a spoon. While we were working our way through the soup, her mother brought us each a half sandwich and some milk. When we were finished, we were given a cookie.

I couldn't believe the whole thing; surely this wasn't normal!

~ SALVATION ARMY GIRL GUIDES ~

I SIGNED UP FOR GUIDES WHEN I WAS IN GRADE SIX and the most exciting thing about it was that I got to wear an amazing uniform. I was most interested in the uniform and in fact, the uniform was the nicest clothing that I owned. It was the most perfect blue; it had a scarf that was beautiful as it perched on my shoulders around the collar. The leather belt had a wonderful pouch where I could keep secret stuff like gum and coins. And then, there was the culotte - pronounced: Kooooo-lot! It wasn't a skirt, but it wasn't shorts either. It was long and to the knees, split in the centre and each leg had its own region. It was cool... cool-lot. All of us could run and jump and stand on our hands and while we were upside down, legs in the air, no onlookers could glance inside the culotte.

If we had to go to the washroom, and if we were careful, we could perch on the toilet seat in a peeing position while not actually undoing the belt or lowering the culotte to our ankles as you would a pair of shorts. We would instead, hoist a single leg of the culotte as high around our mid-torso as possible, shift the beautiful blue material to a side and pee through the leg hole. It was a great achievement to be able



THE SALVATION ARMY GIRL GUIDES

A Co-operating Society of
The Girl Guides of Canada

Enrolment Card

NAME DEBRA ROBERS

COMPANY LONDON 21ST S.A.

MOTTO: "BE PREPARED"

Promise

- I promise, on my Honour, to do my best—
1. To do my duty to God, the Queen and my country.
 2. To help other people at all times.
 3. To obey the Guide Law.

Law

1. A Guide's honour is to be trusted.
2. A Guide is loyal.
3. A Guide is useful and helps others.
4. A Guide is a friend to all, and a sister to every Guide.
5. A Guide is courteous.
6. A Guide is kind to animals and enjoys the beauty in nature.
7. A Guide is obedient.
8. A Guide smiles and sings even under difficulty.
9. A Guide is thrifty.
10. A Guide is pure in thought, word and deed.

Pledge

I promise to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquor,
tobacco, gambling and all other injurious habits.

DATE ENROLLED Feb. 16 1967

ENDORSED E. Th. Baldwin Guide Captain.

ENDORSED John Watson Corps Officer (Chaplain).

to do this; to actually pee with mounds of Girl Guide blue wrapped around us and then go back to the troop without pee spots anywhere on the blue.

We would gather in the washroom to see if each could do it. A group of us stood squished beside each other outside one of the stalls so we could gawk at the person who was in position and admire her balancing skills! Someone always guarded the washroom door to be sure the guide leaders wouldn't barge in on us. For some reason, we thought the leaders wouldn't approve of this activity and if caught, a lecture would surely be in order. If the person was successful we would all cheer and the next person would head into the stall to pee. But if pee spots were noticed on the blue we would slap our legs and laugh uncontrollably as we scrambled back out to the group.

A few years ago, I discovered my Salvation Army Girl Guide Enrolment Card, which has ten Guide Laws, listed on it. In retrospect, I seemed to do okay on all of them until number ten, the last one. They probably put it last on purpose. All the other laws are easy and then you get to number ten!

Law #10: A Guide is pure in thought, word and deed.

I can't even remember when I started breaking this law! Was it in grade one when I got skinny, pint-sized, pig-tailed Margaret to put her foot up into the opening of her desk so all the boys could look up her plaid skirt? That wasn't pure. In fact, it was borderline evil!

Miss Hubble caught Margaret with her foot wedged into her desk and made her sit that way for the rest of the afternoon. Margaret sobbed great sobbing sobs that echoed through the room while tears fell from her face and splattered all over her desk!

As Margaret sat with one leg wedged into her desk, my mind wandered and I proceeded to put a hex on everyone in the classroom. I squeezed both my hands into tight, mighty fists, then pointed them at each kid and burst my fingers out straight into each of their innocent faces! I didn't go right up to the kids and burst my fingers directly into their faces; I did it from a fair distance in my desk-seat. However, it was Lorne Ave. School so any type of expressive aggression wouldn't have surprised anyone. Miss Hubble noticed my fingers bursting at each child and asked me what I was doing. I answered calmly saying, "I am putting a hex on everyone." She looked at me with a dazed look on her face and smiled. Now that every kid in the room was staring at me, I stopped the hexing. Margaret still crying sat with her foot in her desk.

Or maybe I broke number ten when I started to read my dad's *girly* magazines that he had squirreled away. He had them all: *Playboy*, *Forum*, *Penthouse*, novels, cartoon books and his secret porn collection that only he and I knew where it was located in his basement room. He didn't know I knew where it was as I was extremely careful at putting everything back exactly in order where it was before I looked at it so he would never know that I knew. I remember that it was

somewhere between grades one and six that I started to break this law by viewing Dad's porn collection because my artistic talents peaked in grade six.

In grade three art class, I created a large chalk interpretation of King Midas hovering over his gold. It won a citywide art contest because of nearly correct proportions and the foreshortening of his arms, which apparently is an unusual concept for a kid in grade three to understand. It was displayed at the YMCA on Wellington Street in downtown London. After that contest, I was chosen, along with chicken soup friend Rosemary, to select the art pieces to be purchased by the Board of Education to hang in the schools.



Selecting art was very cool; we got to go to the art gallery located in the main library on Queens Avenue, during school hours with art teacher, Mr. Hughes. It was here that I wandered through a world of creativity and artistic nudity.

I carefully studied each piece and chose paintings for our school, including a fascinating abstract called *Underwater Wonders*. I stood in front of it in amazement as wild swirling lines gracefully floated alongside brilliantly coloured fish. The painting made me feel like I was standing in an underwater fantasy. I told Mr. Hughes that *Underwater Wonders* was my favourite in the entire gallery.

So between the times spent looking at pictures of nudes in Dad's magazines and the time spent with the nudes at the gallery, I had a pretty good understanding of the build and proportions of nude figures, both male and female.

I was in grade six when I painted a rather large picture of Jacques Cartier discovering Montreal while standing beside a perfectly proportional, muscular, well built, Native-Canadian, sporting only a loin cloth! I wasn't sure why all Native-Canadians only wore loin clothes in the olden days, in the middle of winter in Canada, but we all knew it to be true, thus my depiction. Once the painting was completed, a group of five teachers took me out of the classroom into the second floor hallway and asked me how I knew to draw a man like that! Knowing that I was bound to get into big trouble for staring at all the nude men in Dad's collection, and thinking that the teachers might want to read Dad's *girly* magazines too, I scuffed my feet a little, looked them in the eyes and said, "I don't know, I just do!" They stood in a circle with their heads close together whispering and finally sent me back into the room. I never saw that picture again. I suspect that one of the women teachers still has it at home hanging

in her bedroom!

And about Dad's magazines, I didn't just look at the pictures; I actually read the articles. Just like all the men who look at the pictures in those magazines and say they like the magazines for the articles! Me too! I learned a lot of words. I learned a lot of things. I learned a lot of body parts. I read about adult activities. I had clearly broken law number ten while I was in grade three, long before I even knew about Girl Guides.

And then there is the Pledge part of the Girl Guide document at the bottom of the card which states: "I promise to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquor, tobacco, gambling and all other injurious habits."

Habits? Intoxicating liquor, tobacco and gambling are habits? I consider the cracking of my knuckles to be a habit! I do that without thinking; my hands just go for each other, they touch, get a grip and then all of a sudden crack themselves! A big burst of noise! There is no stopping it and it feels great! I don't think about the habit of knuckle cracking like I would think about whether to pick whiskey or brandy as intoxicating liquor in which to indulge. This list of habits makes me wonder what other habits those Sally Ann folks have, which at this point in my life may cause me to consider rejoining the old guide troop.

And speaking of tobacco as referred to in the pledge, well, that breach of contract happened before I signed up for

Guides too! In grade five Debbie D., Debbie E. and I used to smoke our brains out. *The Three Debbies...* We smoked; we walked the neighbourhood streets; we smoked; we were cool; we smoked! It was quite the *habit*.

Even though I didn't inhale, I was a heavy smoker for those two weeks and I knew I was hooked, so I made myself quit. I had heard all about addiction and didn't want to be an addict. I didn't want my fingers to turn yellow from the nicotine like the fingers of all the smokers who were in grade eight. During my two week smoking habit, I mostly smoked leftover Export A butts, tossed aside, mashed into the dirty ashtray beside Aunt Ruth's bed. I would steal the butts from the grime of the ashtray and light them on our flip-open electric toaster or the burner on the gas stove. It's tough to light a scrunched up, bent butt with the flame on a gas stove without burning your face, but it was do-able! We three Debbies hung out in the dirt lane behind the school with all the big kids in grade seven and eight, who also smoked. We smoked and swore and swore about smoking. Fortunately, swearing isn't mentioned in the Guide pledge so I am okay on swearing!

And then there was the time when I was in grade one. Doug and I were playing dinky toys at the side of the house when we found a lit cigar butt on the sidewalk in front of Mrs. Bank's house. We picked it up, and with a dinky toy car in one hand, a little dirt road city carved into the crusty dry soil at our feet, we each put some big old fat man's, brown, smelly, slimy, cigar butt into our clean, tiny, pure mouths, and

sucked on it. To shorten the story, my brother got spanked for lying about it and I just got in the big heck because I told the truth.

It doesn't mention banging cigar butts in the pledge so swearing and smoking discarded cigar butts seemed to be acceptable Sally Ann Guide activities.

~ WEEKEND SCHOOL BREAK-IN ~

GRADE 3

LATE SPRING 1964: FRIDAY AFTER SCHOOL.

EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK THERE WOULD BE KIDS PLAYING IN THE PLAYGROUND. Even though school was over for the day or the week, we always hung out at the school. We shot hoops, played scrub, hit tennis balls against the wall with large wooden rackets. Or we rammed a tennis ball into the toe of someone's old nylons, stood with our back against the wall and played, "Want a cup of tea sir, no sir, why sir, cause I have a cold sir, where'd you get the cold sir, from the north pole sir, what were you doing there sir, catching polar bears sir, how many did you catch sir, one sir, two sir, three sir, that's enough for me sir!" And then we would start over.

We also spent a lot of our after school hours slapping our hands together in contortionist-like patterns while standing face to face with another and singing, "A sailor went to sea sea sea to see what he could see see see and all that he could see see see was the bottom of the deep blue sea sea sea."

Many of the other girls skipped Double Dutch, which I couldn't do without catching a slice of rope on the side of my head, so I didn't participate in skipping activities.

My best after school skill was lurking. I would lurk in the schoolyard and watch activities from on top of the roof of the entrance to the girls' washroom.

The outside door to the girls' washroom was housed in a section of the building that had its own roof covering a staircase, which projected from the main building into the schoolyard. It was at ground floor level and the door opened to the playground. Emerging from the side of the washroom staircase wall was a large, shiny pipe, which ran horizontally and attached to the boiler room on the side of the main building. The pipe was about 18 inches in diameter and four feet off the ground. A person skilled in balance and climbing could scramble up the heating pipe and with no effort at all be up on the tar-covered roof over the staircase. Once on the roof, we could make reflective monkey faces into the large double-hung window, or hang with our legs dangling down over the door, or make a series of dance moves on the roof while overlooking the playground. We did all these things.

It was one Friday spring afternoon after school, while on a monkey-face mission that I noticed the window had not been locked. I pressed my face up against the glass to look inside. There was no one to be seen. I spun around and glanced at the schoolyard. There was no one to be seen there either. I spun around to face the window again and stared at it. I was

alone with an unlocked window. An unlocked window with no one in sight was an open invitation to enter! What kid from East of Adelaide would even give it a second thought not to enter?

There were no handles on the outside of the window so even though it was unlocked; there was no easy way to open it.



I studied the structure of the frame and realized that if I pushed my fingers up into the narrow lip of the upper edge of the lower window I could get it started. It slid up slightly, which gave me enough room to squeeze my fingers under the bottom of the window at the ledge. By lifting hard, I opened it high enough to jam my head and upper body through, which I did. Once I was inside the window to my waist, with legs still kicking out on the roof, I slid down over the radiator and landed on my face on the hallway floor just outside of the grade eight classroom. I reached up, closed the window and stood motionless. The building was silent. This was the first time I had ever heard such silence. I stood stock-still and listened to the echoing sounds of my breathing and the increased thumping of my heart.

The large hallway seemed so much bigger as I stood in it alone in the shadows of afternoon lighting. I started to edge slightly forward and slowly and quietly tiptoed into the authoritative space of the grade eight classroom. My fingers caressed the tops of the desks as I crossed the front of the room by the chalkboard and headed toward the huge, sparkling windows that faced the street. My head could barely reach above the window ledge. I stood on my toes and peeked out so I could see all the houses on the far side of the street. There was nothing happening in the neighbourhood. No one seemed to be home. I was alone outside and inside. I looked towards the back of the room and saw a shelf filled with books. I skidded over to the area and touched each book that was carefully lined up in colour-coded sections. Although the books were carefully placed, they were tattered

and ripped. Cover corners were dented or missing and frayed spines were bleeding pages.

I was surprised by a familiar smell and realized that I was standing next to the ditto machine - *The Spirit Duplicator!* I loved the ditto machine. It was the leading technology and I was fascinated by it. Teachers would give us handouts in class that had just come from the duplicating machine and immediately each kid would raise the paper to his or her face and smell it. It was the best smell ever. Now, I was standing right beside it, with its entire aroma floating through the motionless air around me. I reached for the handle, cranked it and the machine made a giant mechanical sound echo through the room. Darn, it jammed and wouldn't make a full revolution.

After quickly losing interest in the now broken machine, I crept out the back door of the room and stood in the elegant and grand front hallway that was encircled by the massive stone arch that framed the doors. Engraved on a bronze plaque were the names of men who died in WWI. A larger, framed war certificate listed men who volunteered for active service in WWII. I was surprised to see the names of my uncles. I stared at black and white photos of some old grey men named Althouse and Oppen. I sat my bottom on the inside steps, put my elbows on my knees, my hands under my chin and peered out the front doors with my face beaming with delight.

Spinning around to discover my next adventure my eyes

landed on the inviting grand staircase at the far end of the building. I jumped up from the steps and sprinted across the hallway away from the front door gaining speed as I fled and leapt up the staircase. My hand celebrated the smoothness of the wooden bannister on my way up. Once I arrived at the top, I immediately threw my right leg over the smooth glistening bannister and slid down! I ran up once more, two steps at a time and then, once at the top wandered, quietly, like a thief, as I bathed in the haunting peacefulness of silence. The light filtering through the large windows reflected beautifully over the gleaming hardwood floors.

During my time of stolen exploration I decided that it was too much fun being in the school without anyone else and that my friends would surely enjoy this too! I raced back to my window and climbed out to gather up my brother and the other kids who were playing in the yard. We all scaled the roof and plopped one by one onto the hallway floor.

The silence dissipated as ten kids ran, jumped and screamed in glee. We scampered up and down the halls playing soccer and field hockey with equipment we found in the sports room. We played with all the toys in the kindergarten room. We painted and ate mint glue. We ran in circles. We kicked every ball that was in sight to be kicked. We left everything exactly where we dropped it, which wasn't necessarily where we found it. We scribbled on the chalkboards. We went to the back end of the school which was for the hearing impaired kids, where we discovered a large fishbowl that was full of Smarties. We devoured them by the handful. We

discovered rooms that we didn't know existed. We ran up and down the stairs. Other kids were sliding down the bannister and yelping with joy. All silence had disappeared. We did everything that we were never allowed to do during school hours. All we needed was some chewing gum and we would have broken every rule!

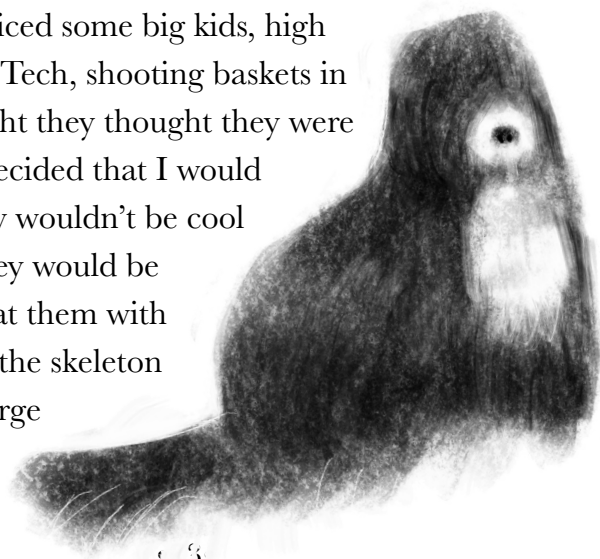
As usual, the door to Old Man Shannon's office was wide open, so I wandered in, past Miss Baker's desk and into his office. There I was standing in the principal's office as if I owned it. I felt important. I looked up at the wall over his desk and was surprised to see *Underwater Wonders*; the abstract painting from the art gallery that I had chosen during one of my trips to the gallery earlier in the year. I didn't know that the school board had actually bought the painting and I didn't know it was hanging in Old Man Shannon's office. Not only was I feeling important, I *was* important; I had contributed to the principal's office decor! I maneuvered myself behind his desk, sat in his giant-sized chair and swung my feet in the air. I kicked and spun the chair in circles all the while keeping *Underwater Wonders* clearly in my view.

During one of my spins, I noticed an elegant, pointed pen that stood in a black plastic stand on a tiny gold ball attached to his green leather desk blotter. I slid out of the chair and picked up the pen. I held it close to my eyes in my right hand and felt its weight. I looked at the slimness of its shape and caressed the smoothness. I guided it through the air like a paper airplane. I was only in grade three and we still used pencils so I was fascinated by the fact that this was a

pen. I didn't own a pen and Jim Parker wouldn't share his. I pretended to print with it in the air and then I tried it out on the blotter. It worked! In fact, it worked so well that it made a big scribble in the middle of his perfectly pristine leather bound blotter, smack-dab in the middle of his desk! Graceful, black fine-lined ink swirls stared up at me while the swirls from *Underwater Wonders* stared down. I put the pen back in the stand and left the blotter alone.

Running amuck in the school was so much fun that the next afternoon, my brother, Scotty our dog, and I headed back to the school. We opened the side entrance so Scotty and a pack of kids could get in without having to go through the window. We continued with our normal break-in, game filled activities. Scotty ran as quickly through the hallways as we did and he played with all the balls we had left strewn around.

As we got towards the back of the school and looked out the windows, we noticed some big kids, high school kids from Tech, shooting baskets in the yard. I thought they thought they were really cool so I decided that I would scare them. They wouldn't be cool anymore. No, they would be afraid. I peeked at them with one eye through the skeleton keyhole of the large wooden door that opened



to the west playground and saw that they were close enough to hear me. I pressed my mouth up against the keyhole and proceeded to make “whhooooooooo” ghostly noises at them through the keyhole out into the yard. The other kids inside with me had their faces pressed against the windows gazing out and could see the big kids startled and looking about. We all laughed, ran away down the hallway, slipped out of the building, and headed home.

Sunday evening, after bath time, Doug and I were upstairs and heard our front doorbell ring. After a few minutes of muffled voices our parents called us to come downstairs to the door. Upon landing at the bottom of the staircase, in our jammies, we were met with the tallest, scariest policeman we had ever seen. He stood rigidly in his black uniform as he stared right at me and said in a clear deep voice: “Did you break into the school?”

I looked him in the eyes, with my hands folded gently in front of me and said, “Yes”

He pulled out a notepad and started to write.

“What’s your name?”

“Debbie.”

“How old are you?”

“Eight.”

“What grade are you in?”

“Three.”

“Did you play with the toys in the kindergarten room?”

“Yes.”

“You could be in a lot of trouble young lady.”

No response.

“And you, young man, did you break into the school too?”

My brother answered, “Yes”.

“Don’t ever do this again; I don’t ever want to be called back to this house to see you again. Do you understand?”

“Yes.”

And then we went back upstairs to bed, crying. We had never been in trouble with the law before and we didn’t want to go to jail. The policeman was big, he had a gun and he had written down our names.

First thing Monday, after morning announcements, Old Man Shannon’s voice broke through on the PA system into my grade three room.

“Miss Baker.”

“Yes.”

“Please send Debbie Rogers to the office.”

She looked at me.

I stood up, took a deep breath, and stepped into the hallway. I placed my hand on the oak bannister that I had just slid down days before and nervously glided it up all the way to the top.

I walked into his office. He was sitting in the chair that I had

been sitting in on Saturday.

I did a quick side-glance up to *Underwater Wonders*, and then looked straight at him.

“The police told me that you broke into the school, is this true?”

“Yes.”

“Did you play with the toys in the kindergarten room?”

“Yes.”

“Did you eat the candies from the fish bowl?”

“Yes.”

“Did you write on my blotter?”

“No.”

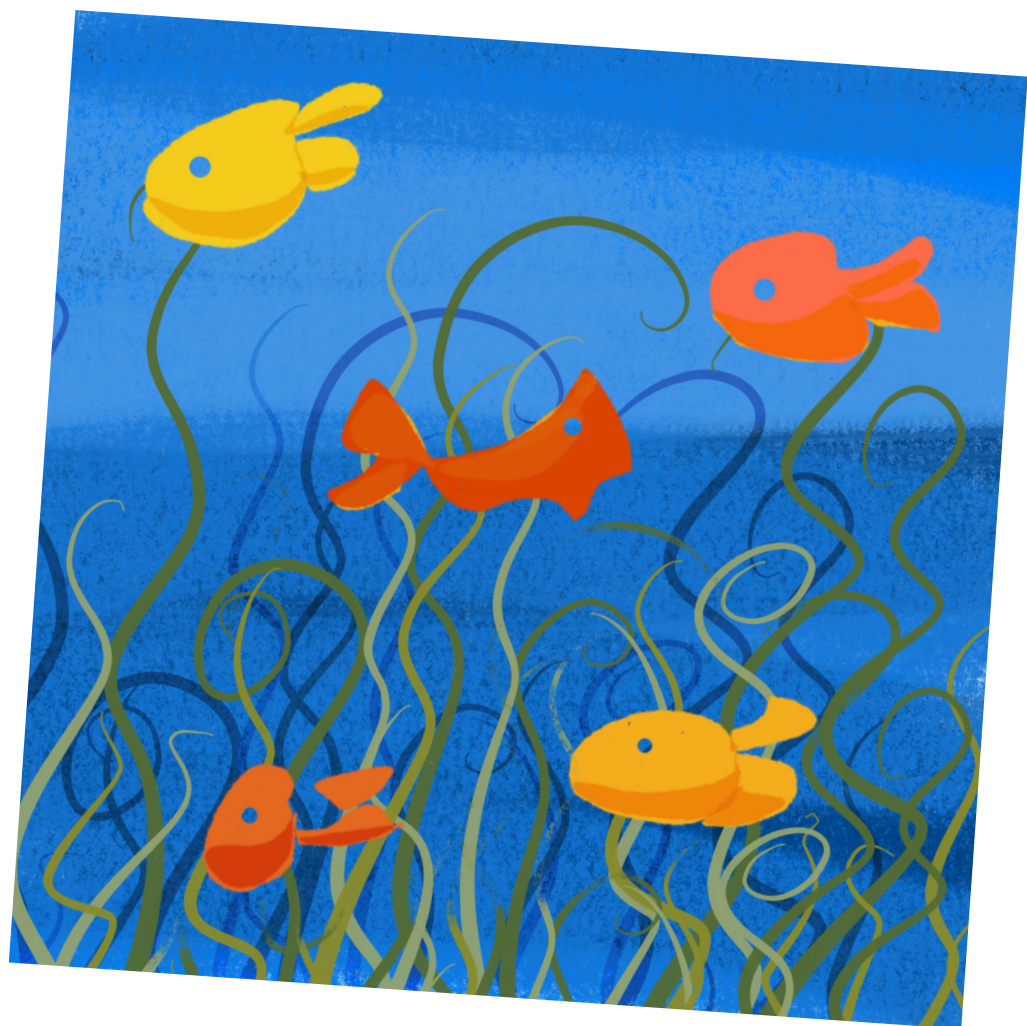
I lied right to his face. I was standing in the principal’s office, lying to the face of Old Man Shannon, the most powerful man I had known during my entire time in the educational system - the man who had the power to welt my hands with a leather strap.

He asked me if I knew who had written on his blotter.

I lied to him again and said, “No.”

There was no strapping; there was no talk of detention or expelling. There was nothing. I went back to the safety of Miss Baker’s grade three class and sat in my desk.

That was the last time I saw *Underwater Wonders*.



~ SKIING ON THE FRONT LAWN ~

GRADE 4

A NEW SCHOOL YEAR BROUGHT NEW FRIENDS AS CHILDREN MERGED TOGETHER to form the new set of pupils in each class. It was because of the merging of pupils that I was introduced to Gail. She lived directly across the road from the school. We developed a fun and easy friendship.

It was late wintertime and Gail had two sets of cross-country skis. We took the skis from her house and crossed the road to the school's front lawn that had a two to three foot gradual slope from the front of the steps down towards the junior grade classrooms. There wasn't much snow and even though we thought we knew what we were doing, we didn't have a clue. We somehow got the skis strapped to our boots and immediately started to fall and scream as we landed on our heads and rear-ends at the bottom of the slope. We were laughing and having a great time.

At one point, I ended up near the curb of the road when a large four-door car with a man inside pulled up beside me. He looked to be older than my dad, with brown and

grey hair. He asked me if I knew where Princess Elizabeth School was. I said I didn't. He asked me if I would get in the car and help him find it because he knew it was in the neighbourhood somewhere. I said I didn't know where it was and that there was no use for me to get into the car; that maybe he wanted to go down the street to Boyle School. It was at that point that I saw he was driving with his pants down and was rubbing an erect penis with his left hand. I had never seen an erect penis before in real life; I had only seen them in Dad's collection. But because I had seen them in Dad's books I sort of knew what they were used for and thought it was rather unusual that he was driving around with it pointing at his steering wheel.

Gail came over to the car. He asked her the same questions. I moved away from the car so I could stare at the penis thing without being noticed. Gail would also not get into the car with him. He finally left without us. Gail and I talked about his penis and then we started skiing on the school lawn again.

Later that winter there was an abduction, rape and murder of a young girl who was found dead in a building on Adelaide Street near Princess, just blocks from where Susan Cadieux's body was found. The following summer, while on my way to McMahon Park to go swimming, I walked past the deserted building and pressed my face up against the front doors to look inside. I stared at the wooden floor that had been described in the news as the dusty floor the girl's body had been dragged across.

~ DYSON'S LANE ~

GRADE 4

DYSON'S LANE WAS A DIRT LANE, WITH POTHOLES, PUDDLES and a lot of broken glass. It was named after the Aluminum Company located on Dundas Street between English and Rectory. The lane opened on Dundas Street and ran through to Queens Avenue, exiting just east of Dare Devil Den member George's house. There were two multiple-car garages mid way through on the east and west sides of the lane with room enough between the two buildings for a car to drive. Mulberry bushes and trees lined the edges of the lane. George's dad ran a tinsmith company out of the garage on the west side and hundreds of tin pieces lay strewn-about on the dirt.

In and around Dyson's lane there was always something, which did not belong to us to play with, or in, or on. One summer we played in an abandoned car we had discovered. It was an old dark green car with flattened tires and bent fenders. It was rusty and dented and the frame of the car rested directly on the ground. It had a tall chrome grille on the front that once was shiny and impressive. There were

horizontal chrome handles with big push buttons on the doors. It looked like it was a car from the late '40s. It had been there for some time before we actually discovered it discarded and well settled into the ground.

We never had a car so the opportunity to play in one was beyond anything my brother and I could dream. We smashed the driver side window with a rock, pried open the door and were quickly inside. We spent hours bouncing and sliding across the big cloth and vinyl seats that spread from the driver's door to the passenger door. We swung with full weight on the steering wheel and played with all the chrome buttons and levers. In our imaginations we drove that car all over London East.



One afternoon, for some reason, we decided to look under the driver's seat where we found a long, rusty, brown rifle. It had an oblong loopy part to put your hand through, a single barrel, a trigger and a lovely wooden handle. Everything we knew about rifles we had learned while watching Roy Rogers, Dale Evans and Tonto. We didn't know anything much but we knew that getting hit by a bullet from one could knock a bad cowboy off his horse.

We played with it passionately over the course of a couple of weeks. We quickly became Bonnie and Clyde, and in our heads we robbed the Canada Trust at the corner

of Dundas and English, over and over. If we felt a little hungry we would drive over to Sammy's Pizza and rob them too. Sometimes we would drive it all the way to Dundas and Adelaide to rob the Toronto Dominion Bank on that corner. We would always speed away by driving behind the



Anderson Globe Factory building because it was such a scary building that not even the cops had the courage to go behind it to catch us! Each time we robbed somewhere we sped away in our flat-tired but speedy getaway car, screeching the tires with full sound effects on every turn. Once we were safely escaped back to our parking spot deep within Dyson's Lane, we counted our stolen cash, tossed the pizza box and each time, we placed the rifle back under the driver's seat before we went home.

I shared the news of our find with our Dare Devil Den friends George and Jim and the four of us would jump into the car, grab the rifle and point it out of the car windows. Sometimes two of us would wrestle in the back seat trying to get the rifle out of the other one's hands. We had no idea of the danger with which we were playing. We had no idea if the rifle was loaded.

After a couple of weeks Dad asked us what we were doing in Dyson's Lane all that time. We told him the story of our car and the rifle. The next time we went back to the lane to continue with our robbing spree the car had mysteriously disappeared. Dad said he didn't know anything about it.

Without having a car anymore we had to find other, more mundane activities to keep us busy. One day, Doug and I crawled through a hole in the fence into the parking lot to the west of Dyson's, where we found a large box of nails. We took the nails and went to each car that was parked in the lot. We wedged the head end of a nail into the dirt directly

under the tire and pointed the sharp end up into the rubber tread of all the tires of all the cars parked in the lot. We put nails on each side of each tire, so no matter if they drove their car forward or backward, they would get a flat. In fact, they would get four flats. Once we were finished setting up each car in the lot to have completely flattened tires, we went home for supper. Later that evening I asked Doug how many cars he thought had flat tires. He replied, “None, because I went back and took all the nails out.” It’s a good thing one of us had a sense of responsibility!

When we had spare time in the lane, we practiced our aim by throwing rocks through the glass in a vintage gasoline pump which was situated about 20 feet directly behind Dyson’s aluminum company. It was a tall, cylinder pump, yellow, with a long, black, rubber hose. We could only see a bit of gasoline resting in the bottom of the tank, so we always threw our rocks toward the top of the glass so we wouldn’t cause a fire. We were fascinated by the strong but muffled sound the glass made as the rock popped a perfect hole in the cylinder. We smashed the cylinder to bits, finally causing the remaining gasoline to spill everywhere.

We also ate a lot of mulberries, which grew wildly in the trees that snuggled tightly up to the garages along the outer edges of the lane. The location of the trees beside the garages, allowed us to easily climb them and tumble on to the roofs of the garages. The roofs were flat and covered with tar and stones, which we threw wildly to the ground. We also used to chew bits of the shiny tar from the roof and pretend it was

gum.

The Dyson's people always threw out wonderfully large cardboard boxes, which we could fit inside. Doug and I would drag them home and up into the attic. From these boxes we built a fleet of automobiles including panel trucks, flat beds, four-door sedans and my favourite, specialty; a two-door, two-seater convertible. My sports-car design was based on the early Ford Thunderbird and even had white-wall tires.

We would have an entire convoy of vehicles strategically placed throughout the attic. Each vehicle had a dashboard with buttons, radio, steering wheel, turning signals and sometimes ejection buttons just like the *Batmobile*.

We didn't know anything about transmissions or engines so we didn't have anything technical like gearboxes or stick shifts. We had so many cars that it was impossible to walk anywhere in the attic without having a pedestrian fatality.

~ TWO SETS OF FRIENDS ~

GRADES 5 - 8

THE SCHOOLYARD WAS ALWAYS FILLED WITH KIDS PLAYING baseball on the tarmac, shooting hoops, or throwing pop bottles high into the air so the bottles would plummet to the ground and explode in shattered pieces of glass. Kids would be smoking on the portable steps or participating in teenage activities behind the portables. Others would be pounding on each other with heavy fists in the dirt lane at the back of the yard. At the same time, others would set the hair of the unsuspecting on fire. Inevitably, someone, somewhere on the playground would be crying, bleeding, on fire, and sometimes all three.

This culture of violence was natural to us. It was a fostered culture of generations of kids who fed on the weak. It was a culture that had been passed down to them while they stumbled their way through the lower grades. It was just the way it was. There was no talk of any particular kid being a bully in those days. By today's definition, we were all bullies, but in reality we were all victims. It was a fight for yourself playground and if someone hit you, you hit him or her back until he or she couldn't stand up. At the end of it all, each

would end up in Old Man Shannon's office proclaiming, "He or she hit me first!"

We were scrappy, we were tough and we weren't afraid. If you let on that you were afraid, some kid would pound the fear out of you. You would be slapped and punched until you ran away crying.

One day in grade five, Darryl, a black kid, came to our school as a new pupil. He seemed nice enough, but for some reason a friend and I decided we would beat him up. We ganged up on him and eventually broke his nose. Nothing happened to us for that. We didn't get called into the office, nor did the police appear. No one told my parents. There was nothing. Darryl came to school the next day with black eyes and his nose covered in white tape. He didn't say a word. As the new kid in class he was allowed to bring something for show-and-tell. He brought in a homemade frame-like structure, about eight inches wide by six inches tall. It had a series of white strings that ran from wide edge to wide edge. He explained that his father was blind and this was the device he used to guide his fingers so he could poke letters in braille through paper in straight lines. I felt terrible for breaking Darryl's nose. I apologized to him.

The odd time, when necessary, I fought for my brother. He was a quiet kid, two years older than me; an exceptional artist and he wouldn't hurt anyone, let alone fight anyone. He kept to himself. One afternoon we were walking back to school near the top of Queens Place and a kid named

Wayne, who was in my brother's class, started to call my brother names and push him. I grabbed Wayne's wrists, planted my feet firmly and started to spin in a circle. I went faster and faster and eventually Wayne's legs were flying horizontally straight out away from me as I spun. I let go of his wrists and he landed square in the middle of a set of bushes on his front lawn. Doug and I continued on our way to school. Wayne didn't pick on my brother anymore.

It was in grade five, when I met Wendy, that I noticed I clearly had two sets of friends. One set went in at 9:00 PM and the other set came out at 9:00 PM. Two sets of friends. Two sets of expectations. Wendy went in before 9:00.

Wendy was a year younger than me and I had never really taken any notice of her until she skipped grade four and landed in my grade five class. She was blond, smart, dressed really well and always seemed to be happy. For some unknown reason we started to hang around together.

She lived at 673 Lorne Ave., at the corner of Lorne and Elizabeth. One day she took me to her house to work on a school project together and I was able to meet her family.

Her mother was small, just less than 5 feet tall. She constantly wore *shift* dresses and always had her hand in a pocket. She seemed nice enough to me but was distant. She referred to me as *Dirty Debbie* as my fingernails never measured up and my clothes were always dirty. I never understood her response to me because I always thought I

did really well fending for myself since I had been dressing myself since the very early grades and doing my own laundry after we got the automatic. I wore clothes as long as I could without washing them because I wasn't really good at washing them.

Wendy's dad was a First-Class Detective at the London Police Force. He was very tall and also was not impressed by me. His low opinion of me peaked when he discovered that my mother's maiden name was Ball as he had numerous times arrested my half-uncles for fights, drugs, stolen cars, and robberies.

Wendy's parents told her to stop playing with me - that I wasn't going to amount to anything. This attitude of theirs intensified one evening after they saw me at the Embassy Hotel on Dundas about 9:30, buying cigarettes. The Embassy was a rough and tumble hotel. It was dark and dirty with scruffy, brawling drinkers. The entranceway smelled like beer, smoke and vomit. On this particular evening her parents were on their way in to the Embassy for a beer as I was on my way out with a pack of Export A smokes.

I said, "Hello"

He said, "What are you doing out this late?"

I replied, "Buying cigarettes" and quickly flipped the pack up beside my face to show him.

They both snorted at me and unmistakably stated that I ought to be home in bed.

I never had a chance to tell them that the smokes weren't for me, they were for my Aunt Ruth and that I only butt-banged her leftovers out of the ashtray beside her bed.

I was clearly out beyond 9:00 and Wendy was told all about it the next day.



~ TRUE CRIME ~

I HAD VARIOUS FRIENDS WHO DID INDEED COME OUT AFTER 9:00 PM. They were all characters who instigated a lot of wild and dangerous fun. Together we partook in *after-nine* activities.

It was with my *after-nine* friend Patty, that I learned how to light a smoke from the end of someone else's cigarette. Face to face, each would place a butt in our mouth that we had just picked up from somewhere on the sidewalk or playground. We would squirrel up nose-to-nose, touch cigarette butt ends together and suck on the stub until it started to glow. We would grip the smoky bang with our forefingers and thumbs and suck on it until our fingers felt the heat from the glowing tip. Once it couldn't be smoked any more we would flick it off the ends of our fingertips at some innocent kid who was playing in the schoolyard. The red glow of the butt would eventually snuff itself out as we lit up the next bang.

One night Patty and Pete, another *after-nine* friend, heard that a man had built a shed out the back of his house and was making pigeons live in it. They told me about it and we decided that making pigeons live indoors was very cruel.

Birds shouldn't be forced to live in a shed, so we were going to make it our mission to set the pigeons free. We hiked from the school, down English street and turned left onto Princess. We snuck between two houses at the corner and started to weave our way through the darkness of the yards at the fence-line. We climbed fences, trees and bushes until we found the likely shed. We were quiet and listened. Eventually, we could hear ruffling and cooing noises, so we knew we had the right spot.

Pete and I climbed up onto the roof and opened all the doors that were perched on top. Two or three birds fluttered out; the others stayed inside. We peered in through the openings and could see about forty birds, but they wouldn't move.

Patty discovered a door that people could enter by, so we opened it and stepped inside. The birds stared at us. We started to flail our arms around to shoo the birds out, all the time whispering to them, "Be free, fly away and find a home!" It took about ten minutes for us to get the majority of the birds out, but some of them still wouldn't move. They stared at us like we were interrupting them or interfering with something. As we closed the door to leave, we saw birds sitting on the roof looking down at us. A few were on the ground and on the fences but none of them really went anywhere. We decided that their lingering around was okay because at least they were outside and they had the option to fly away. The three of us reversed our direction, wound our way back over the fences, through the quiet yards and each went home.

Word rumbled through the schoolyard the next day that someone had been in a Princess Avenue yard and let all the homing pigeons out. When we heard the news, we thought *Homing* was a species of pigeon like the Blacked Capped Sparrow is of the Sparrow family. We couldn't believe that we had freed an entire species. We were secretly proud and never fessed-up to the crime.

The next night, the three of us focused our attention on a beautiful vegetable garden in a yard on English Street that butted up against the school property. We stared through the fence at the orderly rows of vegetables and decided that something needed to be done about it because it was just too tidy. We waited until 9:30 so it was dark enough to be unnoticed. We snuck our way from the front of the house, down the side and into the backyard. We crept over to the garden, gripped an exposed part of vegetation, ripped it out of the ground and threw it high into the air. We continued our way through the patch, flailing vegetables in every direction until we had cleared out almost the entire garden. As we made our escape along the side of the house, I glanced back at our work and saw that the garden was littered with vegetables and completely ruined. As we were fleeing, we heard the sound of police sirens heading our way. Just before we scattered in three directions we swore an oath that if any of us were caught we wouldn't give the names of the others to the cops. The cops made it to Patty and Pete's households. They didn't come to mine. My *after-nine* friends had kept their word.

A few nights later, Patty and I decided that there wasn't anything to do at Lorne Ave. on that particular evening, so we headed down to Boyle School to break windows. We chose Boyle for this adventure because the Boyle principal would never suspect that kids from Lorne Ave. would be anywhere near Boyle so late at night.

There were always lots of rocks on the Boyle playground and the game we played was to see if we could break two windows at a time by throwing only one rock. The second floor hallway of the building had windows to the outside and classroom door windows on the far side of the hall. We knew that if our aim was perfectly lined up and the throw was strong, we could smash both the outside and inside window at the same time. It took a lot of practice to complete the double-chuck but it was quite doable. We started on the north side of the school and smashed our way around the building to the south side. We achieved our goal and managed to get a few double-breaks. Once the windows were smashed we high-tailed it out of the schoolyard and ran home.

The following afternoon I was sitting with Patty on the fire escape steps on the south wall of the Lorne Ave. building as she set a girl's hair on fire with a lighter. It was at that time that I thought maybe hanging out with the *after-nine* kids was not a really smart idea.

~ CATHOLICS ~

GRADE 7 - 8

A TRADITION THAT WAS HANDED DOWN FROM THE SENIOR KIDS to the next generation of Lorne Ave. pupils had to do with Catholics. Lorne Avenue was basically a white, Protestant, heathen, *public* school. We had a few kids from Lebanon, one black family, one Native-Canadian family, a girl from Holland and for a very short time, one girl from Australia. We had one Japanese teacher. We celebrated public and religious holidays together as one student body. Religion practised by different nationalities of the kids at Lorne Ave. was not important to us, but the Catholic kids who lived in the neighbourhood and went to St. Mary's School didn't fit within our understanding of diversity. They were extremely different as demonstrated by the fact that they had an entire school system devoted to their differences.

St. Mary's Catholic School was located a few blocks south of Lorne Ave. School at Lyle Street and King. A lot of the Catholic kids who went to St. Mary's lived in the same neighbourhood as the Protestant and heathen kids who went to Lorne Ave. We walked to school in opposite directions, which meant that every morning the kids from both schools

would cross paths with the kids from the other.

The Lorne Ave. heathen response to crossing paths in the street with a Catholic kid was to quickly raise our hand to the top of the Catholic's head and bop them on the forehead as they passed. It was a quick and easy motion. One little bop would do it. Nobody was hurt. This motion made the Catholics aware of their place in the Lorne Ave. hierarchy each and every day. Many Lorne Ave. kids bopped the Catholics on the head. It was just what you did! The Catholics never retaliated. They got their daily bop and continued walking to their Catholic School.

I don't remember when in elementary school that I actually started or stopped bopping Catholics on the head but it all came back to haunt me in September of grade eleven.

At that time, the Catholic School Board only funded Catholic education until the end of Grade ten. If Catholic students wanted to continue through grades eleven to thirteen in the Catholic system they had to pay tuition. So, at Beck in grade eleven we always had an influx of Catholics who came to continue in the publically funded education system.

In September of grade eleven, a newly arrived Catholic girl, with dark hair and pretty dark eyes walked up to me and stopped directly in front of me. She looked straight into my eyes and said, "Are you Debbie Rogers?"

I replied, "Yes".

She said, “I am Sue” and she quickly raised her hand and squarely bopped me in the head. She knew the move. She had been practicing and waiting for this day her whole life. She bopped me and said, “You used to bop me in the head every day and now we’re even!”

We were *bop-free* friends after that.

~ QUELQU'UN PARLE FRANÇAIS? ~

EVEN THOUGH SOME MIGHT THINK MY TIME AT LORNE AVE. SCHOOL was rather tumultuous, it was stable and consistent for me. I knew what to expect each day and I knew the players. I knew what I had to do to survive and I knew how to get ready for the day. I knew with whom it was safe to play and I knew the kids I needed to avoid. I knew how to protect myself. Even though it was rough and tumble, I was safe. I was a senior who could teach the juniors how to bop the Catholics. I was respected.

High school, on the other hand, was a complete unknown to me. I had chosen Sir Adam Beck Collegiate Institute to be the high school I would attend when I was in grade three as it was then that I found out both my dad and Miss Baker had gone to Beck. Beck became my goal.

It was tough ensuring that I was able to attend Beck because to go to Beck a student must take French while in grade eight. I was in 8B and Monsieur Dubois was our French teacher. He was one of those teachers who travelled from school to school to teach a specific subject, so he wasn't a regular teacher at Lorne Ave., which meant he had, in our

eyes, substitute teacher status. Besides that, no one ever had a clue what he was talking about because everything he said was in French and we couldn't speak French!

The senior classes at Lorne Ave. were streamed into A Classes and B Classes. The A Classes had the smart kids, and the B classes had everyone else. I had been in 5A, 6B and 7A. But grade 7A and *Bug-eye* were not good for me so I ended up barely in 8B. By barely, I mean that I almost had to do grade seven over again, but they spared me failure and conditionally passed me into 8B. My marks were to be reviewed by Old Man Shannon at the end of the first term to see if I could stay in grade eight. It ends up that I was doing well and the horror of grade seven was history to me!

I didn't have any trouble being in 8B because it was so much fun. It was completely unpredictable. We had wild kids who took tantrums and threw things or swore at Mr. Dukovac. Kids would light up cigarettes in the classroom or throw balls of plasticine or books at the back of other kids' heads. Some of the guys would have open bottles of beer in their desks and swig it when Dukovac wasn't looking, and everyone cheated on tests. Dukovac, although new to teaching, handled our class very well. He was a moderate disciplinarian and was liked by the kids, so they eventually did what he asked. But Monsieur Dubois on the other hand, couldn't cope with the brutality of the guys in 8B and finally refused to teach French in our room.

Out of all the kids in 8B, only a few of us wanted to go Beck. The majority wanted to quit school altogether or go to Tech. After discussions with Old Man Shannon, he allowed those who wanted to go Beck into the 8A classroom to take French with them.

Taking French with the 8A kids kept the doors of Beck open to me.

~ THE TRANSITION ~

IT WAS LATE IN GRADE EIGHT WHEN I DISCOVERED that somewhere between grade seven when *Bug-eye* wouldn't look down my shirt because I had no bazookas and grade eight graduation, that I had grown some sort of minuscule bazooki.

A week before grade eight graduation, I strolled into my parent's room, pointed at my newly developed chest area and said, "Mom, I need to do something about these. I need a bra!" That night we walked up to the Metropolitan Store in London East. I tried on various bras and proudly left the store with a crisp, white, 32 AA. As we walked home my mother hollered from the sidewalk to all the neighbours we passed, including Mrs. Banks who was sitting on her porch, that I had my first bra. It was a big deal to wear a bra in elementary school. It meant you were womanly and mature. The boys looked at you differently if you wore a bra and they always made rude remarks.

My hair was another story. Although my hair was always long, it just grew wildly on its own. I had never had my hair cut. When I was really small, Dad would take me to the barbershop on Dundas Street, beside Dyson's Lane. The

barber would put a board across the arms of the big red barber-chair so I could be perched high enough that he could reach me, and he would cut my bangs. When I was older - grades five through eight, when my bangs got long, Mom would solidly mash a piece of masking tape across my forehead from one ear to the other. She would push it hard so that it was sure to stick to my head. She would then press the point of cold, hard, scissors against my forehead and cut in a straight line horizontally along the edge of the tape. When she was finished she would grab one end of the tape and with full force rip it as well as layers of skin from my forehead leaving behind a band of fiery red skin gleaming above my eyebrows.

The approach to my hair was different for grade eight graduation. In preparation for the graduation ceremony, I went to Tony's Beauty Salon on the south side of Dundas Street, just west of English. I wanted to go to Miss Fran's but even though I wasn't married nor at risk of divorce, the appointment was made for me at Tony's. This was the first time I had ever been to a hairdresser. I had my ponytail let down for the first time since my pigtails disappeared in the early grades. My bangs were trimmed and my hair washed. It was left down, draped over my shoulders. My life was changing as I now had a Double-A and a new hair-do.

I always wore my hair down after that instead of in a ponytail but Dad wouldn't allow me to part it in the middle because he said I would look like an Indian. So for the first two years of high school, it was parted at the side and

swooped over similar in style to an old man trying to hide a shiny, balding scalp.

The school dress code at Beck did not allow girls to wear slacks. This meant that as a grade nine girl, I was concerned daily with the fact that I must wear dresses or skirts to school. Preparing for grade nine meant learning how to wear a skirt, which I didn't own, and how to walk in shoes with heels, which I also didn't own.

All through elementary school, I had worn only slacks or shorts. I didn't know how to behave in a skirt; it was totally foreign to me. The last skirt I remembered wearing was when I was in grade two. I was sitting on the steps in the kitchen; wearing my little skirt, with my legs spread-eagle. Baggy, cotton underwear was hanging out and loose about my privates. My mother glanced at me and yelled, "Debbie, sit like a lady!" But, she never told me how it was that a lady sat. I realized at that moment, that if I was to make it through life at all, it must be on my own.

To get ready for the high school dress code, Mom and I went shopping at Hudson's on Dundas Street. Everyone loved shopping at Hudson's. I was allowed to buy two skirts, two V-neck sweaters and outfit-matching knee socks. The knee-length skirts were pleated and held closed with a big safety pin. The sweaters matched the colour of the skirts. We also bought panty hose for the times that I wouldn't be wearing my new knee socks.

Dad insisted that I get shoes with heels so I would develop some calves. I didn't know why going to high school had anything to do with farm animals, but I did what I was told and bought a pair of shiny toed shoes with square clumpy heels. My new elevator shoes made me walk completely unbalanced and feel like a tall and awkward three-legged giraffe. I was worried about being safe in my new shoes.

Wendy had given me a few skirts that she wasn't wearing anymore. They were plaid, with shiny gold chains across the front. These skirts were considerably shorter than my knee length, pleated purchases. They were also larger around the waist than my waist, so I had to use safety pins to gather them in the front so they would stay up. The safety pins worked well for the most part but because I had so much material gathered together in one tiny pin, it would often pop open and the point of the pin would stab me in the belly. The sharp jab would cause me to twist my ankles and sometimes flip my shoes right off my feet. I wasn't good at walking in my high-heeled shoes even though Wendy and I walked to school most days and I practiced in my spare time. I was gangly and unstable.

I was so skinny that I never owned a pair of hips big enough to hang anything on and because of this pantyhose caused difficulties. Without fail, by the time Wendy and I walked from my house to Dundas and Ontario Streets, my panty hose had slipped down my hips and the crotch was hanging lower than the hemline of the skirt. I would hoist the hose back up and by the time we had walked farther on Dundas

Street to McCormick's, the crotch would be down around my knees. I was having enough trouble walking in heels. Dealing with crotch-slide was making it all very problematic for me.

After months of hoisting up and poking my fingers through dozens of pairs of pantyhose as I heaved them up to my chest line, I decided to buy a girdle. I know this is rather hard to believe since I wore size eight clothes and weighed all of 100 pounds, but it was the only thing I could think of to do to keep the pantyhose in place. I saved my allowance for the purchase and headed to the Met. I weaved my way through the underwear department touching all kinds of rubbery things, and finally found a small, fluorescent yellow panty girdle.

A panty girdle is shaped like men's boxer shorts in that it has leg parts, but it is skin-tight. There is no room for anything to swing or move or breathe when you are wearing a panty girdle.

This system of preventing pantyhose crotch-slide, worked for me. I no longer had to hoist the babies up all the time and I could concentrate on figuring out how to walk. My walking slowly improved until one day when Wendy and I were racing out the front doors of the school to catch the public transit bus to go home. I was on the sidewalk in front of the bus stop when one of my shoe's square heels twisted my ankle over and both feet flew out from under me. I splatted face down, spread-eagle, legs a mile apart, on the sidewalk.

My books and papers that once were carefully held in my arms had flown everywhere as howls of hysterical laughter started to stream from the kids who were piling onto the bus. Barb, one of the friends who took the ice cream from the stranger with me as a kid, was just stepping onto the bus and was laughing so hard that the bus door actually closed on her head. The embarrassing words that accompanied the laughter were, “Look at her yellow girdle!” Howl, howl, laugh, and point! I quickly picked up all my books and got on the bus.

Then there was another day when I was heading down the stairs to return the school clarinet to the music room. I had a handful of books, binders, a lunch bag and my clarinet. I had just rounded the landing on the ground floor, passing a bunch of senior students and started to descend the final flight of stairs to the basement. I couldn’t see the stairs below me because I had too many things in my hands, which were blocking the view of the steps and my feet.

When a person is going down steps, the leg movement you take changes when you get to the bottom step and are about to step onto the floor. Instead of being prepared to descend, you extend your foot more horizontally to take a step forward. I thought I was at the bottom step so I extended my foot. But to my surprise, I was two steps from the bottom. I immediately tipped upside down and once again splatted flat in front of what had to be a million people. My clarinet box flew open and the instrument was in pieces on the floor scattered among my books and lunch. Wendy, who

was standing at the top of the steps, walked away as fits of laughter roared through the air. People didn't know whether to look at the mess on the floor or at my yellow girdle that was pointing straight up into their faces!

On January first of 1970, the school changed its policy and girls could wear slacks. Hallelujah! Dad said I could wear slacks once a week and not any more than that. I tried to get permission for two days. He replied, "No days then!"

Fortunately, Dad left for work before I left for school, so I wore slacks everyday and he never knew the difference. I was so happy about the freedom from heels. Not only could I walk again in flat shoes, but also the yellow panty girdle was history!

I started to part my hair in the middle.

~ HEY WENDY WATCH THIS! ~

EACH MORNING WENDY AND I MET SOMEWHERE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD to



make our way to school. One snow covered winter morning the sidewalks and side roads were completely covered in layers of slippery, glistening ice and we could barely walk to the bus stop without falling. We held on to each other all the way up English Street so we wouldn't hurt ourselves. We finally

made it to the bus stop on Dundas near the U-Need-A Cab building. It was there, at the bus stop that I examined the slippery world around us. I decided that it would be fun to take a running, flying leap onto the road and slide on my belly down the middle of Dundas Street.

I passed my books to Wendy to hold and yelled, "Hey Wendy, watch this!" I took a firm, forthright step and broke into a full-tilt fifty-meter dash sprint in the middle of the road. When I was at top speed I stretched my arms out in front of me, leapt into the air and flew just like Superman, arms outstretched with my invisible cape fluttering rapidly behind me in the grip of the wind. I slowly turned my head

from side to side to witness the elegant stillness of the streetscape as each building slowly faded from my vision. I felt the cold wind breezing by my face. In this very moment, I was living the dream of every kid who had ever read a *Superman* comic. As I flew through the air toward the middle of the road I started to prepare myself for my glorious and slippery landing. I pictured how I would gracefully land on my belly and slide enthusiastically all the way across the road, perhaps out into the middle of the intersection by the Canada Trust or maybe I would slide all the way to Western Tire.

After what seemed to be at least twenty seconds of admirable flight, the surface of the road was quickly within fingertip reach and I prepared for the slide. I hit the shiny road with



my outstretched arms still in perfect flight position. To my surprise I did not slide. No, there was no sliding. My invisible cape had wedged itself up over my head upon impact. The bare skin of my hips taunted me while flesh ripped from my body as I bounced along the cold asphalt to an abrupt halt. I lay motionless in the middle of the road, with hips stinging and bleeding as something burned its way into my fresh and tender wounds. My lips also felt the sting of burn. Fearing they were bleeding, I touched them with my tongue and was surprised to taste... salt! The air was still and silent except for rolling fits of howling laughter that seemed to be originating from somewhere in the background in the vicinity of the bus stop area. Yes, it was Wendy; my supportive and dearest friend, bent over, holding her belly as she laughed.

Apparently, the sweet, sunlit, glistening road I had admired only moments ago was not covered in slippery ice but instead was covered with a sparkly mixture of salt and sand that had been spread earlier that morning by city workers to prevent people and cars from slipping on the road. Their efforts had worked.

I brushed the layers of mucky salt off my clothes and picked myself up just as the bus squealed into pick-up position. In dizziness and pain, I climbed aboard.

It took me some time to understand the physical limits of my body. One sunny spring day in grade nine, after school, Wendy and I went to the Polka Dot Material Store on Dundas at Elizabeth, because Wendy had to buy

some material for a project for her home economics class. I didn't take this area of study, as I wasn't interested in sewing or material or thread or anything that had to do with home activities. As Wendy slowly and methodically wandered through the store trying to find material she liked, I wandered through the store keeping myself amused by punching my fist into the rolls of material. I had a quick flashback to being in elementary school when I would wander through the Metropolitan Store and punch the cups down in all the bras on display. Instead of the bras lying delicately and perfectly, face-up in pristine rows of Double Ds, they would be mashed up rows of Double Dents. Denting the bras was a regular routine for me. I would always make my way over to the ladies department specifically for the denting ritual. It always made me laugh, as I would glance back at them all pushed-in and messy.

While Wendy shopped, I continued to punch my way through the aisles of different qualities and textures banging all the rolls and feeling the combination of the softness of the material and firmness of the roll. Still thumping each roll as I arrived at the end of the display aisle, I spun myself towards Wendy and yelled in a big voice, "Hey Wendy watch this!" I placed my hands firmly on my hips, pivoted my body from my waist and thrust my head down, forward, full force, and earnestly crashed my head against the roll of material at the end of the aisle. The sound of a huge thump riveted through the building as my body dropped to the floor echoing a second thump. Silence prevailed except for hysterical laughter from none other than Wendy as she left me in a

heap on the floor while she exited the building.

I reached up to the counter edge and pulled myself from the floor. While gently rubbing the lump on my forehead I carefully lifted the delicate corner of the material so I could examine the roll. I was shocked to discover that the roll on which I had banged my head wasn't a roll at all but instead, was a single piece of material that had been perfectly draped over the wooden end of the counter. I had severely banged my head on gleaming, beautiful oak hardwood! With my goose egg in my hand, I left the building.

Wendy never did buy any material.

At home that night, while nursing my goose egg with ice, I decided that yelling, "Hey Wendy watch this," meant that I was going to hurt myself, so that phase of my life ended.

The rest of my high school days were moderately normal, as Beck seemed to be filled with all the kids *East of Adelaide* who went in before 9:00 PM. I wasn't involved in any more fistfights. The only things I threw were basketballs, shot put and discus. It wasn't cool to smoke. I learned about bird species and realized what a dope I was with the whole homing bird escapade. I continued to take French. I realized that Catholics were people too.

~ THE END OF OUR REIGN ~

EARLY IN 1974, DAD AND HARRY BANKS, OUR LANDLORD, HAD COME TO AN AGREEMENT that Dad would buy our half of the duplex for \$11,000. Banks was going to hold the mortgage and he went away to have the papers drawn up. Before Banks completed the paperwork, he died.

When I heard the news of his death, I sat on the floor in the Bank's house at the feet of his mother. She sobbed in disbelief with her hands covering her face, as she said, "Children should never die before their parents, that's not the way it's supposed to be."

After the funeral, Mrs. Banks, the wife of the landlord, refused to honour the agreement that was made between her husband and my dad. She said it was under-priced, that she would never sell it for that price and she wouldn't hold the mortgage. She listed it with a Realtor. When my mild-mannered dad came home from work and saw the real estate sign on the lawn he was furious. He ripped the sign out of the ground and smashed it into pieces. The real estate company installed another sign a few days later. Dad did the same thing again. The house sold without the purchaser ever

doing a walk through our half of the building.

The real estate market was in the midst of a giant growth period and the new owner listed the house for sale again within months at double the price. Dad was furious for the second time. He wouldn't allow any prospective buyers to come inside our front door. One evening the telephone rang. From the other end of the telephone line, the new landlord told Dad that we had to move out.

Fourteen years had wrapped itself around four floors of multiple people, one dog and numerous cats, making moving preparations overwhelming. One of us had to touch each item that was in the house and make a decision about whether to keep it or not.

The Dare Devils' Den banner was one of my first decisions as it had been long neglected and was tattered and ripped. I found it bundled together with an old notepad of Jim Parker's in the corner of the laundry room. The faded strokes of his pen listed the schedule of upcoming water fights and the cryptography of some sort of secret code.

Someone, not me, went behind the furnace to pull out the old wringer washer so it could be taken to the dump. My gutbucket was beside the washer. It was rusted through. The copper wire was no longer attached and lay limply beside it. It went to the dump too. One by one I helped Dad take down the centrefolds of the nude ladies and we packed the remains of the racetrack. We sorted through the morgue and

kept only recently outdated material.

Remnants of leftover cardboard cars in the attic were smashed down and put out with the garbage. It was in a box of toys in the attic that I found a large grey folded and ripped piece of paper. Colour appeared as I carefully unfolded it. It was King Midas.

While packing items in my bedroom, I approached the dresser that no longer haunted me and opened the lower drawer. I gently placed my folded Union Jack inside.

On May 1, 1974, everything in the house that we could tangibly hold was packed and lifted onto a moving truck. It was over.

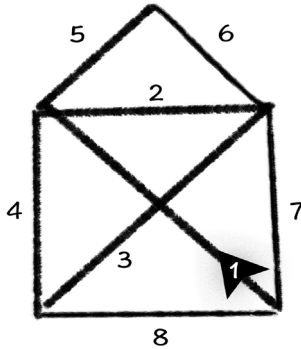
With my knuckle, I tapped the dusty glass of the window to knock away the faded image of the truck that was fixed in my memory. I backed up and made the left turn out of the bedroom. I strolled the lengthy hallway toward the front steps and with a gentle hold, deliberately slid my hand slowly down the oak bannister to the bottom of the staircase. As I stood on the final step I could hear the faded echoes of footsteps that had once led me outside into amazing adventures.

Nervous energy shot down my arms into the tips of my fingers as I gripped the cold yet familiar, brass handle of the door. It creaked on its hinges, as it swung open. I stepped through and with a quiet heart, softly pulled it closed.

APPENDIX 1

DARE DEVIL DEN IQ TEST ANSWERS

1. You don't bury survivors.
- 2.



3. Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and in our days, Pluto
4. A giraffe walking past a window
5. The pocket can have a hole in it
6. Tomato Sandwich
7. Wind can't blow from all directions and peanuts do not grow on trees.
8. Mexican riding a bike (from above).
9. News paper.
10. He can't marry anyone because he is dead.
11. Four.
12. Draw.
13. 0

APPENDIX 2

LONDON EAST AS DESCRIBED BY THE ACADEMICS

**From the London and Middlesex Historical Society Web
site: www.londonhistory.org**

London East grew out of a swamp known as Priest's Swamp, because of the close proximity of a priest's house situated on its eastern boundary.

The preliminary survey was undertaken by Abraham Iredell in 1796, but it was not until Mahlon Burwell in 1810, that a complete survey was completed. The boundaries of London East were set at the Thames River to the south, Oxford Street to the north, Adelaide Street on the west, and Highbury Avenue on the east.

The history of London East begins in 1851 when Murray Anderson purchased a lot on the northeast corner of Adelaide and Dundas. Anderson's home was the first brick house in London East and the only brick house east of Burwell Street. Anderson also gained fame as the first mayor of the newly incorporated City of London. He was a dealer of tin ware, and he constructed a large iron foundry on the southwest corner of Adelaide and Dundas, now the site of London Police Headquarters. Anderson's foundry, the Globe, gave rise to the London East community and initiated the area's industrial history. The employees of the

Globe, wanting to be close to work, built their homes close to the workplace. They bought cheap, small lots from land speculators.

As important as the Globe foundry was, it was the oil industry which made London East such a prominent place. The first oil wells in North America were located in Lambton County in 1857. The refineries were located in Woodstock in Oxford County, but they were so far away that in 1863 William Spencer and his partner, Herman Waterman, moved their entire operation to London East. The earliest refinery was built on the east side of Adelaide, south of the Great Western tracks and Bathurst Street, on the present site of the City Works Department.

Business rapidly expanded and other refineries joined Spencer and Waterman. Among the more prominent were Duffield Bros. (Forest City Refinery), Stedwell & Co., L.C. Leonard, Burns & Co., and Bailey, Duffield and Co. The first use of the crude petroleum was lamp oil because little capital was required for the industry. Technological advances soon resulted in the smaller producers being pushed out, and in 1876 six of the larger companies formed the London Oil Refining Company. Each company continued to operate independently but all profits were pooled.

The largest competitor to the London Oil Refining Company was Silver Star Works, built in 1870 by Englehart, Guggenheim & Co. The significance of American involvement in the oil industry is represented by the

presence of Jacob L. Englehart, an Ohio native, and Isaac Guggenheim, a member of the famous entrepreneurial family from New York City.

Eventually the oil refiners realized that in union lay strength, and largely because of William Spencer and Frederick A. Fitzgerald, “the rival groups combined forces on April 30, 1880, to carry on trade and business ‘under the name and firm of Imperial Oil Company’...”. The old Silver Star Refinery on Bathurst Street, became Imperial Oil’s sole London East refinery.

The stability and prosperity of Imperial Oil was grievously halted on July 11, 1883, when lightning struck the Imperial Oil refinery and the entire premises were destroyed by fire. Concerned about the possibility of further fires and inadequate fire protection the company rebuilt in Petrolia.

The presence of the oil industry and supporting secondary industries established industry as the economic mainstay of the community and attracted a considerable population of factory workers. From 1856 until 1864, the population had grown to 500 people. By the time the community amalgamated with London proper, the population had risen to 2,000.

Months of internal wrangling led up to the amalgamation of London East, due to (sic) anti- amalgamationists fearing extra taxes and loss of London East’s uniqueness. The amalgamation committee finally came to terms, and the

amalgamation of London East and London was formally effected on August 20, 1885. With amalgamation, London East received water from the Springbank Waterworks, police and fire protection, street improvements, and the rebuilding of the G.T.R. Car Shops, which had been destroyed by fire on September 21, 1884.

During the amalgamation, London banned all oil refineries because of heavy pollutants, and encouraged cleaner industries such as breweries and financial institutions. Until recent years, businesses stretched along Dundas Street, but a recognizable business district grew up on the corner of Adelaide and Dundas, known as Lilley's Corners. Charles Lilley's block of businesses appeared as early as 1864, and other businesses soon followed, including the Anderson Block, erected on the north side of Dundas by Murray Anderson.

By 1912, London East had expanded considerably and took in the suburbs of Ealing, Pottersburg and Knollwood Park in London Township, and Chelsea Green in Westminster Township. In all, 2,200 acres were added to the city in the 1912 annexation. Ealing and Pottersburg had extended London East eastwards beyond Highbury and south from Oxford Street to the south branch of the Thames. These two suburbs were largely residential, but sparsely settled.

Knollwood Park consisted of a triangular piece of land north of Oxford to Cheapside and east from Adelaide to Linwood Street. A major part of the area was occupied by

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Cemetery on the south side of St. James Street. The major reason for the annexation was to provide Sunday streetcar service.

Pottersburg took its name from the Glass Brothers. & Co. Pottery, around which the hamlet developed. The firm specialized in the manufacture of salt-glaze stoneware, and Rockingham and Bristol ware. The business survived a fire in 1895, but was destroyed by another fire in 1897. Workers had built their cottages around the factory, a post office named Pottersburg, and a blacksmith shop were also built in the area. Since the 1961 annexation the small hamlet has been obliterated by commercial and residential development. Ealing, Pottersburg, and Knollwood Park all received fire and police protection, city sewage, street lighting, hydro power, and eventually paved streets, sidewalks, curbs, and gutters.

References:

Armstrong, Frederick H., and Daniel J. Brock, *Reflections of London's Past*

London, Ontario: The Corporation of the City of London, 1975

Bremner, Archie, *City of London, Ontario, Canada: The Pioneer Period and the London of Today*. London, Ontario: London Printing and Lithographing Company Ltd., 1900

Carty, Edmund J., and Arthur C. Carty (ed.), *London (Ont.) Centennial Review: An authentic Record of the City's Growth from 1826 to 1926*. London, Ontario, : Hayden Press, 1926

Hives, Christopher, L. *London East: Resource Manual*. London, Ont.: London Board of Education, 1981.

Lutman, John H. and Christopher L. Hives *The North and the East of*

London: An Historical and Architectural Guide London, Ontario
The Corporation of the City of London, 1982

APPENDIX 3

Lorne Avenue staff and students celebrated Canada's Centennial year in June 1967, with a Reunion and Open House. It was a busy event with lots of people standing in the hallways and classrooms laughing, chatting and looking at pictures and displays made by the current students. I attended the event with my mom, who attended Lorne Avenue in the early 1940s.

A booklet outlining the history of Lorne Avenue School was made available to those who asked for one. Miss Baker, the secretary, gave me my copy which still holds a place of importance in my library. It is a rare item.

Miss Baker typed it and then reproduced it using the Gestetner machine that was housed in her office. The Grade eight pupils assisted with its production by cutting the pages to size, binding the booklet with black binding tape and finally adding two staples to seal the bind.

The content was written by Principal, William David Edison Matthews in 1955 as Lorne Avenue's contribution to the marking of London's Centennial year. The second part was compiled by George C. Jarvis, Vice-principal and describes Lorne Avenue School from London's Centennial to Canada's Centennial in 1967.

It is reproduced below in its entirety:

LORNE AVENUE SCHOOL

By W. D. E. Matthews

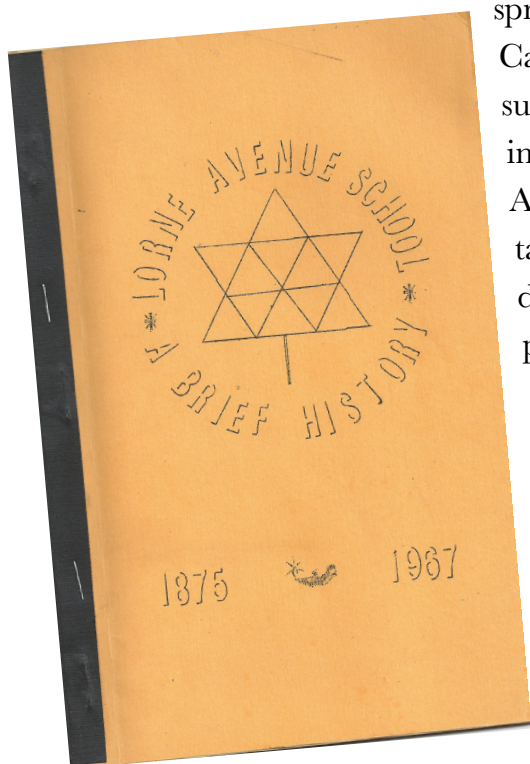
June 15, 1955

Brief History

What the famous old Union School was to the infant city of London in 1855, Lorne Avenue School has been to the suburban fringe that gradually developed east of Adelaide Street between 1850 and 1875. By the time three-quarters of the century had elapsed, the scattered suburbs that

sprawled on both sides of Carling's creek had grown sufficiently large to warrant incorporation as a village. As a community it began to take on individuality and to display a spirit of common purpose.

One of the first evidences of this communal development was the erection of a public school. It was a two roomed brick building that occupied part of the site of the



present school. Because it faced toward Timothy Street, it was for a short time known as that name; but before long, as a tribute to one of the village's prominent public citizens, it was renamed the Anderson School.

Fortunately some record of the official opening of the school remains. To villagers, that day in October, 1875 was an occasion of prime importance. Reeve A. M. Ross was master of ceremonies, while Mayor Benjamin Cronyn represented the big city next door. Obviously, the citizens were proud of their new school building. Trustee Murray Anderson stated that their schoolhouse as furnished, was second to none of its kind in the province. Rev. N. F. English, when invited to express his views, was even more venturesome, and declared it to be "the neatest and best furnished school he had ever seen in the Dominion," and he believed that he had traveled more than the average person. Praise and eloquent words were not the only medium of exchange that day. After the speeches had concluded, a hat was passed "for the purpose of procuring a Bell for the Building" and the necessary amount was quickly oversubscribed.

The child population of London East grew so rapidly that within four years the original two rooms were quite inadequate, consequently two more rooms were added in 1879.

In 1880 Mr. Ambrose Stock's principalship came to an end, and the responsibility of managing the four room building was placed in the hands of Miss Bella Boon, who had been

appointed as teacher of grade seven the previous year. For ten years, during which time annexation to the city took place, Miss Boon demonstrated her ability not only as a classroom teacher, but also as an administrator. Of all the early teachers probably none is remembered more vividly than she. By 1890 the steady increase in the population warranted the addition of four more rooms. In keeping with policy of the London Board of placing the larger schools in the hands of men principals, Miss Boon became a classroom teacher and Mr. W. D. Eckert, who had previously been principal at Rectory Street School, took charge.

Annexation took place in 1885 and London East became Ward Five of the city. Inspector J. B. Boyle seems to have been most concerned over the exceedingly inadequate accommodation of the east end schools. In his opinion Lorne Avenue, at that time, had “not a single good classroom.” While he regarded the Rectory Street School as a “credit to the taste, enterprise, and liberality of the citizens of Number Five Ward, he thought that the Park Street School (now Chesley Avenue) was “surely never designed for the work of education.” For a few months following annexation the Trustees tried to meet the badly crowded conditions in Lorne Avenue by a half-day system (probably London’s first experience with staggered classes), but it proved to be very unpopular. The Board then made arrangements to utilize the first floor rooms of the old east end town hall on Rectory Street. Miss Sadie Vining was put in charge of the pupils who attended there. By means of a large coal stove fairly comfortable accommodation was provided. Inspector Boyle’s

observation about this arrangement bespeaks a bygone day: “If this kind of stove should be selected, then a barrel should be provided so that ashes may be had as a substitute for dry earth for the use of the closets.”

One advantage of wood stoves over coal ones, which by this time were coming into general use, is apparent in a very sharp quarrel that arose between the Lorne Avenue caretaker and a certain Mr. Penn who had for many years looked after the Central (Union) School. Although ashes have today, little more than nuisance value, at that time they were regularly used to keep down odours in the lavatory compartments. Apparently, by this time coal stoves were in use in the comparatively new rooms of Lorne Avenue, but in the much older Central School wood stoves were still being used. The Lorne Avenue janitor, thinking it was a pity to have anything so useful as wood ashes go to waste, laid claim to some that he was sure the janitor at the Central School must be throwing away. But Mr. Penn was not in a sharing mood and maintained that he needed all of his ashes for his large school. The Lorne Avenue man however, took the point of view that the ashes belonged to the Board of Education, and as one of its caretakers, he was entitled to a share of them. Neither was willing to give the ground and so the dispute grew, until finally, Inspector Boyle submitted it to the Board for settlement. They promptly handed down their decision “that Mr. Penn had full legal right to all the ashes at the Central School.”

January of 1892 brought one of those exceptionally cold

spells that stir reminiscences in the minds of old timers. The Board received complaints of cold schools, therefore, each principal was asked to submit a report on the adequacy of the heating facilities of his school during the cold week of January 14 to 19. The majority of the principals reported fairly satisfactory conditions. However, Mr. Eckert's comments bore a note of individuality that deserves repeating: "The teachers are perfectly satisfied with the heating of our school. Miss Carroll has mastered the furnace well, and I think runs it as economically as possible."

By 1896 the building was again straining at the joints to accommodate the rapidly increasing school population to the northeastern fringe. This time two more rooms were added at the south end of the building, bringing the total number to ten. The ground floor addition became the school's first kindergarten room, and still serves the same purpose, while the one above was furnished as a regular classroom. By 1900 the enrolment had reached 600 under the care of the following teachers: Mr. W. D. Eckert, Misses Bella Boon, Edith Vining, Emma Tarry, Bella Grieve, Emma Northcott, Edith McMechan, Missie Laidlaw, Theresa Smibert, Mabel Cannon and Maud Mathews.

While the second quarter century of the school's history did not witness nearly the same expansion in number of rooms that the first had experienced, nevertheless numerous modern improvements were added. The first major change came in 1904 with the resignation of Mr. Eckert after fifty-five years of service in the teaching profession. As a teacher

and principal he was held in high esteem by the hundreds of children with whom he came in contact. Attendance records still extant in the school bear silent, but eloquent witness to the extreme neatness of his penmanship.

In 1905 the sturdy old building underwent a major operation in its lower regions. By this time the Board was convinced that hot air heating, even with furnaces, was not efficient for a school building, therefore, out came the old furnace that Miss Carroll had fired so effectively. The city's expanding sewage system had sealed the doom of dry lavatory compartments and their day was done. With steam heat and new water toilets the old school could well hold up its head among the most modern of school building society.

By 1906 the average enrolment per teacher had reached 55.5 pupils, and into the make-do kindergarten room at the back of the building were crowded 80 to 100 children each half-day session. More accommodation was a necessity, therefore, once again "Topsy" grew some more, and four classrooms were added at the front which brought the building almost out to Lorne Avenue. With its new look it was regarded as "one of the most modern public schools in the city."

With satisfaction and pride the citizens of the East End gathered on February 22, 1901, for the official opening. After listening to an address by Mr. James Hughes, a prominent Toronto educationist, they visited the various classrooms, admiring the large halls, up-to-date sanitary facilities, and modern heating system. Remarkable changes had taken place since 1875.

The enlarged quarters provided a further advantage. It was at this time that “manual training” was passing through its experimental stage as a subject of the public school curriculum. By 1909 the Board had become convinced that it was worthwhile. The basement of the new addition was therefore used as one of the first centres for classes in this subject. It was not until two years later that household science classes were established for the girls. After the opening of Boyle Memorial School in 1915, it became the instruction centre in place of Lorne Avenue.

The expansion of the school building introduced a new problem - the playground was much reduced in area. This was remedied by the purchase of 150 feet from the owners of each of four lots facing Lorne Avenue on the west side of the school.

This period of history cannot be passed over without reference to the Home and School Association, or Mothers’ Club as it was then called. The movement had its origin in Talbot Street School in 1905. Three years later the mothers of Lorne Avenue organized their first club with Mrs. Richard Greensides as president and Mrs. Harry Burch as secretary. At first, meetings were held immediately after four o’clock; later an evening hour was adopted. This involved additional difficulties, since the school was not then supplied with electricity. To overcome this problem kerosene lamps were brought by the members to light up the kindergarten room. In order to raise funds for pictures, extra library books and special equipment for the school, a garden party was held

each year in the schoolyard.

The staff members for 1909 were as follows: Mr. W.J. Snelgrove, principal, and Mr. John Dunbar, vice principal; Misses Boon and Johnson taught grade six, Misses Tarry and Waugh had charge of the fifth graders; Misses Grieve and Miles taught grade four; the grade three youngsters were in the hands of Misses Allaster and Northcott. Miss Gould cared for grade two and Miss Hayes grade one. Three kindergarten teachers daily endeavoured to find elbowroom for 177 five year olds in a classroom scarcely large enough for half that number. Misses Hoston and Daly handled the larger section in the morning while Miss Boake taught a smaller group in the afternoon.

Something else happened in 1909 that brightened the whole future for Lorne Avenue School - the Board voted to install electric lights. Being careful trustees, only the kindergarten room, where the Mothers' Club meetings were held and the caretaker's basement sanctum were granted this boon.

Three years later Mr. Snelgrove was saddled with a new responsibility that encroached upon his teaching duties - a telephone in his office. This however, had its advantages, for many a lad susceptible to the temptation of taking off for the afternoon was reported to his parents before he arrived home for supper.

The decade that followed was a period of rapid expansion on the northeastern fringe between Adelaide and Quebec Streets. The four classrooms added in 1909 were soon filled,

and by 1913 increases in population had once again created crowded conditions. The problem was temporarily solved by the use of a rented room in a Baptist Mission building located in the district. Two years later Boyle Memorial School was opened just east of Quebec Street, thus providing adequate elementary school facilities for that section of the city.

One of the unique features about the school is its memorial to those who made the supreme sacrifice in World War I. In 1920, under the leadership of Principal W.J. Snelgrove, the students and staff combined their resources to provide the funds for a fitting memorial to former students of the school who died for the cause of freedom. A bronze table on a pyramid of stone, not far from the foot of the school flagpole, bears through sunshine and storm silent testimony to the bravery of twenty-three men whose names, like the school, live on, while pupils and teachers come and go.

During the twenties Lorne Avenue bade goodbye to two staff members who had contributed much to the ongoing of the school. In June, 1920, Miss Bella Boon erased her last arithmetic problem from the blackboard and gave out her last yearly report cards. In October of the following year Principal W.J. Snelgrove died after a lengthy illness, having served twenty-one years as head of the school. In January, 1922, his place was filled with W.E. Opper, who had already served London for nine years. His staff at the time included: Mr. R. J. Shaw, and Misses E. Johnson, E. McCallum, E. Cooms, M. Tayler, E. Spence, B. Brieve, F. Kerr, N Cleugh,

M. Nichol, C. Blair, I. Carson and M. Angus.

While the 1920s were characterized by very noticeable increases in secondary school enrollments, most of the elementary schools experienced some decrease. Lorne Avenue was similarly affected. In 1924 one room was closed and by 1926 the enrolment had dropped sufficiently to warrant closing another room. In the second one an auxiliary class was established under the direction of Miss Dora Kingsborough. The other vacant room was converted into a library.

The 1930s may have been days of economic depression, but under Mr. Oppers's leadership progress went on nevertheless. The almost complete lack of auditorium facilities created both a problem and a challenge. In 1935 he and his able assistant, Mr. G.C. Jarvis, undertook to build and install a public address and inter-communication system that would help to co-ordinate the activities of the school. It was a pioneer venture and a tremendous undertaking from every point of view. After scores of hours of spare time labour, success was achieved. On December 20th the new system was formally inaugurated with officials of the Board of Education being present. It marked the beginning of a new era for Lorne Avenue.

Twenty years does not seem very long ago; probably many who read this brief historical sketch will remember Messrs. O.S. Fells and G. C. Jarvis also Misses I. Bradish, M. Taylor, G. Hertel, M. Anderson (now Mrs. Fells), G. Murray, M.

Nichol, I. Carson, M. Angus, and D. Kingsborough, also Mrs. E. Smith.

The years take their toll upon heating facilities as well as teachers. By 1936 the existing system had served its day. That year the basement underwent considerable renovation. A new heating and ventilating plant was installed. This necessitated the construction of a new boiler room, storage bin for coal, and fan room. The following year another boiler room was added, thus increasing the comfort of the rooms in cold weather.

Several changes inside the building have taken place during the last quarter-century. By 1930 the school had a dental room, which at first was shared with a school nurse. As the work of each department was expanded, separate rooms on the first and second floors were made available. One of the major changes of the late thirties was the construction of a fireproof central stairway. Only the more recent graduates will recognize the platform that occupies the northern end of the upper hall. It was built in 1948 to facilitate the broadcasting of morning exercises. Throughout the school, an activity in which the various classes share by turns.

In 1950 the old bell on the roof made the headlines in the Free Press. For scores of years it had ding-donged the hours of work and play for the girls and boys. However, the age of electricity moved in and the old bell lapsed into silent retirement. One summer night, in the midst of a violent thunderstorm, aroused by a piercing, shattering bolt of

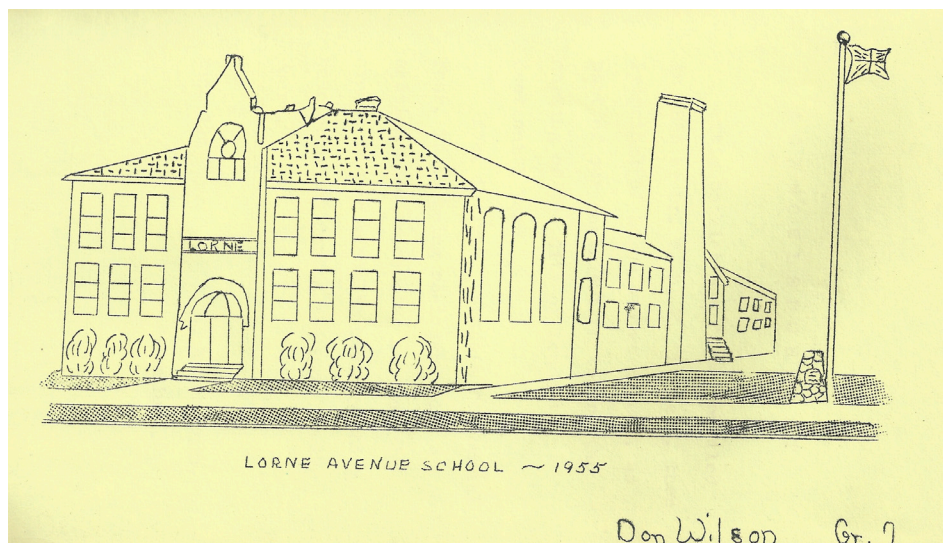
lightning, it shuddered, clanged, and spoke no more. Later when workmen repaired the roof, both bell and turret were removed.

The most recent, and probably final, classroom addition came in 1952. In the basement beneath the kindergarten was found the last bit of suitable space for a fifteenth classroom.

In June, 1953, Principal W. E. Oppen retired after thirty-one years of service in the school. In the use of public address systems he did pioneer work and helped to demonstrate the value of this kind of equipment in the administration of present day schools. His years of leadership contributed much toward developing the harmonious atmosphere found among both pupils and staff.

Lorne Avenue pupils have from time to time distinguished themselves in sports activities. The earliest available record indicates that back in 1906 the lads were swift-footed enough to win the silver cup donated by the Canadian Club for the best track team in the city's public schools. In 1911 the boys captured the Sheriff Cameron Baseball trophy. In 1930 they did it again, and then to show that they carried off the Lawrason cup offered for the public school cadet corps attaining the highest general efficiency. In more recent years the boys have excelled in basketball. Under the skillful coaching of Mr. Richard Peaslee they won the Optimist Club basketball Championship for the city in 1950, 1951 and 1954.

Inspired by the excellent example of those who have gone before, the old school and its staff endeavour to carry on. As of June 1955, they are as follows: W.D. E. Matthews, principal, Miss Grace Baker, Miss Maxine Bowden, Mrs. Eva Cunningham, Mrs. Mary Green, Miss Hazel Henderson, Mr. George Jarvis, Miss Marilyn Matthers, Mrs. Joanne Parkes,



Mr. Richard Peaslee, Mr. Richard Pope, Miss Myrta Taylor, Mr. Edwin Tufts, Miss Jessie Weld, Miss Alice Wilson, Miss Alma Youse, Custodial service are provided by Messrs. H. S. Tucker and R.A. Edwards.

1955 to 1967

George C. Jarvis

As has been noted earlier, on February 23, 1909, a new addition to Lorne Avenue School was formally opened, making a total of 14 rooms to accommodate the pupils of this district. Reports of the event described the school as “standing in the front range of public schools in the province.”

Thirty-one years later, though, the Board of Education was reported as “considering the abandonment of Talbot Street School, one of the oldest in the city. Lorne Avenue, another old one, was next in line to be abandoned, but it would take quite a number of years before steps were taken in either instance.”

It is now 1967, and “quite a number of years” has grown to be thirty-five. Both of the above institutions are still in use, and Lorne Avenue School, far from being abandoned or dying, is larger and more active than ever.

In the years between London’s Centennial in 1955 and Canada’s Centennial in 1967, Lorne Avenue School has undergone two periods of growing pains, resulting in the acquisition of a pair of “wings” - one to the west, and the other to the east of the old 14 room structure so highly praised in 1909.

The first of these additions – the west wing – was the result

of a considerably increased enrolment in the years just prior to 1956. This made it necessary to establish a class in the basement. In addition, the Kindergarten room was too small to accommodate the influx of beginners. Hence in June 1956, work was started on a three-floor west wing, to contain a playroom or general-purpose room in the ground floor, a double-kindergarten on the main floor, and a classroom as well as a Dental Room, Nurse's room and Staff Room on the top floor. But even before the addition was completed in the Fall it was apparent that even more classroom space would be necessary. As a result, the ground floor playroom was divided to provide two additional classrooms.

On October 22, 1956, classes moved into one of the ground floor rooms and the classroom on the top floor. A few days later the Kindergarten occupied its new quarters. In November the last class – Miss Freeland's Senior Girls Handicraft Class – moved into the ground floor room and the west wing was in full operation.

The new wing was officially opened on February 7, 1957, with the guest speaker, Dr. A. B. Lucas, Director of Education, predicting that even more space would have to be provided in the near future.

In 1961, Lorne Avenue School experienced one of its infrequent changes of leadership. In June Dr. W.D.E Matthews, Principal for the past eight years, accepted the position of Principal at Knollwood Public School. Mr. W. William Shannon, formerly Principal of Tweedsmuir Public

School, took over the helm as Principal just in time to guide the school through its second attack of growing pains in five years – the building of the East Wing.

The East Wing was built to;

- (a) provide more classroom space and hence free the playroom in the west wing for its originally designated use;
- (b) house a more modern and adequate heating system (gas-fired);
- (c) provide space for some special classes to serve the surrounding area.

Work on the new addition started in the early summer and by late fall it was in full use. Each of the floors contained three classrooms, and in addition the top floors each had modern washroom facilities, while the ground floor housed the new boiler room from which the whole school was provided with heat. Two classrooms on the ground-level floor contained regular classes while the third, with its attached kitchen, accommodate a Senior Girl's Handicraft Class. The three rooms on the second floor were occupied by regular classes. On the top floor two rooms were specially equipped with modern audio aids to meet the needs of the pupils in two classes for the Hard of Hearing moved here from Lord Roberts Public School. The third room housed an Intermediate II Class established here to assist Grade eight with learning difficulties of various kinds and served several neighbouring schools.

The East Wing was officially opened March 1, 1962, with

Dr. A. B. Lucas, once again, the guest speaker. On that date Lorne Avenue School consisted of twenty regular classrooms (Grades 1-8), a double kindergarten, two classrooms for the Hard of hearing, A Senior Girls' Handicraft Classroom, and an Intermediate II classroom – a total of 25 classrooms. In addition there was in use at that time a gymtorium (playroom for physical education, Home and School Meetings, Opening Exercises, etc.), a basement Art room, A Remedial Clinic in the old staff room, and a library in a small room on the top floor in the old building. Lorne Avenue staff had grown to twenty-eight full-time teachers, and in addition there were three custodians, plus a part-time speech correction teacher, and part-time Dentist, Dentil Assistant and Nurse. All these served a total of 731 pupils.

During the construction of the east wing the Principal's Office disappeared to make way for a corridor linking the new and old buildings. New office space was provided on the top floor of the old building by walling off the north end of the corridor and dividing the space into two small cubicles – a Principal's Office and an Outer Office – the latter containing a modern public address and intercom system.

In the twelve-year period, 1955-67, other events of interest were:

- (a) In 1964 the Board of Education began a policy of replacing the ancient sepia, and black and white pictures that adorned the halls and classrooms, with more colourful and varied prints, chosen by the pupils and teachers from displays at the Art gallery.

- (b) In 1959-60 an “earth-shaking” event occurred that will long be remembered by the pupils of that period who learned their lessons to the accompaniment of the jarring, ear shattering noise of pile drivers and other heavy equipment used in the construction of a storm sewer down the centre of Lorne Avenue in front of the school. This distraction lasted for the better part of a year, progress being greatly hampered by quicksand and underground water. The din finally ended; only to begin again as new curbs and pavement were laid in front of the school. But this time the work was completed in record time and calm once again settled over the district.
- (c) Pupils of Lorne Avenue continued to show their prowess in sports by several times winning the city championships in soccer, volleyball, and softball.
- (d) Pupils and parents alike were deeply saddened by the death of Mr. W. E. Opper on November 19, 1961. Mr. Opper was Principal of Lorne Avenue School from January 1922 to June 1953.
- (e) The vestibule at the front entrance of the school was made the display centre for such items of interest as:
- i. the old bell that called the children to class for so many years from its perch in the belfry atop the old school.
 - ii. the bronze plaque from the cairn that once stood to

- the west of the school, honouring former pupils who gave their lives in WWI
- iii. honour rolls of former pupils who served in both wars.
 - iv. pictures of former Principals of Lorne Ave. School.
- (f) The playground, once a sea of dust when dry and mud when wet, is now completely covered with tarmac. The result – cleaner pupils, cleaner school, and more skinned knees and elbows.
 - (g) Home and School meetings, for many years held in the Kindergarten – both old and new – have been held in the much larger “activity room” since it became available in 1962.
 - (h) On February 15, 1965, the new maple leaf flag became Canada’s official flag. A few days later, when all schools had been supplied, it flew proudly from the flag-pole of Lorne Avenue School.
 - (i) In September 1963, a third class for the Hard of Hearing was established in the old Kindergarten room at the back of the old school.
 - (j) In September 1966, educational opportunities for children at Lorne Avenue School took a giant step forward when, in keeping with a recently adopted policy of the Board of Education, a central library was established in the school, in charge of a qualified

“teacher-librarian”, thus giving the pupils much improved facilities for reading and research.

In the years 1955-66 the enrolment at Lorne Avenue School remained fairly constant, averaging about 725 pupils per year. However, in the Autumn of 1966 the unexpected happened – our enrolment entered a sudden “growth-spurt”, and since January 1967 has been hovering around the unprecedented total of 800 – 815 pupils, squeezed into 29 classrooms of various shapes and sizes, (Including one portable classroom), and in the care of a teaching staff of 33.

And what does the future hold for Lorne Avenue School? Will the old building be torn down and replaced by a new modern structure? Will we get an adequate library? A Gymtorium? Will there be another addition to provide much needed classroom space? Or will it be more portable classrooms? Will the West Wing be made more sound-proof? What about adequate Office space? A Staffroom? What impressions did the members of the Board of Education get when they toured the school last April?

These and other questions provide interesting topics of conversation around the school as rumours fly thick and fast. As to the answers, the crystal ball is much too hazy to predict. At present, possibly the best answer is expressed in that well-know song: “Que Sera Sera”

Staff of Lorne Ave. School

June 1967.....Grade

Mrs. L. Craig.....	3
Mr. L. Davis	6
Miss T. DeVries	1
Mrs. K. Gee	Kn
Mr. K. Flear	7
Mr. L. Godfree	8
Mrs. E. Hanselman	Kn
Mr. J. Hawkins.....	7
Mrs. E. Hayman.....	2
Miss H. Henderson	5
Mr. B. Hughes	8
Mrs. E. Shannon	1
Mrs. B. Kyle	2
Mrs. R. Lukianow	Kn
Miss M. MacGregor.....	4-5
Mrs. J. Pettit.....	4
Mrs. M. Park	3
Miss B. Ready.....	4
Miss C. Rudolph	6
Miss C. Stanley.....	2
Mr. J. Styles	5
Miss J. Weld.....	1
Mrs. M. Woodhouse.....	1
Mr. A. Hinton.....	R.R.C
Miss L. Morrow.....	Jr. Oral
Mrs D. Murphy	S.G.H.
Miss R. Nisbett.....	Kn. O.
Mrs. G. Wesenger.....	Kn. O

Miss M. West..... Sr. O

Miss L. Baker Secretary

Miss E. Thomkins Librarian

Mrs. P. Frost..... Nurse

Dr. Black..... Dentist

Mrs. Moore Dental Assistant

Mrs. Tassies Dental Assistant

Mrs. S. Ewart Charge Custodian

Mr. C. Uttley Custodian

Mr. R. Getsinger Custodian



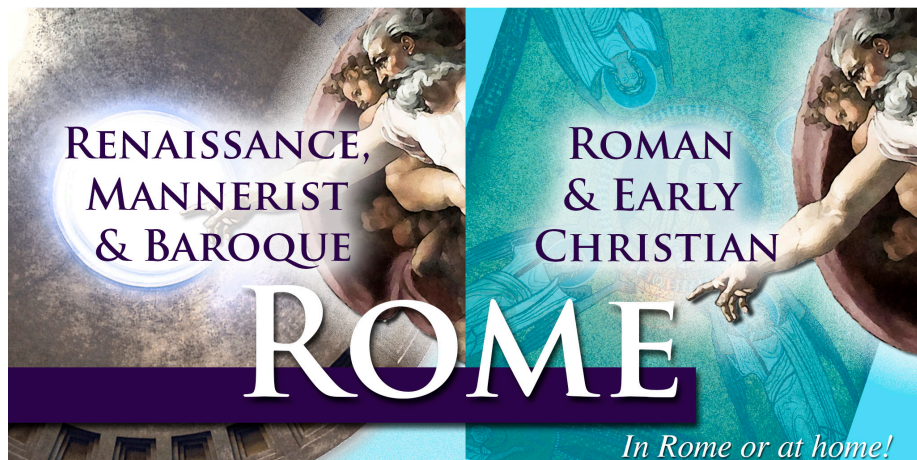
LORNE AVENUE SCHOOL ~ 1967

W. W. S.

~ **TABLET & PHONE APPS** ~
CREATED BY DEB

WALKABOUT TOURS

Sixteen hundred years of art and architecture in two days.



REDEKOP, ROGERS & HUIBERTS



~ABOUT THE AUTHOR~

Over the years Deb has written numerous humorous true-to-life short stories, but this memoir is her first published collection.

She mostly develops Walking Tour Apps for mobile devices, creates web pages, teaches computer software throughout the Province of Ontario and photographs everything.

Three of her *Walkabout Tour* Apps which are being used around the world are:

Rome Walkabout, Italy:

Roman and Early Christian Art & Architecture

Rome Walkabout, Italy:

Renaissance, Mannerist & Baroque Art & Architecture

and the Provincially recognised, award winning
London, Ontario: *Heart of London*, an historical walking tour.

In her spare time Deb drives around in a two seater convertible which is based on the design of her favourite cardboard car mentioned in this memoir. Sadly, her current car lacks an ejector seat but it has a real transmission.

You can find out more information or contact Deb
at: www.heyrogers.net

**To post a review
about this book please go to:**

<http://www.heyrogers.net/hey-wendy-watch-this.html>



You can take
the kid out of the core,
but you can't take
the core out of the kid.

~Val Morrison~