



# Street News

VOICES FROM  
OUR STREETS  
SPRING 2011

## Summer 1974 As Bad As



by *Lance Evans*

Summer 1974, I was 9. I was sitting on a curb on Berkley Drive., 55 Berkley Drive; I always like to say that with a twang.

For some reason I liked to spit a lot when I was 9. I didn't like girls anyway, so I really didn't care. Sitting there on the curb making spit puddles, I heard me some rumbling louder and louder.

'Wow! I felt so small. I swear!'

About 40 or 50 bad ass bikers roared by me all wearing their colours for what seemed like forever. I scanned the pack and the last dude I looked hard at. The guy passed me looked straight at me, waved and then hoarked a big loughie on the road about 2 inches from mine. My little mind was racing.

'Wow!' I was hook, line, and sinker right then and there. You don't give these dudes respect they'll just take it. 40 bikes are pretty loud so I could tell where they were going. I knew this place pretty well. I lived through the 'cut through', down the circle dead centre. My house was the king of that circle, dead centre. It sounded to me like these guys were definitely visiting with someone. I tore off like a shot. Somewhere over by my house I was freaking. All excited I ripped through the cut through from the end of the walkway I could see right down the street.

'Cool!' They were turning on my street. I burned it; I was the fastest thing in that neighborhood anyways so that didn't

take long. 'Yaaah!' Like lightening I rounded the corner straight down the centre of the circle, across the path that went through the flowers in the middle



across the street to our property line. I just stood there. I was kind of scared. I counted the Harleys 12 in all. The bikers were huge, kind of greasy with long hair and tattoos. I heard a roar come from around back and two bikes came flying around to the side yard.

One buddy shouts "Ya, Denis got a few beers?" He killed the switch, kicked out the stand and parked that bike right on my dads beautiful lawn. Denis, he's my dad, he never said a word.

Perhaps I had found my way; I was kind of scruffy with worn knees and always dirty even after a bath and of course I had long scraggly hair.

These dudes - The Outlaws - were like modern day cowboys. Sitting on his bike on the front lawn was a big burly guy with long red hair, a handlebar moustache and a goatee that went to his belt buckle. I wasn't scared for some reason, he looked nice. He wore a denim vest with a big red devil on it; under the patch were the words Satan's Choice. My parents were out back entertaining and it looked like this guy was working security, you know, watching the bikes.

It seemed every person on our street was out snooping at what was going on, mostly the neighborhood kids. I felt like a celebrity. Mom came round front to check on me, making sure I wasn't making too much trouble; which I was really good at.

"Why are these people here ma?" I said.

"One of these guys works with your father." Ma said.

"Hey lady," the big burly guy shouted, "That kid looks like he wants to go for a ride."

I jumped clear from the step to beside that bike; I probably never even touched the ground.

"What's your name kid?"

"Lany."

"Get on."

I climbed up behind him. My mom never even got to answer. She just stood there and saw the ear-to-ear grin on my face as we tore up my dad's lawn, popped a wheelie and burned down the road. Mom never said a word.

# Inner Peace:

If you can start the day without caffeine,  
 If you can always be cheerful, ignoring aches  
 and pains,  
 If you can resist complaining and boring  
 people with your troubles,  
 If you can eat plain food every day and be  
 grateful for it,  
 If you can understand when your loved ones  
 are too busy to give you any time,  
 If you can take criticism and blame without  
 resentment,  
 If you can conquer tension without medical  
 help,  
 If you can relax without liquor,  
 If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,



**Then You Are Probably The Family Dog**

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Thanks to our dedicated group  
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## Street News

**VOICES FROM OUR STREETS**

Published Quarterly

**Start Me Up Niagara**  
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 and homelessness to develop self  
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 opportunities to earn income,  
 improve health and integrate  
 into the community.

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I believe in equality for  
 everyone, except reporters and  
 photographers.

*- Mahatma Gandhi*

# What's Happening...



## *Still Growing!*

The Communal Garden at the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre is up and running for the second year. Once again we met to celebrate the opening of this bountiful venture that provides nutritional food for the SMUN Drop In Centre. As well it offers an opportunity for folks to get out in the country and dig in the earth.

What is the SMUN Communal Garden? It's one where everyone in the community can benefit by taking part, offering what time they have to partici-

pate. (A Community Garden is one where individual plots are assigned for personal use)

In our communal garden, generously donated by the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre, it's with the shared knowledge and physical efforts of enthusiastic participants the garden is maintained; so now the work begins.. The efforts of everyone, participants and donators alike are appreciated and are evident with the Harvest.



## **Relax and Restore !**

Start Me Up Niagara participants have enjoyed Qi Gong with Master George Picard every Thursday since January. George offers a step by step training course for wellness and personal development from which all people can benefit through the 24 hour posture therapeutic Qi Gong classes.

**Free classes are available to everyone. No experience required.**

**Everyone is welcome Thursdays at 2 p.m. for Qi Gong with George**



**Quest Community Health Centre will be offering free workshops every Tuesday morning at 10:15. Come and learn more about Health and Wellness  
No Charge**

# Love SUCKS

*An opinion piece by Nicki*

Love, love, Love. To some love is a thing of beauty and warmth, to others a thing of pain and sorrow. As for me, I've had both and have finally realized that at this time it's not for me. I am Bi-polar and the depths of despair that love can bring damages my psyche and harms my mental health. I do admit there are other kinds of love that I believe in; love of friends, family, and self.

There are many kinds of love, the love of family being a key one. This kind of love I do strongly believe in. Love of parents for children and children for parents is a wonderful thing to have and feel.

This is true and pure love for most. It is the one love that is or should be ever lasting. Even as one expresses dislike for a family member the love is still there underlining it. Sometimes it is a love/hate relationship, but even then there is the love part.

For many, love between friends is as pure and true as that of family. I have friends I consider family and hold them as dear as the family whose blood runs through me. Some friends come and go in our lives but others are forever. Some of my friends I see rarely, but they will always be there and always have a hold on my heart. From my true friends I not only get love, but companionship and support. They are the ones I cry my tears on. Self love this one's a biggie. How can one survive without self love? That is a tricky thing. Self love is hard to achieve and maintain. Self love is often bound up with what others think and feel about us, just like self esteem and self worth all these things are very difficult to find for so many of us. Despite what people think, I battle daily for self love, self worth, and self esteem. Meant to come from within self esteem is often affected by things from without. We get hurt, especially by a loved one, and self love can plummet. Love for another can often affect self love to turn to self hatred as we search for the WHY of

what happened when the one we love turns from us.

Romantic love the kind between a man and a woman, or partners of the same sex is the love that kills, sometimes literally as it takes one to fabulous heights and the deepest of despair. When it's good it can make one feel on top of the world. When it's bad it can make you wish for death. This love is a thing that in the end can kill the soul and make one feel nothing but the deepest depression.

Some men love women and then leave them. They toss them to the side like garbage and make them feel like nothing. This kind of love makes me numb in the end I wish only to feel nothing as waves of pain wash through me.

This love is what binds many in a cycle of self hatred. I feel like screaming, but I'm afraid to start for fear it will never end. LOVE SUCKS.

I personally wish I didn't feel romantic love for anyone. It would make life so very much easier to deal with. I have an ex-boyfriend who, every few month's pops back into my life. My heart skips a beat every time I see him pop up on "messenger"; I know every time I'm going to end up hurt.

The last time he showed up I asked why he keeps breaking me because each and every time a part of me he does break. I was told by a friend to delete him from my messenger list. This is a friend who is supposed to love me too. When I protested he started acting uncaring.

LOVE SUCKS. It does work for some; it even worked for me for a lot of married years. In the end though love bites you in the butt and leaves you broken. I will not be broken anymore; I turn my back on romantic love.

**ONE DAY**  
*One day  
We'll care  
Or not care  
Enough to  
Stop hurting  
Each other  
For now  
I hurt  
Every minute  
Every day  
Without you - Nicki*

## Join your local Street Soccer today!

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**Kernahan Park 4 to 5 p.m.  
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For more information contact  
Laura at  
[niagarastreetsoccer@gmail.com](mailto:niagarastreetsoccer@gmail.com)  
For general information visit  
[www.streetsocccanada.org](http://www.streetsocccanada.org)



**Thanks!!**  
**To Herbal Magic,  
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## ***More Words -***

*Submitted by Susan G*

**Happiness is like potato salad—when you share it with others, it's a picnic**

**Just about the time you think you can make the ends meet, somebody moves the ends.**

**Be careful how you live—you may be the only bible some people read**

**A recipe that is not shared with others will soon be forgotten but when it's shared, it will be enjoyed by future generations.**

---

***Our best wishes to Start Me Up Niagara's Artistic Director Mary Jo Fitzgibbon who is on a wellness sabbatical. We miss you.***

**Thanks to Silver Spire United Church for the ongoing support of Start Me Up Niagara's mission.**



## **Susan G's Potato Salad Recipe**

Ingredients:

3 pounds potatoes, cooked until just tender, cubed, cooled

5 or 6 hard cooked eggs, cooled, coarsely chopped

1/4 to 1/2 cup chopped red onion

1/4 to 1/2 cup chopped celery, optional  
thinly sliced tomatoes and cucumber, for garnish, optional

handful chopped parsley and a sprinkle of paprika on top.

Dressing:

3/4 cup mayonnaise (a little more or less, as desired)

1 to 2 tablespoons prepared mustard  
a few cloves roasted garlic

salt and pepper to taste

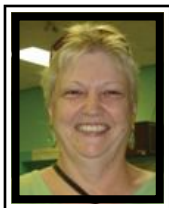
Preparation:

Combine potatoes, egg, onions, parsley, and celery. Stir in mayonnaise, mustard, roasted garlic cloves, and salt and pepper to taste. (Stir the mayonnaise and mustard in a little at a time, until you have the flavor and consistency you like.)

Top with thinly sliced tomatoes, cucumber, and paprika if desired.

Serves 6 to 8.

**Start Me Up Niagara  
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# Thoughts and Poetry

## Still Small Voice

*By Rainbow*

The language of God  
is not spoken with Tongues  
written in Words  
or heard through the Ears  
the Language of God  
cannot be analyzed by the Mind  
It can only be felt in the Heart  
and experienced in the still, small Voice  
that lies at the centre of the Soul

blind man fly  
the scary hodmandod  
crow cries  
whistles blow  
catch the train  
don't miss your stop  
wash your face  
farmers crop  
one more day before you drop  
wipe the sweat from your  
brow  
don't let them tell you  
when where and how  
a farmers crop  
one more day and somehow  
hold on now you must stay  
strong  
yield the harvest keep your  
share  
another crop one more year  
and maybe a little for the  
crow  
go away hodmandod  
reach and see  
how a blind man can fly

MIDC



i leave with a broken heart  
i'll go on make a grand new start  
tough  
to leave  
tough to restart  
but I'll go on  
with a brand new start

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## Just a Thought

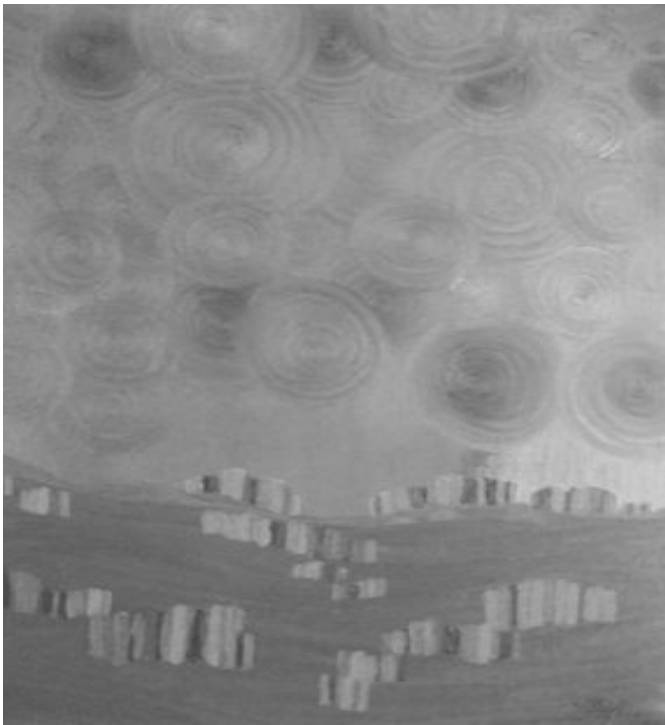
*By Lance Evans*

My lonely life awakens, I close tighter  
Take me to that place  
Where my thoughts may soar and my mind can  
fly free  
I think, "I will stay here for a while," if I say  
It's still my life, I'm in charge  
If I keep my eyes closed, I can stay way  
Walk the deep grass, or a path through tall trees  
Pride falls from my eyes. But no one can see  
I'll go back when I feel better  
I see a brook. I'll skip a rock, and head for that  
hill  
My heart is my home, and for now it rules  
With a gentle wisp of the wind  
The fresh air I remember  
Sounds of birds, and the smell of country  
And that whistle  
I think the "Kettles boiled".



black crow persuasion  
distant skies creation  
moon come soon  
tear me awake  
its different unusual  
tear back that black crow

MIDC



“Starless Night”, (above) and “Bee Keep” (right, Jesse’s first sale), are two of the many paintings by the artist featured on page 12, Jesse Arnold Lepp.

Visit [inkwichsupplement.blogspot.com](http://inkwichsupplement.blogspot.com) or OPIRG InfoShop 10 Summer St. in St. Catharines

## “Turn Around”

## “Turn Around”

*by Janet Elgie*

Each puzzle of my mind  
 Ghost of Carousel  
 My life embraced by  
 Lemon Yellow Chiffon

Puppets of my mind  
 Shadowing my voice  
 Interrupting my thought  
 Momentarily

Until today  
 Until today  
 One with all  
 All with one  
 Parachute Seventeen  
 Bonding  
 For this is the moment

## Peanut and Rosco

*By Maria Sider*

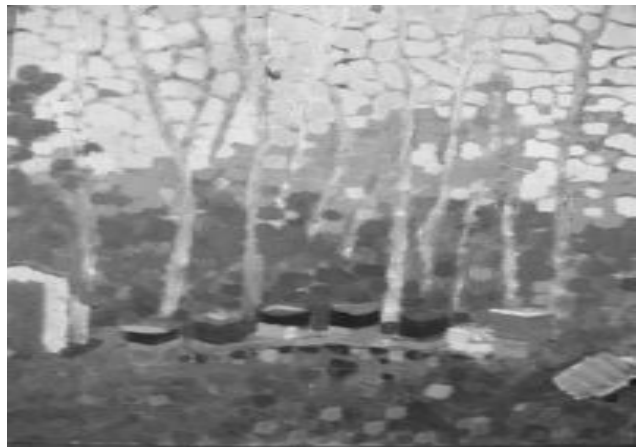


Mark is my son. He has Peanuts the dog. If you call her she will come and bring her favorite toy with her. Then she will lie beside you and watch TV.

Then there is Rosco the cat. He is lazy, fat, and spoiled, but he is very good with children. My daughters cat Hayden also likes children, but she really likes to eat and sleep. Apollo eats and sleeps but she never shuts up. That’s funny.

Jim and Gail have Princess, Tigger and Patches. They all like me when I go there once a month. I have four children and eight grandchildren.

I am so happy these days. I crochet doilies and scarves and sell them. Everyone likes my work.



## Who I’ve Been Waiting For

*By Rainbow*

There are no accidents  
 merely choices  
 There are no failures  
 only lessons  
 There are no wrong turns  
 merely unexpected potentials  
 There are no coincidences  
 merely synchronicities  
 Fate cannot be avoided  
 but it can be modified  
 Destinies must be risen to  
 and Gifts given must be utilized  
 I ME is merely a lesson that I AM learning  
 I AM who I’ve been waiting for

# AUTOBIOGRAPHY IN FIVE SHORT CHAPTERS

By  
Portia  
Nelson

## CHAPTER 1

I walk down the street.  
There is a deep hole in the side-  
walk.  
I fall in.  
I am lost... I am helpless.  
It isn't my fault.  
It takes forever to find a way out.

## CHAPTER 2

I walk down the same street.  
There is a deep hole in the side-  
walk.  
I pretend I don't see it.  
I fall in again.  
I can't believe I am in the place.  
But it isn't my fault.  
It still takes a long time to get out.



## CHAPTER 3

I walk down the  
same street.  
There is a deep hole  
in the sidewalk.  
I see it is there.  
I still fall in... it's a  
habit.  
My eyes are open.  
I know where I am.  
It is my fault.  
I get out immedi-  
ately.

## CHAPTER 4

I walk down the  
same street.  
There is a deep hole  
in the sidewalk.  
I walk around it.



## CHAPTER 5

I walk down another street

# Late

By Teri Grimard

He was late again. It seemed the bus was against him every day; for every day no matter how early he left his small apartment down the street, he never made it in time.

His legs worked hard as he sprinted down his quiet street, careful not to slip on the ice patch he had not noticed the day before. It had been a nasty spill and he could still feel the sharp icy sting on his palms. Taking a deep breath the chilly air filled his lungs and he knew his throat would be sore once he calmed down again.



In usual fashion he was flailing his arms hoping beyond hope the driver would see him this time and stop; heck at this point he would be ok if they just slowed down and opened the door so he could jump in.

Then, just as he was about to slow down in defeat, the bus came

to a jerky stop. Barely holding in the joyous shout that was perched in the back of his throat, he jogged to the now open doors.

The bus driver gave him a curious look as he boarded, and it was no wonder. There he stood gasping for breath, one hand holding onto a nearby railing while the other was furiously digging in his coat pocket for his bus pass.

'Finally,' he muttered to himself as he was ultimately able to capture the small card in his grasp and swipe it through the reader.



# THE OHRC SURVEY, THE CHARTER AND THE MENTALLY ILL

*By Paul Shtogryrn*

The Constitution is the supreme law of Canada. It consists of two main parts. The Statute of Westminster granted Canada's independence from Britain in 1931. The Consolidation of Constitution Acts (1867-1982) includes the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. There were 3 winners under the Charter of Nations, when it became entrenched in 1982: women, the First Nations, and those of us who are mentally and/or physically disabled.

Under Section 15 of the Charter, the mentally and physically disabled are just as protected as are race, creed, colour, sexuality, gender and religion. Canada, in fact, is the only country in the western world where such protections are entrenched in law.

The Ontario Human Rights Commission recently held a survey on protecting the mentally ill. They say they are changing the world in the process. I recently took this survey myself on-line. I had to tell them the hard core truth about the mentally ill really face from my own experience. When I returned to school after spending 18 months in the hospital, my father was so upset that the other kids were deliberately ignoring me that he was willing to relocate to a different community and school.

The CMHA published a brochure about 2 families. One man was injured in a car accident. After 3 months in the hospital, neighbours baked cakes and cookies, set up balloons and warmly welcomed him home. The other man had a nervous breakdown while working an office job. When he returned

home-also after 3 months- there were no balloons or cakes for him. Neighbours totally ignored him as if he didn't even exist at all.

Many survivors will tell you that a mental health issue makes it all but impossible to find housing or employment. Some have been harassed by police or refused service in restaurants. Where is Section 15 working for these people?

These are truly violations of the charter. Now we have another obstacle. "Prison" is now the new "Mental Hospital". Howard Hyde was a schizophrenic who died after being tasered in a Nova Scotia jail. Robert Dziekanski was a Polish immigrant who was tasered to death by the RCMP at a Vancouver airport. Ashley Smith hung herself in jail. Throwing a crabapple at a postman escalated into being transferred to 17 different jails with in a short time. Perhaps something will come of the inquiry.

The Bill of Rights in the American Constitution has been underscored by their first black president. But ask any minority – especially a person of colour – what the American Bill of Rights means to them. Far too many will say that it does not mean a darn thing. Some of my experiences mimic those of racial minorities in the States.

If people ignore or harass you, you can call them stupid or ignorant. But what is unique about this situation is the legal grey area – their actions are unethical and immoral but they're not actually breaking any laws.

Perhaps I too, should openly say that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is a farce. I wonder what

the OHRC will do after reading my survey and what changes will be made. It closed at the end of March. If, as it says, we are changing the world, maybe my own experience will contribute to that cause.

---

## **Congratulations Gail Langford, chosen by your peers at Start Me Up Niagara as Volunteer of the Year.**

*Gail started to volunteer for Start Me Up Niagara in December of 2009. At the beginning she only volunteered once a week, but as time went on she began to volunteer more. Today she volunteers 3-4 times a week, which is approximately 20-22 hours per week.*

*She is involved with the cooking team (her and Jim). She bakes desserts, and has baked cakes for our participants' birthdays. Gail helps to cook for our monthly pasta fundraising dinners and helps in keeping the Start Me Up Niagara Centre clean.*

*While these are amazing skills and abilities that Gail brings, her greatest strength is her ability to connect and show empathy for our participants. She shows a genuine care and interest in them and this is exhibited by making them feel welcome, heaping them with their needs and accepting them for who they are. Gail has been a very strong and positive force as a volunteer at Start Me Up Niagara.*

*-Submitted by Tony Venditti,  
Volunteer Co-ordinator*

# A New Beginning

By D.E. (crybaby)

It's been about 5 years since I have written poems (the edge of my addiction, etc) or articles on addiction (addiction disease or not disease).

I would like to begin by thanking Susan and staff for allowing us this platform to express our dreams, failures, and in-between. I've been an addict for over 20 years, on and off and now I have been clean for almost five years. It has been quite tough but with the love and support of friends, family and many doctors, I have attained a balance in my life that I could never achieve before. I never accepted the fact that I was helpless and out of control.

One of the main reasons that keeps me off the junk (heroin, cocaine and any pills I could smash into my veins) is that I'm truly scared out of my wits by the things I have seen. You see, before when I overdosed I really didn't know what I looked like or what I put my friends and family through. That's right, my family, I was clean for a few years and just one time after I had binged on some cocaine I wanted to come down and did a point of heroin and overdosed in my mom's house. I was dead – no breath, purple lips, until my mom came to check on me. She saved my life by breathing for me until the ambulance came.

You'd think that was enough for me to call it quits but later that afternoon when I got out of the hospital I came home to my bags being packed and I was kicked out again because I was breaking her heart. That sent me on a whirlwind year of trouble and dark, dark,

dark, evil drug abuse. Luckily for me I met a girl who was also reckless, when I saw her overdosing as much as me it really hit home for me.

That's when I decided I needed help. I became so unrecognizable both in looks and personality, I think that if I didn't see someone I loved going through the same as me I would maybe still be in the same boat. So enough of the testimonial because that's too damn depressing.

Clean living is SO beautiful. I feel safe in my house where I live for the first time in a long time. I love the fact that I actually have money to buy food for a change. When I quit drugs I weighed in at 160 lbs and after a year I went up to 300 lbs. Now I am at 250 which is much better for me.

Somewhere along the way I got the Hep C virus and since I was on the right track I felt I should go all the way and clean my body which is now my temple. I went from no family doctors to finally finding one who is amazing and from there I added a dentist, a shrink, a counselor, a methadone doctor, a Hep C doc and a Hep C nurse plus the vampires that take my blood every month. Which really bites because I have no veins willing to work for them so my hands are the last frontier and even there it is a losing battle. I was finally accepted for the Interferon medication and started that 4 months ago. The medication consists of a needle once a week and 6 pills a day. I didn't want to have needles in my house because of the temptation to use them over again with something to



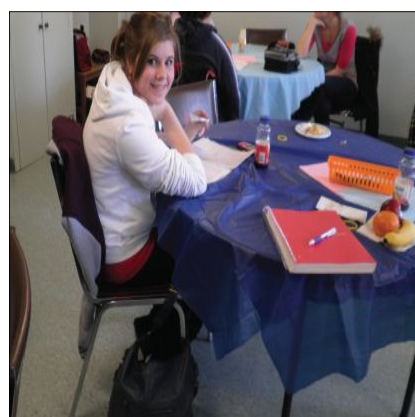
get me high. So I asked my father to keep them at his house and we get together for a breakfast and doctor appointment weekly. After two months of treatment my blood work showed that I have defeated the Hep C virus (I am very lucky to have healed so fast). I still have to continue for eight more months of Interferon. These are things that with my family, friends and the correct doctors behind me are the perfect recipe for clean living. It's not so easy to do as I'm saying, I have so many problems that I have to deal with on a daily or even hourly basis. I'm depressed a lot and I have done quite a bit of damage to my brain and body that I'm noticing now. I'll never be the same guy as before the damage but even a broken car can get washed and look damn good and so can we. My advice to anyone is that you make the decision to get the help you need. Listen to your peers and councillors. The help is there, all you need to do is ask. Set yourself small attainable goals and celebrate those victories.

If you fall don't let it take away your hope, if you are alive today then you have the chance to win today, and yesterday's fall is only one day out of many good days. Soon you will forget about the last day you fell and have only victories to celebrate. This is my prayer for you. Good luck on your journey and congratulations on your victories.

# STORYTELLING PROJECT



**Story Telling: Now and then:** Start Me Up Niagara was happy to receive a New Horizons Grant that offered to create an intergenerational opportunity for seniors and students to share times and stories. We were happy to partner with our neighbours at 15 Gale along with students from the Give Where You Live Program through the DSBN.. In the summer edition we will feature some of the stories the students and seniors shared but for now the stories that speak a thousand words... Pictures



# Starving in Niagara? One Artist's Journey

by J. Russell Cousins

Anyone involved in the art world probably knows or has known at least one “starving artist”. For centuries they’ve been part of the artistic world and probably, always will be. Most of the world’s renowned and celebrated painters, sculptors, musicians, past and present have begun their career making next to nothing while holding on to their dream or excising demons to be able to one day eat from the proceeds of their work; the 21st century is no different. And even though technology and ongoing innovation has added new categories of artists such as the graphic artist, and spin-offs from traditional art such as the street (or graffiti) artist, among others, the struggling artist remains with us. In Niagara, for example, we have our share of people on the fringe who are trying to make their mark in the world and in doing so, for the most part, live the life that so many before them have lived.

J.A. (Jesse Arnold) Lepp has been living that life. He may not entirely qualify or epitomize in a traditional sense the stereotypical starving artist to the letter, but for our purposes he’s close enough. Recently, the 33 year old NOTL native sat down with Russell Cousins to discuss his background, his work, thoughts on art, and what it all might mean from his perspective.

JRC: What kind of family background do you have?

JAL: Well, my father is a Farmer who’s had some success and mother is a Farmer and Homemaker. Basically, they’re people who have always worked hard and tried to be contributors to the local economy through employment opportunities for workers and product to market.

JRC: What about brothers or sisters?

JAL: One brother and one sister; I’m in the middle.

JRC: Has your family had any impact on your work as an artist/painter?

JAL: My dad was always a scribbler. He loved to draw a certain character – an animated boy/teenager/guy and I always thought it was cool. In fact I still have a framed picture of that character. And my mom has always had a love of art and all things art related. My sister is a fabulous crafter. Her blog is huge and has all kinds of instruction and examples of how to recycle clothing for kids and knitting and felting ideas. She’s very good. As far as impact goes, I suppose that because of the interest my parents and sister have, I might have been influenced to be appreciative if not driven to at least try my hand at it. My brother never really had their kind of specific interest in things “artsy” that I can remember but he’s a good man and is successful in his own right.

JRC: When did you begin painting?

JAL: When I was around ten or

eleven I tried to do a water colour. I can remember liking the feeling of putting paint to canvas but at that time it never amounted to anything. There was always something else for me to do. My family was in the agriculture business and from an early age I was involved on a regular basis but as I sit here thinking about it, I can say that for some years after I often dreamed of painting and I would come up with all kinds of different ideas for a piece. But back then nothing came of those ideas. I felt as if I wanted to do something but like I said, it never happened other than a little bit of cartooning in grade seven or eight.

JRC: Any regrets about not acting on those ideas?

JAL: Not really. Things happen for a reason and I guess I just wasn't meant to paint at that time.

JRC: So when did you actually begin to get 'serious', if I can use that word, about becoming a painter and/or artist?

JAL: It was in '09 that I finally decided that I might have what it takes to produce something. But it was in 2007 when I saw a local, Crystal Beach artist’s work - David Drum - that I first started having a real sense or itch about my interest in becoming a painter. I think because Drum is local and I liked his work, it gave me some confidence that I could do it, too.

JRC: What it takes?

JAL: Yeah, I mean, for some time as a teenager and young adult I considered it but as with all of us, I guess, sometimes it takes a while

to find the right circumstances to branch out from what you think you're going to do with your life.

JRC: So you had another career in mind.

JAL: I finished Brock University with a degree in English Literature and a B.A. of Education and became a secondary school supply teacher. I was full of altruistic motivation and of course, a love of literature – mostly the classics, and I felt an obligation or duty to pass on what I know while making a living at the same time. After University, trying to become a full time teacher took up all my time and energy. Even though I'm painting a lot more than teaching these days, I would still like to be a full time teacher. Right now it's a toss-up as to which way things will go; I love both.

JRC: So, going into the family business wasn't something you were interested in.

JAL: I think if things were similar to when my family got into farming in the 70s, I might be doing the same thing now. Access to land is so different today and all the bureaucratic hurdles and hoops you need to jump through to just get things off the ground are a turn off for me. And to be honest, my dad, in a subtle way, discouraged us from getting into it. I love the farming community and I have a ton of respect for what farmers have to deal with but for now, at least, I don't think it's in the cards for me.

JRC: Does being a teacher infringe on your ability to paint or create or even the time to work on projects?

JAL: No, not at all. In fact it's the opposite. Painting allows me to distil my experiences in life and for me that translates into a more accessible educator capable of a lot more or broader sense of the intangible elements of educating. In relation to time for painting, I have to admit that opportunities to teach are less than when I started. As a supply teacher I'm at the mercy of full time educators' individual situations and lately it's been slim pickin's. And of course, the school year isn't year 'round so as you can imagine, being a supply teacher has its limitations.

JRC: What about inspiration; do you draw on what happens in the classroom or anything else education related to formulate an idea or topic for the canvas?

JAL: Occasionally, yes. Being inspired is often a subjective experience for me. How I perceive a given image or situation can sometimes turn into an obscure message that floats around in my head and then can manifest itself in some other form or impression. It's hard to explain and I'm not sure it's worth trying.

In his short career as a painter, J.A. Lepp has been impressively prolific. With 34 completed works since 2009 he has managed to get some of his creations into local galleries and shows for display. Some of this exposure has garnered sales. The sales may not be as frequent or as lucrative as he might expect or want, but they're sales nonetheless and that gives this struggling/starving artist some motivation and encouragement to continue on the path he's chosen to explore both

artistically and financially. Whether art patrons deem the work good, bad, or indifferent, Mr. Lepp feels that getting his work into the hands of aficionados, collectors, or dealers and out of his studio/home - by whatever means, helps keep the creative spirit fed and the commitment to the craft unconditional.

JRC: Was it difficult getting started as a painter; finding a groove so-to-speak?

JAL: That's a great way to put it: find a groove. For the first ten or so canvasses I was truly fishing for style you might say. In a position like mine one has to make the effort as cost effective as possible. And I suppose that can affect the final product to some degree. I would do work in acrylic on Styrofoam and get a buddy to make a masonite support for the foam. Doing stuff like that cut costs but it also kind of dampened the effort because I felt strongly about how much more effective proper canvasses and texture would help fill the work out. But having said that I don't recall and certainly now and going forward, don't feel that cutting corners or being cost conscious hinders what I feel I can do at any given moment. If I feel inspired or motivated to create then no obstacle is too difficult to overcome.

JRC: When did you make your first sale?

JAL: "Bee Keep" (2010) was my first sale. It was somewhere around my seventeenth completed work. Because I knew some of the people involved in the Brock University Art Program, I was able to get my work into an exposition in a St.

Catharines Art Auction around Christmas time in '10 sponsored by the Brock Visual Arts Department, Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG), and the Marilyn I. Walker School of Fine and Performing Arts; all connected to Brock University.

JRC: How did it feel making a sale?

JAL: Besides being totally surprised it was quite humbling at first and I remember wanting the person to buy another one (lol). But gradually I began to feel empowered. I don't think I'll ever forget it.

JRC: Since that first sale, have you been able to sell other work?

JAL: Well, I've had three others bought at various venues. But I've also had one stolen and one lost gambling. My last sale was "The Dreamers" (2010). And it's funny how that feeling of accomplishment seems to be...louder, is how I can best describe it. I'm not a real salesman so I can only imagine that's how people in the profession of sales feel when they make money from their effort.

JRC: After reviewing your blog I get a real sense of an eclectic, surreal, almost abstract style. How would you describe your process of fitting together texture and content

with your style?

JAL: Probably around the time of "Bee Keep" (2010), I started working predominately in oil on canvas. It allowed me a certain kind of flexibility in relation to texture and gave me license to manipulate the images I come with to fit more constructively with my imagination and emotions. I tend to produce work through a series of – maybe 3 -17 or so – epiZodes as I call them. I sometimes go on a bit of rollercoaster ride emotionally, artistically with the subject matter before it's done. I also tend to plan the outcome contextually after the first brush stroke. "The Dreamers" (2010) is a good example of that. It was painted in 3 days where during the process the light in the room kept changing all the time. When I began the work on that piece I felt as if that light would dictate the outcome of the texture so I went with it. The light changing directed me into a frenzy of epizodic decision making about the content and how it would be portrayed via the texture in relation to style.

JRC: Are you working on anything at the moment?

JAL: Yeah, I'm working on something that was inspired through the grieving process; a funeral painting. I know it sounds heavy and I suppose it is. Maybe it's therapeutic for me; I'm not sure

It's kind of new territory for me so I'm not quite sure what to expect even though I have a general sense of where I'm going. It's not really new either; it's been on my mind for at least a year. It's probably the most difficult – emotionally, piece of work I've contended with. But as with most of what I do creatively, it's a labour of love.

JRC: And where do you see your talents taking you creatively and financially?

JAL: Creatively? To the top! As far as artonomics go, as a budding professional, I am selling for less than value; apparently. But I kinda feel like this about it: if a person starves enough, they'll become an artist.

J.A. Lepp works out of a studio in his home. To view his work and gain further insight into this artist's mind-set and talent you can visit his blog: [inkwichsupplement.blogspot.com](http://inkwichsupplement.blogspot.com)

*Start Me Up Niagara is appreciative for this interesting article. Be sure to check out Mr. Lepp's blog and beautiful art work around the city. Our thanks to Russell for contributing this story.*

**Thank you Out of the Cold volunteers. Your dedication to serve others matters.**

*A different world cannot be built by indifferent people.*

## SUDOKU

Here is the answer for the Sudoku puzzle on page 16.

4	6	8	3	7	1	5	9	2
5	1	7	9	2	8	6	3	4
2	9	3	4	5	6	7	8	1
8	2	5	1	6	3	9	4	7
7	3	6	2	4	9	8	1	5
9	4	1	5	8	7	2	6	3
6	5	9	7	1	4	3	2	8
1	8	2	6	3	5	4	7	9
3	7	4	8	9	2	1	5	6

# Emergency Resources

Start Me Up Niagara 905-984-5310 17 Gale Crescent Monday-Friday, Holidays, 9-3 Saturday-Sunday 11:15-1 Open to all

## Shelter Information - 211

EMERGENCY SHELTERS	PHONE	ADDRESS	BEDS	HOURS	RESTRICTIONS (Age, sex, addiction, etc.)
Abbey House	905-684-9736	115 Dufferin Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 2A2	8	24hrs	females and females with children; 8 weeks clean
HOPE House	905-734-8492 905-734-8302	116 Division Street Welland, ON L3B 3Z9	21	24hrs	accommodate men, women & families; no alcohol or drugs
Nightlight Youth Shelter	905-358-3678	5207 Victoria Avenue, Niagara Falls, ON L2E 4E4	10	24hrs	males and females, ages 16 - 30; no alcohol or drugs
The RAFT	905-984-4365	17 Centre Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 3A6	16	24hrs	males and females, ages 16 - 24; no alcohol or drugs
Salvation Army Booth Centre	905-684-7813 905-684-7990	184 Church Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 3E7	22	24hrs	males only, ages 19 and older; no alcohol or drugs
Southridge	905-682-2477	201 Glenridge Avenue St. Catharines, ON L2R 3G8	35	24hrs	males and females; no alcohol or drugs
YWCA St. Catharines	905-988-3528	183 King Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 3G8	28	24hrs	females and females with children; no alcohol or drugs
YWCA Niagara Falls	905-357-9191	6135 Culp Street Niagara Falls, ON L2G 2B6	20	24hrs	females and females with children; no alcohol or drugs
SPECIALIZED SHELTERS	PHONE	ADDRESS	BEDS	HOURS	RESTRICTIONS (Age, sex, addiction, etc.)
CMHA Safe Beds	905-684-7271, ext. 43230	15 Wellington Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 5P7	7	24 hrs	must be referred from hospital's community crisis care or mental health agency; 3 to 5 day stay; ages 16 and up; no alcohol or drugs
Men's Detox	905-682-7211	10 Adams Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 2V8	18	24 hrs	men only; no alcohol, drugs or smoking
Women's Detox	905-687-9721	6 Adams Street St. Catharines, ON L2R 2V8	12	24 hrs	women only; no alcohol, drugs or smoking
Gillian's Place (St. Catharines & District)	905-684-8331	P.O. Box 1387, St. Catharines, ON L2R 7J8	24	24 hrs	females and females with children; at risk of violence, no alcohol or drugs

## Meals

<b>Salvation Army Booth Centre</b> 184 Church Street	Daily 8:00am, 12:30pm, 5:15pm	\$2.50-\$3.00
<b>St. George's Breakfast Program</b> 83 Church Street	Daily 7:30am-8:30am	no cost
<b>RAFT</b> (ages 16-24) 172 Church Street	Daily 6:30pm-8:00pm	no cost
<b>Out of the Cold</b> See schedule page 14	Daily 6-7:30 pm	no cost
<b>Ozanam Centre</b> 235 Church Street	Monday-Friday 11:30am-1pm	\$1.00
<b>Start Me Up Niagara</b> 17 Gale Crescent	Saturday, Sunday 11:15am-1:00pm	no cost

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 David Allen Computer

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 Rysons United School of Music  
 Lows Glass and Windows  
 Royal Crown Printing  
 The Head Shop  
 Rona Cashway Framing and  
 Art Centre  
 Rittenhouse Farm Equipment  
 Jeffrey Greenhouses  
 Burtnik Printing  
 Gary Waters Ltd. Menswear  
 Trojan Alarm and Security  
 The Peanut Mill  
 Trojan Security  
 Donut Diner  
 Sheraton Fallsview  
 Simply Delicious  
 Myers Fruit Farms & Greenhouses  
 Minor Bros.  
 Stoke Seeds

# How to play Sudoku

Sudoku is a number grid. The aim is to fill in the missing numbers so that all horizontal columns, all vertical columns and all 9 mini grids contain the numbers 1 to 9. They can be in any order.

Good luck! Answer on page 14.

				7				
			7	9	2	8	6	
	9	3					7	8
	2		1		3		4	
7	3						1	5
	4		5		7		6	
	5	9					3	2
			2	6	3	5	4	
				9				



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Please direct my donation to: Street News

The Centre, 17 Gale Crescent   Where it is needed most

**OR** - Go to [www.startmeupniagara.ca](http://www.startmeupniagara.ca) - 'Donations' - and follow instructions

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