

Triumph through tragedy assignment

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There had been no sign of flames when got out of bed only a minute before. Now they seemed to reach out of the blackness and grab for us. I could see the orange, red and hot white glow through the thick black smoke and felt the stinging on my right arm and upper torso. It was difficult to see, my eyes were burning and it was getting harder and harder to breathe. Started to repeat over and over in my head as if in a chant, you can't stay here, you can't stay here. Good morning teachers, judges, and fellow students. Today would like to speak about Triumph through Tragedy. What you just heard was an actual account of a tragedy that unfolded in a tiny community of North Harbor, SST. Mar's Bay, many years ago. In the early morning hours of June 19th, 1980, the Lineman's of North Harbor experienced a harrowing event that changed their lives forever. A tragic house fire destroyed their family home and claimed the lives of five innocent family members.

This was the beginning of a long and painful journey for a young woman named Ida, one of the five children to survive the blaze. At 15, Ida was abruptly forced into adulthood, dealing with not only the loss of her five precious siblings, but also the trauma the fire had inflicted on her body and her mind. Immediately after the fire, Ida was admitted to hospital and treated for very serious burns to many parts of her body, most especially, her right arm. Due to the seriousness of her burns, she had to endure weeks and months of treatment and recovery.

She had to undergo a series of specialized treatments and painful procedures, including daily iodine baths ND bandage changes, as well as, a number of complicated and risky us rises such as reconstructive skin grafts. Despite the agony of the entire treatment process, Ida vowed to spare her

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family of any more pain, and never to quit and never complain. Although doctors did not have much hope for survival in the initial stages of Idea's hospital admittance, she faced each and every procedure with courage and determination, to the amazement of doctors, nurses, and her family alike.

After spending over two months on the Burn Unit of the Health Sciences Center in SST. John's, Ida was released from the hospital and began an out-patient treatment process. She was finally able to return to her home in North Harbor, and begin to deal with the loss of her brothers and sisters and to attempt to heal on the inside. Ida tells her incredible story in her book, *No Turning Back*, where she paints a series of vivid, haunting pictures as she recounts her remarkable life story of unbearable pain, loss, tragedy and ultimately – survival.

Ida is a survivor. Her scars are not flaws but stamps of her strength. As Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "The true measure of a man is not how he behaves in moments of comfort and convenience but how he stands at times of controversy and challenges." With powerful determination, Ida miraculously survived the horrendous fire and got a second chance in life. She is a true hero and a true inspiration to all people who face challenges in life. Wouldn't it be wonderful to pass through this human experience without any problems.

It would be nice to avoid sadness, disease, disability and even death. But such is life. None of us is immune. At some point, we all endure these seemingly negative experiences. When adversity comes our way, how we respond to that difficulty is much more important than what has happened to us. It's our

response that determines who we are to become. If we are to progress, life will likely get more difficult. The more daunting the challenges and the greater the apparent obstacles, the more potential there is for personal growth.

Its the falls of our life, the difficulties we face, that can be the source of strength that enable us to rise above the challenges. Admire Ida not only for her spirit, courage, and determination throughout her recovery but for how far she has come in life. Ida successfully completed high-school only a few months after the fire and proceeded to graduate college while being awarded the President's Medal for the highest overall marks in the province and the Governor General Medal for having the highest marks in any post-secondary field in that particular year. For the past years, Ida has worked at Revenue Canada in SST.