



*The following ten stories, in no particular order,  
are the TOP TEN submissions.*

You, the membership, will decide who will win the Ipod  
Touch Local 88 has donated.

**You can submit your vote for the best story on the  
local's website at:**

**<http://www.local88.ca/storycontest.html>**

One vote per member.

**Voting page:**

open : Sunday, February 21, 10 P.M.

close: Sunday, March 21, 6 P.M.

The committee will get in touch will all participants.

The winner will be announced on the website and at the  
General Membership meeting, March 28.

# A Short Dog Tail

He stood 8 inches tall and weighed six pounds. He cast a small shadow. My sons told me his owners didn't want him. He runs away. The cats chase him into the bedroom and one waits in the doorway while the other flushes him out. Then they give him a cat butt whipping, which is both degrading and humiliating to such a fine canine.

So, Paco, the Chihuahua, came to live with us and our Jack Russell, Eddy. At first he was shy, till he figured out he was safe and welcome.

The days went by and Paco settled in. One day he and I went next door to a lawn sale. There, an older gent admired Paco. He was delighted to see Paco still had all his parts and, no doubt, so was Paco. He asked if we could introduce Paco to his dog, Pansy. And a date was arranged.

To let the dogs get acquainted, Paco was to stay a week, and so it was.

This is where it gets interesting. My mom asked where Paco was and I told her. To my mom's surprise she asked, "Didn't I recognize Pansy's owner? Didn't I remember our dog lady?"

When I and my little brother were very young, a small Chihuahua showed up at our place and we took her in and called her Lady. She and my mom became best friends. We had her for a couple of years when a man came to our place to do some work. When he saw Lady he said a different name and she went to him! This is my dog he said. I wondered where she went. He lived two concessions over from us.

We were heartbroken to lose Lady. As we said goodbye my mom and little brother cried. The man saw this and said she was more our dog than his. Please take care of her for him and we did for many more years till she passed.

When I went to get Paco, I asked him if he remembered Lady and his kindness he did to us. As we talked he told me of his cancer and I asked him if it was better, and it was. Also he asked if I had known his son who was killed in a car crash and I did. He asked what kind of man did I think he would have been. "Good and kind," I said.

So when I left it felt as something was amiss. I looked at Paco, who also seemed sad. I owed this man a dog, I thought.

When I got home I talked to my boys about Paco going to live with the man and his dog Pansy. My eldest said OK, but not Eddy, No, Paco was ours. My youngest was reluctant but when I told him Paco would have his own complete family he seemed to like that. So Paco went to live with Pansy and the man.

Now the years have passed. My boys are grown. Lady, Eddy, Peppy and Whopper are all gone to dog heaven, but one dog still stand 8 inches tall and a little heavier than 6 pounds casting a shadow 30 years long.



# A LESSON LEARNED

My story begins on Friday, April 13, 2007. You can tell by the date, that this just isn't going to end well. I had an appointment that day to have my winter tires with winter rims to be removed and my all season tires with aluminum rims to be installed. The service had been completed and I paid for the charges. I noticed and mentioned to the young man who did the work on my car that he appeared to be half asleep in a teasing way. Hmmmm, just an observation or prediction. I wonder.

I went that day to pick my daughter up at university some 1 ½ hours away. The weekend had begun in a very normal way.

On Sunday that same weekend, local 88 had a meeting at Centennial Hall in London. I was taking my daughter back to school after the meeting so she was riding with me to the meeting. We started on our way, got almost to Ingersoll on our way to London and realized something was forgotten at home. We turned around, picked up the forgotten item, and headed again to London. We traveled along the 401 a little faster than usual, but there was no problem. We did a little shopping which made me late for the meeting but I got there for the majority of the event. Following the meeting, we picked up my daughter's roommate so I could drive them both back to school for their finals that year. Still, everything seemed very normal. We traveled north out of London eventually getting onto 19A north of Thamesford. This is where things started to go terribly wrong. I was just south/east of St. Mary's approaching the dam near Wildwood Conservation area. Suddenly there was a large noise, so I began to slow, then there was a big bang and my car on the front left dropped to the ground. I was able to keep control of my car and pull it to the shoulder and eventually stopped. As I sat there trying to understand what happened, I saw a tire on a wheel speed past me on the left side of the road. HOLY COW..... my wheel came off. Thank God, there wasn't much traffic on the road at the time, and Thank God, we were ok. I jumped out of the car, and chased down my tire which could have jumped the guardrail and bounced into the ravine, but it didn't. I rolled it back to my car and put it on the passenger side of my car. I got back into my car to think what I needed to do next. With shaking hands, I called CAA who responded from Stratford. I called the roommates parents to pick up the

girls in Thamesford since my car was being towed to Ingersoll to a GM dealership.

If the story ended here, that is already quite a story, but my story continues.

On Monday, I called the shop that had done my tire work and told them what happened. They seemed surprised but I was told, that happens sometimes because I had aluminum wheels and the nuts tend to slacken off. WHAT!!!! If nuts slacken off of aluminum wheels, why do aluminum wheels even exist. I asked if that shop was going to accept responsibility for this event. The response was, "It depends how much we are talking about". I told the man on the other end of the line, I would get my total and call him back. I took nearly 2 weeks for all of the balances to be made available. The damage was around \$3,600. When I called the shop back, the owner asked, "Why don't you put it through your insurance". To that I responded, "Because I would lose my great driving record, I would lose my first claim free reward, and I WASN'T RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR MISTAKE". So now the fight was on. Just try to find a lawyer in the same town where businessmen and professionals run in the same circle of clubs and friends. Every legal office I called said they had a "conflict of interest". I don't give up easy. The lawyer who usually takes care of my issues said, "If the nuts didn't come off before the wheels were changed, but they come off 2 days after, then obviously, they weren't tightened properly."

After I had tried every other office, my lawyer recommended another lawyer's office in town, so I called. This guy was my last hope. I met with him and he said I needed to get a tire professional to state the nuts were not properly installed. That was like pulling teeth. I just wasn't getting anywhere with that.

With the work that was to be done on my injured car, I needed to purchase a new tire. It was at this new tire shop, that I got the boss to admit the nuts weren't properly installed. Finally, I'm getting somewhere. I began proceedings for small claims court. Now, the original shop started listening and taking me seriously. It took about four months and my determination paid off. I settled out of court.

The lesson here is, keep good records, do your homework, fight back. Don't take the law into your own hands, but DON'T GIVE UP.

# Both Sides of the Story

I like to garden. My boyfriend Paul likes to ride his motorcycle. On Wednesday evenings, in the summer, a group of bikers from his church, like to get together and go for a ride. One Wednesday, hoping that the group might go down to the lake, where Paul's niece Amy lives, Paul took along a bag of beans from our garden to give to her.

When the group rode up to Amy's apartment building (a two-floor walk-up), Paul thought he saw a light on inside. He took the bag of beans and went and knocked on the door. No one answered. He knocked harder. Still no one answered. So Paul took the bag of beans and tossed it up onto the balcony, figuring Amy would find it when she came home. The bikers continued on their ride.

Unknown to Paul, there was a young woman just out of high school, staying with Amy for a few days. The girl's father had recently died in an accident and she was going through a very rough time emotionally. She was alone in Amy's apartment, when a biker gang drove up. What were they doing here? What did they want? There was a pounding at the door. She decided not to make a sound and maybe they would go away. More pounding. Then a package came flying over the railing onto the balcony. She stayed away from the windows and doors, trying not to imagine what might be in the package. When Amy came home, the girl explained all that had happened. Amy went out to the balcony to see what had been thrown over the railing ... a bag of beans.



# HIM

Once upon a time, long, long ago in a land far, far away, there was a forest. Within the dense underbrush of this heavily-treed area walked a man. He was not, however, just a man. Nay, for he was a giant among men, a legend not only in his own time, but in the times before and after him. His heroic exploits, having been recalled throughout the ages, made him an epic figure, casting a shadow almost as long and certainly as broad as many of the mighty trees he walked among.

As solitary a figure as he seemed, this giant was once known to have a family. Indeed, it was told that he had taken as his partner a wispy, delicate flower, with long golden hair, eyes as clear and blue as the sky above, and a smile that could shine on the day brighter than the sun itself. This fair maiden had doubly blessed the woodsman—once by being his bride and once by bearing him a manchild.

Often, surveying his green kingdom, he would roam throughout the trees and vegetation for days without seeing a single other living being save for the denizens of the forest. These creatures were his friends and his extended family. He protected them and sheltered them from harm. They, in turn, befriended him, often keeping him company on his sojourns and guiding him to his destinations.

It was on such a pilgrimage one day that he spotted a lone figure in the distance. He approached cautiously, silently, wanting to neither alert nor alarm the preoccupied visitor. As he made his quiet way toward the opening of the glen, spanning the distance between the two of them in but a heartbeat, suddenly he towered over the unsuspecting wanderer. Speaking softly but with the conviction and passion of a man possessed with both physical and moral strength, he uttered but one word—“Son”.



# The Last Laugh

*“I probably shouldn’t say this, but, what the hell. You know what I think the main difference between men and women is? Think about it. [pauses and smiles] Space. Get it? Never mind. [mild laughter] I guess you were expecting something more there. More space? No, I don’t think so. [more laughs]*

*“Friend of mine, he’s always driving around in his car, one hand on the wheel, the other holding the stupid cell phone to his head. You’ve got a mental image of this already. Wow. So he smashes into a tree. Totals his car. No word of a lie. He’s not hurt. But the car is a complete write-off. So what’s he do? He sues. You won’t believe this. He sued the sucker who phoned him. Can you believe that? What’s this world coming to? So now I gotta hire a bloody lawyer, Jesus. [hearty laughter]*

*“I was in Calgary last week. [a hoot] Why would you acknowledge that? [laughter] I’m just kidding you, Calgary’s a great city. I never put down a city, not too much anyway. I’m always afraid if I ever get back there, someone’s gonna yell out, “Hey this is the jerk that said we was all morons.” [laughter] You know I love you.”*

Later he leaves the stage and proceeds to the bar. He runs his fingers through his hair out of habit. As he steadies the drink to his lips a man leans closer from a couple of chairs away. “That was great.” “Glad you liked it. Thanks.” He immediately turns and nods to someone who doesn’t notice.

After the flight home, he takes the subway to Scarborough. He enjoys the anonymity of the city, being lost in the crowd. He unwinds

in public, observing individuals for peculiarities, taking mental notes. This relaxes him. As he walks the street to his low-rise apartment, he kicks at a twig that snaps rather than scatters. Winter is coming. He dislikes winter and wishes he had more money, to leave the cold behind and work and live in a warm climate.

He walks in the door and uses one foot to pry off the shoe from the other without putting down his two pieces of luggage. “Hayden? Is that you?” his wife calls from another room. “T’ain’t the milkman,” he replies. She appears in the door from the kitchen, but does not come closer. “How was your flight?” Before he answers, he already knows that she does not care. Her mind is elsewhere. “Fine. Nothing unusual. Which of course means I was surrounded by freaks.” She smiles, half-smiles, tempted to say, “You would fit right in.” “I’m just making dinner,” she says instead.

During dinner they discuss her work at the hospital. She has been a nurse for twelve years. They have been married for four years. Out of the blue, Karyn says, “I know.” He does too, but has no response. “Deborah called. I knew right away. It wasn’t anything she really said. It was the tone, the inflection or something. And I just knew.” A tear trickles from an eye. “It’s so weird really, to talk normally to someone who you just realized is screwing your husband. I mean, what do you say?”

Hayden marvels that she could discover his infidelity so readily, from an apparently harmless phone call. “What, what did she say?” “Who cares?” Tears suddenly racing from each eye accentuate her pain. “I can’t help noticing that you’re not denying anything here.” He realizes this too, and briefly wonders if he had would he have been able to talk his way out of this. Fabricate some explanation. Funny how the word “explanation” seems to latch itself on to bad things, he thinks. You never have to explain a good thing. He’ll have to remember this. Immediately he is embarrassed at his own thought progression. “When was this?” Karyn looks at him a while, too long, he thinks, for such a simple question.

“Two days ago.” She holds her fork, but the tines rest on her

plate. "There is so much I could ask you. But I don't think I want the answers." That's a switch, he thinks, and immediately chastises himself for thinking that. He notices her green blouse. A darker green blotch where tears have landed together. Karyn continues, "I think I suspected for a while. I mean I know I did. For three years you came home the day after your last show. This last year you stayed a couple days extra. When I asked you about it that one time, you said you were catching up with friends."

"I was." He says it rather meekly, knowing full well he is still guilty.

"But it was new friends too. Wasn't it?" In a twisted way, he admires her for her observations, for her clarity. She probably rehearsed this scene in her head, he supposes. He is wrong but will never know that.

*"How are you all doing tonight? [a few responses] You look good. You look great in fact. [he laughs] I can't see a thing. [laughter. He stares in one spot] My god you're gorgeous. You come here often? You wanna get a drink after the show? [more laughter. He takes two steps closer and stares at that spot again] Wow! You really are . . . something. . . Mom? Mom, what are you doing here? [loud laughter. Turns his head slightly] Sorry Dad. [increased laughter. He lets it die down and extends a hand in that direction, smiling] Mom's hot. [audience howls]*

*"Any couples here tonight? Stupid question. Of course there are couples. How many couples here tonight? Quick show of hands. [a few hoots and numerous hands are raised] Quite a few. Guess I better not go there. [mild laughter] I, ah, I was part of a couple. Till recently. [Puts his hand up in a gesture of 'stop'] I know. We've all been there. Well most of us. [he rapidly scans the audience for effect] No, ah, my wife and I recently split up. It's never pretty. I mean*

*splitting up. Not my wife. [laughter] I had to say that. She could be here too. I can't see a thing. [peers at the audience. Loud laughter] So, yeah, we recently decided to call it quits. Which is a funny expression for ending a marriage, when you think about it. I mean it makes it sound like a softball game or something. 'This game is going on forever.' 'Okay, let's call it quits.'* [laughter] *And marriage isn't supposed to be like that. It's supposed to be for life really. Why are you looking at me like that? Seriously that was the original idea a couple hundred years ago, when marriage was invented. [laughter] When people got betrothed. The good old days of betrothal. Which sounds dangerously close to betrayal. [he stops himself and changes direction, in his pace and in his mind] Yeah, so we are calling it quits. We're beyond a time-out apparently. [loud response] And she works at a bank, my wife. So you can bet my finances are looking really good now."*

At the bar he shakes hands with the manager, who he has known for several years. "Very good Hay. Good show." Hayden rests four fingers on the lip of his glass. "Thanks. I was working out some new stuff." "Yep," the manager responds, and then hesitantly, "Can I ask you something? Are you and your wife really splitting up?" "Yep back at you." The manager is truly saddened, disappointed even. "Sorry to hear that? That's a shame. How's she doing?" "She's fine. I mean, you know, she's not happy but what can you do? Life goes on." He pauses, then adds, "Even if marriage doesn't." "I thought your wife worked in a hospital, doctor or something." "Yeah, she does." Hayden shrugs, "But I had to make a joke."

Two months later Hayden walks along the boardwalk in The Beaches. It is a mild winter in Toronto, but the wind off of the lake is chilling. The snow, trampled while it was soft, has frozen hard into an unpredictable surface. He zips up his coat the remainder, to reach the top. "Should have worn a scarf," he thinks. "Never been a scarf per-

son. Wonder why?" He inclines his head to the lake, to the wind. He is chilled. He is not enjoying this. But in a way, he is. Hayden has walked every day for weeks now, along the lake shore, even a few days when it rained. He has been doing this sort of thing more and more. One day he ate his soup, knowing full well it was too hot. He burned the top of his mouth, something he always hated before, especially days after when it felt so strange to his tongue. He ate the soup anyway. On another day, his shoe became knotted after he pulled the lace, something that always infuriated him. "Isn't that the purpose of pulling the lace. To unknot the thing," he thought, angrily. Normally he would kick the shoe off and unknot it later. This time he bent over, not even crouching or sitting, and carefully unknotted the lace, reveling in his anger.

He had not called Karyn in weeks. As time went by, the strength to call her diminished, as the need increased. She hasn't called me either, he noticed. "But that doesn't mean anything," he thought, "She is hurting." He exhales heavily. "It's not like she's moved on." He smiles, but unhappily.

He moved into another apartment, not too far away. This wasn't out of convenience. He liked the area. He wondered, when the topic was first mentioned, if she would be the one to move out, but most of their possessions were hers. Not his, not theirs. It just worked out that way. He had never accrued things in life, except friends and acquaintances. Hayden liked that, till now. Now he didn't want to talk to people. He wanted a home, a refuge. "Refuge from what?" he wondered. He sort of knew, but the sentence wasn't formed yet. He just knew that he wanted something familiar, something warm, something personal. With this new apartment and a few new possessions, not much more appealing than the hotel rooms he frequented, he felt unmoored. More than that, he felt alone, like he never had before in his life. There was too much quiet, and yet he had no interest in television or music. They were annoying distractions. But distraction is what he craved. In essence, he was compelled to confront his situation.

He loved Karyn. Why did he do what he did? Then he laughed

at himself for the question. They had a good marriage. So what was he thinking? Or why wasn't he thinking? What the hell was he thinking? Why?! He crosses the room and freezes. He wants to kick something, but he knows it will hurt. He wants to throw his mug, but knows it would be meaningless. So he stands there, in a rage, but doing nothing, till he melts to the floor and runs his fingers through his hair, leaving them there, holding his head.

*“I’ll bet you can’t guess my age. [a few calls from the audience. One is ‘200’] Two hundred. [He laughs and the audience does too] You’re close. Closer than you think. No that would be my emotional age. Have you ever noticed that as you get older your brain is pretty much the same, but your body begins aging, and the world is changing, and our outward life is changing. You acquire more stuff, maybe change careers, or not. You have different demands on your time. But you, the essential you, the one in your noggin, is the same. [he pauses] You know, I don’t think there is a joke there. I don’t even think I’m right. What the hell am I talking about? [laughter] Why are you even listening to me? Where am I going with this? Geez, so many questions. Bet you weren’t expecting this were you? Geez, another question! [laughter] If I drop a name like Descartes or Kant, feel free to get out one of those giant poles with the hook on the end, grab me by the neck and haul me out of here. [mild laughter]*

Hayden sat apart from others at the airport. He scanned his surroundings, but unlike other times, he remained oblivious to everything. The action was all in his head. Returned to his apartment he wastes no time and calls Karyn. “How have you been?” he asks grimly. “I don’t know if I want to answer that. I don’t want to give you anything, if that makes any sense.” He replies immediately, “It

does. I don't know how to say this, but. . . I think about you all the time. About me. The life I just kind of created for myself. I. . . never imagined my life would turn out this way. Everything came so easily before." She cuts him off, "Too easily." "Probably. I'm not looking for forgiveness, Karyn. I guess I want you to know that I've changed. A lot." "Why would I want to know this? I hurt Hayden. Every goddamn day." "I know."

Later, he takes off his clothes and stands in the shower with his eyes closed, the water so hot his face and chest turn red, his hands pull his hair back after each time he raises his head, his thoughts clarifying with words and emotions rapidly racing by like the water on his body, till he finally steps back and says in his mind, "I don't like myself." But he already knows this isn't true. He has changed.



# COMFORT COVERS

The record setting rainfall days of May and June have suddenly become a distant memory that's evaporating and fading fast from the hot July sun. But, there was one stormy mid-June night that I will probably never forget.

As I lay in bed, hard rain pelted against the window. Flash after flash of lightning illuminated the room without even waiting for the preceding deafening roll of thunder to finish. The light and sound show seemed unending and at any moment, I expected to see my six-year-old daughter appear in the doorway, seeking comfort from the storm under Mommy and Daddy's covers.

But tonight, my daughter was too deep in slumber land to hear the thunder's frightening crash. Instead the door creaked open to reveal the silhouette of a shorter figure. Slowly my three-year-old son crept into the room. Those prudent steps turned into a quick scamper when Mother Nature again turned on the floodlights and quickly cranked the volume.

My son hit the bed just as the house was shaken from the loudest thunderclap yet and buried his head in my pillow. After a few seconds, he lifted his head up from the pillow and looked at me scared and wide eyed and said, "Daddy, how come it is thundering in your room too?" I smiled as I was reminded that only a child's innocence could spawn such a remark. I gave him a hug and told him everything was going to be all right and, as the storm subsided, we slid down under the covers, drifted back to sleep and dreamt of the long, hot, dry days of summer that tonight seemed so far away.



# Dangerous Curves

Sometimes you just need to get out with the girls!

Flashback to April 2008: I had been tossing around the idea with a few friends about starting a women's riding group for London and area. Add to the mix that I was recently laid off from CAMI, meant I had some time to put into it.

Through word of mouth and the magic of the Internet, the **Dangerous Curves** were born. Starting out with six women sitting around the kitchen table, a year later our little group has grown to over 50 active members. Our objective has been the same since day one: Few formal meetings, no officers, and no politics – just get out and ride!

This summer, we held our annual weekend getaway – cheekily named the “Beaver Run”. We converged upon the Lake Huron town of Southampton between Port Elgin and Sauble Beach. 20 members headed north from London for the 4 hour trip on 18 bikes and one pack mule car on a Friday this past July. We made a stop at the Old Mill in Blyth for some leather and sheepskin shopping (‘cause that’s what ladies like to do!!). We arrived just before 6 p.m. As we were parking the cycles someone pointed to the motel sign. On the Manor Motel sign it said, “Welcome Dangerous Curves”...oh boy this was going to be quite a weekend!

Welcoming us was my Uncle Wayne and cousin Jen who own and manage the motel. They were more than accommodating, putting as many of us as close together as possible. It has a closed in courtyard, gazebo, pool, hot tub and fire pit. It was wonderful to be able to sit around and socialize outside as the weather held out for us. I had reserved some saddlebag space and packed the official drink of the weekend the “Beavita Chiquita”. A concoction of strawberry daiquiri mix and coconut rum --- mmmmm good! We toasted each other with a beverage and headed out on the town. First stop was a little pub called Duffy's where they had a 2 person band playing. When three of our members walked in the door they exclaimed, “You must be the Dangerous Curves?” Hmmmm...they must have seen the motel sign? Or does word get around quick? We enjoyed the music, sang along and when

they closed at midnight, we moved on to the Phoenix for retro night -- good old tunes, decent dance floor and \$3 cocktails – exactly what the Dangerous Curves thrive on! We danced, we sang, we partied, and closed this establishment too!

We were a little slow revving up the next morning, but had an itinerary to follow - lunch reservation at the Harley Blues Café in Scone. A must stop if you are in the area. Owner Nadia will take good care of you. Sign the Wall of Fame and check out motorcycle memorabilia. Well worth the visit. We left our marks on the wall and signed and mounted a **Dangerous Curves** banner on the north wall.

After eating some people opted to head back to the motel for some R & R. Eleven of us continued on a ride through the area. We traveled back roads stopping at Fox Harley-Davidson for some shopping ('cause ladies like to do that!) Next we headed into Owen Sound continuing up through Balmy Beach, turning right at Hogg and taking Presqu'le Rd. where we had a stunning view of Georgian Bay coming down the hill. We passed through Kemble on Kemble Rock Rd. climbing a beautiful hill with some more glorious scenery. When we turned west, a large black cloud descended on us and we prepared for a very wet, windy ride back to the motel.

The next morning we packed up and said good bye to Uncle Wayne and Jen and headed out to the Harley Blues Café for brunch. After a wonderful meal, we began the journey home. Our return trip included traveling through Walkerton, Formosa, Belmore, Wroxeter - making a pit stop in Brussels. Continuing on through Seaforth, Staffa and back into London, we stopped at a Timmies to say our goodbyes. Lots of hugs and thank-yous were handed out. The last comment made summed up our weekend, "So...Captain Carol when's our next weekend getaway?" Once a group of acquaintances - now a group of friends!



# Killer Christmas Tree

Once upon a time there was a land of Christmas Trees that grew harmoniously together with nature and animals. One cold winter day a particular Christmas tree noticed a group of people strolling through their winter wonderland. Also they noticed that they were carrying a saw and became suspicious as to why this was. As the people approached this one particular tree noticed that the little child was excited to have been pointing it out to the older parents. Jumping with delight the child was screaming that he wanted this tree. Not sure as to what the child was talking about nonetheless it was nice to see people admiring nature. The father approached the tree and asked the child if he was sure this is the one. "Yes," the child said to his father "it is tall and straight and has beautiful branches!" Well, this tree was very appreciative of the comments made. The other trees surrounding this one no doubt appeared jealous because of the attention it was getting.

Suddenly, the father picked up his saw he brought with him and began to cut down the tree that everyone was praising. The tree was aghast...."What is happening to me!?" it asked, "WHY, are they doing this?" As the tree was feeling the pain of the jagged edges of the saw searing its bark it began to lose consciousness, 'tis the end it thought. All those years of growing up in a forest with nature and animals, enjoying the sounds of life.

Time had passed on when the tree started to awaken. "Where am I?" it asked, "What has happened to me?" It realized that it is alive, yet not connected to the earth as it was accustomed to. Marveled at this it soon realized that it was on some sort of life support device...standing tall as before yet alone with itself in a room with furniture. Not quite sure of its surrounding it did hear the same voices that it heard in the forest. The child and the parents were coming close to this tree again. Beginning to feel the fear again it didn't know what to do. But, this time the people were looking happy and had things in their arms that they brought to this tree. Bit by bit the tree was getting things placed on it, shiny things that glittered and looked very beautiful. In bewilderment the tree couldn't make out as to what the people were doing., Were they about to perform

another ghastly act as before? Was the tree doomed forever? The more the people put things on this tree the more they were happy. Music was playing in the background, happy music, soothing music; the tree was beginning to think that this might be some sort of ritual where people worship trees. This tree began to feel very serene in its new environment, almost like a superior tree from the other trees it left behind in the forest. This tree was wishing that the other trees it grew up with could see what was happening to it, almost 'God like'. Finally the people had finished the decorations and had just placed the shiny light string on its branches. The lights in the room went out and the tree started to panic again, thinking it had been fooled one more time. The panic went away when the room lit up again, this time in a wonderful lust of coloured lights. People in the room were ecstatic, oooing and awing almost with tears in their eyes. The music was still playing and the people were beginning to sing to the tree. Now, this tree thought it must have died and gone to tree heaven. The people were just so happy and in turn it made the tree happy too.

As the night continued on, the people turned out the lights and the rooms was darkened and quiet. Unsure of the peace that was in the room the tree was busy thinking of this ritual that it had seen. Wondering what was to happen next the sun came up and the people gathered once more, this time bearing square boxes with pretty wrappings on them. They were taking these boxes and placing them at the feet of the tree. Curious as the tree was, it definitely was going over mixed emotions... one day it was happily living in the forest and people came and cut it down. Sadness, that it was taken away and then questioning its existence in a support device. Happy again, that they were dressing the tree with pretty items and excited that these boxes were being placed at its feet. No doubt this tree had to have been thinking of the worship ways people worship their trees. It began to think that it may have been the King tree... the CHOSEN one sort of thing. The next day passes on and nothing much was happening except that more people were coming to the tree and offering more gifts to it. Alright, it thought this is the most it has ever been happy, people coming and praising it... bearing gifts.

Another night passes on and things were quiet. The morning sun comes up and suddenly the tree heard the clamoring of feet running towards the

tree, children screaming with glee and laughter all excited like it has never seen before. The tree thought it was another day of worshipping and began to enjoy the atmosphere. Without notice people were reaching underneath the tree and taking these pretty boxes away, ripping the decorations off the boxes the tree was horrified. "What is going on here? Leave my pretty boxes alone! Don't touch them!" it was saying to itself. Yet, the people were still happy and the music came back on again Not sure of what to make of it the tree thought this was another step in the worship process so it slowly accepted what was going on. Moments have passed and the worshipping has stopped and the people have left the room taking their gifts with them. Most unusual way of doing this it thought. Days passed on again and the tree was still being praised over, the coloured lights were still coming on and the music was being played.

One day the tree noticed that people were not paying as much attention as they used to and became concerned. Later, the people came back to the tree carrying boxes again, only this time they were not decorated. The tree was being picked upon again and people were taking off the shiny things and lights too. Now, the tree was wondering what was going on, one-day praise and now disregard for its appearance. The tree couldn't believe what it was seeing and feeling, thinking that the same people that kept it alive are now destroying it again. The people had just taken the last shiny thing off the tree when it felt the hands of the older person grabbing it and stripping the life support device that had kept it alive. The fear came back again only this time it was worse as ever. In its fear the tree began to lose its life it thought. This time it was true. The tree was dying, yet not knowing how much longer it had it was becoming very sad that its life was full being in the forest and then having been worshipped by people. Then being taken away from its home only to realize the false sense of security it had gotten from people. Moments later, the tree, with what little life it had left in it, managed to have woken up and noticed that it was outside again this time laying on its side. It got a chance to look around and saw that there were other trees lying outside too. All along the way it saw trees, many trees lying there. Some looking sicker than others and some had no life left in them. Those that did have life in them managed to talk to one another and discovered that all the trees had experienced the same thing, the joys and laughter from their

people friends. Having told of their experiences the trees began to feel an emotion that they never have felt before, betrayal. Yes, the trees were feeling anger and betrayal towards people. The very same people that gave them life and joy have now killed them. What do they think? At that moment the trees saw a person walking along the sidewalk and decided that revenge was in order. With the help of nature a big gust of wind came along and was blowing the trees towards this person. With what little life they had left they began screaming, “Do the same. Do the same!!!”

The last time anyone saw the trees, they were rolling down the street chasing a person. This person was never to be seen again and no one knows what had happened.

THE END



# A Hero Amongst Us

Would you know him to see him as he passed by?

Would he look different from you or me?

You see them on TV. You hear about them in the newspapers.

Do we really pay attention anymore? I am proud to say I know him, and he lives in our community. His name is Peter, and he is my husband.

Along with him and our three children, I watched curiously from a 1/2 kilometer away something moving on the road.

As we approached closer, to our disbelief and horror, we saw a small child, not the crow or small dog we had first thought.

The child, barely one year of age, was dressed only in a diaper, tee shirt and rubber boots.

We were barely stopped on the roadway when Peter jumped out of our Mini-van and ran to the child.

The child zig-zagged all over the road, trying to avoid this stranger.

As they both ran to the crest of the hill, on the opposite side of the road, Peter was able to pick up the child, take two steps, just as another Mini-van came flying over the hill, narrowly missing both Peter and the child.

After some searching in the area, we found the home where the child belonged.

With a grateful, fatherly thank-you, and the realization of what may have been, we were on our way again.

The fact that the father had not known that the child was missing made the events numbing and too close to home.

Because of the unselfish act of one person, several lives have been changed forever.

It's amazing really, how little effort it takes to change the world for the better.

Being a Hero is not an easy task, but it takes a big heart, and I am thankful to know that there is a Hero amongst us!



# Encouragement Never Fails!

I played football all my life and reached the age of forty looking back on the glory days of high school. When my forty-first birthday came I met a CAMI personal trainer, named Diane, who changed my whole outlook on “Staying off the couch”. She proceeded to weave some wonderful workout concepts on me that appealed to my need for exercise and athletic involvement. In no time she had me swimming, biking, and running. Well to my amazement, she coached me to my first triathlon ten months later in Ingersoll, Ontario. However, this is not what this story is about.

Little did I know! As well as these sports, Diane had a passion for something else. Yes, how did you guess, Hockey! This is a passion and a desire I never had before and will never lose. This story is about a six foot one, two hundred and seventy pound football player who looked like Bambi on skates. My first month was spent on going to a beginner’s hockey, with other co-employees from CAMI Automotive, at Ingersoll arena. As a tripod, I barely could skate up and down the ice without relying on my stick to keep me standing. Everybody was very helpful and encouraging, all positive and fun.

The real fun started when I received an invitation to ice time in Woodstock, after a month of playing. When I arrived there, it took me awhile to get dressed as it always did, but eventually I made it on the ice. What a shock to realize these guys and my coach Diane seemed, to me, to be NHL caliber, flying around the ice like a bunch of electric fingers in a plasma ball. Once again, it was a positive influence on me that these players from CAMI had no negativity, speech or action, against the way that I skated. How refreshing and what a rush to be involved in a sport so fast and advanced that players with such remarkable ability and sportsmanship would welcome me to their game. That’s classy!

A lot has changed in this time frame. It has been about four and a half years since I started playing with these CAMI hockey players who are still encouraging and positive to my game, each other, and new players. My coach Diane is now my fiancé. I play hockey three times a week and workout three times a week. I was recently invited to the CAW tourna-

ment, in Kitchener, with a team from CAMI and shared in some team building and comradery. How excellent to pass on positivity through encouragement with so easy a phrase as Good Play! Or Nice Shot! Or What a Pass! Or ten million other positive reinforcement words we should use. The most important thing was the way Diane and the CAMI boys at hockey were encouraging and positive with me. Their time and patiences has changed the way I view coaching other people and especially parenting my kids.

Encouragement Definitely Never Fails!

