

My Most Significant Learning Experience
by Helen Schaefer

The most significant learning experience of my life was to be hit by a train and live to tell about it. The experience occurred on the mile wide transfer rails in Pitcairn, Pa. The railroad yard is in a valley where fog is trapped. We had to travel by train to the neighborhood high school. In order to get to the train station we had to cross the mile wide rails through an area declared public domain.

On a particular November morning I was walking on the public domain boardwalk to catch the 8:07 train to high school. I heard the engine's bell clanging, and thinking that I was on the rail, I jumped forward a few yards and into the "cow catcher." This cow was pushed forward and rolled into the gravel between the rails. All I could think of was to get my ankles over the rails. When I stood up I was covered with black coal steam droplets. It was almost time for a shift change and workers waiting in the railroaders shanty came running to my rescue. The only damage was to my nose.

After a bath and change of clothing, my friend's Mom drove us to school. Armed with a tardy slip I walked into the classroom, shocking the teacher writing on the blackboard. She turned around, wide eyed, said "I thought you were hit by a train! I replied, "I was, but I didn't think I should miss today's learning experience.!"

That miracle has caused me to wonder what God expects of me, and has altered my life. Because of what I experienced, I try to see the good in everyone I meet as well as to make my time on earth make a difference by absorbing and learning as much as I can.