

65 years. My memories will always remain intact. A new summer offers the opportunity to begin at yet another north woods place where memories can blossom once again. Shady Shores, however, with its beauty, peacefulness, and significance will never be forgotten.

THE GREENHOUSE EXPERIENCE

by
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[Assignment: Describe a place for which you feel significant emotions. It could be a place you have been to only once or one you visit regularly.]

When I was sixteen years old I decided that I needed a job. My parents, like many, were relieved that I felt this way. The expressions of generosity in their faces when I asked for money became less evident as time passed. I was not at all thrilled about the hamburger joint or gas station scene. Fortunately, my dad had heard that the Red Barn Greenhouse was in need of a few more workers, so I decided to save myself from grease and gas, and took the job. Despite the sometimes strenuous work, it was a good job, and not just because of money in the bank. It helped me to cherish all the little blessings in life.

The Red Barn Greenhouse is a privately owned business located in southwestern Michigan. It is a small business but big enough to advertise on billboards along country highways. When I first saw the billboard I felt a sense of pride and said to my friend as we drove past it, "Hey, that's where I work!" It is a picture of a bright red barn with three pink impatiens peeping out of its one circular window. The same design is painted on a sign near the entrance of the greenhouse parking lot, two plant delivery trucks, and the green vender aprons. The words "Red Barn Greenhouse" in their respective colors are written on the barn, and smaller bold letters boast "Perennials and Hardy Mums, Centreville, Michigan, owners: Bill and Janice Butcher." It looked just like their business card, but many times larger.

Last summer I drove a clumsy red delivery truck to the enormous flea market in Shipshewana, Indiana with an Amish woman named Joanna. Three of the six greenhouse workers were Amish women in their early twenties. They were always interested in what I did for fun and even though our lifestyles differed, we had a lot in common. Dating and eating were often topics for discussion. Joanna and I both love to travel,

so she showed me all the postcards she gathered from her trip to Montana.

Every Tuesday and Wednesday morning I would go to work at 6:30 a.m., make sure the lawn chairs, vender aprons, and coolers were ready to go, and start the twenty-five minute venture to the market. This truck was no luxury vehicle. The only cushioned seat was where the driver sat, so Joanna had to sit on the large metal dashboard that headed up to unbearable temperatures. This would force her to stand up the rest of the way, the door handle her only reliable means of stability on this bumpy journey. I always felt a sense of power and responsibility behind that big round wheel, accelerating up the hills, pressing the pedal to the floor until the oddly pleasing gas fumes enticed my nose. Sometimes I drove the truck through the produce section to add plants to our flea market inventory. The other vendors looked at me as if I were two years old; it is not everyday that one sees a young girl drive a big delivery truck with an Amish woman guiding her path. I considered the truck as my own, and I loved it most of the time. On the way back from the flea market one evening, with a load of unsold plants in the back, there was a huge popping noise that seemed to have hit several reflex spots. Joanna and I jumped and screamed as the noise was followed by a series of shocking bumps, until I finally gathered enough control to stop the truck. Joanna swore that we were shot by a cannon ball, and I agreed until we found that our front right tire had been shredded. Lying several yards behind us, it looked as hopeless and woeful as a casualty of war. We did not have any bumps or bruises to show for our little accident, just a good story to tell our friends.

The typical flea market day started with watering the plants. In the plants and produce section it was always a race to see who could hook up their hoses first. Joanna complained that the perennial sellers across from us "hog" the water spout, so it was better if we beat them to it. The drops of water made different tapping sounds as the leaf textures changed. The fuzzy lamb's ear leaves made no sound at all; like the water was not even on at all. The hostas made a sound so loud that maybe it hurt them to be watered. The thing about watering plants after a hot day was the perfume shop of fragrances that they gave off. I love the way lavender smells, reviving and fresh as an early morning shower, so I always gave them an extra long drink. The lilies had an air of eggnog about them. In the greenhouses the dry smell of the potting soil lingered like a bad cologne, but at the flea market, the scents of the flowers were free to rise up and meet my nose.

As I watered and assisted the customers, Joanna went to the concession stand to buy us both a doughnut and juice for breakfast. The morning buyers were mostly elderly people who wished to avoid the hot afternoon sun. It seemed as though the older the customer, the more questions I was asked. No matter what the age, however, helping customers was like a game of "I spy". They asked for a tall plant that liked the shade, smelled like cinnamon, and attracted butterflies, and I would point it out to them.

The noontime sun grew very hot, and the heat was evident everywhere. It radiated off the cars, cold drinks were carried around by

every available pair of hands, shady patches quickly filled with exhausted shoppers, and all of my ice that I brought from home melted. Sometimes the sun became so bright it made my eyelids so sleepy they refused to open. For my lunch break I worked my way down the endless aisles of vendors and people constantly bumping into each other, losing their coordination due to the heat. Wooden lawn ornaments, bulky plastic sacks, wagons full of blanketed children, and shelves of many sizes floated among the crowds. My favorite vender, a lady in her seventies, sold dried flowers. She worked hard every week to bring a new supply of dried bouquets that were certain to be sold out.

At the end of my break, I ventured toward the lemonade stand, bought my drink, and slowly made my way toward the Red Barn Greenhouse signs. I felt like I could start a new day at work with a last sip of my lemonade, which always tended to warm up in a few minutes. By the time I returned Joanna was more than ready to take an intermission, so I took on the task of answering plant questions once again.

On the bumpy truck ride back to the greenhouse, Joanna and I sipped on our third or fourth lemonade of the day, counted our earnings, and gossiped about rude customers. I really enjoyed my summer job, and always felt an eagerness to return to work the next spring. The hours, days and weeks of work at my job blended into one another, but the time spent with fellow workers and loyal customers who love nature and beauty made it an enlightening job experience.

MY GRANDFATHER

by

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[Assignment: Based on your direct observation, write a description of a place or person which conveys a recognizable feeling more through the selection and arrangement of sensory details than by stating the attitude or by naming the emotion.]

Everyone has a place in their heart for someone special. Though this person may pass on, the memory you hold remains deep inside. As for me, I will always keep a fond memory of my grandfather hidden within. His name was Joseph Surinak, and he was the greatest man alive.