

Former Listowel resident leaves legacy through autobiography

Bev Vollmer's Transformation reflection on her life from city girl to rural Perth County farm wife, mother and columnist

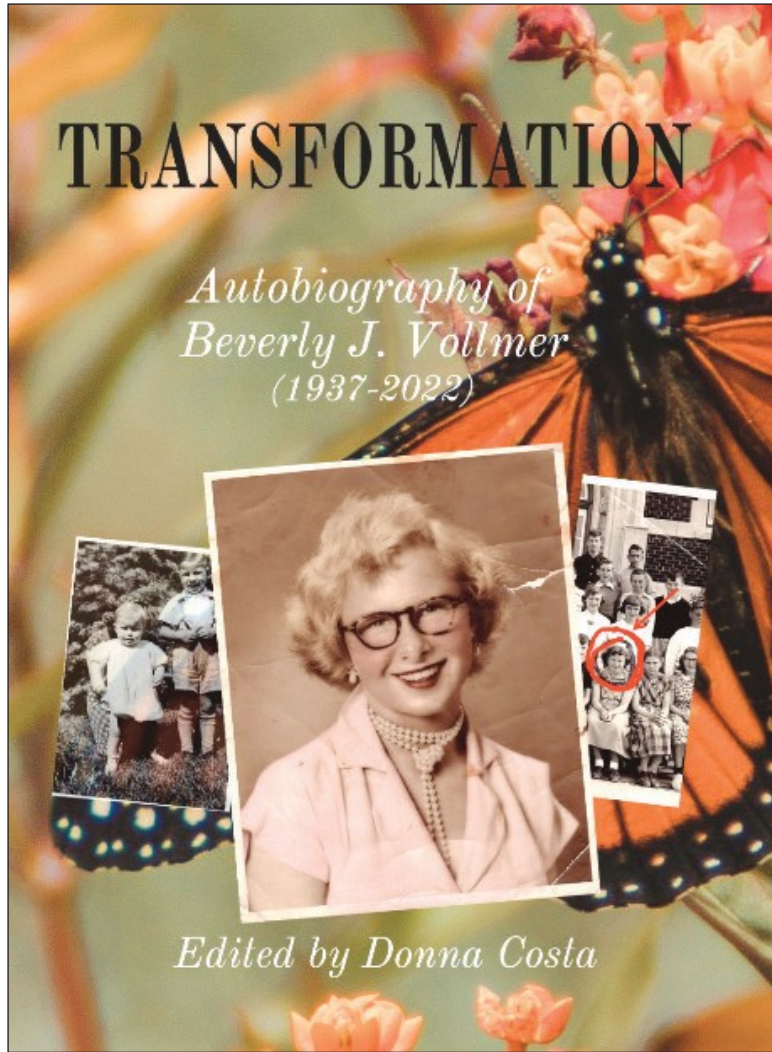
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LONDON – For many years, Donna Costa had been asking her parents to write down some of their life stories.

Her father, Lorne Vollmer, never got the opportunity prior to his passing in 2011. But her mother, Bev, a long-time typesetter for the *Listowel Banner* and columnist for the *Listowel Independent*, ultimately took her up on the request. She was a writer after all, and the process came naturally. Bev Vollmer began compiling her story in the mid-1990s, and had accumulated so much material encompassing 60 years of her life that her daughter took on the job of arranging and editing it into an autobiography, aptly titled *Transformation: Autobiography of Beverly J. Vollmer (1937-2022)*. Bev passed away in October 2022 at the age of 84 after years of living with Alzheimer's disease. Costa took on the role of caregiver for her mother in her final years.

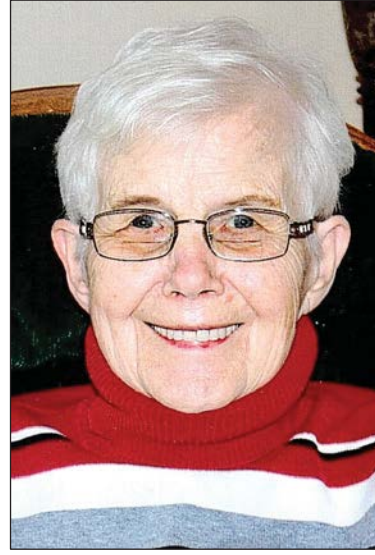
"When she passed away, I took a copy of it that we had and we



put it at the funeral home," said Costa, a London resident and published author herself. "A lot of people really enjoyed looking at it; so then I thought why don't I try putting this out as a book, because there were family members who wanted to read it."

And so *Transformation* was officially published, with Vollmer's biography from the book reading: "Vollmer was born in Kitchener, Ont., in 1937. She wired radios

at Electrohome, wound yarn at Spinrite, and worked the assembly line at Campbell Soups. She cooked for hired hands, rocked it out in a band, taught fitness classes, and sold her own handmade teddy bears. She also raised five children on a Perth County farm. "From high school dropout to college student, university novice, and finally, columnist for Listowel's *Independent*, *Transformation* is the satisfying story



Contributed Photos

Transformation: Autobiography of Beverly J. Vollmer (1937-2022) is the story of former Listowel resident Bev Vollmer, a long-time typesetter for the *Listowel Banner* and columnist for the *Listowel Independent*. The stories encompass Vollmer's early days growing up in Kitchener-Waterloo, before moving to a farm in rural Perth County where she raised five children. Bev Vollmer (pictured in her later years, above) passed away in October 2022.

of one woman's metamorphosis." Costa learned a lot about her mother and her family's establishment in rural Perth County from reading the stories that would ultimately compile *Transformation*. Her parents bought an 86-acre farm on Line 86 between Tralee and Dorking in the late 1950s, raising five children (Costa is the middle child of the siblings).

"They didn't have very much starting out on the farm," recalled Costa. "She was a city girl, growing up in the big city of Kitchener-Waterloo, and then moving out to the country. They just had the stiff upper lip, and did what they had to get by."

Costa also learned how proficient a writer her mother had

become by reading and editing the original manuscript. When Vollmer had obtained her high school diploma and began her job in the newspaper industry, Costa had been living in Thunder Bay and been somewhat unaware of her mother's professional transformation.

"I knew she became a writer and submitted columns, I knew she got her high school diploma," she said. "But I don't think it even really hit me until I started actually typing this book, and it was like, 'oh yeah, she really did all these things and she was a writer.' I don't know if it consciously affected my writing, but there's the genetics there, I guess."

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Costa is currently working on a book outlining her experiences as a caregiver to her mother, and also a historical fiction novel about a female homeopath's perception of the Great Influenza epidemic of 1918-20.

She will be at the Listowel branch of the North Perth Public Library on Thursday, Oct. 19 at 6:30 p.m. to give a presentation on her mother's book, which is available for purchase online at www.barnesandnoble.com.