One Thousand Trees

August 2019

One Thousand Trees

FACILITATING WELLNESS
THROUGH CONNECTION, CREATIVITY, AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

Publisher
Lisa Browning

Regular Contributors
Emily Brant, Cheron Kovacs, Andrea Lines-Botell, Christine Nightingale, Kayleigh Radatus, Arlene Spencer, Sandra Wilson

One Thousand Trees is published monthly. Submissions for Feature Articles (based on the monthly theme) or Regular Departments are due on the 25th of the month prior to each publication. Full Production Schedule, including summary of monthly themes, can be found at

www.onethousandtrees.com/magazine.html

Please submit by email, as a Word doc attachment, by the above-stated deadlines. Please do not send PDFs. First-time writers for One Thousand Trees are asked to send a brief (two to three sentence) bio, and a head shot in JPEG format.

Because of difficulties with some articles sent in the body of emails, we cannot accept submissions in this format. Please sent a word doc attachment.

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Cover Photograph by Sandra Wilson
www.quiteacharacter.ca

This Month's Contributors

Sandy Bassie

Choose Your Moments

Sandy is an artist, a poet, and a dreamer. She is a stubborn advocate for those she loves. Fierce, yet tender. She holds to this: it is never too late to learn or change. The things we believe about ourselves drive our lives and choices. Choose to believe the good and those will be places we soar.

Emily Brant

Essentially Emm

Emily is a holistic health enthusiast who has overcome various health challenges herself and realized the power of nature's tools like whole foods and essential oils to assist in healing. Emily is on a mission to share her unique story and gifts in hopes that it'll help inspire and motivate anyone who might be up against any challenges, self-doubt or difficult times.

Kelly Gauthier

The Power of Photographs

Having grown up in a family of renowned artists and creative individuals, Kelly understands the true essence of art, its amazing potential, and the ability to heal that lies beneath it. Over the years her love for photography has taken her in many different directions, and what started out as a hobby quickly became her profession. With a degree in Still Photography and Art Therapy, Kelly offers others her passion for photography and awareness for mental wellness in a professional capacity. For more information visit www.pictureyourselfwell.com.

Barbara Heagy

Say "Cheese"

Barbara is the author of the inspirational memoir *10 – A Story of Love, Life, and Loss* and co-author of *Good Grief People,* an anthology of stories and poems about grief and hope. Her stories have also been a part of the anthologies, *You Are Not Alone – 52 Stories of Hope* (One Thousand Trees), the *Canada 150 Legacy Project, Grey With a Silver Lining,* and *Dreamers Creative Writing – Year 1 Anthology.* Barbara lives in southern Ontario, Canada. She can be reached through her blog/website at www.barbaraheagy.com, on Facebook at www.facebook.com/barbaraheagywriter or via email at barbaraheagy10@gmail.com.

Jorge Hurtado

Nature for Kids Matters

Being passionately curious has allowed Jorge to become a successful research scientist over the last 12 years. He is convinced that hard work, humility, honesty and creativity will contribute to generate positive changes. From inception to closure, he has led 12 multidisciplinary projects during the last 10 years of academic and consultancy work, affecting positively the livelihoods and well-being of different communities across Peru, Guyana, Dominican Republic, and Canada.

Cheron Kovacs

Self-Love is Just a Heartbeat Away

Cheron was born and raised in Zimbabwe, Africa. She is the oldest of 7 children. She is married with three beautiful daughters aged 21, 5 and 4. Cheron came to Canada in 2001 with her oldest daughter. Her purpose in this life is to humbly serve others through love and encouragement, by sharing her story, so others can learn to love themselves for who they really are, and so that they can pass their blessings onto others.

Margreet Kuypers

Take Time

Margreet loves how photography lets her express herself without words! She studied ecology at university, but later developed as a photographer using books written by Bruce Barnbaum and Freeman Patterson as inspiration and guidance. She has been a member is a number of different camera clubs, and has son some awards at the annual Halton Hills Photo Art Competition. In 2017 she held her first show entitled “The Joy of Creation.” For more information visit www.parapluphotography.com.

Andrea Lines-Botell

Spice, Splatters and Soul

Andrea offers gentle support to others through her coaching company, Mandalia House of Healing. Many modalities are available including art, mindfulness techniques and supportive tools for change. With a vast training background in conflict, crisis and mindfulness, Andrea's passion is to help others find their own solutions for inner peace and betterment. For more information visit www.mandaliahouse.com.

Linda Neff

The Story Behind the Story:

Perspective

Linda is a teacher, writer, and speaker. It is her privilege to have a "brood" of four young adults, two sons-in-law, and five grandchildren. Her second book of poetry is called *Perspective: Choosing to See Beauty and Truth.* Her blog can be found at www.lindaneff.ca

Kayleigh Radatus

The Music of Life

Kayleigh is a Certified Life Coach & Certified Level 2 Reiki Practitioner, helping you feel the music of every day. She uses intuitive Spirit guided readings, Groovy Reiki, and personal development workshops to help her clients remember what life on Earth is for, and create a life that feels as awesome as their favourite playlist. Learn more by visiting her online at www.ThisGroovyLife.ca, and on facebook at www.facebook.com/ThisGroovyLife.

Catherine Robertson

Beautiful Things

Catherine is an artist, writer, designer, wife entrepreneur and mother who lives with her husband Stuart and their two children in Guelph. When not making jewellery, crafting, cooking or gardening she is likely to be found caring for her multitude of pets.

Catherine Ann Skiles-Chavez

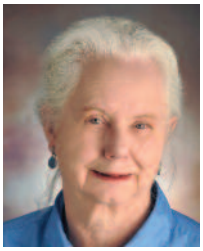
Photographs and Memories

Catherine spends her free time promoting and empowering others to live their truth and share their creativity in all forms of expression, but only recently began sharing her own stories with others, despite having been a lifelong writer herself. She enjoys genealogy, history, painting, reading and spending time with her family. She gains much of her inspiration from the beautiful landscape that surrounds her home in Arizona where she lives with her husband and their rescue dog Jasper.

Arlene Spencer

Words I Couldn't Say

Arlene is a wife, mother of three grown boys, and a special education educator who has a passion for life, an abundance of energy and a need to be heard because at the end of the day everyone has "Words They Couldn't Say." You can reach Arlene by email, at Arlenewics@gmail.com.



Marilyn Whiteley

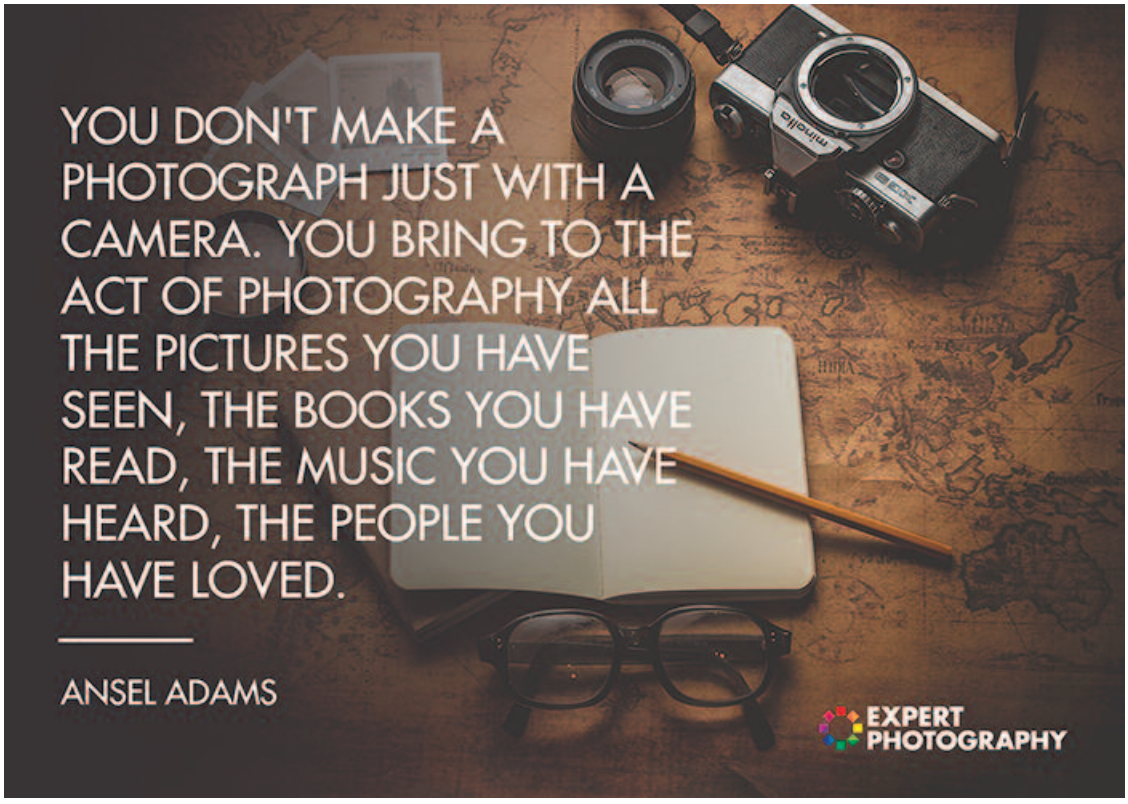
Contemplative Photography

Marilyn taught religious studies at universities in the United States and Canada. Then historians discovered that women had histories! Marilyn enthusiastically took up this study and combined it with her previous educational background to become an editor and writer on Canadian women in religion. One of her books, *The Life and Letters of Annie Leake Tuttle: Working for the Best*, was also the result of considerable serendipity, as is her latest book, *The Life of Isabel Crawford: More Than I Asked For.*

Sandra Wilson

My Adventure Called Life

Sandra is a writer, photographer and educator with a passion for fun and learning. She holds a BA in English and History, and has continued to take courses online throughout her adult life, deeming herself a life-long learner. She believes that life is a learning experience, and continues to find lessons every day, which she applies to her writing, her photography, and lessons she can share with others. Connect with Sandra at www.quiteacharacter.ca.



Publisher's Ponderings

As I lay in bed this morning, in those moments just between sleeping and waking, I started to think about this month's magazine, as I knew I wanted to put it live this morning. This article is usually the last thing to be done prior to publication, and I had been struggling with its content.

Suddenly, Wayne Dyer's quote "What you focus on expands" popped into my head, and I realized why I have been having so much difficulty lately, not just with this article, but with a lot of things. I firmly believe, and have said so ad nauseam I'm sure, that we need to embrace our darkness in order to see our light. But I also know that there comes a time when we have to move on, past that darkness.

I haven't been doing that, at least not recently. I'm not sure if it's because I spend so much time coaching others to see the light in their own darkness, or if it goes deeper than that. I do keep a gratitude journal, and write in it daily ... so I know I am more than capable of acknowledging the blessings in my life. Subconsciously, however, there seems to have been some remnants of false messages that I had internalized, which continually threatened to obscure my focus on those blessings.

Until this morning, that is. This morning, I confronted those messages ... not an easy thing to do. But as soon as I made the conscious choice to replace those messages with true, empowering messages, the cloud lifted.

With clear skies, I can make a promise to myself, to focus always on the blessings!

Lisa

The Power of Photographs: Changing How We See Our World

by Kelly Gauthier

As I sit down to write this article my eyes are drawn to the window beside me where I can see the trees shivering in anticipation of a thunderstorm that lingers overhead.

As I continue to watch, my focus turns to the leaves themselves and how they appear to be dancing yet fearful of what's to come. Their movements are beauti-fully contrived, but they are aggressive none the less. The steps to their dance and their hushed rustling appear to be a warning to all around them that "there's a storm coming, take cover." I immediately wonder what they would be thinking should they be able to process thought.

I begin to project my own thoughts and concerns onto the leaves that memory and experience provide. I notice that not only has my posture changed, but my facial expression as well. I can feel their dance of fear rising in my own body as I look up at the blackened sky and wait for it to explode with anger. I have now taken on their fear simply by watching them through my own internal lens.

As a practicing Art & Photo Therapist I have spent a great deal of time looking at, taking, and working with photographs. As a result I have developed a sincere appreciation not only for the art itself, but also for a photographs ability to heal. I have come to understand the importance behind capturing a moment and being able to revisit that moment when the need arises. Far too often every day moments pass us by before we have had the opportunity to appreciate, deconstruct, digest, or fully understand them. We rely on our memories for validation and truth, when in reality all any moment can offer is simply itself.

This is when a photograph can bridge the gap between past and present, and reveal a current truth as opposed to one that is no longer valid. It can give you a chance to look at an experience and revisit it without having to relive it. A great deal of our own fears come from revisiting memories that we no longer have control over. Memories that may have caused us sadness or pain, or possibly embarrassment and discomfort. Those memories linger with us and often take up valuable space in our minds because we have given them permission to. We relinquish control over them because they happened in the past and we've been told over and over again that we can't change the past. But here's the thing, a memory is only as real as it is remembered.

Each one of us is very much like a camera. We have a personal lens that we see things through and we have various modes that determine how clearly and much we choose to capture. My lens is currently set at f/1.4, the maximum aperture and widest opening, and my internal mode is set to continuous.

This means I want to see everything and I will continue to shoot individual moments as long as I can hold down my shutter button or until my buffer is full. In other words our eyes are capturing the moments and our minds are retaining them one after another until they are too full and we have no choice but to download or delete them. Most of us choose to download them as oppose to delete them because it means that we can call on them anytime we like.

Now this would be wonderful if the only moments and memories we were downloading were all good ones, but they're not. So why is it that we choose to store them? Where do all those painful or unhappy memories go? Well as I mentioned earlier these memories will continue to linger in your mind and take up valuable space unless you deal with them. They will sit idly in the back of your mind and wait for just the right moment to resurface. A moment when you're feeling down or vulnerable and fear has taken control. This is when we call upon them as they serve us as both punishment and ammunition.

But what if we really don't want to think about them anymore. What if we truly want to let our negative thoughts go? How can we get rid of them for good when we know these memories are no longer serving us well, that they continue to cause us pain, and are getting in the way of us moving forward and living our best lives.

Well, that's where photographs and phototherapy come into play, and why I love what I do so much. Because our brains are so efficient at storing the essence of a picture, a photograph and its visual content can trigger a memory even if the image itself is not one we have seen before. This means that negatively stored memories can be brought to the surface and worked on just by looking at photographs. When I use photographs in therapy as a means of healing I do so in various ways.

Firstly, a photograph can be used as a conversation piece, one that opens the door to talking about the memory itself and why it continues to be painful.

Secondly, a photograph can also be used as a visual aid for those who have suffered trauma or abuse at the hands of someone else. By projecting an image that contains the abuser or reflects the experience, I am giving the individual an opportunity to say what they need to say without feeling threatened. This in itself allows for tremendous healing and forgiveness.

And thirdly but not lastly, a photograph can also be used to provide one with the opportunity to change the outcome of a what was once a negative experience into a positive one or one that feels better.

Again by projecting a relevant image onto a large white papered surface I am giving the individual an opportunity to draw into or on the projected photograph and change the outcome. By adding or taking things away, using colour where there wasn't any, or including speech bubbles with positive content, the individual can now construct an outcome that serves them well. Each of these uses of photographs and many more give way to understanding, acceptance, and most importantly healing. Who would have thought that a photograph could be the answer to letting go?

So the next time you find yourself revisiting negative moments or memories, I encourage you to pull out your camera and take some photographs. Sit with them, talk to them, draw on them. Their content has the power to change how you see things by adjusting the lens from which you look at your world.

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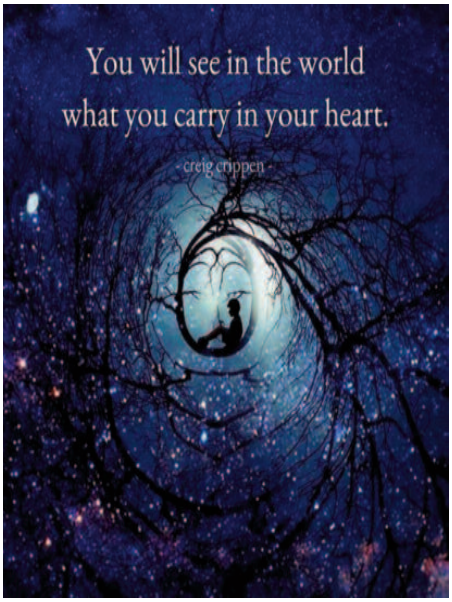


Photography Is ...
by Sandra Wilson

Photography is magical.

My first delve into photographic magic was in my father's at-home dark room. With some interesting equipment and chemicals on a blank page a photo would slowly appear.

These photos contained their own magic as they could freeze time. With these photos I could witness aspects of my childhood I was too young to remember, and I could be introduced to family I would never get to meet in person. And now, as a grandmother, I appreciate this magic even more. Now that time seems to have sped up I can take photos of my family and freeze those beautiful moments, capture those tiny features that change so quickly and store memories for them to cherish as they grow older.

As a photographer I appreciate that I can capture the magic for others. I can freeze time and help store memories of people, events and special moments.

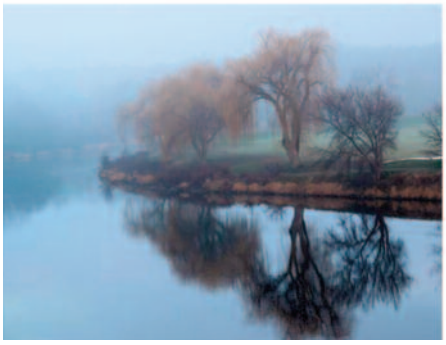
Photography is inspirational.

I love to hike in nature with my camera. A walk in nature is relaxing and recharging. The photos I take on these walks can be inspiring and worth admiring. These photos have inspired me, and others, to write poetry.

Foggy Morn

The willow weeps by the water's shore.
As the fog descends once more
Echoed by the mirroring lake
Watch the fog the image take
What may lurk among those trees?
As the picture seems to freeze
Does the air hold a chill?
Or does it carry an ominous thrill?
Does the fog bring a pain?
Or will it simply lead to rain?
Do you dare walk a path?
And risk the fog's silent wrath?

(poem by Sarah Cummings)



I have found inspirational quotes to pair with the photos to include in a calendar to help inspire people every day.

Photography is a creative outlet for me and one nature walk in a local park inspired a whole children's story. I found a little rubber duck and proceeded to place this duck into the photos which, once home, I created into a cute little story about a little lost duck. My photography has also inspired an upcoming poetry book and a storybook featuring my grand-children in my photo studio.

Deep in the woods
I sat to have tea
When a wolf came along
And tried to scare me

Oh pretty dog
You look so sweet
Come sit beside me
I will share with you a treat

And the two became friends
Right there in the wood
And that's our story
Of the girl in the red hood

As I capture the beauty of the world with my camera, I can share it with others who may not have a chance to see that beauty. I can inspire people to appreciate not only their life but their world around them.

Photography is a teacher.

One of the greatest lessons learned through photography is patience. As a nature photographer I often have to wait to get that perfect shot. Sometimes the animal is hiding or hidden amongst the trees and I have to wait until they move to capture them in a good shot.

Sometimes there are things in the background (people, vehicles) that I need to wait for them to move in order to get the shot I am looking for. For example, I was taking prom pictures in an outdoor garden but had to wait for the light to change so the traffic behind would move along and not be in the picture. Another time, at Peggy's Cove, I wanted the perfect shot of the lighthouse, but there were a lot of people and I had to wait until later in the day in order to get the shot I wanted. The patience I have learned as a photographer I can apply to my life too.

Another wonderful thing photography has taught me is observation skills. While out in the woods looking for a bird or animal to snap I have to look around carefully. By nature, many creatures hide from humans so to capture them (in photography) you have to be very observant. I also will pull out my macro lens and zoom right in on things we often don't really see. It is a world that is in general not noticed by the naked eye, but it can be magical and inspirational when observed. This increased observation skill that I have gained also helps me in life. I can see the world differently, I can find the positive, find the joy and admire the beauty. And I know that even if things aren't going quite right, I can always snap another shot.

Photography, whether you experience it as a photographer or an admirer of the photos, is a magical and inspirational thing. It gives me a lot of joy when I get to capture memories for people, it gives me a chance to recharge when I set off in the woods to see what I can see. It is an outlet for creativity and a beautiful form of art. Photography isn't just what I do, it is an important part of my life.

* * *

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our stories, our selves, our success

Call for Submissions

The next volume of SHARING,
an anthology of empowerment stories,
will be published in March 2020.
This is the first time we will be combining both
men's and women's stories in the same volume!
24 spots are available.

If you are interested in writing for this anthology, email
lisa@onethousandtrees.com.

Deadline for submissions: November 1, 2019.

www.sharinganthologies.com

Contemplative Photography: My Journey
by Marilyn Whiteley

"You're not going to take a picture of that, are you?" John's voice broke through my concentration on the scene before me.

"I'm just thinking," I muttered. Sometimes I took the photo, feeling somewhat embarrassed, and sometimes I gave into shame and didn't. In either case, I was embarking on a journey into a new realm of photography, although I didn't recognize it at the time.

I already knew the basics. My father had been an enthusiastic photographer ever since he had acquired a camera at the age of fifteen. My parents gave me a camera when I was ten or so, and it was not just a box camera or a Brownie. It had the full range of controls, and I soon learned to deal with f-stops, shutter speeds, and distance settings.

Then, when I was working in a national park during the summer before my final year at university, I decided that I wanted to take pictures with Kodachrome, which my father had started using not long after this colour slide film became available. My parents mailed me my father's extra camera, carefully packed in sanitary pads, because my mother had heard that that was the safest way to send something fragile, and I began exploring with colour.

Now, a year later, I was in Europe, the trip an amazing graduation present from a family friend. The ten of us in our group mainly travelled by bicycle and stayed in youth hostels. I assumed that this would be my only foreign travel, and thus I should record everything of interest that I saw. After all, wasn't that what my father did during our family holidays? John, one of the group members, was a New Yorker and a Harvard undergraduate—and much more sophisticated than I. And he seemed to have a different philosophy about taking photographs. Could there be something more than making a record?

As the years went on, I continued taking pictures. After I married, I chronicled the activities of our family as our children grew, and I documented our holidays together. But increasingly I felt that I did not need to record every detail. If the scene was too cluttered or the lighting poor, I could skip the photo and simply tuck away the moment in my memory. And while I still took many pictures of our two sons posed and looking toward the camera, I noticed that I especially enjoyed photographing them when they were doing something or looking at the scene, backs to the camera.

Something else was changing. As I took close-up photos of nature, I was increasingly drawn to taking pictures of odd things like tree bark, and textures, and shadows. I found this deeply satisfying, but who would want to look at such images? And then I discovered: there was such a thing as contemplative photography. Photography did not need to be for the purpose of taking pictures other people would like to see. When I centred on the process, not the product, photography could be a means to help me see—truly see—the wonders of this wonder-filled world.

In his *Little Book of Contemplative Photography: Seeing with Wonder, Respect, and Humility*, Frank Zehr points out the aggressive and acquisitive nature of words and images we use concerning photography: "We *take* a picture. We *aim* our camera. As *snapshooters* we *shoot* a picture." But what actually happens is quite different. Light reflected from the subject is received by the camera through the lens and onto the film or the digital sensor. And if we shift our thinking from taking to *receiving* photographs, we begin to see the world with new eyes.

People come to contemplative photography from a number of religious traditions—Buddhist, Taoist, Christian—or from their own personal spirituality. My faith is Christian, so that is the language that comes naturally to me. Thus the words of Christine Valters Paintner in her book *Eyes of the Heart: Photography as a Christian Contemplative Practice* resonate with me. She writes that we may come to see "the divine at work in the hidden depths of things." We may have what Painter describes "the vision of the graced ordinary moment." Those from other traditions might say it differently, but this expresses the core of my experience of contemplative photography.

What it requires is openness, seeing what is there rather than what I expect to see. It means slowing down, perhaps taking some deep breaths, shedding my expectations, and being fully present. It is an experience of mindfulness. And when I begin to

explore with my eyes and with my camera, I often discover patterns, details, depths that I had never noticed before. I find unexpected beauty looking down into a fern or examining a webbed head of grain. I also discover beauty in unlikely places, the beauty of imperfection, as I see with new opened eyes weathered wood, peeling paint, and rusty iron.

I have said "camera," because that is what I use, but contemplative photography does not require any specific tools. Either a complicated camera or a point-and-shoot will work well, as will a tablet or a phone. In fact, it is best not to become too involved in the mechanics of the photographic act. It is the process, not the product, that is most important, as we make contact with the sacred in an ordinary moment. Contemplative photography can become a deliberate spiritual practice.

Afterwards, some will use one or more of the resulting images as a focus for meditation. Some will choose to edit their digital images on a computer. I do so, and in playing with the image, I enjoy a second period of mindfulness as I attempt to find the settings that allow the photo to express as best I can my experience in receiving the image. Many images I retain for my own contemplation and memory. But when I share them, I find that often people *do* want to look at such images, and perhaps they, too, see something of the "graced ordinary moment."

As I age, I am no longer able to go out as easily to contemplate the wonders of nature. Much of my photography is now during travel. To be sure, some of my pictures mainly record the sights, just as they did on that long-ago bicycle hosteling trip. But there is a difference. I now tend to slow down, see more deeply, and observe things I would never have noticed before, like the reflection of a town hall in water of a fountain, the sunlight filtering through a giant leaf in the rainforest, or the smoke of incense beyond the statue in a temple. This is a gift of the practice of contemplative photography.

But of course I am not always taking—or better "receiving"—photos. Yet I have discovered that the practice of contemplative photography has come to affect my way of looking at the world even when I have no thought of photographing it. It has trained my perceptions and allows me to see the world with new eyes. I notice things. I see beauty in unexpected places. And I more often sense the sacred in ordinary moments. My life has been enriched by contemplative photography.

* * *

Photographs and Memories
by Catherine Ann Chavez

The other day, while looking for something else, I came across this old, dog eared black and white family photograph. It's a favorite of mine. Taken someplace in the Pocono Mountains or up-state New York in mid-1937. It depicts some family members hamming it up for the camera. A beautiful moment captured in time. It always this unexplainable power to take a highly productive day and turn it into a winding rush down memory lane. I end up pulling every box of old photographs out of the closet. Each a treasure chest filled with bits and pieces of family memorabilia. Before I am even aware, there I am hours later, on the floor surrounded by familial artifacts, each unique and precious. I love those days. I love how those old, worn scraps of paper take me on a journey through time, emotions and memories. Every. Single. Time.

I can identify five of the six people in the picture. They are my maternal great Uncle George, my grandmother Catherine, an unidentified woman, my great Aunt Josephine, my great Aunt Helen (George's wife) and my great Aunt Ann. I never met my grandmother; she died when my mother was very young. Unfortunately, Aunt Ann died only months before I was born and George died when I was two, so I don't remember him. Fortunately, I was blessed to have grown up with my two great aunts Josephine and Helen, and they shared the stories of those I never knew. So, I cherish this

picture because it's a portal to the past, a connection to my history, and a small glimpse of where I come from.

My grandmother Catherine died in 1956 at age 49. She had a hard life, divorced, single mother, long hours, low pay and ultimately illness claimed her life, but amazingly she always found a way to still enjoy life. My mother says that I am a lot like my grandmother. We are both tall, robust women. She says that I have grandma's smile, her round rosy cheeks, her silly sense of fun and her resilience. I like to hope that's true; I like to laugh and I when my brother and I are together, even now in our 50s, we're like little kids. I see grandma's smile and her kind face in this picture and wish I knew her. I feel her strength carry on.

My Aunt Josephine lived across the street from us when I was growing up. I spent a lot of time at her house helping her in her gardens. Her and Uncle Henry's house was always full of laughter despite hardships. There was always enough food for one more. She made a heck of a pot roast! She was our stand in grandmother, gave sage advice and snuck us kids candy when mom and dad weren't looking. I look at this old picture and my heart is full of love and I miss her every day.

Uncle George and Aunt Helen raised two daughters. They would invite my mother to stay with them for weeks at a time during summers after my grandmother died. They helped give my mom a sense of family and childhood memories. I look at this old picture and I am grateful for them both for loving her.

Aunt Helen was a great cook. I mean the best! I remember many meals around her table. After years of trying, I've finally perfected her rice pudding recipe and am asked to make it for all our family gatherings. I look at this old picture and I am thankful for her generosity and sharing of traditions.

My Aunt Ann was a hat buyer for the Montgomery Ward catalog in New York City. She and her husband, Uncle Bill, never had children of their own but stepped in to raise my mother and her brother after grandma died. I am named Catherine Ann after the two women that raised my mother. I look at this picture and I know the determination and strength it took to stand strong in adversity. I am proud of their sense of commitment to our family.

There are two other brothers, my Uncles Frank and John who are not in this picture for whatever reason. Perhaps one of them is taking the photograph, but none-the-less I am sure that they are nearby with their wives, Irene and Marion. All six siblings loved to vacation together when they were younger. Later pictures in the series would show them all making a human pyramid on the beach. Laughing, always laughing. This photograph also induces a sense of mystery. Who is the strange unidentified woman? She also appears in other photographs and seems to have a friendly relationship to everyone. Is she a friend or family? Perhaps she is just another resort goer invited to join in the fun. I feel sadness that she has no name, perhaps no one remembers her. I vow one day she will be identified.

How wonderfully simplistic life is in this photograph. No one knows what the future holds. In this picture they are happy, living life and loving one another. Forever captured in joy.

I will eventually post it to Facebook for my other family members to enjoy. Some will say they've never seen it; others will remember it well. These extended family are the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of these people having fun on the wheelbarrow. It's a great day when a simple picture sparks a long discussion thread that includes memories and family stories. It keeps us all close despite our physical distance from one another and passes on the memories and values to the next generation.

Above all, to me, this simple photograph is magical. It causes my mind to reel imagining the events that may have led up the taking of this picture. Who took the picture? What happened immediately after? What was said or done that made everyone laugh or smile so much? Where is this place? So many questions! To everyone else who looks at this photograph it's just a small picture of a bunch of silly people having some fun. To me, it's a priceless snapshot, that brings those I never met to life, and reunites me with those I have lost.

How could these people in this picture every know the effect that this one photograph would have for generations to come some seventy plus years later. It's just a bunch of siblings having some fun and someone thought to take a picture. How lucky we all are they did!

Mostly this picture just makes me smile. I like to close my eyes and imagine them all together in the great beyond. My grandmother is laughing. Helen and George are holding hands, sneaking a kiss when no is looking. Josephine and Ann are unpacking the picnic basket, calling everyone to come eat. In a loud ruckus, they are all gathered. United once again, happily enjoying life on a warm summer day along a sandy beach.

And for a short while on a lazy Saturday afternoon, I get to be with them, even if only in spirit.

* * *

An Evening of SHARING

Suicide Awareness

Featuring:

Craig Dubecki

Dominic Mitges

Clay Williams

Thursday, September 12, 7-9pm

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The Amazing Grace of Life
by Andrea Lines-Botell

I was heading to the cottage last week when I found out that my cousin John had passed away. As with many sudden deaths, it brought many realizations, regrets and wishing for last moments with them. The cottage is a time each year that always brings such blessings and growth and this time it brought much reflection and healing.

I woke early one morning with my cousin on my mind. I brewed a pot of coffee which I knew with much certainty would not be the kind of coffee John would brew! He had many passions in life and one of them was coffee. The absolute best cups of coffee I have ever had are the ones he made for me. Some of them taking over an hour to brew with outlandish brewing methods! Songs came in and out of my head while it was brewing with flashes of memories of his love of music and his sparkling smile.

He had worked most of his life at Bay Bloor Radio delighting in the sheer glorious sounds that the equipment produced. After many years he joined his wife at Coffee Tree Roastery in downtown Toronto, and it was here that he followed his coffee passion to the next level. He delighted in getting more people to experience a *John* cup of coffee which was more like an amazing art form.

I headed down to the water with my own hot fresh cup of coffee and sat to take in the morning. The coffee tasted empty compared to anything John would have made me. Sitting in the stillness of the new day I realized I was the only person around with little or no activity on the water. There were, however, hundreds of dragonflies dancing in a beautiful swarm. I had never seen that many in one area before.

I sat next to the cool still water watching the morning light glisten and tiptoe on the gentle ripples while dragonflies continued their dance with the morning chorus.

I saw how similar they were to humans. Some racing around at a fast pace not really sitting and others languishing in the morning sun. Varying shapes and sizes all creating their own intricate web of their own version of society. Even with the stressors of society John always included his passions within everything he did. Music, coffee, family, friends and in the last couple of years, faith. He had found his own way to intertwine joy within his life where most of us forget that this is an option.

It was at this time that an amazing and graceful heron landed on a tree next to me stopping and perusing its new surroundings. Shortly after two ducks landed in the water and settled right in front of me. At that moment I felt nothing other than the air on my face and a warm peace settling into my heart.

The heron moved a little and with a gentle lift took off. It was so low that it nearly touched the ducks. They were unfazed by this and continued to just be still in the water together. As the heron disappeared activity seemed to get jump-started and other birds started to chorus around me with the faint knocking of woodpeckers in the distance.

After a time, I headed back to the cottage and joined the family antics that were starting. John's funeral was the day we left the cottage. People at the service talked of John with memories of pranks, laughter, love and his passions. Many stories of coffee and music were within each tale.

One of the lessons John had given in life was learning to be alone and enjoy stillness. It took me back to my time at the cottage and that if I hadn't chosen to be alone and still, I would have missed the fantastic moment in time and nature with the heron. John had lived with cancer in his last few years and the stressors and hardships that came with it. He had made choices that felt right to him in his healing.

It occurred to me that we all make choices that at the time we feel is right or best and it will never be exactly what others would do or approve of. That when faced with cancer it is hard to know what your choice or decision

will be. It is one thing to be the person watching a loved one go through the process in pain and a whole other thing being the person with cancer. Knowing that choices can lead dramatically to two possible outcomes is far-reaching and beyond daunting.

I was reminded of what you see isn't what is in the heart or the soul when it comes to anyone. A few of us had lost touch with John while he was on this path and within this time John gained new friend-ships. They knew him for the man he was today. The man walking with cancer and ongoing surgeries. They took John in and loved him for the man right in front of them without the past of what he was before. For myself and my family, John was John. Past, present and now all around us. John was a shining bright star that taught us of the delights of many things and how to remember your passions.

It often takes people passing away to remember them in clarity and is usually followed by regrets over things that had or had not been said. This happens so frequently, and John funeral wasn't an exception. I have found that being authentic and coming from a place of love and non-judgment with everyone in your life allows less room for regret. If you don't agree with their choices let them know that it doesn't take away from love itself. Knowing your boundaries and when to remove yourself if the choices affect you in a negative way is part of love. Holding yourself and loved ones in a place of love is healing for all.

Friends of John's who were musicians started to play some his favourite songs along with his guitar teacher and my lovely and vibrant cousin Don. We all stood and started to sing Amazing Grace. John loved that song and the people who were there singing it too. Family and friends together reconciled and brought together in grief and love. I was taken back to the heron and that I had thought of it as being amazing and graceful. Such a gift to be reminded that amazing grace is all around us. We are often so clouded by the bustle of life that we don't see it. It can be in the twinkle of someone's eye, within the deliciousness of that fresh coffee, a delight within the sweet tune of a melody, the touch of a hand, a leaf falling or birds singing. Grace is found in forgiveness of ourselves and others and from loving someone and seeing them for all that they are. Grace is amazing and it is connection to life. Grace is not based on materialism or the things of life. It is in love, connection and experiencing life.

The song came to an end and I could feel John's warm smile shining down on us as tears flowed for many.

As with losing all loved ones gifts come forward and with John the gifts are bountiful. His lessons and examples will reach far. The fabric of our loved ones can be found within the dance of the dragonfly and the swoop of the heron wings. It is the essence of all and is always unending. Connecting with those you have lost by pausing in stillness holding your heart and soul into the beauty of the moment.

Some of the reminders I take from John is to pause over my coffee, lose myself within music, watch the waltz of nature, remember to laugh, learn new things and to intertwine my passions into each day. Perhaps the biggest gift from John and all who have passed before him is the reminder to walk our own lives with doors and heart open to the amazing grace of life itself.

* * *

Words I Couldn't Say

Arlene Spencer

Pillar of Strength

When there were only eight pieces of pie, and nine people it was her that suddenly didn't really like pie anyway.

The definition of a hero is a person who is admired or idealized for his/her brave deeds or noble qualities. Heroes can be famous, family members, strangers or even our pets.

When I think of a hero, I think of a person who demonstrates strength, courage, bravery but most of all displays love. My life has been blessed with a hero, my eighty-seven year old mother.

She is a firecracker. She lives in her own home, takes care of herself, bakes, quilts and host the neighbourhood coffee circle each morning. She can be seen scooting through town in her little red car probably on her way to a family function that she rarely misses. I guess you could say she is pretty amazing.

For me and my brothers and sisters, she is our cornerstone, the tapestry of fabric that holds our family together. She had nine children in eleven years.

Growing up, our home ran like a well oiled machine. Laundry every Monday and Thursday, groceries once a week on a limited budget and a house and yard that were spotless. She was our father's hired man who drove tractors, picked stones, baled hay, harvested corn or anything else that needed to be done. When she told us to do something, no was not an option. She ran a pretty tight ship.

She mended scrapes, cuts, broken bones, broken hearts, survived rebellious teenagers, and dealt with many car accidents. Sometimes our yard looked like a used car lot when everyone arrived home on Sunday evenings for supper.

She relentlessly nursed one of my brothers back from a broken neck and another who suffered from Leukemia, but her biggest challenge was trying to support our brother who battled alcoholism.

I know there were many late nights she would sit at the window praying that the next set of headlights rounding the bend would be one of us safely arriving home.

Her real courage was tested when she said goodbye to two wonderful husbands, two daughters and a son.

For those of us who have children, can't imagine the strength and courage it took for her to stay strong during these difficult times providing support to the other six remaining.

It wasn't until I left home, I realized that my mother wasn't just my mother; she was a women who had feelings, ideas and needs. My true appreciation for her became more evident when I had my own children. It was then I truly acknowledged what she had sacrificed for our family.

I know there will come a day when she won't be there to answer the phone, tell us what we need to hear or give us her shoulder to cry on, but do know she will always live in the hearts of her children and children's children because she taught us what it truly means to be family.

They say that we are made up of bits and pieces of all who have touched our lives and we are more because of it and less if they had not touched us.

We take our parents for granted and think they will be here forever, don't miss the opportunity to tell them how you feel now instead of saying, I wish I would have said that.

The "Words I Couldn't Say" is, the best compliment anyone can give me is to say, "You're just like your mother."

* * *

Say "Cheese"
by Barbara Heagy

I love photographs, all kinds of them — travel photos, family photos, portraits, nature, wildlife, landscape, action, architectural, weddings and other events. Photography has always been an interest of mine, whether that was looking at photos or taking my own photographs. I collect coffee table books full of beautiful, unique photos of professional photographers. I make albums and scrapbooks of my own photos, both with printed photos and now, in this day and age, of digital images.

As a young child, I used to play with my parent's Kodak Box Camera, which was literally a black box that they used for the occasional family snapshot. I never took any real photos but I began to see the world through that little peephole of a viewfinder. It brought the world into focus for me and made me really look at things in isolation.

I was in my teens when I bought my first camera and I began to take pictures of my own, for real. It was a Kodak Instamatic, quick load, designed for easy snapshots. I used it to document my life and my family, mainly taking pictures of people and pets. In my mid- and late teens, I was bitten by the travel bug and most of my pictures were taken while on route from one locale to another. Photography, then, was a way to document the trip, to capture the beauty, the never-to-be-seen again moments, the unique landscapes, architecture, and people. My photos were always immediately put into organized albums with captions. For me, photography became a way to preserve the memories that I didn't want to forget.

I had fun, for a while, with my Polaroid camera where the image magically appeared within seconds before your eyes, developing on the spot for instant gratification. It was interesting but too expensive and I didn't use that camera for long.

My husband bought me a beautiful and very expensive 35 mm. Nikon with a thick textbook on how to take better pictures. I have to admit, I never used it. It was too complicated, too many dials, too many instructions and proper procedures. I wanted to take quick snapshots that gave me instant, beautiful results and I fell back into using my smaller snapshot model.

For my 60th birthday, my daughters bought me a beautiful Canon EOS Rebel T3, and my life changed. Now I have a self-focusing, self-adjusting, digital camera that takes stunning photos. For the first time in my life, I feel like a real 'photographer.' I don't have to check f-stops, and ISO's, if I don't want to. I can set the camera on automatic and it makes the best choices for me in regard to light and focus.

I keep digital photos in folders, properly labelled for easy access, and I can sit for hours looking at photos on my large computer monitor. With retirement and travel, and the birth of four grandchildren, I have more opportunities to take more pictures and I do! I have thousands of digital images in hundreds of labelled folders.

After retirement, I joined the GWSA (Guelph Wellington Seniors Association) and became a member of the Into Focus Photography Club, a group of like-minded seniors who love photography as much as I do. We are all of different abilities and attend for varying reasons. There are those who attend purely for the social aspect of regular camaraderie and rarely take pictures and there are those that are seeking technical knowledge and look to keep growing in skills and knowledge.

There's something for everyone in our club. It's a great group of people and we learn from each other at our monthly meetings. There are regular field trips of interest, both near and far, to give members some interesting subjects for picture-taking. We also have an on-line site at www.intofocus.smugmug.com where our monthly themes, personal sites, field trips, and tutorials are available for those who visit on the Internet.

My photography has changed and I continue to grow. I still use photography to document my life as I travel and enjoy family and friends. I now challenge myself with a greater variety of subjects from small bugs, to beautiful sunrises, to close-ups of my new baby grandson. Photography captures those special moments and freezes them in time. I have fun, creatively, with my photos as I explore computerized altering and adjustment of my photos with a computer software program, specifically for me, Picasa 3. I make digital books of collections of my photography and give them as gifts for others.

Sometimes people have criticized me for taking so many pictures. "Put your camera down. You're missing the moment," they say. Actually, I find quite the opposite. Photography, for me, slows me down, makes me zero in on the little details of life. It captures the fragmented moment and gives me a way to relive it over and over again. It gives me focus and a new understanding of the world. It's magic. Pure magic.

* * *

Nature for Kids Matters
by Jorge Hurtado

One of my most rewarding experiences in Canada has been to work with Focus on Nature. The goal of the organization is to help kids to explore and connect with nature through photography.

As a father, I am concerned that kids are currently experiencing more time indoors using electronics with increasingly less time in contact with nature. Nature is here defined as any green space that can allow a level of connection between a child and its environment. As humans connect with nature, we tend to develop long-lasting personal connections which often have an important effect during development in terms of health and social well-being. Likewise, when kids spend more time playing in forested areas nature helps to nurture a child's creativity and vitality. Moreover, exposing kids to outdoor recreation contribute to appreciate and protect nature when they get older.

In 2016, Richard Louv visited Guelph and I attended one of the best discussions that a community member can participate in. The discussion was based on "Nature-deficit disorder" term coined by Louv in his 2008 book *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder.* Some of the statistics facing the U.S.A were alarming and Canada was no stranger to the problem: In 2014, Parks Canada Agency reported that 90% of our daily time is spent indoors; Since 1970, there has also been a 90% of decline in the radius of play for 9-year-old kids; Only 28% of today's students walk to school compared to their parents school days. In addition, 1 out of 4 Canadians are obese and more kids are diagnosed with ADHD, depression, anxiety. Scouts' Canada has suffered a gradual decline in members (current number of members is only 6% of what it was in 1965 as in the 2015-2017 report).

I am not sure if most of you have watched the Nature Valley commercial, and I am not intended to boost watching views just for the sake of it. I think this commercial has a powerful and scary message.

It is also important to consider that recreational technology is not only responsible for Nature-Deficit Disorder. There are other aspects to consider to evaluate the role that technology fulfills when there is time to fill in recreation or play time.

Consider for instance, the fact that 8 out of 10 Canadians live in urbanized areas, there are more new immigrants likely to be unaware of the Canadian natural world, Canadians are working and commuting longer, and no to mention that many parents and kids fear outdoors. Thus there are several factors contributing to facilitate a permanent niche for recreational technology.

Kids that have not experienced natural connections are unlikely to develop a complete sense of awareness if they become, for instance, influential policymakers. Looking into the future, our country needs leaders that do not suffer from 'environmental amnesia' simply because nature was not part of their environment. Just consider what type of decisions will be taken in regards to Climate Change, forest degradation or animal extinction or even the need to have more green areas in our own city.

The strategy that we used at Focus on Nature may be simple but we know that it has become quite effective. In numbers and with little funding, we have carried out 534 workshops across 95 elementary schools in the Guelph Kitchener/Waterloo region. We have shared knowledge about the basics of digital photography with approximately 13,256 students from elementary schools. This number of kids have spent at least one day with a qualified instructor with enough expertise in nature photography and in contact with nature (e.g., local arboretums, parks, etc.). Through the use of digital photography outdoors, kids make relevant messages and form and shape what I would call a unique learning experience. Kids forge their "Kodak moments" a tiny segment in their lives that becomes unforgettable and priceless and that is captured by their own eyes through the lens of a camera. We have identified the type of interactions that may help kids develop environmental capabilities, values, knowledge, intimacies, and relationships.

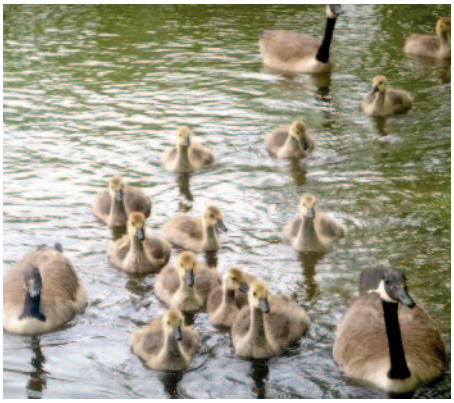
Connecting with nature is powerful and it is one of the best and more memorable things parents can leave for their kids. As Baba Dioum (1968) said: "*In the end we will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught*."

* * *

Photographs from a Recent *Focus on Nature* Exhibit

Photographers (left to right): Amelia, Angel, Ben

Photographers (left to right): Jerry, John, Mia



Photographers (left to right): Noah, Senay, Vesna

It was very difficult to pick just nine photos from the amazing work presented on the *Focus on Nature* website! Please visit www.focusonnature.ca to check it all out!

Focus on Nature

Gluten-Free Berry Crumble
by Emily Brant

You'll Need:
5 cups fresh mixed berries, rinsed
1/4 cup coconut sugar or maple syrup (to sweeten the fruit)
3 cups gluten free oats
1/2 cup coconut flour
1/2 cup melted coconut oil
1/4 tsp cinnamon
pinch if nutmeg (optional)
1/4 tsp sea salt
1/3 cup maple syrup
1 tsp vanilla

The Method:

Preheat oven to 350. Grease a 9x9" baking pan with coconut oil.

Mix your rinsed berries of choice (I used blueberry and raspberry) with coconut sugar or maple syrup (to avoid a tart or sour base). Place the mixture in the pan.

In a large bowl, make the crumble by combining oats and all remaining ingredients. Mix with a wooden spoon then spoon mixture over the berries. Bake for around 30-35 minutes or until the crumble becomes slightly golden brown. Keep an eye on it to make sure the top doesn't burn. Cool 10 minutes, then enjoy alone or with a scoop of your favourite diary free ice cream!

* * *

To me, photography is about capturing the beauty of a moment. Taking photos freezes time for just a moment.

Photography is about capturing a moment to preserve the memory.

Photography is about capturing what beauty means to YOU.

Photography is about capturing a moment to share with family and friends, and others.

Photography can be used as a means to generate an income, or as a means for your personal investment.

Since we moved to the house we currently live in, I have taken an interest in taking pictures of the exquisite sunrises I get to witness most mornings. I've also become fascinated with the clouds... the many beautiful shapes to be seen. The way the clouds move... sometimes very fast... and sometimes they appear to be still, but if you shift your gaze for a moment, they clouds have transformed.

For me personally, being able to take pictures/photos of nature has really awakened me to the profound beauty that is all around us. It has also given me a greater appreciation for nature.

Photography has taught me to stop for a moment, take in the beauty, and appreciate what's there in that moment. As I appreciate these moments, I find myself Awakening to so much more around me, such as the breeze, or the many different scents of the day.

Photography really is a great way to Awaken to oneself, as well as take in the vast beauty all around us!

This is Your Canadian Sister signing off. Remember: "Self Love is just a Heartbeat Away."

* * *

Writing the Music of Life
by Kayleigh Radatus

Welcome, to The Music of Life. Some of the most important connections of our lives, those we form with ourselves throughout life, as well as those we form with our families and friends, are being lost in this modern world of "social" media, minimalism, and keeping up with society. I hope, through this column, to remind my readers of all that matters, and help them re-establish their bonds with life, memories, mementos, and traditions.

Oh boy, what a time it's been. The last few weeks have challenged my ability to follow one of my personal guide-lines to Love This Groovy Life; having

quiet time alone a minimum of three times a week, but preferably every day. Between colds & fevers, summer camps & birthday gatherings, and of course, my job, and regular life responsibilities, it's been a lot to manage, and my quiet time alone has been a rare experience.

By the last weekend in July, I was feeling worn out and exhausted, yet still faced packing to go away for the weekend to visit family. And I really didn't want to do it, nor did my husband and daughter. But we did want to see our family, and the best way to do that was to plan and prepare to stay overnight. I wanted to curl up in a ball in bed and stay there all weekend, catching up on all the sleep I'd missed in July. Instead, I forced myself to move, while my husband did the same, then we pushed, nudged, and cajoled our daughter into packing her things as well.

I'm so glad we did. As soon as we arrived and got unpacked, relief settled in. The air is different close to the big lakes. I could already feel the shift in the air when I stepped out of the car at our pit stop, half an hour away from our destination. As I write this, I'm sitting on a deck, in the cool-ish morning air, sipping coffee from one of my favourite mugs, while listening to all the birds singing and chirping. There's the occasional sound from other humans, but otherwise, it's just me and the birds.

Yesterday, we visited with family we haven't seen since last Summer. We shared supper with them, my daughter played with her younger cousin, then all the kids went on a wagon ride together. There was swimming in the pool, treats to celebrate a recent birthday, a campfire and roasted marshmallows. But most important of all, there was conversation and connection.

We don't get to direct every aspect of life. Often, we're dealing with hard stuff we'd rather not have to, like illness and long hours at work, but generally, we do have a lot of control through the choices we make when faced with our options. We would have had a nice weekend if we had stayed home, but we would have missed out on so much if we had. In making the choice to go away for the weekend, we all got exactly what we needed; family time with fun and connections, and that quiet time alone I so desperately needed. When it comes right down to it, that's exactly how to write The Music of Life.

I'd love to hear from you! Chat about The Music of Life column by visiting www.thisgroovylife.ca/blog/the-music-of-life-column.

* * *

Perspective
by Linda Neff

My Grade 6 teacher held up three items: a red ball of yarn, a nickel, and a green-leafed bunch of white berries. "Choose one of these, and write about it. The best entry will receive the nickel."

I chose the berries, and described my childhood play on our farm. I once filled a small tin pie plate with mud, and decorated this "dessert" with white berries from our bushes. And this was well before competitive cooking shows on television or the ideas of Martha Stewart!

Little did I know that making mud pretty would become a metaphor for a way of living life. My mother demonstrated this positive perspective. She referred to her alcoholic husband as someone who "was a wonderful man when he was sober. He loved his family." She was the quintessential "glass half full" kind of person.

On the other hand, I went through some years of grumbling, whining, and wishing there was some other glass. An invisible but real encounter changed all of that.

Early in my teen years, I listened to a speaker on television explain how I could have peace with God. *Peace*. That's what I wanted and needed. My prayer went something like this:

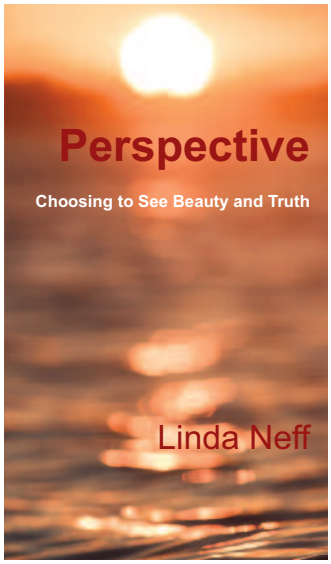
Dear God,

I am starting to believe that You are real. Forgive my sin and unbelief. Thank you for giving Jesus to die for my sins on the cross. Please come into my life and make me your child. I will follow you forever. Thank you for Your love.

He gave me deep peace and I have spent a lifetime living as His follower. Along the way, I have found so much joy and wisdom in reading the Bible and journaling. This has helped me to have a bigger, more hopeful viewpoint about life.

Last year, I compiled a book called: *Perspective: Choosing to See Beauty and Truth.* It is a sampling of my journal poems based on seeing the lovely realities of each season in nature and in life. It is divided into Spring, Summer, Winter, Autumn, and Any Season. (My son Eric, a photographer, provided the stunning pictures, and my daughter Sarah, also a photographer, arranged the headshot. When I gave birth to them years ago, I never would have imagined this collaboration. Grateful joy now.)

Remember my story about the mud pie decorated with the white berries? My teacher awarded me the nickel prize. However, the best prize has been discovering a perspective that puts the best viewpoint on my life's many mud pies!



* * *

Take Time
by Margrett Kuypers

To look and to perceive takes time.

Taking photographs helps me to slow down, focus and reflect.

I like going for walks on the Bruce Trail. When I see a possible setting for a photograph I have to stop and stand still and take my time.

When I am outside in nature, the light plays a crucial role in the timing of taking a photograph. When the light reveals a potential picture, I receive the opportunity to capture that moment. I use different angles to frame the subject. The more time I spend in one place, the more detail is being revealed. I breathe in, then out, hold my breath and when I am perfectly still, I will finally press the shutter release.

In that moment when the shutter is opened, the light shines in...

Painting with light is a spiritual experience for me. I never know what I will photograph beforehand. I just need to slow down, use all my senses and pay attention to my immediate environment. The light determines what I will notice.

Photography is personal. When I go out with other photographers we invariably do our own thing. We all come home with our own unique take on the world. Over time, with commitment and dedication, a personal style develops. I tend to reference nature to comment on my life. When I look through the photographs that I have accumulated over time, I notice a lot of pictures of flowers in spring and summer. Lately however, I gravitate more towards capturing images of leaves in fall and winter. I seem to have moved from being dazzled by beauty to being more intrigued by character, experience and the cycle of life.

Photography is communication without words. It requires the use of all our senses. Opening up to messages requires stillness and the willingness to pay attention and listen.

I used to think that my photographs can show my intended message without an explanation. I have come to realize though, that my view is not necessarily the same as someone else's. My interpretation of the world will differ from yours. When somebody else looks at my photographs, they will look at them through the lens of their own life experiences. Our thoughts are definitely unique.

Taking the time to translate my photography into words adds a different dimension in the quest to discover meaning. It even helps me understand why I do photography. I've always wanted to be an artist, but despite going to many different types of art classes, I was never really talented enough. Then I read a book called "The Art of Photography" and it seeded the thought of using photography as a means toward that elusive goal. What is art anyway? If I use a creative activity to express "conceptual or imaginative ideas in such a way that the end result can be appreciated for its beauty or emotional power," then I am working towards it.

The trick is to stay true to who you are. If I lose sight of the reason why I take photographs and try to take the ones that I think others want to see, I will lose authenticity as a person, a photographer as well as an artist.

We are all different and our attention is captured by what we deem important in our lives. I tend to be contemplative in the sense that I am thoughtful and I use photography as part of a meditative process. When I look at my pictures afterwards, I will choose the ones that best capture the moments that speak to me and I will arrange them to convey a story or a message. The goal is to do it in such a way that it will resonate with other people as well.

Take time to slow down, pay attention, stand still and focus. You will be surprised by what will be revealed...

* * *

Beautiful Things
by Catherine Robertson

I've always been fascinated by old architecture. Buildings tell a story, and the older the better. The Church of our Lady is a spectacular building that I have photographed countless times. I think it is my absolute favourite Guelph landmark.

A favourite pastime for our family is wandering about and snapping photos of beautiful things, whether it's plants and flowers, interesting urban sites or even our pets, capturing them through the camera lens is a wonderful way of preserving memories for years to come. It also teaches our children to stop and reflect, realizing the beauty that surrounds us.

Photo: Catherine Robertson

* * *

Choose Your Moments
by Sandy Bassie

Caught between life and memory, tones and textures out of time, story suspended, photography offers a pause where motion and emotion linger. There is beauty in this art form, though at times, there can be ugliness. Both joy and trauma hang in memory, a picture, a snapshot, a moment, whose light and shadows hold ... capture things we hope to remember, others things we'd rather forget.

One photo becomes a happy thought. A bright jewel bringing joy to my day. Another, like lightening reveals darker places, some we must remember, others we'd rather forget.

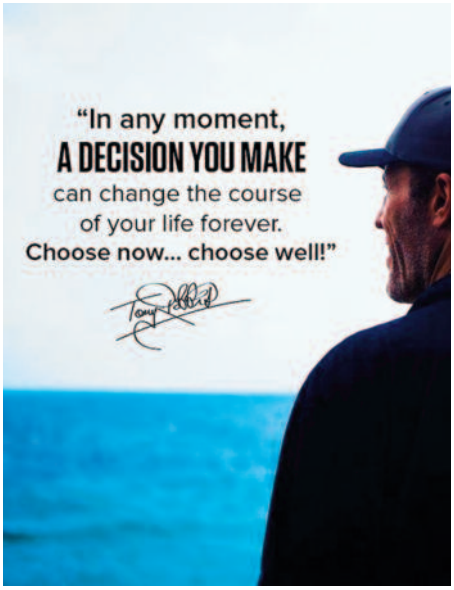
So, why do we love photos? I have boxes of them filled with memories I struggle to recall, and a computer filled with recent digital ones. I grew up in an era of Polaroids and instant photos. Entertaining and quick, but nothing compared to the onslaught we face now with every phone at the ready and Facebook, Snapchat or Instagram just a click away.

I still pull out the old box, take photos one at a time, and think of the lives reflected there, parents and grandparents whose stories linger, wanting to be told. I look through old albums, weddings, baby books; their joys and sorrows, laughter and tears, captured on the page. I wonder at all the 'what ifs' that brought us to those places and beyond them to today.

I think about the journey, about passing the baton. My son wants to try his hand at photography. He's beginning the adventure with our old camera and a thousand questions. Out for photos this week, we had a shared moment. The joy it gave still brings me pleasure.

There is truth in the saying a picture is worth a thousand words. A photograph that speaks and frames them well is worth far more than we know. Its impact when heard and shared can linger through a lifetime or longer. I hope to share many more moments with my son. I'll tell him, enjoy, take time with your photos. Remember. And choose your moments well.

* * *



MONTH IN Review

The Power of Telling Our Stories!

Top Left: *momondays Guelph* July show!
Top Right: Lisa Kelso and Clay Williams, our two speakers at our Evening of Sharing about Aging Gracefully.

Bottom and Below: We're finished the 26-book Kindness Kangaroo series, by Sandra Wilson!

Zany Zebra

by Sandra Wilson

Unique Urial

by Sandra Wilson

Fabulous Flamingo

by Sandra Wilson

Anxious Alligator

by Sandra Wilson

Hopeful Hippo

by Sandra Wilson

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SHARING

our stories, our selves, our success

Next Month .... in One Thousand Trees

September's focus is
Suicide Awareness.

"I had to experience despair, I had to sink to the greatest mental depths, to thoughts of suicide, in order to experience grace."
— Hermann Hesse, *Siddhartha*

Do you have a story of hope you'd like to share?

If you know of any community wellness or charitable events taking place in September, please complete and send us the Event Listing form found on the magazine page of our website.

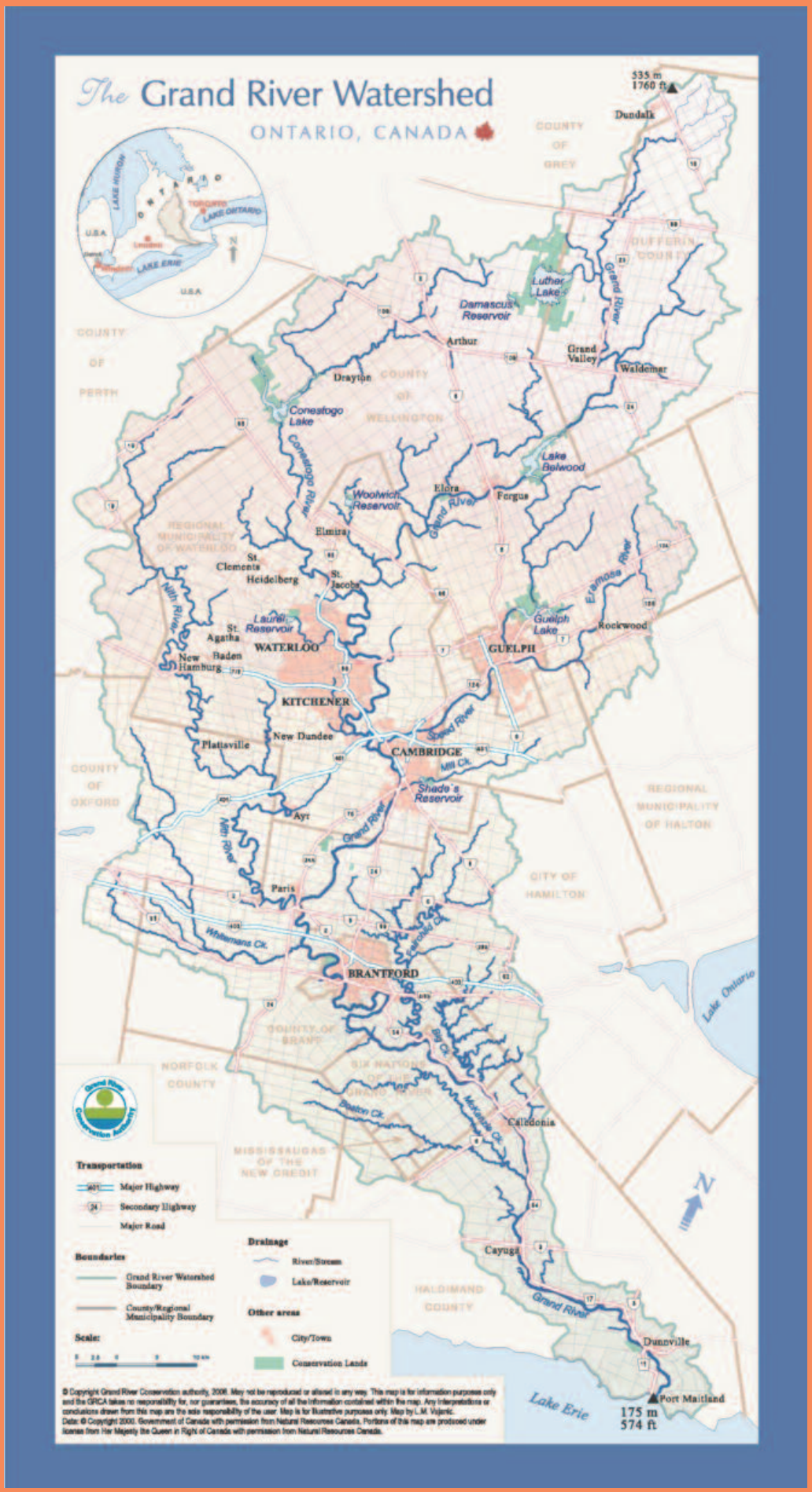
Articles are always welcome for any of our "regular" departments ...

Connections
Creativity and the Arts
Food and Nutrition
Giving Back
Health and Wellbeing
The Library

Deadline for submissions is August 25.

As always, we look forward to hearing from you with any feedback or article ideas!

lisa@onethousandtrees.com



The Grand River flows 300 kilometres through southwestern Ontario from the highlands of Dufferin County to Port Maitland on Lake Erie.

The Grand River Conservation Authority manages water and other natural resources on behalf of 39 municipalities and close to one million residents.

One Thousand Trees' target market is defined by the borders of the Grand River Watershed. Department Editors are responsible for promoting practitioners, events and volunteer opportunities in the cities of Brantford, Cambridge, Guelph, Kitchener, and Waterloo.

Visit the Grand River Conservation Authority at www.grandriver.ca.