



The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration

#19

The Grannie Annie's 19th Collection

Historical Family Stories from
The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration
Written by Young People

Saint Louis, Missouri

The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration

Welcome to the 2023/2024 Grannie Annie celebration of family stories! Students in U.S. grades 4 through 8, and homeschooled or international students 9 through 14 years of age, are invited to interview their family storykeepers and write a story from their family's history. The Grannie Annie experience leads young people to strengthen family and community bonds, encounter history in a personal way, and polish their writing skills. Students are encouraged to share their work with their family, school, community, and The Grannie Annie.

The works of sixteen young authors, chosen to represent the submissions received this year, are included in this nineteenth annual collection of Grannie Annie family stories. This year's stories are published on The Grannie Annie's website and in this complimentary PDF, and will be shared on Facebook throughout the year.

The Grannie Annie mission — to inspire young people to discover, write, and share historical family stories — springs from a belief in the transformative power of “story.” The simple, genuine family stories in this collection can help us connect with people in today's world and with people from times past. In unexplainable ways, these stories foster feelings of unity with people whose lives may seem very different from our own. Quietly, surely, the world moves one step closer to peace.

Published by The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration, P.O. Box 6094, Chesterfield, Missouri 63006.

The Grannie Annie welcomes — and desires to receive and publish — family stories from students of every race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, and creed.

Because the stories in The Grannie Annie's nineteenth collection were captured from the oral tradition, they represent a unique blend of history, legend, and opinion. Accuracy — historical or otherwise — is not guaranteed, and the views represented are not necessarily those of the authors, directors, or publishers.

Particular thanks to fiber artist Elda Miller.

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Your tax-deductible donation will enable more young people to take part in The Grannie Annie, and will make the remarkable Grannie Annie published stories more widely available. Please mail your donation to the address at the top of this page or visit the donation page of The Grannie Annie's website: TheGrannieAnnie.org/DonatetoTheGrannieAnnie.html.

In memory of
Ann Guirrerri Cutler,
whose passion for saving family stories
inspired The Grannie Annie
1944–2007

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Invitation to Participate

Praise for The Grannie Annie

* The time setting of each story is noted in parentheses here and also on the story pages.
A notation of “c.” (circa) indicates that the year is approximate.

Story Settings Map, International

Numbers on map are story numbers.



Story Settings Map, United States

Numbers on map are story numbers.



A Word from Grannie Annie

Some Native American nations so valued their histories that they designated a tribal storykeeper. My mother filled that role in our family for decades, and before that, our family storykeeper was Mom's mother, my grandmother Randazzo.

Gramma Randazzo lived with us when I was a child. She didn't speak English well; however, at an early age I learned to say "Tell me a story about the Old Country" or "Tell me again the story about the baker's daughter who had dough under her fingernails." Then she would begin, in her broken English that made the stories even more fascinating to me. She told me stories about the olive groves on the family estate in Italy, about Grampa Randazzo's brothers and all their escapades, and about the family's early years as immigrants in Brooklyn. Mom carried on the tradition with her own repertoire of stories — about teaching in a one-room school, about blizzards and floods on the farm, and about rolling up the rug and inviting the neighbors over to dance.

I was fascinated by their tales and still am. I have written down many of their stories, saved them in keepsake books so they won't be lost. They're a treasure to read now, just as I had hoped, but I find I saved more than the stories themselves. Listening had been a way to be close to Gramma Randazzo. When I read Gramma's stories now, I remember sitting near her, hearing the stories from Gramma herself. When I read Mom's stories now, I remember aunts and uncles and cousins gathering around the kitchen table to listen. By sharing their stories, Gramma and Mom created a sense of family, a sense of closeness and security, that will stay with me forever.

Ann Guirrerri Cutler, The Original Grannie Annie, April 2006

What Are Your Stories About Today's World?

Have you been recording your thoughts, feelings, and observations about this unique time in history? Preserving your experience of today's challenges and celebrations will be a priceless gift for future generations — and may someday inspire a Grannie Annie story!

Note to Parents and Educators

The sixteen stories in The Grannie Annie's nineteenth collection represent the 243 submissions received this year from young authors in seven U.S. states. The published stories took place in eight countries on four continents over a span of 150 years. Some stories involve historic events; others vividly depict everyday life from earlier times. Many people in these stories find themselves in particularly challenging — even life-threatening — circumstances. As family members meet their own challenges with courage, determination, ingenuity, and heroism, they often also strive to improve the lives of people around them.

Our volunteer readers chose these stories with you and your family in mind, yet you may want to preview the stories before sharing them with young or sensitive readers.

We're so pleased that you've joined us! We encourage you to discover and preserve some stories from your *own* family's history. And we hope that you'll join us again next year for The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration.

Connie McIntyre and Fran Hamilton, Directors of The Grannie Annie

Listening is an act of love.

—Dave Isay, StoryCorps

**The Grannie Annie's 19th Collection
of Historical Family Stories**

1. A Chilling Story

early 1840s; on the Oregon Trail in territory that is now Kansas and Nebraska, USA

On a cold winter night in the early 1840s my nine-year-old great-great-great-great-great-great-grandfather and his parents were traveling the Oregon Trail.¹ With the mix of the frigid air rushing through their ears, the bumpiness of the trail, and the oxen's stomping hooves, no one noticed when my sixth-great-grandfather fell off the wagon.

My great-grandfather snapped awake to the freezing blanket of snow beneath him as panic and dread washed through his bones. Too weak to run and too parched to scream, his only option was to crawl into a bush and try to warm up — but to no avail.

Right as he was beginning to lose touch with reality, he saw another wagon on the trail, and he had a rush of adrenaline. Using the last of his newfound energy, he rushed in front of the wagon's path, forcing the oxen pulling the wagon to stop. After my great-grandfather explained to the father of the family what had just happened to him, the family pitied him, so they let him on the wagon and tried to warm him up with some wool blankets.

After a few weeks, the family finally reached Fort Kearny,² where my great-grandfather decided that he wanted to look for his parents. After looking around for a few days, he was about to give up, but right as he was walking back to the other family's wagon, he saw two familiar faces: his mom and dad! My great-grandfather, now flooded with relief, sprinted over to them and gave them a huge hug. He then explained the whole story to them, and his extremely grateful parents went over to the family and thanked them countless for saving their only son. The family said that they were happy to help.

After more *thank yous* and *you're welcomes*, my great-granddad and his family went back to their wagon. As they were walking there, my great-grandfather knew that this would be a story that would never be forgotten throughout generations upon generations.

Charles Enke; Missouri, USA

1. The Oregon Trail was a 2,000-mile route from Independence, Missouri, to the Columbia River in Oregon. Thousands of settlers traveled this trail in wagon trains in the mid-1800s.

2. Fort Kearny, named after Col. Stephen Watts Kearny, is near Kearney, Nebraska, which took its name from the name of the fort. The second "e" was apparently added to "Kearny" by postmen who often misspelled the name of the town.

2. The Incredible Find

1931; St. Louis, Missouri, USA

Crack! My great-uncle Tommy Collico, a ten-year-old boy, was casually walking on Grand Avenue.¹ It was a humid day on August 21, 1931. Tommy did not know it yet, but he was going to go home with a story that his family would never forget.

The St. Louis Browns were competing against the New York Yankees at Sportsman's Park, located at 2911 North Grand Boulevard.¹ Suddenly the crowd cheered so loudly that Tommy could hear it outside the stadium. That was when he saw something hit a parked car and roll under it. He was curious, so he took a closer look. It was a baseball, but he was not aware that it was a very special baseball. Tommy grabbed the baseball and headed home to show his family his incredible find.

It had just been the third inning, with a runner on first base. Babe Ruth was up to bat. He hit a pitch from George Blaeholder that soared over the pavilion roof and hit a parked car on Grand Avenue. The crowd cheered with excitement as the Great Bambino² hit his 600th career home run! Ruth got ejected in the ninth inning for arguing with the umpire, but the New York Yankees ended up winning the game 11 to 7.

After the game, Ruth reached out to reporters, asking the radio stations to relay his request to have the home run ball returned to him. He would give a \$10 reward and sign a new ball to whoever returned it.

The next day, my uncle Tommy arrived at the Sportsman's Park press gate with the ball. Ruth greeted Tommy like a son. They chatted for a bit, and Ruth gave him a ten-dollar bill and a brand-new ball that was signed. This was an unforgettable day for Tommy and his family!

Aiden Hunter; Missouri, USA

1. Grand Avenue and North Grand Boulevard were the same street with slightly different names in different locations — and “Grand Avenue” seemed to be more commonly used.

2. “Bambino” is an Italian word meaning “baby” or “child.” Babe Ruth (nicknamed the Great Bambino) played major league baseball from 1914 to 1935. From 1921 to 1974 he held the record for the most home runs hit by a professional baseball player in his career, ending with a total of 714.

3. A Call to Duty

1942–1944; St. Louis and Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, USA; near Salzburg, Austria, and other European locations

In the autumn of 1942 I was a young man, barely out of my teens — and the world was at war. I knew that the decision I was about to make was going to be life-altering, but many of my friends, like me, had the call to duty. I knew I had to make the hard decision to serve my country and enlist in the military. That decision would send me into the heart of conflict that would change my life forever.

I stood in front of the recruitment office. The posters at that time showed pictures of brave soldiers in action. It's like they called you in. By the time I made the decision, the war had become vicious, and many young men my age were being killed or injured daily. I knew I could become one of those men, but contributing to the military, and to something bigger than myself, called to me — and I enlisted.

Basic training was the hardest thing I had ever done in my life. The drill sergeants were mean and tough. They screamed orders at everyone. The physical toughness of other recruits and the military helped me build the mental toughness I needed to survive. The best things about basic training were the bonds and friendships I formed with the other recruits. It was amazing to see the diverse backgrounds of all the recruits and how we bonded together to serve our country as one unit.

As the weeks passed, the reality of war began to set in. As a young man, I was scared to realize how much of a responsibility we had. Living day in and day out for months, within the barracks and on the training grounds, built a sense of camaraderie.

The day finally came when we were called to deploy. I found myself on a crowded transport ship. Waves crashed over the ship as we sailed east. What lay ahead was the great unknown. My fate, and the fate of our nation, hung in the balance.

The reality of war struck me the moment my boots hit the soil. This was an unfamiliar and scary land. There was a distant thunder of bombs and gunfire. The air was thick with smoke and the smell of black powder. At that point my friends and I were no longer recruits, but now soldiers. Even though war was chaos, I witnessed how strong and fearless my fellow soldiers were. Their courage and sacrifice made a mark on my soul that I will never forget.

Being a part of the war, I discovered how strong I really was. The young man who had enlisted with a sense of duty now stood on foreign soil and witnessed one of the biggest changes in the world's history. As I reflect on the years, I carry with me the memories of camaraderie and sacrifice — and the feeling that I played a part in changing history for the better.

Mick Janish, great-grandson of the narrator; Missouri, USA

4. The Metal Shofar

1943; Nice, France

It was Rosh Hashanah — the first day of the Jewish New Year — in September 1943. Usually my great-grandmother's family would go to synagogue on this important day and hear the shofar, or ram's horn, being blown.

This year was different. My sixteen-year-old great-grandmother, Hadassah (had AH suh), and her family were hiding in an apartment in Nice (nees), France, because the Nazis were in control. If Hadassah and her family were found, they would be killed. No one could leave the apartment, including her father, mother, brother, and one of her father's students. Someone who was not Jewish would secretly bring them food. Hadassah spent the days trying to read a book she had found in the apartment, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*,¹ in an unknown language she was teaching herself — English.

Right from the apartment window, Hadassah could see metal train tracks. Military trains carrying weapons and bombs would loudly pass by on their way into Italy, making the apartment rumble.

When the holiday of Rosh Hashanah started, Hadassah looked at her father's shofar and asked, "How will we blow the shofar?" If any of the neighbors heard the wailing sound through the walls, they would know there were Jews hiding.

Hadassah's father did not look scared. "We will time the blowing of the shofar to a passing train."

The morning of Rosh Hashanah, Hadassah and her family crowded into a tight hallway in the middle of their apartment. They stood there with wide eyes, waiting in the silence. All they could hear was the soft sound of breathing. Then, finally, their ears heard a small clattering sound. They could feel the vibration of the floor shaking through their feet. The walls were trembling, and the roar of the metal train cars got louder and louder. Everyone looked up at Hadassah's father. At the moment that the train whistled, her father lifted the shofar, put it to his lips, and blew. His knuckles turned white as he clutched the shofar. *Tooooo!* the train thundered. *Tooooo!* echoed the shofar.

The "earthquake" ended as the train pulled away. Hadassah's father put the shofar down. Hadassah felt relieved and happy. Quietness returned as the family stood there. But before they could move, there was another sound: Suddenly the bell rang.

Hadassah's family looked around at each other, remaining frozen, moving only their eyes. Her father shook his head. They would not answer the door. In fact, they would never know who the person was on the other side.

The family later sat down to their Rosh Hashanah feast. This year it was just green peppers. That was all the food they had for several days. To this day, when

my great-grandmother eats a fresh green pepper, she's right there, back in the apartment, waiting for the train to come so she could hear the shofar.

Ezra Hillel Klein; New York, USA

1. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, a novel about the experience of an American fighting in the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) was written by famous American writer Ernest Hemingway, who had served as a newspaper reporter from the battlefields of that war. The novel was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize.

5. The Twister and the Two-Year-Old

1950; Cleveland, Ohio, USA

When my grandmother was living in Ohio, she witnessed a tornado that ripped a boy away from his home. She was ten years old at the time, and was playing in the backyard when she heard a strange sound. The sky that day was purple, with just a hint of green. Looking into the woods behind her, my grandmother, Myrna, saw a long, twisted spiral — a tornado.

The tornado headed for the house across from hers and picked it right up, just like in *The Wizard of Oz*! Items such as the beds and the refrigerator came falling out. Then, as Myrna continued watching, a little boy at the age of two years was tumbling around the interior of the house.

It was terrifying to see something like that. Myrna felt like she couldn't move. She was practically glued to the ground. She kept watching and saw the little boy get sucked out of the house!

Myrna went inside and told her dad what she had seen. Her dad had been watching the tornado from inside the house. When Myrna came in, he realized that she had been outside, and he started to scold her. However, Myrna told her father that she had seen the tornado pick up a house and cause a boy to fly out. Her father's face expressed ambivalence — sadness for the boy and his parents, yet gladness that it wasn't his own family.

After the tornado ended, Myrna's father decided to go over to the remains of the house that had been destroyed. He saw that the owners had returned home and were searching through the mess. He asked what was wrong, and the owners worriedly replied that they couldn't find their little boy.

Myrna had been following her dad and piped up. She explained to the owners what she had seen. They asked in which direction the boy had gone, and Myrna pointed. The owners rushed off, and Myrna and her father went home.

They received word a couple of days later that the owners had found the child, and he was alive! He had been flung one and a half miles away from his house at two years old, but had landed in a tree and had survived. The owners were very grateful for Myrna's help in finding him. This news caused Myrna to nearly cry with emotion, and she wasn't sure why. She was happy that she had been able to impact someone's life at such a young age.

Phoebe Wenger-Stickel; Missouri, USA

6. The Cowboys and Indians

c. 1951; Pink Hill, North Carolina, USA

Many families have funny stories that are passed from generation to generation. Almost all of my family's stories are from my grandfather's side of the family and involve him getting into some sort of trouble. My grandfather was a mischievous little boy, especially when it came to fire! Growing up in the 1950s, he always watched westerns on TV and played "cowboys and Indians," which was his favorite pastime.

On this particular day my grandfather was around four years old and was staying with his babysitter, Ermalee, while his parents were at work and his older sister was at school. He was bored out of his mind, and he took his cowboy and Indian figurines to his bedroom. He was playing that the Indians had tied up his cowboy, Texas Pete, and they were going to burn him at the stake. My grandfather's mom had just bought a brand-new bedspread that had beautiful fringe around the edge. My grandfather found the fringe useful for tying up Texas Pete. Then he lit a match to the fringe to burn Texas Pete at the stake! His bedspread was immediately engulfed in flames, and my grandfather stood motionless, not knowing what to do!

He finally ran to Ermalee and told her what had happened. Without thinking twice, she ran to his room, took his bedspread off his bed, put it in the bathtub, and turned on the water in attempt to get rid of the fire. The bedspread and sheets were ruined, and the mattress had a small burned spot.

When his mother got home and Ermalee told her what had happened, she said that my grandfather would have to tell his daddy what had happened. It seemed like it took forever for his daddy to come home, but finally he walked in the door.

My grandfather told his daddy what had happened, and his daddy immediately walked to the bedroom to inspect the damage. My grandfather had feared the spanking of his life, but this time he did not get a spanking. Instead he was made to go sit outside. It was winter — cold and very dark in his backyard. It seemed to my grandfather like he was out there for hours before his daddy finally came outside, sat next to him, and said, "This is how it would feel if we did not have a house. We would have to live outside. So, if you think we do not need this house, we can light it on fire. But if you think we need it, then you can come inside." My grandfather got up, walked into the house, and apologized to everyone.

Although this story has gotten a chuckle from my parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents numerous times in years past, my grandfather surely did not think it was very funny at the time. The punishment he received was way worse than any spanking he could have received, and he certainly learned his lesson! That had not been his first time playing with fire, but it certainly was his last.

Eliza Rouse; North Carolina, USA

7. Escaping Cuba

1959; Havana, Cuba

When my grandma was about five years old, her family moved from New Jersey to Cuba, because her father had gotten hired to manage a casino. They sailed to Cuba and rented a home in Havana. The area where they lived was like a smaller and less wealthy Beverly Hills. They even had a family that drove and cleaned for them. My great-grandfather, great-grandmother, my grandma, her brother, and my gram's dog, Papelito, all settled into living in Cuba for a few years.

At that time the president of Cuba was a man whose last name was Batista (buh TEES tuh).¹ However, there were rebels that lived in the mountains who did not want Batista to be president. They wanted their leader to be president, and their leader was Fidel Castro. The rebels were a strong army, and in Cuba, armies decided who was going to be president. They fought physically, and the strongest army was the one who chose the president.²

On December 31, 1958, New Year's Eve, the rebels invaded the streets. Everybody, including my grandma and her family, turned off the lights in their house and hid, but unluckily they lived across the street from the vice president of Cuba. That meant that all of the houses on that block were searched — including my grandma's house. My grandma and her family were sitting there silently when the door burst open. The rebels yelled at my grandma's family, but they were yelling in Spanish, and my grandma's family didn't understand them. My grandma's family backed up against the wall with their hands up.

My gram's dog, Papelito, did not like that and barked. A soldier turned around and pointed his gun at the dog, but my grandma didn't like *that*. She dove in front of the dog and hugged Papelito, but she was only seven years old, and she didn't know better. The soldier backed off, and my grandma stood up and went to the wall. The rebels raided the family's house, took the jewelry and food, and took a camera from my grandma.

About two weeks later, my great-grandpa said that the family was going on a picnic, because he didn't want to scare my grandma. Instead they went on a ship. They had to wear red and black to go outside, because those were the rebel colors. My grandma's brother did not go with them, because he had a wife and a child to take care of. Papelito also had to be left behind.

My grandma and her parents got to Key West, Florida. Then their friend drove them to Miami, and they flew to New York. Papelito ended up coming to the United States with my grandma's brother a few weeks later.

Now my grandma lives in Colorado and remembers this as a scary period in her life.

James Adrian Manza; Colorado, USA

1. Batista served as the elected president of Cuba from 1940 to 1944. In 1952, before a scheduled presidential election, he seized power (with help from the army) and canceled the election.

2. Fidel Castro became the leader of Cuba in 1959 and remained in power until 2008. Castro was

also the leader of Cuba's Communist Party for most of that time, continuing until 2011. The Communist Party is the only political party that is allowed in Cuba.

8. Lady, the Hero

1960; near Delta, Ohio, USA

Near a small, peaceful, quiet town surrounded by cornfields, there is a small little house, and in that house there is a boy, my grandpa — a little boy named Dan. He lives with his loving family and a dog, Lady. The small little house is on a farm with many animals, such as cows, chickens, and horses.

On a late summer day Dan, the three-year-old boy, is doing his housework. He feeds the chickens, he feeds the horses, and he goes off on a dirt trail to feed the cows. Dan gets there and finds a big muddy area. He tries his best to go around it, but it is no match for a little boy. Dan gets stuck — first his boots, then his legs. He can't move! He cries out for help for minutes, but nobody hears him. The cows hear his cries for help and swarm him, sniffing and almost stepping on the small little three-year-old boy.

When Dan thinks nobody is coming and all hope is lost, he tries to get out of the mud himself. He stretches his leg as far as he can. His sock flies off and gets stuck in the sticky mud. He does the same thing with his other leg. *Fwoop!* he hears as his sock comes off his foot. He tries his best to get out of the mud, but it's no use. The cows are all around him, and he cannot risk being stepped on if he would go under the cows' legs. All Dan can do is scream for help.

After a few minutes of crying out for help, he hears a bark. Lady, his blond German shepherd, has come to help him. Lady starts nipping and barking at the cows and scaring them off. The cows back away from Dan. As Lady is standing next to Dan, his parents come and help him out of the mud.

If Lady had not been there, Dan's parents would not have known that he was in a "sticky" situation. Lady truly saved the day.

Gemma Vanni; Ohio, USA

9. Achieving the Dream of a Lifetime

1950s–1962; Skopelos, Greece; New York, New York, and Memphis, Tennessee, USA

During the 1950s there was a young girl growing up in a small village on the Greek island of Skopelos (SKOH puh lohs). Her name is Chrysanthy (krih SAHN thee), and she is my yiayia (YI-yuh), which is Greek for “grandma.” Every morning except Sundays Chrysanthy would walk to school with her best friend, Mahoula. Chrysanthy loved school so much that she wanted to be a teacher one day.

Chrysanthy’s home had only a fireplace and a wood-burning furnace for heat, and the only news her family would get came from an occasional newspaper or town crier. To get around, they would use either a donkey or their feet. Over time, electricity and radios came, but Chrysanthy was never spoiled. Occasionally her family would get a box of things from her aunt in America. After seeing all of the new, interesting things in the box, she wanted to see the place that they were from. She wanted to see the world.

In 1962 Chrysanthy’s dream came true. Her cousin Mike traveled from America to Skopelos and visited her. Every night he would ask her to speak with him, because all of the grown-ups talked too fast for him to understand their Greek. Chrysanthy and Mike discussed what they were going to do the next day. During the day Chrysanthy would carry his camera bag to wherever they were going.

Over time, Mike saw how much Chrysanthy wanted a great education and wanted to go to college, so he asked her if she wanted to go to America. You see, there were only two colleges in Greece at the time, and girls rarely went to college, making it extremely difficult for Chrysanthy to go, not to mention expensive. But in America, colleges were cheaper and plentiful, so Mike went home to his parents and asked them if they would host Chrysanthy while she went to school. Luckily for her, they said yes.

After getting everything ready to go, Chrysanthy boarded a plane in Athens and headed to New York City. She was just fourteen years old, was all by herself, and traveled with only an extra pair of clothes and a whole lot of gifts for her cousins. Sure, she had some nerves, but really she was excited. She was on a real plane!

Once she landed in New York, she was met by a stranger who asked her in Greek, “Are you Chrysanthy?” He was an airport employee who took her to New Jersey, where she would get on another plane to Memphis, Tennessee, to meet up with her aunt and uncle. It was that employee who gave Chrysanthy the first hot dog of her life. After five more hours of travel, she was with relatives once again. She had made it to the land of opportunity.

My yiayia easily learned English, went on to finish high school, went to college, got married, had two kids, and fulfilled her dream to be a teacher.

“If you can dream it, you can achieve it.” —Chrysanthy

Malachi Crooks; Missouri, USA

10. The Mouse-tronaut

1964; Okeene, Oklahoma, USA

It was 1964, and my sixteen-year-old grandpa was at school. He was listening to the instructions for the science fair when the bell rang for lunch. For the rest of the day he was thinking about what to do for the science fair. He was in awe of rockets at the time, so he figured he could build a rocket and launch it.

He bought the parts and built his rocket. He went and grabbed eggs to test it. The first launch cracked the egg. He grabbed some sponges for reinforcement, and put them on top of the rocket for cushion. He tried it again, and the egg came down safely, but he did more testing before the final launch.

He lived next to a farm that had a silo with a broken window. The silo was infested with mice. He walked to the loading area and found the broken window. He had to wear gloves to avoid broken glass. Catching the mouse was easy, but he knew it was going to be hard to launch the rocket and bring the mouse back down alive.

He kept the mouse in custody for two weeks before the big launch. In that time he made a poster explaining the experiment. Once the time came, he walked to a vast golf course with the mouse and the rocket in hand. He set up a camera to record evidence for the science fair judges. He set up the rocket and put the mouse in the cockpit. After it was all secure, he set it off. The rocket took off silently, but as fast as a cheetah, and it scared him.

The rocket's parachute worked, but he wondered if the mouse lived. He found the top half of the rocket and touched it. *Roll, roll, thump*, it went. He tried again. *Roll, roll, thump*. "Shoot, I killed it," he thought. He was going to collect the rocket when he heard tiny scratching. The mouse lived! He was so happy that he couldn't control himself. He turned in his video and went home.

The next day he went to school and realized that he had won. He got the blue ribbon and a trip to the Houston Space Center. There he learned a lot about rockets and got to talk to a real astronaut! He now works as an engineer.

Levi Dill; Missouri, USA

11. A Defiant Act and a Life Saved

1966; Chu Lai, South Vietnam¹

Have you ever heard of Stonewall Jackson, Douglas MacArthur, George Marshall, or even Edward McCormack? Well, you should have, because these men have something in common. Not only were they great soldiers, but they also saved lives, and one of these men saved the life of a wonderful young boy.

The man I'm talking about is Edward McCormack, my great-uncle. In 1966, when twenty years old, he volunteered to join the United States Marines to serve in Vietnam. Due to his talents, he rose quickly in rank from private to lance corporal to the rank of full corporal and platoon leader. Many soldiers have stripes or chevrons² to show their rank, and my uncle had numerous chevrons sewn onto his uniform, which only made the situation he was about to put himself in even worse.

On September 15, 1966, my uncle and his friend decided to slip off base to a nearby village, and thank goodness they did, because in that village was a boy with a rag wrapped around his leg and something seeping through the rag. My uncle saw him and was curious about the leg. He asked the boy if he could see it. The boy said yes, and my uncle took off the rag, revealing a deep gaping hole that was very infected and had muddied blood in it because the boy's mother, who was the *mama-san*, the village leader, had applied mud to it! My uncle did the best he could to clean the wound with his canteen water, and he added battle dressing to it, but my uncle knew that if he didn't go back with some proper supplies, the boy would lose his leg and probably his life.

That same day my uncle returned to his military base and rushed to the sick bay, where he told his friend, a medic, about the boy. My uncle's friend gave him medication and told him how to apply it. The problem was that if he got caught going back there, he could lose everything he had worked for in the military — his rank and chevrons. But he knew what he had to do: He had to go back.

The night after he met the boy, he wrote to his parents, Grace and Edward, to tell them what he was about to do. In their reply, they tried to prevent him from returning and told him to take the boy to the doctors on base, because they were scared for my uncle's safety. But my uncle knew that the doctors wouldn't even attempt to save the boy — it had to be him. He went to check on the boy multiple times and developed a relationship with him. This only made him want to save the boy even more. And he was successful! He saved the life of that boy!

We don't know much about the boy. We don't know his name, but we *do* know that his mother was the village leader and that the boy told my uncle, "Me be a Marine someday."

Grace E. Farnakis; Missouri, USA

1. Between 1955 and 1975 the nation that is now Vietnam was two separate nations: North Vietnam and South Vietnam. These two nations were at war with each other. North Vietnam was a

Communist nation that was trying to extend Communism into South Vietnam, which was resisting that attempt. The United States and some of its allies fought on the side of South Vietnam in the war.

2. In the United States Marines, a chevron is a cloth badge, consisting of one or more upside-down V's, that is worn on the upper part of a uniform sleeve to indicate military rank.

12. Never Lose Faith

1974–present; Chicago, Illinois, USA

In 1974 my uncle Damian was born. The doctor told his mother and father that their baby was born with the umbilical cord wrapped around his neck. That scared the mother and the father. They didn't know what disabilities he might have, if any. Eventually they learned that he had epilepsy and cerebral palsy. Despite having these disabilities, Damian developed normally except for his ability to walk. It took him five years to walk independently. Even after he was walking, he would fall down a lot. Therefore, in elementary school he had to take extra safety precautions by wearing a helmet in gym class.

When high school rolled around, Damian wanted to play a sport. He had always loved sports, but he had been told by his doctor that he could not play contact sports like baseball, football, or even soccer. My grandma told him that he should swim, but he didn't want to. Damian wanted to *run*. When he learned about cross-country,¹ he decided to join the team.

Damian was the slowest runner at every cross-country meet, but he had faith that he could continue to succeed. At the end of every race, his team would cheer him on at the finish line as he crossed. He never gave up. Damian kept running and began to race against his own time. This clearly worked for him, as he started to get faster and faster. His team loved him; they always cheered him on at the end of a race, because they also had faith that he could succeed.

Damian went on to run 5K races² in college and into adulthood. My grandparents were so proud of him, and they had faith in him. They knew he could succeed — not only at running, but also in life. Damian earned his master's degree, but he never stopped running! He still ran, and he still kept trying to beat his old time. Damian still falls from time to time due to his disability, but he does not let that stop him.

Uncle Damian is currently training for a half marathon, and a main reason is that he has faith. My grandma said she always had faith in Damian and had so much joy raising him. She never ever lost faith, and neither did he.

Garrett Hardy; Missouri, USA

1. In cross-country, runners run in open country rather than on tracks or roads.

2. A 5K race is a distance of 5 kilometers (3.107 miles).

13. The Hero Who Did Not Want Recognition

1988; New Bern, North Carolina, USA

My great-granddad, whom we call “Pop-Pop,” is the most memorable man in my family’s history. He not only was a great person, but also was a hero. He was born on April 16, 1926, and when this story took place, he was sixty-one years old and lived in New Bern, North Carolina.

One wintry night in February, my great-grandparents had just gone to bed, along with most of the people on their street. In the house next to my great-grandparents lived a mom, a little boy about the age of four, and a little girl the age of seven. The mom of that family had been fixing dinner for herself and was just so exhausted that she forgot about the food she was cooking and fell asleep on the couch. Later she realized that the house was burning, with flames everywhere and smoke all through the house.

Luckily the little girl and her mom got out of the house, but the little boy was left inside.

The little girl was screaming and banging on my great-grandparents’ door. Suddenly my great-grandfather got up and grabbed his robe. He went to answer the door where the little girl was crying and screaming to help her little brother, who was still in the fire. My great-grandfather told his wife to call 911, and he went to help.

As my great-grandfather saw the great big fire and heard the embers popping, he went into the house to save the boy. He was crawling on his hands and knees, trying to find the boy. It was dark with no electricity, and the wood panels were burning and making his hands blister. At this point, he did not care; his focus was to save the boy. Finally, he found the boy lying in the hallway unconscious. He picked up the boy and ran out of the house. When they finally got outside, Pop-Pop performed CPR¹ on the little boy and revived him.

My great-grandfather not only saved a little boy, but also risked his own life saving him. He was awarded the North Carolina Governor’s Award for Bravery and Heroism by Governor James G. Martin. He was also awarded the Carnegie Medal for an outstanding act of heroism. This medal is given to people who have risked their lives or risked serious injury to save, or attempt to save, a person’s life.

My great-grandfather was known as Oliver Gray Wheeler, Jr. He changed this family’s life and was an amazing and unselfish person. This is a great example of someone being selfless and really caring about others.

Caroline Clark; North Carolina, USA

1. CPR (**cardio**pulmonary **resuscitation**) is a procedure that can save the life of a person whose heart and/or lungs are not working effectively or have stopped completely.

14. The Closed Door of The Israel War

1991; Mitzpe Nevo, Ma'ale Adumim, Israel

The deafening sound of the siren pierced the air as she fled the kitchen, leaving the cupboard doors swinging behind her. With her little brothers crying in the background, she panted, speeding down the hall into her parents' bedroom. She grabbed the cardboard box with her name on it, and pulled out her gas mask. She lifted the neck strap around her head and pressed the mask against her face. She yanked at the bands as tightly as she could, the borders of the mask suctioning to her face. Taking a deep breath, she tried to sit still, not knowing how long she would be in the "safe room."

This was not anything unfamiliar for Sara, my mother, who was eight years old at the time. She had done this before. For the last month, Sara had been practicing this emergency drill. Even though she knew exactly what to expect, it felt different this time, because this time, it was not a test. This was not a drill. This was a war.¹

The blare of the siren raged above her as she tried to slowly breathe. Sara's father slammed the bedroom door behind them. Soaking a towel in a bucket of water, he rolled it on the floor against the doorframe, sealing any outside air from seeping in.

This was Israel in February 1991. For five long weeks during the Gulf War, the Iraqi government attacked the Jewish people of Israel with missiles. Over the course of those terrifying weeks, forty-two scud missiles rained down from the sky, sending citizens into bomb shelters and "safe rooms." Sara's family, like all the others, had been forced to run and take cover when they heard the blast of the siren.

Sara huddled with her seven-year-old brother on the lumpy bed. Her youngest brother was only five, sitting on their mother's lap while she stroked his hair. The blinds had been pulled shut, a thick layer of plastic taped to cover the entire window. Sara's father smoothed the tape keeping the plastic down, desperate to keep the chemicals out.

All Sara could think about was the poisonous gas that might be stored inside each 41-foot-long missile — how it could leak out at any time and take the lives of many innocent civilians.

Families were often stuck in the "safe room" for many hours at a time — sometimes overnight. During those nights, all five family members had to squeeze into one queen-size bed, and were forced to use a bucket when they needed to use a bathroom. No one was able to leave until the "all-clear" was received.

After many hours of the unknown, the radio signal was transmitted, broadcasting the approval for families to exit their "safe rooms." The relief of being able to breathe freely again was temporary, as Sara knew that at any given moment, the

siren could go off again, sending them all back. But for now, for this next breath, she chose to be happy that she had that. She had tomorrow.

Jonathan Michael Mark; New York, USA

1. The conflict in 1991 was sparked when Iraq invaded Kuwait, and a coalition led by the United States responded to push Iraq back. During the fighting, Iraq fired scud missiles at Israel because it viewed Israel as an enemy.

15. Farm Cats

1993; Moberly, Missouri, USA

It's a couple of weeks into summer, and I'm living my best life. Today we're going to my grandparents' farm, and it's my favorite place. What's not to love about the old oak with the swing, or the big red barn. The farm is so serene and tranquil. But my favorite part of the farm is the cats. There are so many cats — black, white, ginger, and calico. There are two cats, however, that my sister and I adore: Blackie and Marshmallow. Marshmallow is my sweet calico cat, while Blackie is Jen's sleek black cat. This spring our cats had kittens, and we got to name them! I'm so excited to be back at the farm!

I hop out of my dad's pickup truck with Jen to greet my grandparents. After we eat lunch, we go outside. All over the lawn are cats, snoozing in the sun or scurrying after rodents. We walk into the barn, where even more cats are hiding from the afternoon heat. Nestled in the back of the barn in piles of hay, our cats lie surrounded by kittens. We make our way to them, and my sister strokes Blackie while I pet the kittens. Blackie's kittens are white with gray patches, despite their mom being completely black. However, the runt of the litter, Powderpuff, has no gray spot, and has a crooked paw. As I stroke him, I know he has to be mine.

However, my parents have said, "Jeanine, you can't have a cat." So I shove this thought away and focus on playing with the cats. Jen and I play with them until our parents announce that it's time to go, and we say goodbye to our grandparents. Little did I know that I might never see the farm again.

It's a few weeks before we get the news: Mom tells us that Grandpa died, and Grandma is going to have to sell the farm. I would never again see the sparkling blue waters of the duck pond, or the vast golden fields, or even the porch with the creaky swing and the peeling paint, or the barn. My whole childhood, my sanctuary, would be gone forever.

Then I worry about the cats. Even though Mom just told us that Blackie and Marshmallow and all of the other female cats would be safe with the neighbor, all of the boy cats would be left in the wild. Then Mom told me the best news ever: I could finally get a cat.

We took one final trip to the farm, and I soaked it all in for the last time. I said my final goodbye to Grandma, and then I went for a walk. As I walked through the barn, it hit me, and I knew exactly which cat to keep. So that's how I came to *now* — with Powderpuff curled up on my lap as I watched the farm fade into the distance, knowing that I had made the right choice.

Mackenzie Sasek; Missouri, USA

16. The Village Hospital

c. 1995–2007; Lwala, Kenya; North Andover, Massachusetts, and Hanover, New Hampshire, USA

Sometimes life can be very unfair. You never know what's coming your way, yet it all depends on how you handle the challenges that are presented to you. Take my dad for instance: He has endured a complicated life.

My father grew up in a rural village in Kenya, Africa, with no running water, electricity, or health care. He watched helplessly as neighbors passed away because there were no hospitals nearby. Because of this, my father made it his dream to become a doctor and assist his disheartened community. Once he graduated from primary school, he was chosen to attend a prestigious boarding school on the outskirts of Nairobi called Alliance High School.

In his second year at Alliance High School, my dad was chosen to participate in an exchange program with a coeducational boarding school called Brooks School, in North Andover, Massachusetts, in the United States. Some American students would come to Kenya, and some Kenyan students would go to North Andover, Massachusetts. Even though my father was sixteen, he'd never been on a plane before, so flying to the United States was a big opportunity for him. When he got to Brooks School, he was fascinated by how different the United States was from Kenya. Every amazing discovery encouraged him to return to America for college.

My dad applied to many colleges, but he failed to be accepted because the mail system was slow in Kenya, so his applications were late. The following year he applied earlier and was accepted into Dartmouth College with an international scholarship. Unfortunately my dad's parents couldn't afford the expensive plane ticket to Boston. When my father's village heard about this, they decided to help! They sold their cows, goats, chickens, and sheep to buy him a ticket. Once they raised enough money and my dad was about to depart, the villagers pulled him aside and said, "Once you go to America, please don't forget us. Remember to come back and help!"

So my dad went to America and studied hard. He was in his last trimester at Dartmouth, getting ready to graduate, when he received tragic news from home: His mother had fallen ill and had passed away. This wounded his entire family. That was the moment my father decided to build a hospital in his village to keep the other kids from losing their parents and becoming orphans.

He worked on the project with his father. Yet, when it was almost time to unveil the new hospital, his father became ill and passed away as well. This was terrible news for my dad's whole family, because they had lost both of their parents. Despite the appalling information, my dad found ways to continue the preparations.

Finally they had raised enough money, and on April 2, 2007, the hospital was officially opened. The people of the village were grateful for what my dad had

done for them. He had learned that persistence and perseverance pay off. He was proud that he'd made a difference in his village, even when it had felt impossible.

Ma'lee Ochieng; Missouri, USA

Invitation to Participate

The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration invites you to discover, write, and submit a story from your family's history. Your story can be humorous, tragic, inspirational — it can be about *anything* that happened in your family before you were born. The annual submission deadline is February 1. Complete details, including the guidelines and required submission form, are available on The Grannie Annie's website: TheGrannieAnnie.org/SubmitStories.html.

Praise for The Grannie Annie

Thank you so much for the opportunity to share family stories. My father has gotten so much joy from sharing his story, reading Matthew's drafts, and looking through his mom's old Bible and seeing family members' names, birth dates, and death dates written in her handwriting. The Grannie Annie is definitely more than a writing assignment. It is a bonding experience for everyone involved.

—Amy Pierce, Parent; Missouri, USA

As a writing instructor, I encourage my students to enter various contests throughout the year. They have submitted stories to The Grannie Annie every year for many years. Thank you for the writing prompt and for reading their submissions. I have enjoyed the remarkable stories that many students have uncovered.

—Janine Edwards, Instructor; New Jersey, USA

The Grannie Annie is a writing opportunity with meaning and purpose. As students discover and share their family's stories, they come to realize the power of their pen to connect members of their family, stir the imagination, and touch hearts.

—Martha Stegmaier, Grannie Annie Board member and volunteer extraordinaire; Missouri, USA

Thank you for this great honor to be included in The Grannie Annie Family Story Celebration. I took my daughters to South Korea this past summer to meet extended relatives like my grandmother, who is from North Korea. It is very special that the story of her family can be memorialized in this way so that Esther and her sisters can appreciate their heritage.

—Sandra Sohn, Parent; Ohio, USA

My family has really loved the whole Grannie Annie process — the interview, the research, the editing, and of course the honor of having our family's story selected for publication. It's been such a pivotal writing experience for Aidan, who has just finished fifth grade.

—Mindy McCoy, Parent; Missouri, USA

Participating in The Grannie Annie offers my students a wonderful opportunity to learn about their families' history by interviewing a family member, and an authentic audience for their writing.

—Kathy Lewis, Teacher; Missouri, USA

Thanks for such a great opportunity to write powerful stories and to showcase our work!

—Carol Fitzsimmons, Teacher; Missouri, USA

The Grannie Annie has brought all 51 children in my language arts classes closer to their families — and to each other. When they discuss their stories, they notice similarities between their own stories and their classmates' stories. The Grannie Annie is a valuable program that has provided my students and me with a powerful learning opportunity.

—Elie Bashevkin, Teacher; New York, USA

Perhaps the greatest value of the Grannie Annie stories is something not written in the book. When a child interviews an older relative, the child gets to know a person he or she may have taken for granted. The relative gets to tell a story that might have been lost. A bond is created or strengthened. A story is recorded for posterity. New memories are woven, and — just maybe — a writer is born.

—Lulu Delacre, Author/illustrator of *Salsa Stories*

My daughter, Sophia Rose, contacted my mother in Germany after her language arts teacher suggested that she write a story about my mother in World War II. The two had a wonderful e-mail and phone correspondence over a couple of weeks. When I saw the final draft of my daughter's writing, I read a story my mother had never told me. My daughter created a new memory of my mother's life through her writing. What an amazing gift The Grannie Annie gave our family!

—Petra Swidler, Parent; Missouri, USA

The Grannie Annie gives students and their parents a chance to reflect on the varied experiences that weave together their family's identity. Many people have brokenness in their family history, and by identifying and writing about hard experiences, our children learn to see the strength and restoration of our loved ones. We're grateful to The Grannie Annie for providing an opportunity to publicly show honor and respect to our family members who have persevered.

—Christan Perona, Parent; Missouri, USA

Because of The Grannie Annie, I have been motivated to continue writing and am now working on my first novel!

—Aaron Schnoor, Author, *Grannie Annie, Vols. 5, 6, and 7*; Grannie Annie Selection Committee 2014 – 2017, and 2019; North Carolina, USA

When young people participate in The Grannie Annie and discover, and then reflect upon, their family's stories and the family stories of others, the experience can create in each of these young authors an enhanced sense of appreciation, understanding, and "connection." Thank you to The Grannie Annie for giving our communities young people who will see our diversity as an asset rather than a deficit, will recognize the sameness even in our differences, and will bring to our world a bit more compassion.

—Dr. Phil Hunsberger, Senior Partner, Educational Equity Consultants

This is my daughter's first time submitting her writing outside her school. It's very encouraging to her. She loves reading and writing. I believe this experience will have a great impact on her.

—Daniel Liu, Parent; New Jersey, USA

Year after year, my fifth-grade students are eager and excited to submit their work to The Grannie Annie. The experience of submitting a manuscript — with the hope of publishing — gives newfound meaning to their learning. The students stand taller when they become cognizant that the world is benefiting from their contribution.

—Rebecca Friedman, Teacher; Maryland, USA

The Grannie Annie challenged my students to go beyond their comfort zone, to write for a broader audience, and to see that learning goes beyond the four walls of a classroom.

—Ann-Marie Harris, Teacher; Maryland, USA

Thank you for starting such a heartwarming project where *all* the kids are winners, whether their stories are published or not.

—G-g Metzger, Teacher; Texas, USA

Publication of our daughter's story is special to us for so many reasons. . . . Both my mother and grandmother passed away a few years ago. Growing up, I heard this story countless times from my grandmother. It's wonderful seeing that story told through my daughter's words.

—Andrea Rominger, Parent; Alabama, USA

Orion's writing a family story was extremely important to his grandmother, who had a serious illness. When he called her to tell her that his story was going to be published, she was as happy as anyone had seen her in months. She read the story to anyone who would listen. I can't even begin to tell you the positive impact that this has had on our family.

—Andrew Jones, Parent; Pennsylvania, USA

The Grannie Annie provides the perfect opportunity for students to start asking questions about their families' past — not just the facts, but the stories. Then as they write, students begin to understand how *telling a story* differs from *writing a biography of facts*.

—Mark Futrell, Teacher; North Carolina, USA

I would like to thank you for giving Yifu such an encouragement, and working diligently to publish his first article! Our families in China are very happy to hear about this. It is an amazing experience to me that I witness that a part of my family heritage is being connected from my father to my son through the event you support! Thank you!

—Yuxing Feng, Parent; Missouri, USA

This book should be on the bookshelves in all elementary and junior high schools.

—[The Reading Tub](#)™

My students were so excited to write their family stories! Since the stories were written during our immigration unit, the students had even more reason to ask their families questions. The stories really enriched our classroom discussions and helped the students to connect to the concepts being taught.

—Amy Del Coro, Teacher; New Jersey, USA

Since my mother died recently, I have been cleaning out her house and going through her things and wondering, "Who made this quilt? Who's in this old photo?" Trying to remember the family stories that she told me has really driven home the need to preserve family history. It is so wonderful that The Grannie Annie encourages this continuity of memories.

—Beverly Miller, Teacher; Alabama, USA

The Grannie Annie is a good start for kids to get published. And I love the way The Grannie Annie helps people understand their family history. It also helps children get closer to their families.

—Andrew Malphurs, Author of the *Grannie Annie, Vol. 5*, story "Grandpa's Saddle"; Georgia, USA

Our son's *oma* is overwhelmed that her "story" is in print in *Grannie Annie*. . . . Every family member and family friend has a signed copy.

—Karie Millard, Parent; Indiana, USA

Since first becoming involved with The Grannie Annie, we look forward every year to the truly unique and heartwarming stories each student brings to the classroom.

—Brian Billings and Laura Amburgey, Teachers; Ohio, USA

Although most students in our Eastern European village live next door to family members from earlier generations, The Grannie Annie prompted them to talk with their grandparents in new ways — and to discover the customs and challenges of times past. In addition, stories from the Grannie Annie books have given my students a glimpse of the world outside their village, where differences may abound but the underlying human condition remains the same.

—Martin Ellinger-Locke, Peace Corps volunteer in Glodeni, Moldova

Stories connect people in families and communities, giving them a common language and understanding of the present as well as the past. Through The Grannie Annie, generations connect as students take time to listen to the stories of their older relatives — and learn from them. Then, as the students write and share their stories, the connections multiply.

—Amy Glaser Gage; Children's author, writing teacher, and consultant to The Grannie Annie

When kids learn details about what life was like decades ago, the past comes alive for them. History becomes real — and they want to know more! The Grannie Annie provides an opportunity for kids to be inspired by their own family's history.

—Florrie Binford Kichler, Patria Press

The Grannie Annie is all about connection. As it hearkens back to the original Grannie Annie, it continues her tradition of oral storytelling to link generations and cultures. Grannie Annie family stories written by young people illuminate a long span of history, often revealing family values honed from adversity or triumph and tempered by humor and love.

—Janet Grace Riehl, Author of *Sightlines: A Family Love Story in Poetry & Music*

The Grannie Annie is remarkable in its goals and in its approach. Recording and sharing the stories of preceding generations goes to the heart of education — it teaches us who we are as family members, citizens, and members of human civilization.

—Matthew Lary, Co-author of *Victory Through Valor: A Collection of World War II Memoirs*

My son "harvested" several stories from my father, including one that appeared in *Grannie Annie, Vol. 1*. My father has since passed away, and I am forever grateful that my son recorded these stories before it was too late. I doubt he would have done so if it had not been for The Grannie Annie.

—Karen Metcalf, Parent; Tennessee, USA

Taking time away from your technology-filled life to join in The Grannie Annie is like trading fast food for Sunday dinner at Grandma's.

—Debra K. Shatoff, Ed.D., Family therapist and author of *In-Home Child Care: A Step-by-Step Guide to Quality, Affordable Care*

Teachers and parents, if you want to motivate students to love writing, ask them to write for The Grannie Annie.

—Bonnie M. Davis, Ph.D., Author of *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You: Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies*