**Stepping Into a Lifetime**

**Sharon Frayne**

I held tightly to my daddy’s hand as we hurried along the sidewalk on the long journey that led to my first day of kindergarten. That little trip was full of excitement, energy, anxiety and joy. It took about 10 minutes to walk that half-mile with my tiny legs pumping as hard as they could to keep up with my father’s long stride. How could I know, that I’d spend the next 56 years heading to school each September. That special feeling was rekindled every year as I spent a lifetime in the school system.

But no memories are better than that very first exposure, at 4 years of age, to the open door to the world that was granted to me in the classroom. My teacher’s name was Mrs. Morley, and after my mom, I thought she was the prettiest lady in the world. I can still see her twin set sweaters, pencil skirts, high heels and pearl necklace. She was kind and gentle, but organized our day so thoroughly that we were kept occupied and busy learning each minute we spent in her classroom. I remember circle time, and learning my A,B,Cs, days of the week, colours, and numbers. Before long, I could print my name! My creativity knew no boundaries when it came to art time, and I proudly carried home my creations each Friday.

I still have the black and white photo taken of our class soon after the start of the school year. There’s me in the centre of the middle row, bangs, gap toothed smile and excited grin lighting up my face. I remember the pushing and shoving as we struggled to organize ourselves on the benches the photographer provided. He hid beneath a huge black cloth and held up his arm with a flashing bulb.

“Look at the birdie,” he shouted.

I squinted hard, imagining that I’d see a little yellow canary fluttering over his head, as I’d seen so often on the cartoon shows.

I retired as a principal on June 30, 2014. I spent my last day in the kindergarten class, still learning with the other 4 and 5 year olds. We practiced our printing and reading and worked hard with the paint and chalk. I used my digital camera to capture the busy children at work, and forwarded the photos on to their parents.

The world has altered in many ways over the past 56 years. It would be impossible to predict the changes I experienced, and futile to predict the future of today’s kindies. The excitement, energy, anxiety and joy that I felt on my very first day lasted me through Elementary and Secondary school, University and College, Teaching and Administration. Kindergarten opened a universe for me, and I know that every child who starts this September has that possibility ahead of them.

Thank you, Mrs. Morley, for giving me a great memory and gifts to last a lifetime.