

The Mystery of Fate:  
*Common Coincidence or  
Divine Intervention?*

*Real Stories ~ Real People*

Compiled and Edited by  
Arlene Uslander and Brenda Warneka

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# Acknowledgments

To our story contributors, we express our deep appreciation and thanks for your patience, your willingness to answer our seemingly endless questions in our efforts to make sure we had the facts straight, and for your encouragement, support, and loyalty. And, of course, for your wonderful stories. We hope that someday, we can meet and thank each of you in person.

To Stephanie Grossi, a very talented graphic designer, for enthusiastically working with us to come up with a very memorable photo collage for the front cover.

To Hank Wilson, Larry Hicks, and Jacob Herbst, subjects of three of our stories, thank you for graciously giving us your time and making it such a pleasure to interview you. We felt that you each had a compelling story to tell, and with your patient help, we were able to tell it.

To all whom we have mentioned, and to many others—those of you who led us to people who had stories to share; consultants whose advice we sought and received on technical matters, and to friends and family who believed in us and our idea for this book, thank you for helping us “keep the faith” to keep on going with “Fate.”

*Arlene and Brenda*

*Note: Quotations with no attribution after them are by the author of the particular story wherein they appear.*



## About the Editors

When I first got the idea of putting together a collection of stories about fate, I posted an announcement on a writers' website soliciting submissions. I received only one response from a person named Brenda. She wanted to know whether an experience involving her husband would be appropriate for my book. She described the incident; I e-mailed her back, saying that it sounded just like what I was looking for. About a week later, she sent me the story. It was perfect for the anthology. You will see why when you read "Fate on the Fly."

We subsequently started e-mailing back and forth, and got to be what you might call "good e-mail buddies," telling each other about our families, our work, our vacations; the kinds of things most women talk about when they first become acquainted. The fact that we lived in different parts of the country—she in Arizona, I in Illinois—and that our work experience was totally different—she a lawyer and a businesswoman, I a retired elementary school teacher, and freelance editor—didn't seem to get in the way of our e-mail friendship. After all, we are both writers. That is how and why we met on a writers' website.

After corresponding for about a year and a half, we decided it was time to meet. It just so happened that my husband and I, and Brenda and her husband, were going to be in Florida at approximately the same time, so we decided the four of us should meet for a weekend.

My husband and I picked up Brenda and her husband at the hotel where they were staying, which was only a few blocks from the house I had rented for my family. Having exchanged pictures, we easily recognized the other. We greeted each other warmly, introduced our husbands, and from that moment on, it was as though we had been friends all our lives. What made everything even nicer was that our husbands discovered they had so much in common. They both are businessmen, they love to cook, and have a great time browsing through stores, especially Costco and Trader Joe's!

About a year after we met in person, I asked Brenda if she would consider being the co-editor of this book. I thought it would be fun to work together (albeit long distance). Her response was short and (not so) sweet: "NO! NO! NO!" She explained that she was much too busy with work, family, friends and various activities to take on yet another project. Somehow, though, after a lot of cajoling, pleading and *begging*, I was able to convince her. What I didn't realize until after Brenda started working with me is what an outstanding editor she is. So I got much more than I bargained for: a fun co-editor, superb editing skills, and someone to help with the story selection.

The fact that Brenda was the first one (actually the only one) to send a story in response to my announcement on that particular writers' website, and ended up being my co-editor and very good friend, seems to me like kind of a fate story in itself—as though she just happened to be surfing the Internet late one night, at the right place, at the right time, and was interested and curious about my "intriguing fate announcement" (or so I thought it was!). But our meeting on the Internet had even more important implications, as you will find out when you read my story "God Writes Straight Lines in Crooked Letters." Actually, if the truth be known, she saved my life, or at the very least, prolonged it.

What you are about to read are stories we both selected from hundreds that were submitted, and if you notice any typos or misspellings, they are my fault, not Brenda's.

By the way, Brenda's suspenseful and heartwarming story "The Traffic Stop" won first place in the non-fiction category in the prestigious magazine *Arizona Attorney*. When you read the story, you will understand why she won first place!

As for our wonderful contributors, they come from all over the world. Some have also won writing awards; others are sure to win awards, as they are all fine writers. Even more important, they are fine human beings. Be sure to read their bios at the end of their stories.

*Arlene Uslander, Co-Editor*



# About the Photos

The photographs on the cover are as follows, clockwise:

1. Map showing Alexandria, Egypt, where Vicka Markov Surovtsov's story "Miracle in Alexandria" took place.

2. Hank Wilson, the policeman in "The Traffic Stop," in a photograph taken circa 1962, when the story took place.

3. The author of "The Sapphire Ring," Katherine Kimsey, with her husband, JD, and their oldest son, Robert, in 1946.

4. Standard Poodles, BonBon and Maggie, whose story is told in "The Sisters," shown with their owner and the author of the story, Brenda Warneka.

5. Two photos of people being herded onto trains during World War II relates to "A Life-Altering Twist of Fate," by Katia Gusarov, "The Amazing Tablecloth," as told by Rabbi Adam Glickman, and "Closure" by Barbara Yavitt.

6. A view from New York Harbor of the Twin Towers burning on that infamous day, 9-11, some events of which gave rise to Arlene Uslander's story "Jacob! Jacob! Reborn September 11, 2001."

7. A rosary, a string of beads used in counting prayers by Catholics, which plays a central role in "The Rosary," a story by Ann Wilkes.

8. Dr. Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925), Chinese revolutionary, widely revered in both Mainland China and Taiwan, who played a major role in the life events of author Aimee Lui's grandparents in "The Quake That Made a Marriage."

*Cover collage by Stephani Grossi, graphic designer,  
Stephanie Grossi Designs. - [www.stephaniegrossidesign.com](http://www.stephaniegrossidesign.com)*

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## What is Fate?

*Luck of the draw, or meant to be? Our lives are impacted by forces we cannot explain, often changed for reasons we will never totally understand. However, when people are touched by the hand of fate, they know it. Whether fate brings them their heart's desire, or forever closes the door to their dreams, the path that has brought them to that point is clear, and fate's irony is unmistakable.*

Thomas Wilson  
*Writer, musician, philosopher*

*THE MYSTERY OF FATE:*

## *The Traffic Stop*

By Brenda Warneka

*What we anticipate seldom occurs; what we least expect generally happens.*

Benjamin Disraeli

It was after midnight in late February 1962, and bad weather had kept most drivers in Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan, home for the evening. Bone-chilling sleet, followed by snow, had made for icy, slushy roads in the small Detroit suburb.

The old, shiny green Packard moving east on Jefferson Avenue caught Patrolman Hank Wilson's eye for two reasons. First, he loved that line of cars, and this one was really nice with customized rear bubble skirts. Second, the car was too clean for this time of year, with no mud or salt stains. Hank was a policeman who trusted his intuition. Imagining that the car might be going a little too fast for road conditions was reason enough to stop the driver.

Hank maneuvered his police cruiser out of a side street where he had been parked, turned on his siren and gave chase. The Packard swung quickly over to the curb and stopped. Hank got out of his vehicle and approached the car, leaving his partner, Bill Crandall, slouched in the passenger seat, chin on his

chest, snoring peacefully. Police protocol required the second officer to be alert to provide assistance in case of trouble, but Hank did not want to disturb Bill.

The driver of the Packard, a man who appeared to be in his early twenties, rolled down his window. He had a bulky wool coat folded across his lap. A young woman, who appeared to be a few years younger than the driver, sat next to him. Hank stood back at an angle from the driver's window, a defensive stance that allowed him to move quickly if a problem arose.

"Good evening," Hank said to the driver. Then, without waiting for a response: "How do you keep your car so clean in this type of weather?"

The driver seemed taken aback with the abruptness of the question. "Oh, me and Bonnie—this is Bonnie," he said, nodding toward the woman beside him. "We just got married. I washed the car for the wedding. We're supposed to be on the expressway on our way to Chicago now, but I took a wrong turn."

In spite of the biting cold of the night air, a warm feeling flooded over Hank. He was only a few years older than the driver, and it had not been that long since he and Mildred were married. He thought of her at home now, undoubtedly fast asleep.

"Let me see your license," Hank said. He was now at the driver's door, bent over a little, looking slightly down at the driver and into the interior of the car.

The man shifted his weight to one side and pulled a wallet out of his back pocket. He removed a driver's license and passed it to Hank through the open window.

Hank shined his flashlight on the document. It was a Michigan license in the name of Bruce Hemelberg, and it had expired a few days earlier.

"Bruce, did you know your license is expired?" Hank asked.

“Yes.” The driver flinched at the question. Cold air was pouring in through the car’s open window, and he slid his hands beneath the warmth of the coat on his lap.

Then he looked up earnestly into Hank’s eyes. “It’s only just expired. Bonnie and me are moving to Chicago to live, and times are tough. I didn’t want to waste money getting the license renewed here when I’d have to pay for a new one as soon as we hit Chicago.”

Hank could relate to that. He had experienced how tight budgets could be for young newlyweds. Every dollar made a difference.

“Let me see your registration,” he said.

“It’s my mom’s car,” Bruce explained. He motioned to Bonnie with his head to look in the glove compartment. She pulled out some documents, peered at them in the dim light from the glove box, and passed them over to Bruce to give to the officer. Hank examined the registration first. It was for another car in the name of Norma Hemelberg, but there was a bill of sale to this car, and the license plates belonged to Norma. He handed the paperwork back to Bruce through the open window.

“Got any outstanding tickets?” Hank asked.

“No—no.” Bruce shook his head, but Hank detected a note of uncertainty.

“Now you need to be sure, Bruce, because if I check, and you do, I’ll have to take you in. You were going a little fast just now, but I’m ready to let you go. If you have any outstanding tickets though, tell me now before it’s too late.” Police procedure required Hank to check for outstanding warrants once he had stopped a driver, but he was thinking again about what it was like to be newly married and broke.

“No, I ain’t got any tickets,” the man assured him.

“Wait here,” Hank said, and walked back to the police car where he woke up Crandall to radio Hemelberg’s information into headquarters. A few minutes later, the radio

crackled back the report of an outstanding warrant for running a red light in Detroit. It was not a major warrant, but now the officers had less latitude in how to proceed. Because an arrest was involved, they were required to call a second patrol car to assist in taking Hemelberg to the station.

Hank walked back to the Packard, shaking his head. “I told you to tell me if you had any outstanding tickets, Bruce. Why didn’t you tell me you had an outstanding ticket for running a red light? I don’t have any choice now that we’ve checked. We’ve got to take you in.”

“I’m sorry,” Bruce gulped. “I forgot about the ticket.” In spite of the cold air, beads of perspiration appeared on his forehead, which Hank took to mean he could not post the bail to pay the ticket. The young man was nervously hugging the coat on his lap.

“Look,” Hank said, “I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll give you the money to pay the ticket. Based on the citation, the bail should be fifty dollars. I’ll give it to Bonnie, and she can post the bail after we get to the station, but I’m going to have to formally arrest you and book you at the jail first.”

“Well, that sure is decent of you to give me the money to post bail.” Bruce shook his head in disbelief. “Give me your home address, and I’ll mail the fifty dollars back to you as soon as I can.”

“Mail it to me at the station,” Hank told him. He figured he would never see the money again, but he felt good for his small act of charity—somewhat in the nature of a wedding gift to Bruce and Bonnie. “When the other patrol car gets here, you need to follow my car to the station.”

As it turned out, when they got to the police station, additional information came to light that showed Bruce Hemelberg had more than an outstanding ticket for running a red light. He was a hold-up man, an alleged killer of a mob runner,

and he was wanted by five different law enforcement agencies, including the Michigan State Police. His girlfriend, Bonnie—whom Bruce had met at a Saturday night dance at a mental facility where they were both confined—was his accomplice in crime and the mastermind behind the hold-ups. They had escaped from the institution some time back after Bonnie got them a weekend pass in return for sexual favors she was said to have granted one of the facility's psychiatrists.

The Packard was stolen from a garage where it had been stored for the winter, which accounted for the lack of mud or salt stains, and Bruce admitted during questioning that he and Bonnie had been scouting for an all-night store to rob when he was stopped by Patrolman Hank Wilson. When Hank searched the car after Bruce was booked, he found a loaded shotgun, sawed off at both ends, almost to the size of a pistol, hidden under the heavy wool coat that Bruce had left in the back seat when he got out of the car at the police station.

Hemelberg later admitted at trial that at the time of the traffic stop, he had been driving with the sawed-off shotgun concealed under the coat on his lap. He and Bonnie had agreed, when they realized Hank was pulling them over, to shoot the officer. Bruce had his hand on the trigger underneath the coat, aimed at Hank, while Hank was questioning him.

"I meant to kill him," Bruce testified. "I really meant to kill him. But I couldn't pull the trigger—he was just too nice."

Patrolmen Wilson and Crandall received commendations for their outstanding police work in arresting two dangerous criminals. Bruce Hemelberg was sentenced to Jackson State Prison in Jackson, Michigan, for a term of five to thirty years for his crimes, not including the alleged murder of the mob runner, which the authorities were unable to pin on him due to lack of a body. Bonnie was sentenced to one to five years in the Detroit House of Corrections.

Three days after Bruce's release from the state prison in 1972, he instigated a three-hour siege and shootout at a party store in Hazel Park, Michigan, including taking a twenty-five-year-old woman hostage. He was shot to death by a police marksman. He was twenty-nine. He is buried in Macomb County, Michigan. Bonnie's whereabouts after she was released from the Detroit House of Corrections are unknown.

Hank Wilson, the policeman whom fate had favored because he was "nice," today lives in Scottsdale, Arizona, with his wife, Mildred. He is an executive with a computer software development and licensing company.

Brenda Kimsey Warneka has spent her working life in the world of law and business, including many years in the private practice of law. She mainly writes on legal topics, but also on history, travel and human interest. Her story "The Traffic Stop" won first place in the non-fiction category of the 2008 Creative Arts Competition sponsored by the *Arizona Attorney* magazine. Brenda is married with children and grandchildren. She is a member of the Arizona Press Women and lives in Paradise Valley, Arizona, with her husband Dick.