



Text Version of Audio Story: Vashti

So there you are. You're 45 years old. Your husband has survived a World War and has come home to tell of it.

You've done a good job raising four children who are all grown and out of the house now.

The house itself is big ... real big house. It's been a lot to take care of over the years, with six bedrooms and all.

So, what do you do now?

Maybe sell that big house and get something a bit more manageable?

How about maybe just taking a deep breath and looking back at all you've accomplished? Four kids, and you did a good a job.

Maybe if you sold that house, you could move into that smaller place and have some money now, finally, for a few luxuries. You've been giving to everyone else all these years. Maybe, just maybe, you could do something for yourself? You deserve it.

These are exactly the kinds of questions that were facing Vashti Risdall. The question was, "*What to do next?*"

Most people would be saying "*Do nothing next. Take it easy for a while. Slow down and smell the roses.*"

Vashti and her husband talked about it. He wanted whatever she wanted.

Arthur was his name, and he was an easygoing sort of fellow ... nice, friendly kind of guy.

She told him what she wanted to do. Most guys would've hesitated a bit and urged their wife to "*give this a little more thought, honey,*" urged them perhaps, to "*think about the smaller house*" ... "*a little time off*" ... "*Maybe — maybe a few of those luxuries.*"

But no. Arthur wanted whatever would please his wife. He told her, *“Let’s go for it, honey. Let’s do this together.”*

It was March of 1948 when Vashti picked up the phone and made that call.

In no time at all, a lady showed up with two children — two very, very frightened children — a little boy and a little girl. The boy, Robert, was 4 years old. The little girl, Margaret, was 2.

That first night, the children were too frightened to eat. Vashti held the little girl and rocked her. She couldn’t get close to the little boy. He was so frightened and angry and sad that he even wore his shoes and his coat to bed that first night.

The next morning things were better. And as time went on, things improved even more. The little boy took a great liking to Arthur. Who wouldn’t?

Vashti got out a notebook and started to keep notes on the children. Vashti was happy she had opened her door to these two small children. She knew she had done the right thing. These were the first two children Vashti had opened her door to.

Over the next 51 years, Vashti Risdall would open her door to a total of 162 foster children.

A few years after starting, her husband, Arthur, passed away, but it didn’t stop her from doing what she did best — caring. Some children stayed for just a few days, others for maybe a couple of weeks. Yet others, would stay for months — and then there were those who stayed under Vashti’s loving roof for years.

Vashti finally stopped looking after others a few years ago, at the age of 96. She’d have kept going, but her family persuaded her it was time to call it quits.

At the time of this writing, December 2001, Vashti is doing just fine. In two weeks, she will celebrate her next birthday.

On Christmas Eve, Vashti Risdall will be 100 years old.

From the Juniata Valley in the rural mountainous interior of Pennsylvania with the music of Johnny X, I’m the American Storyteller.