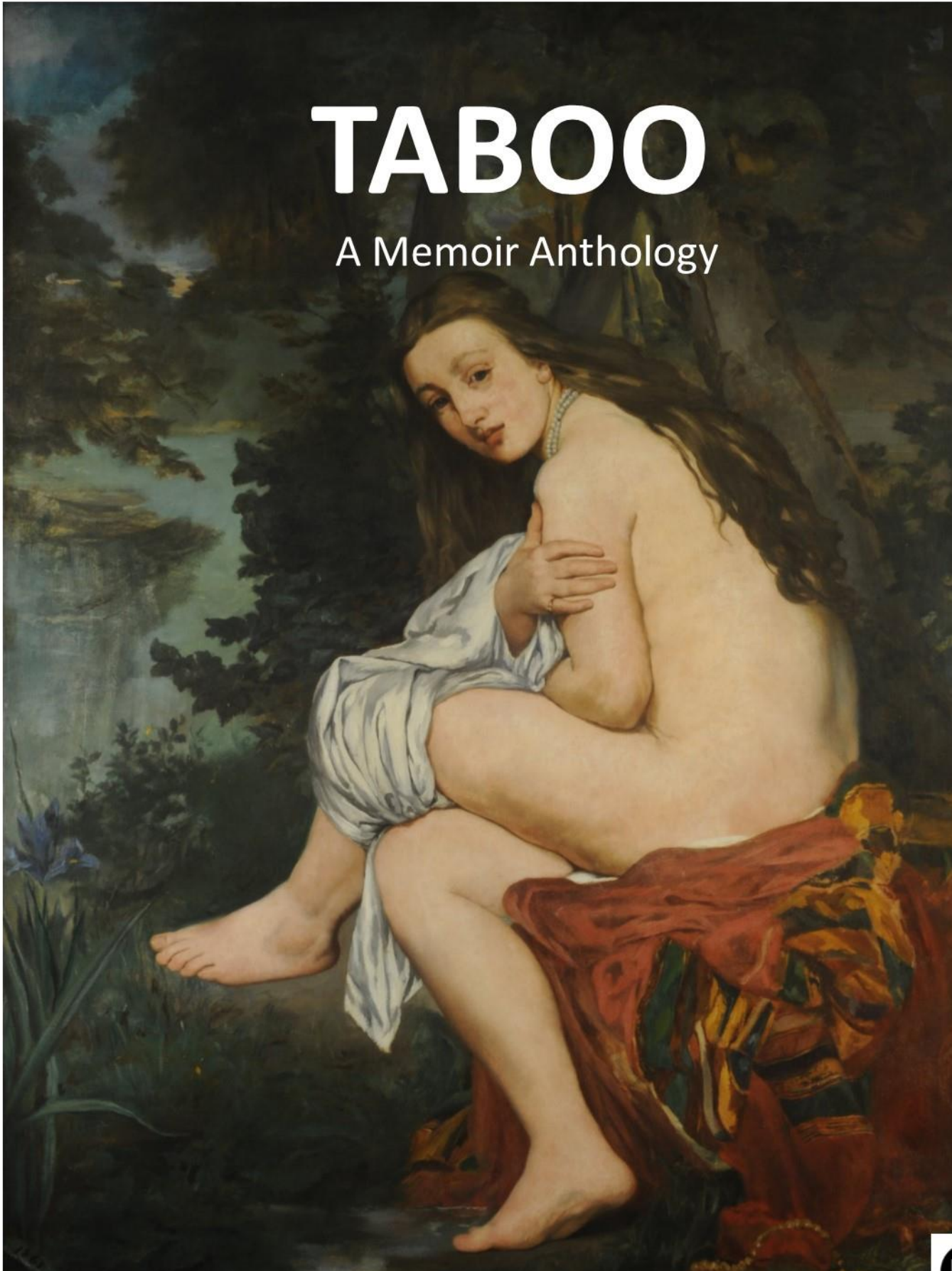


TABOO

A Memoir Anthology



TABOO

A memoir anthology

Edited by Sandra Tonn



POWELL RIVER
PUBLIC LIBRARY

Copyright © 2016 by the Powell River Public Library.

All Rights Reserved. The use of any part of this publication reproduced, transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, or stored in a retrieval system without the prior written consent of the publisher—or, in case of photocopying or other reprographic copying, a licence from the Canadian Copyright Licensing Agency—is an infringement of the copyright law.

First Printing 2016

Cover: *Surprised Nymph* by Edouard Manet; 1861; Paris, France. Location: Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Book design by Sandra Tonn, Powell River, British Columbia

Proofreading: Terry Faubert and Joanna Dunbar

All written material is the property of its respective contributor.

Published by the Powell River Public Library
4411 Michigan Avenue,
Powell River, British Columbia
V8A 2S3

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Taboo : a memoir anthology / edited by Sandra Tonn.

Electronic monograph in EPUB, MBOI, and PDF formats.
ISBN 978-0-9920031-1-1 (epub, mobi, pdf)

1. Authors, Canadian (English)--British Columbia--Powell River--Biography. 2. Taboo--Anecdotes. 3. Powell River (B.C.)--Biography. I. Tonn, Sandra, 1968-, editor II. Powell River Public Library, issuing body

FC3849.P69Z48 2017 971.1'31 C2017-903701-0



The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Powell River Public Library.

ta·boo

Late 18th century: from Tongan *tabu* 'set apart, forbidden;' introduced into English by Captain Cook.

noun

1. a social or religious custom that prohibits, forbids or disapproves of particular words, objects, actions, or people.

adjective

1. "sex was a taboo subject"

verb

1. "while he is tabooed, no one may speak to him"

Contents

Introduction <i>by Sandra Tonn</i>	7
A Small Rebellion <i>by Brenda Allan</i>	8
The Miniskirt <i>by Wendy Barker</i>	10
A Hair-Raising Ritual <i>by Kathy Bennett</i>	11
Breasts <i>by Pat Buckna</i>	13
Men Who Liked to Touch <i>by Marilyn Carey</i>	16
Clothing Optional <i>by John Carter</i>	18
Spots <i>by Kate Day</i>	20
Skin Deep <i>by Joanna Dunbar</i>	22
Painful Shades of Embarrassment <i>by Bev Falconer</i>	23
Hopeless <i>by Terry Faubert</i>	25
Sneaky Girls <i>by Violet Isaac</i>	27
Shadowy Existence <i>by Christa Köstler-de Beaupré</i>	29
Crow Girl <i>by Mary Lock</i>	30
Fresh and Illegal <i>by Audrey Lyster</i>	32
Athena, Where Are You? <i>by Mary Lou MacMillan</i>	34
Dissent <i>by Rita Rasmussen</i>	36
It Takes Two <i>by Teresa Rice</i>	38
Punishment <i>by George Samuel</i>	40
Privileged Pain <i>by Holly Sparks</i>	42
Shacked Up <i>by Marlaine Taylor</i>	44
Tough Stuff <i>by Elisabeth von Holst</i>	46
Getting Old <i>by Rose Marie Williams</i>	47
What About the Stripper? <i>by Betty Zaikow</i>	49
Author Biographies	50
Acknowledgments.....	53

Introduction *by Sandra Tonn*

When I suggested “taboo” as a theme for our memoir writing project, some of the seniors were apprehensive.

Why write about something they were taught to not even mention? Did it have to be a taboo from the past or something that is still taboo today? One woman didn’t submit a story at all because she didn’t want her kids to know she’d intentionally thrown a rock and broken a window when she was a child—the only time she could remember breaking any rules. Others found that once they got going they had enough taboo subjects to fill a book of their own, should they want to.

It takes bravery to write anything meant for public readership. Tackling a taboo story also took vulnerability—after all, breasts, nudity, menstruation, religion, racism, and hemorrhoids can leave a writer exposed in many ways beyond sharing their writing skill!

It wasn’t until the submitting and editing process was complete that the 23 writers who participated all agreed it was a wonderful topic. I think you, the reader, will agree. Some stories show how taboos have changed over the years and others show how far we still have to go. Some are funny and others are heart-breaking. All them are 100 percent true, which is the bitter sweetness of memoir writing. I often say, “You couldn’t make this stuff up!” It’s *that* real. Each writer’s intention was to share a taboo slice of life and they’ve all succeeded wonderfully.

All of the writers published in this book have participated in the seven-week *Memoir Writing for Seniors* course run by the Powell River Public Library. In addition, they have continued their writing practice by attending one of the *Monthly Memoir Writing* programs, also facilitated by the Library.

My hope is that you will not only be enlightened and entertained by the stories offered here, but also recognize the value in reading and knowing such stories. Seniors have a wealth of experience and insight on many topics—even ones we rarely take time to ask them about.

A Small Rebellion *by Brenda Allan*

I hesitated slightly before pushing the door open. A misgiving or two flitted through my thoughts but I just let them fly by. My decision had been made. This was the day. Usually I would discuss things I was thinking about or planning to do with my friends or husband. Not this time. This was mine and mine alone. Yes, age was a big factor even though I tried not to focus on the number—50! I mean, it's easy to be flippant until there it is, staring you in the face. It loomed large. I didn't *think* I was having one of those clichéd crises, but maybe.

Crossing over the age line seemed to bring along with it perceived limits—skirts too short, hair too long, behaviour too wild. Sometimes there was a subtle reference in a conversation, other times a blatant remark, but there they were and it all bothered me. I had become hypersensitive and noticed each raised eyebrow and downturned mouth.

As I walked through the door of the tattoo parlour a delicious wave of rebellion swept through me. I shouldn't be there. Was I bucking Catholic guilt or a societal pressure? The only other people I knew with tattoos were my kids, some of the art students at the college where I worked, and bikers.

I wondered if my eldest son felt the same way I did when he got his tattoo. In his case he would have been pushing against perceived parental displeasure. For him, getting tattooed was making a statement—I am my own person. His common sense came through when he decided to place the tattoo where it could be covered by a sleeve and, in fact, my husband and I didn't know about his new body art until a few days after it had been done. When he pushed up his sleeve at the dinner table one evening, we gasped, then stared. On the top of his left arm was a seven-inch green-scaled dragon, intricately drawn in ink.

Our daughter, on the other hand, had planned her tattoo for months before she turned 18. We would not give parental consent before she was the legal age. My husband didn't like the idea of his little girl having a permanent mark etched on her skin. Interestingly, the design she chose to have prominently placed on her left shoulder was of a Scottish thistle from his ancestry.

The artwork for my tattoo caught my eye as I was going through a book on prayer—two lilies intertwining in a circle. I went back to look at it again and again, thinking of the lilies in the murals my sister and I had seen in Mexico. By this time, she had already been gone for six years and the loss still was as sharp as the cut of a razor. She hadn't made it to the age of 50. I emailed a copy of the lily design to the shop to see what was possible and my impending tattoo artist, Amy, said yes, she could enlarge it and add colour.

So here I was in the waiting room, heart pounding. On the way to the storefront I had wondered what I would say if I saw someone I knew. Would I have admitted where I was going? Then Amy came down the hallway to get me. She was petite and polite, with multi-coloured sleeve tattoos. We chatted as she set up and I learned she was a mother of two.

“So where are we putting this?” she asked.

I had decided to place it on my upper left thigh. I wanted to be able to see it myself but have it not be too visible. She swabbed the spot, as if for surgery, and laid out her inking needle.

“Ready?”

“Ready!”

I braced myself, not only for the expected pain, but also for the reality that this was a forever mark. The machine started with a whirr, like a dentist’s drill, but within a few seconds I relaxed, the sensation feeling much more like a cat’s claws kneading my leg. As she bent over my body working on the design, I saw that this was my personal ritual and permanent signature to mark an entry into the next stage of my life. I was happy with my decision. I would worry about my husband’s reaction later.

The Miniskirt *by Wendy Barker*

To be really cool in the late 1960s and early 70s, I knew it was imperative to wear textured stockings and a good, short miniskirt. Cool became cold, though, when the temperature dropped. More than once, my inner thighs bore the white splotches of frostbite after a winter walk to school.

A few other hazards came with the fashion. For example, my beautiful emerald-green leather mini with the silver snap-fasteners down the front was inclined to catch on the side of a desk and pop open. And when my university laboratory rat scrambled in through the front buttons of my very short, pink coat-dress, there wasn't enough fabric to keep the rat from falling to the floor when hustled to a private corner to unbutton and free the little renegade.

Sitting down anywhere in public involved a good yank on the skirt sides to make sure all bases were covered, and then an ongoing, conscious effort to keep my knees pressed tightly together.

The biggest challenge to wearing a mini, however, was to bend over gracefully without losing all dignity. I thought I had mastered this feminine skill fairly well, and was quite conscientious about it. One day though, now out of university and at my bank job, I stood and carefully reached across my desk to pick up a file. Behind me, I heard the accountant's stern voice. "If you bend one more inch, you're going to lose your job!"

Why did I, along with many other girls and women, go through such contortions to avoid exposing parts that were never allowed to be seen, and yet wore clothing that made it nearly impossible to avoid showing those parts? Perhaps it was just as well for me that a few short months later, I graduated to a maternity wardrobe and the fashion world moved on.

A Hair-Raising Ritual *by Kathy Bennett*

On Sundays, our family went for afternoon drives. My younger siblings, Paul, Agnes, and Michael, would race to get their coats and hats on, yelling, “Dibs on a window seat!” It was a lot of fun, but I’d been opting out lately.

“Don’t you want to come with us?” my mom would ask, shaking her head, and not comprehending me one little bit. I was usually the one who whined, “Can’t we go for a drive somewhere? Do something?” And it was true that I did want to go with them. I loved getting out of the house—away from the boredom of being at home. But, the truth of the matter was, I had a much more important Sunday ritual—one that would resolve a huge problem, but could only take place when everyone left the house.

You see, I had hair growing in places I didn’t want hair to grow. I had leg hair. And I had hair under my armpits, too. I was horrified by all this growth. No one told me girls could grow hair like the boys did. It was positively ugly and certainly not normal. I could never approach Mom about this. Personal problems were never discussed.

But, I had my ritual. Once everyone was on their way and I had dutifully waved goodbye to them, I’d dash over to the cupboard where Dad kept his electric razor. I’d watched him enough times to know how it worked. I’d plug the razor in by Dad’s kitchen chair, whip off my pants and smile at the familiar hum when I clicked the “on” button.

Up went my leg onto a chair as I ran that buzzing razor up and down my leg, thrilled to see all that horrible hair disappear. Then the other leg. Up and down, front, back and sides. I knew that the razor only held so much hair in its dispenser so after putting my pants on again I’d open the end of the razor and carefully tap out all that mulched-up hair onto a piece of newspaper that I had ready on the table.

With that job done I’d then set up Dad’s little face mirror. It stood on small, metal legs and I could choose to see myself in a normal size, or I could flip the mirror on little hinges to see myself much closer and larger on the other side. But first I’d take a look out the window and, once satisfied that the coast was still clear, I’d hurriedly pull off my blouse, sit on Dad’s kitchen chair, and proceed to eliminate the forest under my armpits. First one, then the other. My armpits looked so smooth and lovely in that mirror and felt even more lovely to stroke.

Pleased with my achievement, I’d quickly put my blouse back on, empty the razor onto the paper once again, then take the razor to the kitchen sink and blow any remaining hairs out. A wee brush came with the razor and I used it to clean any microscopic bits that might be left behind. I had to make sure that Dad would never suspect.

My parents would have a hairy fit if they knew what I was up to. And I? I'd shrivel up and die if either of them found out. Not only would I have to own up to taking what didn't belong to me without asking, but I'd have to own up to the embarrassment of all this hair—of being like a circus side show freak.

After I put the razor and mirror back exactly the way I'd found them, I gently folded the edges of the newspaper into a neat little package and wiped the table clean with a wet dish rag. I went down into the basement with my package and dropped it into the wood burning furnace. I kept the furnace door open watching to make sure the evidence burned completely.

With my newly-shaved legs and armpits I could re-enter the world, looking once again like any other normal girl my age. No one, absolutely no one would ever know about my Sunday afternoon ritual.

Breasts *by Pat Buckna*

Jocelyn and Marsha were discussing breasts. Mr. Sanderson, the grade seven teacher had excused himself from the room and had been gone for over ten minutes. I'm not sure how the conversation got started, but I didn't care. I was simply glad to be listening to them—the prettiest girls in class.

"I think they're sexier without a bra," said Jocelyn, whose substantial breasts, I had to admit, looked good to me.

"No," said Marsha, "The appeal is not in what you see, but what you imagine."

Although Marsha's breasts weren't nearly as large as Jocelyn's, I had no trouble imagining what lay under her blouse or bra, and maybe what she said was true, but I would still rather not have to imagine. They both turned to me.

"You're a guy, what do you think?"

This was tough. A wrong answer could have ended the whole discussion. I hesitated and tried to keep my eyes on their serious faces.

"It depends."

"On what?" said Marsha.

"I bet he's going to say on how big they are," said Jocelyn, anticipating my thoughts, but not my answer.

"No, it's got nothing to do with that."

The last thing I wanted was for our discussion to end, it was too good. Most guys seldom had a chance to be a part of a conversation like this, and for good reason, too. Every time Kenny or any of the other fellows started talking about girls, they acted like dorks. No wonder the girls thought we were dumb. Most of the time I was embarrassed being lumped in with the rest of them. To guys they weren't breasts, they were tits, or honkers, or hooters, jugs or some other derogatory term.

Guys could be such assholes. It was bad enough when they made snide comments about the girls, but even worse when it was me they were laughing at.

I'd been fat as long as I could remember. Because of my asthma I'd always been excused from Phys. Ed. classes until that year. Ken Churchill, the vice principal, believed in all of that healthy-

body, healthy-mind crap, and managed to convince my mom that I should participate in gym class this year.

In the first class, Churchill started out by making everyone run two laps around the gym. I barely made it halfway down one side before my extra pounds and weak lungs slowed me to a wheezing walk.

“Ok lads, shirts and skins,” said Churchill, blowing his whistle.

I’d never played basketball before and was assigned to the skins team. I was embarrassed to take off my shirt. One of my so-called teammates pointed and laughed, then everyone laughed. Another shouted, “Look, he’s got tits, and big ones too.” Every time I got the ball and started to run up the court, my breasts flopped up and down. The more they flopped, the more the others chuckled.

“Get a bra,” someone called out. I began to realize what the girls must have felt like.

“So which is sexier, breasts in a bra or ones that hang free and natural?” Jocelyn said, her words still dangling in the air when Churchill strode into the classroom.

“When a teacher leaves the room, it is *not* a signal for all hell to break loose. This class could be heard as far away as in the office and I’m certain half the neighbourhood could hear you as well.”

Churchill was such a tight-ass, but that was probably why they had made him vice principal. The class fell silent and everyone busied themselves working on nothing. As he turned to leave the room, he motioned to me to come with him. A trip to the office was never a good thing. I’d only been there once before, three years ago when Kenny and his dumb-ass friends broke my nose and ripped my shirt during recess. Kenny got the strap and blamed me, of course.

Even though I would much rather have preferred talking about breasts, I followed Churchill out of class, down the hallway and into his office where he closed the door behind me.

“Don’t worry,” he said smiling, “It’s nothing bad.”

I relaxed a bit. I looked around the room—at the shelves of books, the piles of papers on his desk. The strap still hung on the hook by the door. Churchill was never this friendly. I’d never seen him smile before. I sat down and he began to tell me about how he’d been keeping an eye on me all these years, watching my progress.

“I’ve never met a boy with such promise, not in the 20 years I’ve been in this profession. You have a sparkling future ahead of you. Without the slightest doubt whatsoever, I am certain you will become a Rhodes Scholar.”

I had no idea what Churchill was talking about or what he meant, so I said nothing.

“And what do you think about that?”

I didn’t think anything about it, except I wished I were back in class with Jocelyn and Marsha instead of here with him.

“I know it’s a lot to digest all at once, so you needn’t say a thing. Now, before you go back to class, I have something to ask you. Normally I would never ask a student to do this, so if you’re not comfortable let me know.”

Churchill seemed nervous and reached into his trousers. He handed me a two-dollar bill.

“Could you run up to the corner store and buy me a pack of Rothman’s King-Size cigarettes? You understand, in my position, I can’t leave the school.”

Churchill might as well have struck me with the strap. He had yanked me out of class, away from a great conversation, for this?

“No sir, I can’t do that. I’m not old enough. It would be illegal.”

“Oh, okay. Never mind, it’s not important. You’d better get back to class.”

I got up and took my time walking back to class because I knew that by now Marsha and Jocelyn’s tête-à-tête would be over.

Mr. Sanderson was back when I returned. The entire class was busy writing in their scribblers, and neither Marsha nor Jocelyn looked up when I came in. The only person who did notice me was Kenny, but I sure as hell wasn’t going to tell him what I thought about breasts.

Men Who Liked to Touch *by Marilyn Carey*

I was running as fast as I could toward the fire hall. My heart was pounding and I had a distinct feeling of fear. I was not really sure what I was afraid of, but Donna had just told me that Vicki had walked off with Mr. Baker and us girls all knew that Mr. Baker liked to touch us in ways that made us very uncomfortable.

By the time I got to the fire hall, I had such a feeling of dread that I hesitated before knocking. Mr. Baker answered the door and gave me a big smile.

“Is Vicki here,” I asked? He called and she came out from the other room.

“We have to go home,” I said. I was suddenly really mad at her.

“Why did you go in there?” I asked while we were walking home.

“He said he had a doll that looked like me. What’s wrong?”

“You’re not supposed to go with him,” I said.

“Why not?”

“Because he touches girls. What did he do?”

“Nothing, we were just playing.”

Vicki was nine and just learning how to stay safe. I was 10 and had already had experiences with men who liked to touch. When I was eight, an old man who was bedridden tried to pull me into the bed with him. I had been sent to entertain him while my grandma and his wife sat in the kitchen drinking tea. It scared the hell out of me. I wasn’t sure what he wanted but I knew it was not okay. Another time, an older teenager tried to talk me into his house while I was collecting for my paper route. I also had an uncle who liked to suck on my earlobe. My aunt never left me alone with him, but she didn’t, or couldn’t, stop him.

The man from the cleaners used to touch me every time I picked up my mom’s dry cleaning. At least he would give me a nickel—you could buy a lot of penny candy with a nickel. One Christmas he sent a box of chocolate-covered cherries home for my mom. She looked very surprised and wondered out loud why he would do such a thing. I remember feeling uncomfortable because I knew my mom would never approve of me accepting those nickels.

What seems strange to me now is why I didn’t tell mom. She was a young, well-read, wise mother who encouraged us to explore any topic. Why did *none* of us kids tell our parents? Was it because we were used to keeping secrets? Like when we went to Windy Canyon or walked

over the burning coal field—both absolutely forbidden. Or was it because sex was a taboo subject? If so, I wonder how we learned that.

Maybe we all instinctively knew that no adult could help, that we needed to find ways to protect ourselves and the best way to do that was to tell each other who to avoid and have the older kids protect the younger ones. Maybe we were afraid that we would be blamed. Perhaps we simply thought we were more powerful and in control than we really were.

Whatever the reasons, I can see now that for the kids who lived with incest, or were abused by relatives, our ways provided no protection at all.

Clothing Optional *by John Carter*

“Look Dad, there are naked people over there.” The words that fell from Claire’s six-year-old lips focused my attention toward the back of the beach we had just found. As I scanned the small groups of people I became aware that everyone was indeed naked.

My wife, Sheila, our daughter, and I, had set out for a day by the sea on an unfamiliar section of the East Devon coast. The sight of a beautiful cove boarded by high sandstone cliffs and crystal clear water had convinced us it was time to cool off. The heat and long walk from the hamlet where we had parked the car made the sparkling blue water irresistible.

To be clear, I had never been a prude, but public displays of nudity had been restricted to men’s changing rooms and a handful of skinny-dipping episodes in mixed company. After a brief discussion with my wife we decided that cooling off was more important in that moment than anything else.

My daughter needed no second bidding, and was naked and in the water in a trice. Meanwhile Sheila had become topless, but still retained her briefs. As I undressed and followed Claire into the water my wife overcame her reluctance and finally shed the last vestige of modesty.

The total freedom of swimming unfettered in the crystal-clear coolness of the sea felt so liberating, and was an experience I knew I’d feel eager to repeat. As I emerged from that gentle haven onto a beach full of strangers, I was surprised at how relaxed I felt.

We decided to stay on the beach and become “one of them” for the day. So, sunscreen was applied to our bodies with special attention to the areas that so rarely saw the light of day, the blanket was spread, and cold drinks and sandwiches were covered with our towels to keep them from the hot sun.

The beach really was quite beautiful, and as we relaxed and became a little emboldened we wandered along the tide line. Claire was totally at ease as she collected shells and some very attractive pebbles worn smooth by the waves. As the day progressed several preconceived ideas regarding “weirdos who ran around naked” were dispelled. They were not weird in any way. We stopped and talked to other naked people, some of whom were recent converts to the alternative weekend lifestyle. We met a banker, a prison officer, two engineers, a small group of teachers, and a psychiatrist who was linked to the social work team I was a member of—small world.

Sheila was relaxing more with every encounter and her initial reticence had evaporated like a puddle in the hot sun. These were normal families and there were several children of similar age to Claire, who was soon totally involved in games of Frisbee and rounders, interspersed with frequent excursions into the tranquil, azure water.

One of my initial concerns was how I might react to the sight of liberal numbers of naked ladies in close proximity. Would I be relaxed and casual or disgrace myself with a visible show of appreciation of their charms? I think there must be some sort of anti-embarrassment switch in our heads that senses such concerns and switches off any inappropriate thoughts in these social situations. So my dangly bits stayed dangly and over many future years of visits to nude beaches it was never a concern again.

I was somewhat concerned, however, when as the day progressed Sheila's posterior, which was noticeably lily white as she stripped off earlier in the day, took on a rosy blush that rang loud warning bells. My concerns were brushed aside as she simply applied another basting of sunscreen to her embarrassed looking cheeks. We had a super day while meeting many really pleasant people, and spent many hours swimming and just relaxing in the sun.

We started our trek back to the car at about 7 pm, and loaded up for the trip home. On the journey, Sheila's discomfort became obvious. When we arrived home she stripped and was in the shower before I could blink. I soon realized why. As she stood in the icy cold shower, those tender little cheeks that blushed so demurely on the beach were as fiery red as hot chili peppers. The next morning the first order of business was to purchase half a dozen pairs of cool, silk, loose-fitting underwear to ease the discomfort of sitting in her office all day.

A few weeks later, our adventure forgotten, we attended the "open evening" at Claire's school. While waiting to see her teacher, we sat by our daughter's desk to look at her work. We opened her English book, and there it was—*What I Did at the Weekend* by Claire Carter.

"This weekend," she had written, "We went to a beautiful beach where the water was warm, and nobody had to wear any clothes. My Mum burnt her bottom."

Under the story her teacher had written, "Very interesting Claire," and had given her a gold star, and a big red tick!

When we finally met the teacher, I think Sheila's cheeks were every bit as red as her other cheeks had been on that first foray into the world of public nudity.

Spots *by Kate Day*

I was almost five years old and developing leprosy fast. In between teaching us to read, write, and do sums, Sister Imelda, our convent kindergarten teacher, regaled us with vivid tales of far-off lands in which the dreaded disease of leprosy loomed large. These stories were usually accompanied by dramatic pictures of people without fingers or toes. These poor people could not be touched and were hidden away, never to be seen again.

Apparently, leprosy started with a little white spot and I had just such a tiny white spot right in the middle of my palm. If I told anyone, I would be whisked away and have to watch my fingers and toes drop off all by myself. I still played daily with my friends Kathleen and Dorothy—roaming the coal hills around Six Bells, our Welsh mining community—never breathing a word to either of them of my impending doom, and all the while checking my little white spot.

“What's the matter with your hand, darling?” asked my father one morning at breakfast. “It seems to be bothering you.” He grasped my hand examining it closely. “Oh, just a little piece of dry skin,” he smiled, and then pulled my little white spot clean away, revealing healthy pink palm underneath. I breathed a huge sigh of relief. Now nobody would ever know how narrowly I had escaped leprosy.

The next year, spots once again featured memorably in my life. It was an afternoon in the late spring and I had not felt well all day. Even sliding down the nearby mountain on pieces of cardboard with Dorothy and Kathleen had not made me feel better. Then my head ached, my throat hurt, and worst of all, I was covered in hundreds of little pink spots.

“It's scarlet fever, I'm afraid,” pronounced Uncle Doc, our doctor and close family friend, patting my hand. “And it's highly infectious,” he added looking gravely at my parents. I had a two-month old baby brother and a delicate little sister who only a few weeks before had almost died from some horrible intestinal illness. Scarlet fever posed too great a risk to my siblings so I was sent away to an isolation hospital for a three-week stay.

I found myself deep in the Welsh countryside in a long, green-painted children's ward. When my parents visited, they could only speak to me through a partially open window, with hugs and kisses strictly prohibited, but the doctors and nurses were kind and I was not unhappy.

About two weeks into my stay Billy arrived in the bed opposite me. He was 15, much older than the rest of us, and he didn't talk much. One night, I saw Billy get quietly out of bed. It was dusk and everyone else was asleep. The night nurse, having made her rounds, had left the ward. I watched as he pulled a jumper on over his pyjamas and stuck his bare white feet into heavy black shoes. “Where are you going, Billy?” I whispered, sitting up in bed. He put his finger to his

lips. “Shh, I'm leaving. I can't stay here. I'm running away and you mustn't tell anyone. Do you absolutely promise?” I stared at him, thrilled. Lots of people in my storybooks ran away and I also knew all about promises. “I promise,” I said fervently, feeling very important. He smiled at me and was gone.

I curled myself up into an excited ball and shut my eyes tight. Time passed and it was now completely dark. I heard the nurse come back and forth into the ward to check that all was well. Billy had pulled his bedclothes up high over his pillow and she never noticed that he had gone. Try as I might, I could not sleep. Poor Billy was out there alone in the dark and with no socks. He would be so cold and frightened and I was the only person in the whole wide world who knew that he had run away. Suddenly I could bear it no longer. “Nurse, Nurse,” I called in my quietest loud voice.

“Whatever is it, Lovey?” she answered, hurrying to my bedside.

“It's Billy!” I blurted out, “He's gone, he really has, he's run away.” Nurse checked Billy's bed and then, to my horror, she burst into tears and ran from the ward.

Billy had indeed gone, escaping through the bathroom window. A search party was quickly despatched and he was soon found—cold and damp but otherwise unharmed. I was told they had brought him back to the hospital, but I never saw Billy again.

The following morning, I awoke to find myself once again completely covered in spots. I had developed chicken pox on top of my scarlet fever. I was due to leave the hospital in a couple of days, but I still had a new baby brother and a delicate little sister at home and here I was, infectious all over again. I was gently informed that I could not return to my family for at least another two weeks. I was expected to be very brave, and of course there would be treats when my long incarceration was finally over.

Alone in the hospital bathroom I sorrowfully surveyed my spotty, six-year-old self in the mirror and heaved a sigh of resignation. I thought of Billy and sighed again. What else could I expect? I had, after all, broken my first ever solemn promise. Then the sad face in the mirror smiled at me as I suddenly realized that things could be worse—after all, I still had my fingers and toes.

Skin Deep *by Joanna Dunbar*

In high school, in the early 1960s, I was taken by the way fashion models seemed to look angry and disgusted. I took a modelling class offered by a fashion agency. It didn't go well. The poses seemed foolish, plus they didn't like my ankles, to say nothing of my grumpy facial expression.

I was again caught by the act of modelling when in my early 30s I took my first drawing class. The class began with still life and then moved on to live models. This modelling looked straightforward and unpretentious. "I could do that," I thought. Facial expression was irrelevant. The long sittings would be simple as I could drift off into my mind. The action poses seemed fun and creative. So I signed on as a model at the University of Alberta Department of Fine Arts.

Most of the classes took place on the third floor of the old arts building—a picturesque place with dormers and old wooden floors. Chilly, but they gave me a heater. Initially I was curious to see what I looked like in their drawings, but soon discovered there was often little resemblance to how I saw myself. Sometimes they did want a clothed model, to work on the shadows created by flowing cloth on the human body, but mostly not. I liked how what to wear was seldom a problem. Only a robe required for breaks. And the pay was good.

My mother had accepted that I, as an adult woman, did not welcome her feedback about my choices. Still when a friend of hers said to me, "But of course you wear a little something?" gesturing to my lower half, I knew my mom had told her about my new job.

"Oh no, that wouldn't work at all," I replied, "That would make it more of a tease."

She shook her head in confusion.

It's interesting to me now, how I seemed to have had no trouble with the disrobing. After six years in a convent as a nun in which I had continually added layers of clothing, I was fiercely taking them off. I was trying out the possibility of discovering myself by physically revealing myself. Using my imagination, I simply stepped into the role of an art model and did what I imagined an art model did. I did this for three years, discovering how even with my clothes off I could remain hidden.

Recently I was reminded of all this when I heard of the existence of a local life drawing class. I told one of the members how I used to model and with delight she expressed the hope I would model for them. I seriously considered it for a while, seeing it as a chance to celebrate my older body. Eventually I said, "No, I'm not up for it." But secretly I'm still considering it.

Painful Shades of Embarrassment *by Bev Falconer*

“Guess what, Mom?” Alan called out from the doorway as he returned from his paper route.

“Mrs. Perry has hemorrhoids, just like me!”

I stopped cutting the onions for supper and gawked at my son. Alan *was* a very outgoing, 12-year-old boy and regularly stopped to talk with his customers, but about his hemorrhoids? *And* Mrs. Perry’s hemorrhoids? He didn’t seem the least bit embarrassed, but rather fascinated by the chat.

It was after this episode that I realized just how much ways of thinking had changed since I was around his age in 1940. In a similar situation my reaction was an extreme contrast. Granted, our personalities are different but the passage of time had a lot to do with the attitudes.

The day I came home from school to find my mom lying on the chesterfield, her eyes scrunched half closed and breathing in little gasps, my heart started pounding.

“What’s wrong, Mom?” I asked her.

She didn’t answer right away and when she did it was almost a whisper, although there was no one else in the house.

“I’ve got piles, and it’s very painful.” (Piles was the name used for hemorrhoids back then.)

I didn’t know what “piles” were but it sounded as if it was something private so I wasn’t going to ask.

“Sitting on cold cement can cause piles,” Mom said, “So can constipation. That’s why I’m always reminding you to keep regular.”

This talk made me squirm. I just didn’t know what to say and wished I was somewhere else.

“Do you want me to get you a blanket—or an Alka Seltzer or something?” I blurted out.

We didn’t have much in the way of medicine in our house but Mom gave me an Alka Seltzer once when I had a bad headache so I thought it might help her. But what she really wanted was a glass of water, and for me to peel the vegetables for supper and set the table. I was glad to be able to get out of the front room where I felt completely useless. At least in the kitchen I could do something.

At that time discussion of hemorrhoids wasn’t the only cause for embarrassment. Once, outside after church, my mother was talking to some of her friends and I heard one of the younger ladies say right out loud, “I’m ‘pregnant.’” I gulped and looked down at the ground. I had heard

the word whispered and knew what it meant, but it wasn't a word that was used. Everyone said "expecting"—a woman was "expecting" a baby. It felt like "pregnant" was a word that should be kept quiet. It was so, so...I don't know, so private and personal.

I had the same feeling another time when I heard a woman talking about "breast" feeding her baby. Usually mothers just said they were going to feed their baby. But to hear this woman use the word "breast" felt to me as if she was showing a picture in public, and I blushed. It was at times like these, when adults caught us eavesdropping, that one of them would whisper and gesture in our direction and say, "Little pitchers have big ears." Then they would all look at us and shoo us away.

One Sunday near Christmas we were in church and were mostly singing Christmas carols, which was good. I'd been out caroling to earn money for the Junior Red Cross for the war effort and really liked singing. Both in Sunday School and out caroling when we sang "Hark the Herald Angels" we sang verses one and three. But in church that day we had to sing the "other" verse as well. It had not just one, but two embarrassing words in a row: "virgin's womb." It was awful! We knew about "virgins" from stuff whispered on the playground and it didn't seem decent to use the same word in church. And "womb" felt like a very naked kind of secret. I was so glad after we got through *the second* verse and hoped *that* by the end of the carol my face would *have cooled* down so no one would notice me.

Years later when I was in high school, I had an after-school job at the *Powell River News*. We were all busy folding papers when our boss, Bob, walked by and I heard him say to the head girl, "Take over for a bit, I'm going to see a man about a dog."

"So, is Bob getting a new dog?" I asked the girl next to me.

"No, no," she laughed, "Haven't you heard that expression? He's just going to the john."

That took me completely by surprise, never expecting it was something personal. People didn't usually announce they were going to the bathroom. I felt my face burning and didn't know where to look to hide my embarrassment. I felt so naïve not knowing something that everyone else knew—and angry that my scarlet face betrayed me yet again.

Yes, blushing was a painful part of my growing-up years. It was a relief when the words that triggered these episodes became commonly used—and when I loosened up and became comfortable using them.

Our stories, repeated over the generations, help us see where change could help and so move us from my mom secretly suffering from piles and me being embarrassed about it, to my son Alan using some "Preparation H" and having no problem chatting about it with Mrs. Perry.

Hopeless *by Terry Faubert*

I was only a child of 12 when my mother broached the subject of a hope chest. Mine was to be an old blue steamer trunk, wide and deep. It had tarnished brass corners and strappings, the inside patterned with a delicate blue plaid. My task was to make household linens to fill it as I grew inexorably towards marriage—sheets, blankets, pillowcases, tea towels and bath towels, aprons, and finally a matrimonial quilt—a left-over vestige of the dowries of our long forgotten great grandmothers.

My mother encouraged me to view any education or career I aspired to as temporary, something to fill the time and support myself while waiting for a woman's true calling—that special someone who would propose.

Marriage was a dream I eagerly embraced. The idea that I might someday be chosen by someone was very appealing. Yet the word “hope” left open the possibility of disappointment. Still, my mother seemed confident of the outcome, so I willingly began the first project—embroidering the intricate designs stamped on the ends of matching pillowcases. The many colours of the soft skeins of embroidery thread were more inviting than a freshly opened box of crayons. Countless hours were spent choosing the right shade, learning the different stitches, and painstakingly bringing to life the ribbon-entwined umbrellas, spilling their flowers across the pillow case. Stitch by stitch, ripping out and redoing any that weren't perfect, I slowly added not only cheerful colours, but also texture. I loved to run my fingertips over the smooth bump of the satin stitches and the rough pebbles of the little French knots.

As the years passed tea towels were added to the pillowcases in the bottom of my hope chest, but doubt gathered on top of them. As I joined the throngs of young people opposed to the Vietnam War, I came into contact with radical ideas that questioned women's place in society and the inevitability of marriage. By my late teens I considered marriage an oppressive institution and embraced the idea of free love. The old hope of finding that special someone was trampled by the idea of freely loving everyone, without regard to rules or restrictions.

Unwilling to take risks with my body, I needed parental permission to obtain the new birth control pill that had torn asunder my mother's carefully ordered plans. I confronted her in her bedroom one evening. Her dark eyes flashed in anger at my request. Just like the items in my hope chest, I was supposed to save myself for marriage. Her consent was reluctantly given, since, to her, pregnancy would be a far greater shame and announce my sexual misconduct to the world.

According to my parents the only respectable reason for a daughter to leave home was to marry. Since I no longer expected that to happen, I hit upon transferring to an out-of-town university as my only hope of getting out from under my parents' control. In May of 1971 I packed one small suitcase and moved out of their suburban Toronto home and into a house full of students in downtown Montreal. A year later, my parents loaded my old trunk with all my abandoned possessions and shipped it to me unannounced. In the bottom were the hope chest items I had made so long before.

It was a poignant moment as I fingered the carefully stitched cloths, remembering the bright hope I clung to in those days. There seemed now no point in waiting, no reason left to hope. I did the unthinkable; I took the items that were to be reserved for that one purpose, and began using them. I hung the precious tea towels in the kitchen and stuffed my pillow in the ornate case. Sometimes, in bed, I would feel the ridges of my handiwork and sigh for the loss of that innocent, impossible childish hope.

When my lover and I moved in together, we were careful to call it "a relationship," not a marriage. We considered ourselves beyond monogamy or jealousy. No strings attached. Freedom. And yet I could not help clutching at a fragile strand of hope, as thin as a single thread of embroidery cotton—hope that in spite of it all, our relationship might last forever.

My mother had never given up trying to convince me to marry. On one of my visits, we sat at her kitchen table. She spoke of my love of children and how she couldn't believe I would never have a family. Many months later, she was pained to discover that her words had helped me decide to go ahead and have a child, without altering my views on marriage. She tried her best to keep my pregnancy hidden, forbidding my sister to throw a baby shower for me.

The forever hope I had secretly cherished flickered, faded, and was finally extinguished when, in spite of our coming child, my lover left. Many years later, I again fanned the spark of hope. The pillowcases had long disintegrated to rags when I briefly flirted with a marriage that finally, irretrievably stamped out any remaining embers of hope, leaving me divorced and happy to raise our three young children on my own.

Today I live alone, content to enjoy the solitude of each bright day. The trunk still sits in my basement, its scratched and dented blue surface covered long ago with a green paisley vinyl. It has served me as a bench and a table. I have changed diapers on it and stored Halloween costumes in it. I also kept a scrap of the old pillow case. It's yellowed and stained now, but the umbrellas and flowers still look as bright and hopeful as when they were first stitched. A reminder that what we hope for does not always come to be, and perhaps we wouldn't want it to.

Sneaky Girls *by Violet Isaac*

My mother was a beautiful woman. I admired her and saw how carefully she combed colour into the roots of her hair. She arranged her hair just right even before putting on her head covering for church—a black silky square folded into a triangle and tied under the chin—as per the Apostle Paul’s teachings in 1 Corinthians 11. Religious beliefs and the principles of faith featured strongly in my family.

As a girl, I wasn’t sure why Mom’s lips seemed a bit redder and glossier than usual until one day I found a tube of lip gloss in her top dresser drawer. I applied a bit to my lips and, sure enough, my lips were a wee bit redder and glossier. Were her nails shiny, too? I wondered but never found nail polish. Perhaps she used Vaseline or cooking oil.

I was about 12 years old when Aunt Clara, our neighbour, hurt her back. She needed help with housework and looking after baby Mildred. Another relative, also a neighbour, had twin boys and sometimes needed help, too. In both cases I earned small change, which allowed for sneak purchases. I could hide a nail polish bottle in my pocket, but what made me think that I could hide the smell of it being applied or the result—sparkling nails? Mom must surely have known what was going on, but she never said a word about it. The nail polish mysteriously disappeared though.

One summer, between grades six and seven, four small country schools were amalgamated so everybody attended school in the Village of Linden, near Calgary, Alberta. We rode to school on buses for the first time, a new adventure. Occasionally, instead of riding the bus home, I went to my grandparents’ house in town to do Grandma’s ironing or vacuuming. That allowed me to stop at the store on my way home and do some private shopping for lipstick or *True Stories* magazines, all of which disappeared within a few days. Confronting Mom about the disappearance of things paid for with my own money never seemed an option. I knew I was being a bad girl, buying things we were not supposed to own.

By age 16, I had moved on to wilder escapades. Shopping in the Salvation Army store in Calgary, I managed to purchase a party dress while Mom was busy trying on shoes. It was a silky floor-length, red gown with spaghetti straps. Surely Mom wondered what was in my bag, but she never asked. I wore that gown one night when I sneaked out of the house to meet a boyfriend. I used forbidden lipstick that night, too. I had been cleaning windows that day and deliberately left the ladder against the porch roof. I don’t know how I managed to get out the window, onto the roof, and down the ladder in a billowing full skirt without falling and breaking a limb. Mom and Dad were sound sleepers and I was never caught sneaking out or back into the house, but of course, like so many of my purchases, both the dress and lipstick disappeared.

I tried hiding things, especially “bad” magazines—under the mattress, in my underwear drawer, at the bottom of the closet, or in the storage space where I kept a lamp for reading secretly at night. Lipstick was often in my pocket to prevent detection. It was such a waste of hard-earned money, and perhaps that was the lesson for me. Think twice before you spend. Mom was a very busy farm mother and I sometimes wondered how much time she spent searching for the things she knew I was hiding. With her grade eight education she had no forensics training, but was a natural detective.

What is interesting to me now, besides the hiding and discovery, is that Mom and I never discussed the issues, not when I was still living at home, or in later years. After Dad passed away, we actually became friends and spent hours chatting on the phone, when we could have analyzed what happened between us—but we didn’t. The sneakiness and secrets we swept under the carpet, never came to light.

Shadowy Existence *by Christa Köstler-de Beaupré*

I will never forget a day when I was seven, growing up in Vienna during World War 11. I had been allowed to go all by myself for a medical checkup, two city blocks away from home. On tippy-toe I pressed the doorbell of Frau Dr. Thea Fischer's practice and residence and was ushered by her sister Mimi into the front room of their apartment, which was the medical practice. Always polite, I remember Frau Mimi looked very efficient with her greying braids pinned to her head. I thought she must be a big help to Frau Doctor and probably did the cooking in addition to helping with the business.

With eyes shut I braced myself for the cold stethoscope on my chest, then peeked at Frau Doctor's beautiful auburn hair, knotted at the back. I was fascinated by the colour. As she directed me to inhale and exhale, I relished the scent of her fresh shampoo.

"There is no trace left of your bad cold," she announced. "Tell your Mother that you can return to school." She asked me to let myself out since Mimi was busy with phone calls.

Stepping into the long dark hallway, which I assumed led to the bedrooms, kitchen, and bathroom, I heard a faint sound and was curious so I hid in the shadow. I froze, hidden in the shadow, as an old man in striped pajamas quietly shuffled across the corridor and disappeared behind a door. Still frozen, I glimpsed someone else silently crossing my view—this time a lady with brown hair and plain, dark clothing.

Both puzzled and excited by the mysterious goings-on of these never before mentioned people, I quietly turned the door knob and stepped out into the noisy sunny street. What had I just witnessed? I was so anxious to get home and ask my mother who those two shadowy figures were that I started running, but when I passed some ladies who knew my family from church I slowed down to a more appropriate pace for a young girl out by herself.

To my great disappointment, neither my mother or oma would explain what or who I'd glimpsed. All I was told, in a stern voice, was to promise never to mention this matter to anyone ever again. From that moment on the subject was taboo.

After the war and when I was older it became clear why I was sworn to secrecy. Our Frau Doctor was Jewish, but since there was a dire need for medical doctors, she was granted permission to stay and work at her profession. Her sister Mimi was employed as well, but her other sister and her father lived a quiet and hidden existence in the back of the apartment.

Crow Girl *by Mary Lock*

In the 1950s when I was growing up, girls were supposed to be girls. Mothers were homemakers who emerged from cookie-fragrant kitchens wearing an apron and a sweet smile. The ideal daughter was well-mannered, well-behaved, and well-groomed like my big sister. She had creamy skin, shining light brown ringlets, sweet pink lips, big green eyes, lots of girlfriends, and read *Nancy Drew* books. My grandmother loved my sister. She called her “pet pigeon” and wrote special letters to her. I, however, was not my grandmother’s pet pigeon but more like her gaggling, annoying crow. My grandmother called me a tomboy.

I was loud. I whistled. I wiggled. My ears were too big and my long, dark, unruly hair either stuck out from behind them or hung in my eyes. I was brown-skinned from the sun, wiry, and had hairy legs. My knees were always skinned. I shinnied up poles and wore holes in my new snowsuit on the very first day. I didn’t read books because I was always moving.

Despite my grandmother’s preferences I liked being a tomboy—a wild crow girl—but it came at a cost. I was very lonely. But aloneness also meant I was free, and as a lone adventurer I didn’t need friends. Nature became my friend as I pursued her wonders. I rescued drowning worms from puddles and loved their squirming, pink bodies in my palm. I kept hapless honeybees in jars, feeding them wilted flowers, and I nursed abandoned baby birds. I picked up snakes in the back lane and held their warm “scaliness,” watching their red flickering tongues trying to sense who I was. I padded barefoot on muddy beach flats, kneeling in the salty sand, uncovering clams and limpets. I waded into ponds after retreating frogs, my pink circular skirt floating around me like a sinking banner. When I captured one I cupped it gently, fascinated by its smooth moist skin, its long clinging toes, its beautiful bulging eyes, and a throat that pulsed when it breathed. I searched out the treasure of frogs’ eggs and raised them in a basin on my back porch. I marvelled as they turned from minute tadpoles into miraculous miniature frogs. It was an enlightening lesson on life.

Sometimes I rode my bike out to the cow barn at UBC and wandered past the cows lined up in their stocks ready for milking. I loved the sound of their huge jaws munching hay and how their pink tongues slid across their rubbery noses leaving them glistening with saliva. The cows’ soft brown eyes were so gentle and their nostrils puffed big, steamy breaths. Sometimes I rubbed the warm coarse hair of their foreheads. I even loved the “cowy” smell and the big “pooley” trough that ran beneath their constantly flicking tails.

I loved to climb trees. I scaled the heights of the big mountain ash tree in our backyard and could look out onto the roof of our house. I climbed the ladder like branches of the tall firs in the neighbourhood park and sat high up, concealed like a bird, amongst the foliage. One of my favourite places was the vacant lot where a lone adventurer could create a wild, imaginary

world amid the bush. I followed secret trails and created a base camp with imaginary kitchen, bed, and toilet. There was even a store and lookout posts.

No, I was not my grandmother's pet pigeon. I would like to have had her love and approval, but I was too wild a bird for her roost. Besides, I liked being a free bird. Over the years I convinced myself that I was happiest alone. I have since learned, over many years, that other human beings are wonderful and I no longer want to be alone. But still, deep inside me, lives that wild crow girl and I love her, ideal or not.

Fresh and Illegal *by Audrey Lyster*

In the spring of 1960, the first year of my marriage to Gerry, a park warden in Banff National Park, my sister wrote from England announcing that she and her daughter would be coming for a visit. My niece was 10 years old, which meant it was the last year she could fly for half fare—a significant saving. I, with my harmonious nature, could not argue against the visit despite the fact that it was less than ideal in many ways.

My new husband and I had moved out to the summer cabin, which offered primitive accommodation and, in addition, if we followed the park rules, our diet was limited to canned meats, soups, and little in the way of fresh food. It didn't help that my catering powers had not developed fully and that the nearest grocery store trip, which was allowed only once a month, was more than 25 kilometres away accessible by horseback.

Gerry was convinced that we needed a supply of fresh meat for our visitors and, of course, the hills were alive with the sound of fresh meat bugling away in the shape of elk. To kill one, however, would be considered poaching—the very act that a warden was expected to prevent. Despite that, the powers that be appeared somewhat ambiguous. One of them even gave him a book of recipes for cooking wild meat.

We were very aware of the presence of a herd of elk in a draw just behind the cabin. One afternoon, not long before our guests were scheduled to arrive, and after much soul-searching, Gerry appeared, gun in hand and raised above his head, and said, "If you hear this go off we will have meat." This was a moment of high drama, which every early homesteader's wife would recognize.

I must admit I was a little nervous. Well, actually I was a lot nervous. Though the day was almost over and the valley was totally devoid of people, I still felt that the superintendent could easily be lurking behind the nearest bush, ready to jump out and catch us in the act red-handed.

Gerry hadn't been gone long when I did hear a shot and then a sound like barking from several different areas behind the cabin. I immediately thought he had wounded a critter, which was then running to collapse at the feet of the park superintendent. Not so, I found out soon enough. The barking was coming from the mother of the young elk that Gerry had shot. This didn't make me feel any better. The deeper we sank into this illegal act the more uncomfortable I become, but on I had to go—halfway back up the mountain with Gerry to help him butcher the animal.

By this time, it was getting dusk and harder to see, plus our nervousness didn't help. After puncturing a couple of its internal organs we did manage to get the animal into quantities. After burning the incriminating evidence, we were ready to head back to the cabin, but not before agreeing on a plan of action. I would go on ahead and when I heard Gerry approaching I would call out some prepared, idiotic remark, indicating that the coast was clear. Of course, when I got back to the cabin it was just as deserted as expected as anyone with any brains was home eating supper by now.

In our discussions before we started all this stupidity, I admitted knowing how to preserve wild meat. I had the jars and in the morning I would cut off the meat from the front quarters and cook it for the requisite four to five hours.

I was up early, prepared the meat for canning, and had it bubbling away before 8 am. Of course, it was the hottest day of the summer so far. The cabin walls were pulsating with heat as I was keeping the door closed to hide my crime.

On the 8 am local radio news, it was reported that there had been a fire in Lake Louise—the post office and the adjoining store owned by outfitter Ray Legace who was currently out with a party of campers in the neighbourhood of our cabin. Someone would have to inform Ray of the damage to his store. As a result, our usually quiet, deserted valley would soon be running. There was nothing I could do but keep the cabin door closed and hope.

At about 11 am a young man arrived on horseback looking for Ray. I made tea, which I served outside, opening the door just a crack to allow myself to slide through and hoping the aroma of wild meat cooking was unfamiliar to our guest. He didn't seem surprised by this rather unusual treatment of not being invited in, and left soon after in pursuit of Ray. A couple of hours later Ray himself showed up on his way back to Lake Louise. He received the same outdoor tea treatment and left soon after.

For the next few days we packed the two hind quarters of elk with us wherever we went, like millstones around our necks, because we were so afraid to leave them behind where someone might see them. Then it came time to go to Calgary to pick up our visiting relatives. After much hassle with lost luggage and so forth, we finally sat down to our first meal with our guests at the summer cabin. When presented with our bountiful offering of wild elk, my sister announced that she didn't eat meat—she was a vegetarian.

Athena, Where Are You? *by Mary Lou MacMillan*

Spring, 1987, Naxos Island, Greece. On this sun-washed morning, the momentary joy of being carefree is mine as I traipse along this hilltop village road overlooking the cerulean waters of the Aegean Sea. The air is heavy with the herbal scents of wild thyme and oregano, while bumblebees hum drowsily at their work.

Soon I arrive at my destination and enter the “pharmakia,” the tinkling of a bell signalling my entrance. My eyes adjust to the darkness within, where dusty shafts of light beam in from windows high overhead. At the back of the shop, I see two men standing behind a counter. I walk down the aisle towards them, scanning the merchandise, which is laid out on wide countertops just like the Five and Dime store of my childhood. One man is white haired and much older than the other, a tall gangly teenager.

I acknowledge them with the restrained smile of a woman travelling alone, and quickly avert my eyes to my task at hand. I turn and walk down the other aisle, and with more scrutiny now, take my time searching carefully, past the hand lotions, the band-aids, the toothbrushes and the vitamins. Hmm...it seems I must make one more go-round of the premises to find what I’m looking for. I feel the curious gaze of the two men at my back as I circulate one more time. Finally, I come to the realization that the item I am seeking is nowhere to be found, and if I am to be successful in my quest, I must approach the two silent observers.

Smiling at them again, even more demurely, and with the hesitation of diving into cold water, I attempt to articulate my request. “Nap-kin,” I enunciate slowly, almost pleadingly, meanwhile trying as best as I can to avoid direct eye contact. The two men regard me blankly. Uh, oh. I guess I will have to find another descriptor. “Serv-i-ette,” I say, emphasizing the three syllables, and then quickly, as if it was an afterthought, I utter quietly, “woman.” Oh, no. They stare back at me with incomprehension. Now what? Desperately, I blurt out quickly, “Kotex,” as if it was some kind of vile-tasting nastiness I’ve just ingested. Suddenly, their eyes become illuminated like those of a pouncing cat and the old man mumbles something before shuffling off into the back room. The teenager and I both manage to find the walls of the shop very interesting as we wait the interminable minutes until the old man returns.

It seems I have two choices, a big box of maxi pads or a small box of maxi pads. I point to the small box, which the young man takes and seals carefully in brown paper while the old man and I carry out the money part of this transaction. I take my wrapped package, then, and place it in my small cloth bag, nod my head in thanks, and flash them one last, apologetic smile.

With all the dignity I can muster, I head for the door, but not too quickly, and even though I am temporarily blinded by the sunshine as I exit, I collapse into relief. This unforeseen ordeal is

over. But not without a torrent of memories taking hold. I am a teenager again, in the bathroom, wrapping my sanitary napkin in wads of toilet paper trying to conceal it under all the discarded tissue in the waste-basket, out of sight of my four brothers who tease and taunt endlessly. Oh, how can this be, I wonder? Here I am, 38 years old, and that demon is still alive and well—that demon who reminds me of the shame and humiliation that crouches and waits, all for the mistake of being born a woman.

Dissent *by Rita Rasmussen*

I was in grade seven or eight. My home room teacher was a big guy, red-faced and loud—a real Bible thumper. Every morning he made a student read out loud a passage he had chosen from the Bible. He methodically went up each seating row, desk by desk, to pick out the child who would have to read. I had figured out an avoidance strategy to counteract this demand. Once a month or so, when I saw my row and desk location coming up for a reading, I would stay home playing sick. Sometimes I would show up at school again by noon. No one seemed to notice there was a pattern to my school absences.

One day I got caught out though. The desk in front of me was empty. My throat constricted. I thought I should go to the washroom, anything to get out of that classroom and the upcoming demand. But the reality was, my careful calculations had been thrown out of sequence by the child in the desk in front of me being absent. I was scared. What would I do? I had only seconds to decide. Somehow I gathered my strength and the unknown courage of my own convictions. I stood up and walked to the side of the teacher's desk. I was frightened but also resolved. I remember putting my hand on the side of the big oak desk and looking down at it.

"What do you want?" he asked.

My eyes were cast down, looking at my hand and the grain of the wood on the desk top. I mumbled a reply.

"What?" he said.

I clenched my fist, took a breath, and looked at him.

"I am not going to read the Bible in front of the class," I said.

His face turned red and he stood up.

"What did you say?"

I felt like I was shrinking, but I repeated it louder.

"I am not going to read the Bible in front of the class and you can't make me."

Then I added, "You can't make any of us read the Bible in the classroom."

The room had become very still. He glowered at me. I waited.

"Go sit down," he said finally.

I did. I crossed my hands and, looking at my fingernails, thought, “Oh, boy! I have done it. He is going to report me for talking back and resisting. I will be kicked out of school.”

He read his excerpt from the Bible himself. I didn’t really listen. I caught the bus home at the end of the day. I told my parents what I had done. They were unperturbed by my announcement and reassured me there was nothing wrong with what I had done. If the principal phoned there would be no problem and I would not be kicked out of school.

There was no phone call. The homeroom teacher never asked another student to read the Bible in the classroom. Instead, he read the Bible passages out loud, smacking the page every now and then with his big hand.

It was a difficult thing for me to do at that age. I look back and admire my determination and the strength of my own beliefs. The incident still provides me with respect for my younger self and my parents’ support.

It Takes Two *by Teresa Rice*

As a teenager in the 1940s, parents and adults seemed to dance around the subject of sex, without imparting any useful information. I missed the sex education class at school, although I don't think that would have been much help. Apparently, the girls were told to place anonymous questions in a box for the headmistress to answer. She was a nun, so I'm sure she didn't do the condom on a banana demonstration considering the Catholic Church's attitude regarding birth control.

In my day, there were the usual warnings and admonitions—nice girls don't have sex before marriage, and nice girls definitely don't get pregnant before marriage. No mention of nice boys or not-so-nice boys. In ballroom dancing the boy leads and the girl follows his footsteps. In matters of pre-marital sex however, the rules appeared to be different. Girls were expected to take a step back and resist temptation, and then the boys would follow their lead. Rules, however, were made to be broken and frequently were.

As a young woman, working for a large company taught me a lot about life. Up to that point I had very little contact with girls or boys my own age, and had no knowledge of the world of dating and socializing, apart from what I read in books. There were probably more than 200 girls and women in the building where I worked. Of course I didn't know all of them, but if anything remotely scandalous was going on, news quickly spread throughout the office.

One of the things I learned was that nice girls *did* get pregnant. It happened all the time—especially back then, before birth control pills were available to anyone who wanted them. There was Joan, for example, who was engaged. When she told her fiancée she was pregnant, he said they would get married at the end of the month. After not hearing from him for a few days, she discovered he had immigrated to Canada without telling his family about the pregnancy. Her story had a happy ending though. She married someone else when her daughter was three years old. Then there was Maria, who didn't drink alcohol except for one night at a party and ended up expecting a baby. Maria kept her baby, which was hard to do then, especially if there was no family support.

The rules were simple, it seemed. If you became pregnant, you got married, regardless of whether you wanted to or not. Girls who defied convention were considered an embarrassment to their families. In many cases they were banished to mother-and-baby homes and pressured to give up their babies for adoption. There were always stories going around about girls trying gin and hot baths if they thought they might be pregnant, and there was supposedly someone who knew which herbs would produce the desired result. Desperate girls would sometimes resort to back street abortionists, with disastrous results. In that era, society

in general placed the blame on the girls alone for unexpected pregnancies, as if they were virgin births. Gender equality was non-existent.

Listening to stories of lives in turmoil because of unwanted pregnancies made me certain of one thing—there would be no “shotgun wedding” for me. I wanted the white dress, the veil and the freedom to choose when to marry and when to start a family. Of course I was sometimes tempted to have sex, especially when I was involved in what I considered a serious relationship. I think what stopped me were the memories born of my being part of a poor family, and of my mother having eight children, one after another. She was only in her 40s when she passed away, otherwise there would probably have been more. That was not the life I wanted.

It’s not that I, or any other girls who didn’t have pre-marital sex, were more virtuous, but we were aware that the birth control methods available at that time were unreliable. I imagine that if the pill had been as accessible as it is today, different choices would probably have been made.

Even though we discussed unwanted or unexpected pregnancies and most of us probably thought, “Thank God it’s not my problem,” no one in my immediate circle was ever mean or judgemental to the girls concerned—more sympathetic I would say. After all, it takes two to tango.

Punishment *by George Samuel*

When I try to remember how my parents reacted when my behaviour was bad, in their judgment, I suddenly discover that I'm judging *their* behaviour, as if I were the parent and they the children.

The year when all these issues came up—their good or bad behaviour and mine—was 1946 to 1947, when I was nine. I was in Granville, Ohio, with my mother, brothers, my grandmother, and aunt while my father returned to Burma after the Japanese occupation had ended.

There was only once that I remember my father administering a physical punishment, and he wasn't angry. It was shortly after we had all been reunited, in Burma, after the year of separation. My mother told my father to punish me. She had complained to him that during my year in a household run by women, I had got out of hand. He chose a very English upper-class punishment—I was caned with a bamboo cane, on my bare behind. I remember the welts, which showed the joints in the bamboo. Yet more than pain I felt rage. The nanny, a slender young Karen woman, was watching and giggling from the hallway. (Karens are an ethnic minority in Burma who took well to Christian conversion. American Baptists, like my mother, preferred Karen nannies. My mother thought Karens were prettier and cleaner than Burmese.)

The humiliation of the nanny's laughter drove me mad. She really appeared to enjoy seeing the young white master get a caning. We were exactly the same height. I felt it was unjust that this childlike person could ridicule me as if she were an adult. If I was being punished for resisting female power in Granville, Ohio, then here in Rangoon, Burma, the power of my mother and her delegate the nanny was humiliating me through the power of the British Raj, whom at that moment they were manipulating. I think I yelled at the nanny. I was acting like a misogynist racist pig.

My father never struck us in anger. When angry, his violence was verbal not physical. At first my mother's violence was intended to be principled and to teach valuable lessons and involved a hairbrush applied to the bum. She eventually abandoned law and principle in favour of sudden rage—yelling and blows to the head and shoulders usually from behind. I vividly remember my little brother Alex cringing and his eyes rolling back in his head when Mother was behind him. Once when little Alex was four she offered to give him a lollipop and he burst into tears. His name in baby-talk was "Lolly" and he thought she was telling him she was going to "pop Lolly," that is, spank him.

The family scene darkened as my mother's diseases of stroke and alcoholism progressed. My father's wounding behaviour was psychological rather than physical, and possibly more traumatic. His critical attitude felt like cold rejection and was terrible and terrifying. It's quite

strange now to begin remembering that he was actually a kind and caring man in spite of himself.

Privileged Pain *by Holly Sparks*

My twin brother and I were born into the middle class some 70 years ago.
Dad was an executive of an air conditioning company, vice-president of the show.
We had moved into a suburb, well-heeled, no minorities, if you please.
Attended the public education system, K-9, free as the breeze.

World War II had ended, Roosevelt and The Democrats creating a New Deal.
The 1950s offered postwar prosperity and an optimism free of the Hitlerian seal.
The atmosphere was promising for the growing middle class—a select few.
Not Mexicans or poor whites, and Heaven help the Blacks and emerging Jews.

Our dad died in 1953. We were 10. It was tragic, not easy.
He was coughing up blood, making all of us extremely queasy.
His bed had been moved downstairs into the living room. He was very frail.
He looked like death warmed over, anorexic, so very pale.

We stayed with the Kellogg family, country friends, for a week or two.
Not ever considering that his battle with lung cancer was sadly through.
We returned home finally, the house eerily quiet, filled with aromatic flowers.
But no sign of our Dad. He had succumbed after numerous hours.

I cried, darted upstairs, at a loss. He was my love.
Life would be different now. Trust me, it was.
A huge portrait of him was now accenting the living room fireplace.
Dad's belt had been removed—no more spankings, no more disgrace.

The hearse for the funeral was lush, truly divine.
Will and I enjoyed the luxurious trip to the funeral home, mighty fine.
Dad looked handsome, peaceful, put on display.
The aura of death had been removed. No more to say.

My brother and I were sent to private schools. Our final three years were tough.
I felt very out of place. The atmosphere was hoity-toity. Smug and rough.
Well-mannered for sure and not exposed to the riffraff.
But I missed the average peer who was friendly, learning her craft.

I would line up each day in a brown pinafore, saddle shoes, an ironed yellow blouse.
Inspected for cleanliness, tidiness, and even a louse.
Then proceeded into the auditorium for morning prayers and news for the day.
I was not a happy camper and definitely did not want to stay.

Shacked Up *by Marlaime Taylor*

In the year 1968 I was a hippie who technically ended up a chippie.

As a hippie I was part of a countercultural movement that rejected the values and mores of traditional mainstream life. Our resistance to haircuts and our preference for colourful free flowing clothing identified us, but more importantly, during this era, “free love” was the order of the day, which meant sexual relations without the restriction of marriage or any other long-term relationship.

In the minds of my hippie contemporaries, there was no problem with consenting adults “sleeping” together or even living together. However, with the generation preceding (specifically, our parents!) this was taboo. It’s when I met and fell in love with Bruce and we decided to move in together that I qualified myself, in the minds of my parents’ peer group, as a chippie.

It’s long been forgotten, thank goodness, but in those days “chippie” was one of a list of unkind and derogatory words loosely translated to mean, “shacked up with some man instead of doing the proper and acceptable thing,” which would, of course, be getting legally married. What’s “shacked up?” That’s another best forgotten label—what an unmarried couple living together used to be called.

Bruce and I wanted to live in the country and eventually found a lovely little four-room house on two acres about five miles down the road from my parents’ home. When I told Mom and Dad of our plans, I met with resistance, to say the least. They liked Bruce well enough, despite his being eight-and-a-half years my senior, but begged me not to shack up with him. Being strong-willed and determined, I went ahead anyway and we moved in together December first, two weeks before my 19th birthday. I wanted my parents’ acceptance but Bruce was not yet divorced from his first wife, so we could not be married as my parents preferred.

The day we moved in, we invited Mom and Dad to come see our little house, though it was empty save for a few wooden boxes to sit on. I will never forget, as we sat chatting, my father’s gruff command. “Bruce,” he said, “You come over in the morning and we’ll load up a trailer with some furniture for you.”

Though they weren’t happy about it, my parents made the choice to keep me in their life by accepting my living arrangements. They informed me, however, they would be telling their friends and our extended family that Bruce and I had run away and gotten married. They didn’t want anyone knowing that their daughter was a shackled-up hippie turned chippie.

Tough Stuff *by Elisabeth von Holst*

“Ow!” This sound was not heard in our family’s home. It was *verboten*—strictly forbidden.

My little sister Gudrun and I were proud when our knees (or at least one of them) were decorated with noticeable Band-Aids. I remember as an eight-year-old when I tripped over the cement edge of a drainage hole. I cut my whole kneecap wide open. That required a huge Band-Aid, and still, dark blood oozed through.

Papa was in charge—the family inspector to investigate as to whether the wound was healing properly. With one quick pull the bandage was off my knee and in his fingers. I held my breath—all my muscles contracted. No sound came out of my mouth. A new Band-Aid, with a little Vaseline across the gauze to prevent it from sticking to the wound, was applied. With such a major incident, it took more than just one ripping and dressing ritual.

I was even younger when Mutti took me to a clinic to get inoculated. The doctor entered with a long needle and when he saw I was scared and whimpering he sternly barked, “Stop it!”

My older brother Peter, who needed a companion for his inoculation, told me he admired me for not crying at every little thing like my older sister Marianne. Those words helped my ego to develop immensely and noticeably. In fact, I grew into a tomboy! I became a wrestler and, naturally, enjoyed winning against boys.

When we received our shots in high school the girls said, “Öchs’chen. You go first. You are not afraid.” They didn’t know how I held my muscles tightly.

Thinking back now, I gather that Papa probably suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder from his time in WWI, including as a prisoner of war. He was only a 19-year-old boy, and injured. I imagine there were many opportunities to hear cries of pain over and over again.

Getting Old *by Rose Marie Williams*

Just as I was getting used to the freedom that comes with being a widow, the wheel of life turned again and chaos ensued. What am I going to do? I'm getting older and everything I do takes longer and requires more energy than I seem to have. Also, I have been sick for the last month with a terrible flu and am still recuperating, which has alarmed my family, creating concern and fear for my safety.

My eldest granddaughter came from Toronto for two weeks to help me, and two other granddaughters came from Jasper and Kingston to work in my garden. My daughter is coming the end of the summer and we will complete legal arrangements—update my Will, set up a Living Will, Power of Attorney, access to my safety deposit box and chequing accounts, and set up a cell phone for me. The serenity and peace of my home is disrupted with so many people coming and going. Even my cat hides under my bed!

I know their intent is to help me, however these disruptions clash with my established routines and I become confused and disoriented, and some tasks are forgotten. With all this family input, I feel my independence is slowly slipping away and I will again be subject to the will of others.

For the greater part of my life, I have had to do what I was told. I had to obey. First, I had to follow the rules of my father, my mother, my older sisters, my maternal grandmother, and, of course, teachers and other school authorities. Then, like all adults, I was subject to the law of the land. For 40 years, I worked as a public school teacher, submitting to the constraints of school administrators and the needs of my students and their parents. When I had children I had to consider their wants, desires, and general welfare, as well as those of my husband.

Well, my children have grown up and have gone their own way, finally making a life for themselves. When my husband died, I was devastated. I grieved, and set about making a new life for myself. That was a new experience—a life for myself! For the first time I answered to no one but the law of the land. When friends tried to console me by telling me I would meet someone new and marry again, little did they realize that was not what I wanted. I actually enjoyed this newfound freedom, even though I missed the love and companionship of my husband.

Now I am beginning to understand that my cherished independence is about to be compromised. It is going to end. Little by little, my ability to follow my own desires and wishes is breaking down. I am not able to combat these life forces, and I know I must succumb to the wheel of life's turning. I realize that my family's concern is because they love me and are willing

and able to help me utilize what stamina I have to continue to enjoy my life to the fullest. They want me to stay in my home for as long as I can with help—help in the garden and help in the housekeeping.

But I don't want help! I know that when others help in the housekeeping, things won't be the way I have done them. They won't rinse the dishes properly. They won't load the dishwasher the efficient way I do. Dishes and cooking equipment will be put away in different places. I won't be able to find things. Linen will be folded differently and will not fit in the spaces allotted for it. I'll be frustrated and become angry. People who are trying to help me will be puzzled and hurt.

There is an angst, a bitter anger, when you face your own mortality, when you face the unknown. My husband used to tell me, "Getting old is no fun," but I didn't get it. Now I do. After his stroke his speech was difficult and he laboriously found and chose his words. "You, wait! You wait!" he spit out angrily. "You'll see!" was left unspoken, hanging in the air.

How will this end? The wheel is turning, turning, turning, and as it turns I become more helpless, even invisible. Who I am will disappear.

What About the Stripper? *by Betty Zaikow*

In the 1970s, many young people moved to Texada Island, British Columbia, to live a simpler life and be closer to nature. We formed a friendship with Karen and Peter, who were newcomers, along with their sweet, three-month-old baby, Tasha. My husband and I were expecting our first child in a few weeks, so to celebrate and ponder our new roles as first-time parents, we decided to go for dinner at the Texada Arms Hotel in Van Anda.

We were very hungry so ordered our dinners right away and started happily chatting about their move from a big, busy city back east to a little cabin in this quiet paradise, and about our little cabin, built in anticipation of our new arrival. Little Tasha started squirming and fussing. She was hungry, too. Karen discreetly put the baby to her breast, covering her with a lovely soft, cream-colored shawl. The baby, satisfied, quickly and quietly settled down.

The waitress bought our water and tea and, seeming shocked, said, "Are you breastfeeding?"

"Yes," Karen politely answered.

"But you can't breastfeed here," the waitress announced, "You have to go into the bathroom to do that."

"I am not going into that filthy bathroom to nurse my baby," Karen said. "There is no place to sit down except on the toilet."

"Well, you can't breastfeed her here."

My husband said, "What about the stripper that's next door in the bar right now? She's topless."

"That's different," the waitress said. "You cannot breastfeed here or you'll have to leave," she added with a note of finality.

Karen sat stunned, with tears streaming down her face. I was speechless and felt the injustice of the situation sharply. The father and father-to-be looked ready to punch someone out, they were so angry. We all got up and we left the restaurant. Our joyous dinner out celebrating friendship and parenthood completely destroyed, we went home devastated and hungry.

Author Biographies

Allan, Brenda

Since moving to Powell River, Brenda spends much of her time outdoors, but writing is still a part of her life. For her, the writing process opens doors to memories, and by recording them, Brenda's children and grandchildren will have a way to hear her stories and her voice.

Baker, Wendy

Wendy retired from a career of writing job descriptions, grant applications, policies and procedures, accreditation compliance reports, performance appraisals, statistical analyses, financial summaries...and is now having fun writing memories to share with her grandchildren.

Bennett, Kathy

Born in Powell River, Kathy grew up on a 16-acre hobby farm. Her plan to travel the world got put on hold when she married and had seven children. She and her husband now take great delight in travelling to places far and near to visit their children and grandchildren.

Buckna, Pat

Before settling in Powell River in 2010, Pat spent a number of years in the Northwest Territories. He is a singer-songwriter who produces music events. He holds a Certificate in Creative Writing from Simon Fraser University and is currently completing a book-length memoir.

Carey, Marilyn

Marilyn began writing memoirs because her brother insisted, as the matriarch of the family, that she record family memories before it was too late. She has been delighted with the coaching and camaraderie of the memoir writing group.

Carter, John

Born in England, John spent 12 years in the Royal Air Force, but most of his career as a social worker. He and his lovely wife Wendy retired to Powell River in 2006, where John is a valuable volunteer in the community with his big heart, winning smile, and sense of humour.

Day, Kate

A retired teacher from Britain, Kate now lives in Powell River. She has also lived and worked in Singapore, Uganda, and the Cayman Islands with her husband and children, and is currently enjoying writing short memoirs about her life and travels.

Dunbar, Joanna

Born in Edmonton in 1944, Joanna was raised in a half-Catholic family with an older and younger brother. Writing memoirs has brought her closer to herself, allowing appreciation for

her choices and their consequences. And in this process of pursuing clarity she has rediscovered the pleasure of a story well told.

Falconer, Bev

Bev Falconer, who moved to Powell River with her family in 1935, writes stories about growing up in the unique Powell River Company Townsite during the 1940s. She has enjoyed travelling in Australia, Indonesia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Europe, but is always happy to call Powell River home.

Faubert, Terry

Originally from Ontario, Terry has lived in the Powell River area since the early 1980s. Her passions are hiking, travelling, and (most recently) kayaking. She is currently working on both a children's book and a memoir about building a cabin in the woods.

Isaac, Vi

An artist and retired teacher, Vi has travelled extensively, paints art, and is working on short memoirs for an autobiographical book for her large and much-loved family.

Köstler-de Beaupré, Christa

Christa loves people, food, and travel. As a 20-year-old visiting relatives in Montreal, she decided not to return to her native Austria. She worked and experienced life across Canada and as far north as the Yukon. Retired in Powell River, she writes about her life for her three sons and their families.

Lock, Mary

Mary has lived on Texada Island for close to 40 years, enjoying its beautiful natural environment. Her love of nature plays a role in many of her memoirs.

Lyster, Audrey

Audrey spent the first 10 years of her working life in England as a chiropodist. After her parents died she immigrated to Canada, where she met Gerry Lyster, a national park warden. This opened up a whole life of adventure, including wilderness, marriage, and children. A talented writer, Audrey did not start writing until she was in her 80s and joined the memoir writing program.

MacMillan, Mary Lou

For most of her adult life, Mary Lou has lived on a homestead in the rural area south of Powell River. She draws inspiration for her memoirs from her days living on the land.

Rasmussen, Rita

Rita was born in Powell River, close to where her grandparents settled in the early 1900s. She is

an internationally celebrated multi-media artist, and enjoys the creative process and exploration of memoir writing.

Rice, Teresa

A retired bookkeeper, Teresa is originally from England and has retired in Powell River where her son and family also live. Teresa likes travelling, spending time with her grandson, and writing about her early years growing up in Liverpool.

Samuel, George

George was born in Burma in 1937 of Scottish and American parents and did lots of war-torn travelling before age 11. He has enjoyed writing and the way the practice and feedback from his memoir group has opened up his early memories and feelings.

Sparks, Holly

A creative person, Holly shares from her heart. She loves a challenge, be it physical, spiritual, or summoning the patience to write her lyrical memoirs.

Taylor, Marlaine

Since she regrets not knowing more about her grandparents, Marlaine is writing her memoirs for her children, grandchildren, and perhaps even for great grandchildren and greatgrandchildren not yet born.

von Holst, Elisabeth

After the loss of her speech and writing ability due to a stroke in 2013, Elisabeth used her incredible strength, resilience, and perseverance to regain her health and continue her memoir writing career, much to her writing group's delight. Every month they are transported and touched by her stories of growing up in Germany and immigrating to Canada.

Williams, Rose Marie

A retired school teacher and longtime resident of Powell River, Rose Marie is a dedicated memoir writer, a volunteer for several community services, and sings with the Powell River Chorus.

Zaikow, Betty

Betty grew up in Blubber Bay on Texada Island and is writing short memoirs for her grandchildren to read. She is new to writing, but enjoys remembering and recording the events of her childhood.

Acknowledgments

Many thanks and sincere appreciation to the Board of Directors, management, staff, and volunteers of the Powell River Public Library for their unwavering support and enthusiasm in relation to the *Memoir Writing for Seniors* program and this most recent project. Each and every month I hear from the writers that their memoir writing practice has improved their writing and ability to remember, changed their views on the past, and greatly enhanced their present lives. Some say they feel they belong in a way they never could have imagined. All of this would not be possible without a dedicated and valuable Library community and all that each person contributes.

—Sandra Tonn, editor