

The First Year

97 Stories Distilled From 87 Years of Successful Living
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In 2018 I lost my lovely wife, Jean Isobel to leukemia after 63 years of happy marriage. To fill the empty hours I joined The Centre Wellington Writers www.thewellies.com, a creative writing group based at The Victoria Park Seniors Centre in Fergus, Ontario. Creative writing was new to me, and new was what I wanted.

The Wellies advised me to write about what I knew. That was a challenge. My working career spanned accounting, management, university education, and productivity consulting, with numerous diversions in between. In these roles I wrote hundreds of reports, cases, teaching notes and articles, full of facts and figures. There was not much creative writing called for there, or rather, not much writing that was billed as creative.

I was also a husband and am a father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. In the other direction, I was fortunate to know two full sets of grandparents, my mother and father, two brothers and a sister, five cousins, and many friends and acquaintances. More story-writing potential there? Maybe.

I started out with 50-word micro-stories and branched out. Drawing on my work experiences, I developed stories that were intended to educate as well as entertain. I leaned heavily on my business and university backgrounds. For example, in *Nurena* a colony of aliens takes control of a university and uses it as their base to take over an entire country's economic system.

A coming-of-age story, *Andy*, tells of a young college student at the start of his working life who is seduced and discarded by his female boss, and how he coped.

147 Chess Sets, tells of a graduate student who joins an Internet start-up and helps take it all the way to a successful initial public offering (IPO). For those not familiar with internet commerce, *147 Chess Sets* can provide insight into how the few who succeed there can create enormous wealth for themselves and for their early investors.

The most dangerous period for a modest entrepreneurial business comes when the business is passed on to a new generation or a new owner. At the start, the entrepreneur must manage everything; design, marketing, manufacturing or sourcing,

distribution, collection, personnel, cashflow, accounting and profitability.

As the business grows, the entrepreneur must grow to manage the increasing complexity. A new owner cannot hope to span the scope the entrepreneur grew into and must juggle the various functions as she or he builds a management team.

The Opportunist introduces a once-successful entrepreneurial business that is failing because a new owner tried to run it the way the entrepreneur did. It tells of a competent professional manager who takes over and juggles all the pieces as he pulls the business back from the brink and starts to build his management team. This story is loosely based on my sojourn into management. I was not very successful then, as a wet-behind-the-ears, twenty-seven-year-old neophyte.

The Opportunist expresses how, sixty years later, I wish I had gone about it, if only I knew then what I know now.

The last part of *The First Year* is devoted to anecdotes about some of my real-life experiences and word sketches of people I knew, including five real-life entrepreneurs. It explores some of my education experiences at various stages in my life that explain how I arrived at my teaching/learning philosophies.

Jean and I had long-time friends, Carol and Steve. Carol lost Steve to cancer after fifty years married. The final written story, *The Survivors*, describes how Carol and I joined forces just in time to sit out the pandemic together, a bubble of two.

The First Year closes with a children's picture story, *Lucky Linda Loon*, as I explored a full range of writing styles trying and find out where creative writing might take me. This story follows a loon's life cycle, what loons eat and what eats loons. Linda has morphed into a series of free, fact-based, flipbook animal stories that can be found at www.critteraweek.com.

Several members of The Wellies are writing these stories, which are delivered to e-mail inboxes every week. They are getting positive feedback from parents and teachers.

The black and white rendition of Linda in my book does not do the pictures justice. A full-colour online version can be accessed from my web site.

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I would love to hear from you.

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