

## **Everyone Loves a Story: A Personal History by Gloria Paris**

Everyone loves a story. They continue to fascinate us throughout our lives. We enjoy telling and listening to them, whether they are fiction or nonfiction. They are also available to us through reading, television, movies, and the internet. As a child I was an avid reader, and soon found myself writing as well. When I was nine years old, I was asked to write the children's column for a monthly newspaper. It was written by the patients and staff members in the sanitarium I was in.

There are so many interesting stories about the people, the community, and the history of Seneca County that I have included in writing my life story. While doing research for my book I found invaluable information in historical societies and libraries in this area. One historical society furnished me with box after box containing stacks of information and pictures about a sanitarium near there that I had been a patient in. In it were the original hospital newspapers that I had written a column for, as well as several of my poems. There were several pictures of me that had appeared in the local newspapers. It was hard to believe, after all of these years, and I think the staff at the historical society enjoyed seeing them as much as I did.

Interviewing members of my family and friends and hearing their stories proved to be of immense help in putting this book together. When speaking in public for various organizations people often tell me stories of the experiences they, or others they knew, had while in sanitariums. My extended family of adult patients, most of whom had tuberculosis of the lung, had many stories which I have included in my book.

My maternal grandparents, Massimo and Adele Giovannini, were among the many early Italian immigrants to settle in upstate New York in Seneca Falls. Their stories were incredible and have been passed down from generation to generation. I was the first, but not the only member of their family, who had tuberculosis.

Tuberculosis is a devastating disease and has remained so right up to this day. Many people in this area have suffered and often died from it. I have described the panic and prejudices in the 1930s, the history of the sanitarium movement, the different types of tuberculosis, as well as its treatment and prevention, and the decline and resurgence of this disease throughout the years.

When I was first admitted to Biggs Memorial Hospital in Ithaca I had a private room overlooking Cayuga Lake, one of two of the Finger Lakes that border on Seneca County. One of the hospital's librarians brought a library cart filled with children's books to my room. When I asked her questions about the lake she told me how these lakes were formed. Her most amazing story was the one about how ancient Indian tribesmen believed these lakes were formed.

After being discharged after nine consecutive years in sanitariums for tuberculosis, I lived in Seneca Falls in a small house on Washington Street, next to the Elizabeth Cady Stanton House. It had been purchased by an aunt and uncle in the 1940s. No one in our family paid any attention to the historical sign in the front yard. No one knew who she was. Both houses on either side of the Stanton home have since been razed by our government.

In college I learned more about my disease when I wrote my senior thesis on tuberculosis of the bones and joints. Fortunately I was able to review my medical records less than a year before they were shredded.

As an advocate for human rights--minority groups--I have tried to help those people in Seneca County who are disabled. Senator Mike Nozzolio, who has done so much for people in our area with disabilities, helped me a number of times.

Living in this beautiful area with its scenic lakes, parks, historical sites, tourist attractions, churches, and exceptional schools, there is a wonderful sense of community. It was the perfect place for my husband and I to raise our children, and is now the perfect place to spend our retirement in. It is truly "A Wonderful Life" living here.