



# SOME OF MY YMCA STORIES

Ana Pregardier



# PRESENTATION



The Young Men's Christian Association of Rio Grande do Sul, in celebrations of the 120th anniversary of its foundation, invited the YMCA members and authors Ana Pregardier and José Luiz Pereira da Costa to accept a challenge full of memories and affection: the construction of two books that tell a little about the history of the institution, and in particular, the way in which YMCA-RS contributed to their lives and to the lives of so many other people throughout this trajectory.

The invitation was accepted immediately, in the most beautiful voluntary spirit, and the literary works *Esta Maravilhosa ACM* (This Wonderful YMCA), by José Luiz Pereira da Costa, and *Algumas Histórias Acemistas* (Some YMCA Stories), by Ana Pregardier, were donated to the institution and will be widely disseminated among members, students, professionals, volunteers, clients, partners and the community in general.

They are beautiful accounts of a living history that has been with us until today, and with God's help, will make a contribution that will allow the YMCA-RS to face the challenges of the coming decades with the same love and commitment from the thousands of people who made this institution a place of welcome, fraternity, equality and lots of innovation.

All so we can continue to impact the lives of thousands of people, especially children and young people, in the search for a fairer and more egalitarian society.

Rio Grande do Sul, November 2021.

**Daniela Colussi**

President of ACM-RS

**José Ricardo Calza Caporal**

General Secretary for ACM-RS

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**Ana Pregardier**



ACM-RS • 1901 • 2021

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Associação Cristã de Moços do Rio Grande do Sul

International Data for Cataloging in the Publication (CIP)  
Lumos Assessoria Empresarial  
Librarian: Priscila Pena Machado (CRB-7/6971)

P923 Pregardier, Ana.  
Some of my YMCA stories [recurso eletrônico] /  
Ana Pregardier. — 1. st. ed. — Porto Alegre : ACM-RS, 2021.  
Dados eletrônicos (pdf).

“Commemorative book in honor of the 120 years anniversary  
of Associação Cristã de Moços do Rio Grande do Sul”

ISBN 978-65-5854-498-2

1. Associação Cristã de Moços do Rio Grande do Sul –  
História. 2. Memórias. 3. Contos. 4. Histórias de vida. I. Título.

CDD B869.8

Cover Images: ACM-RS Archive and Ana Pregardier Personal Archive

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Associação Cristã de Moços do Rio Grande do Sul  
Rua Washington Luiz, 1050, Centro - Porto Alegre / RS  
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The author has joined as Lifetime Member (Academic Immortal) the Academy of Letters, Arts and Culture of Brazil - ALB (Sep-2018), occupying chair number 08 – its Patron is Machado de Assis. With 14 years of experience in the financial and banking market, she is currently CEO of Intus Forma Tecnologia Vivencial, Financial Educator and author of 33 works, including books, financial education games for young people, as well as scientific articles, national and international lecturer and member of the Brazilian Union of Writers UBE-RJ.

Specialist in Habits Formation, she developed and published the Ludic-Experiential Method of Habit Formation (LVFH), scientifically recognized nationally and internationally. Specialist in Psychology from the State University of St. Petersburg - Russia, Specialization in the field of Clinical Neuroscience (Unylya); MBA in Project Management at FGV, MBA in Knowledge Management and the Ontopsychological Paradigm and MBA in Business Management and Business Intuition (AMF). She graduated in Business Administration at UNISINOS.



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## # 01 Where it all began

In order to start writing, I decided to come here...

That is the little square in front of ACM (Brazilian acronym for YMCA), in the Historic Center of Porto Alegre/RS. I tried to start writing at home, the same way I write so many other books, but it was impossible to start there as not a single word came out. After not understanding why I couldn't start writing about a place that was my life, I decided to literally change the scenery. It may be that you, at some point, saw me sitting on the bench in this little square, with my notebook writing away. If by chance you did, rest assured that this was the day I started writing this book.

I look at this building, these windows, and I see many scenes and stories that are part of it. I see people from now and people from the past, I see scenes that I haven't witnessed, but they are stories of a YMCA that came before me and that are part of who I am today. I see a building that now exists but did not exist back then (and which I saw being built), I see groups of many young people gathered with backpacks, getting ready to go to camp, I see teenagers throwing backpacks out of the school window to catch up with their classmates who are here, in the square, children exchanging school pass tokens for popcorn after school, athletes leaving their classes and heterogeneous groups of young people and adults going out together to do volunteer work.

There are a bunch of them, but so many that are not mine, they are stories from YMCA.

And here comes the big question: how to translate into a book what is not just my experience, but the experience of what it is to be a YMCA member?

I thought about writing chronologically. I considered writing in thematic sections. However, none of these ways made me comfortable, because what I want is that we can feel and live *junt@s* (which means 'all together' in Portuguese, we use @ to avoid specifying gender and being more inclusive) these experiences and lessons that YMCA offers us.

So I invite you to choose! Yes, choosing and living with me several stories from the past, present and also (who knows) the future that YMCA has to offer us.



An then? All ready to get started?

In this book, you will find options and, depending on what you choose, you will get to know stories and situations that may have different points of view. I already anticipate warning that these stories may (or may not) have had the characters' names changed for confidentiality reasons, hehehehe, but I truly state that they are real. I hope that with this experience, by reading all of it, you can also feel a little of what YMCA is and what it really means to be a YMCA member.

To start with, I'll give you four options. You can choose one of them and search the book for the # that has the number corresponding to your choice. In the future, as the reading flows, some of these options will appear again and others no longer, but don't worry, as the path is made by walking. And, in this book, the most important thing is your experience of living the YMCA life.

- **Option 1:** If you want to know a little bit about who I truly am, hehehehe, who is this talking to you, lol, look in the book and start reading at **#03**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to go straight to the stories of the YMCA life, look in the book and start reading at **#14**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 02 Kindergarten

We don't always remember moments from our childhood, but some of them are magically etched forever in our memories.

The year was 1986. Writing this now, straight from the year 2021, sounds unbelievable and absurdly far away, but memories have a surprising way of making distant moments in time so alive that it feels like they happened "yesterday."

In that year, ACM Centro (Downtown's YMCA) still did not have the wonderful school building that it features nowadays. There was a super old building there, and the difference in structure was not the only one. Where we see today a wonderful gym room, there was a building with only one floor, where there was a ballet, jazz and gymnastics room that featured the door in front of the entrance to the gymnasium, and another on the side of the building. There were two rooms, each of them with a colorful wooden door and an incredibly high step (ok, it shouldn't be that high, but I was only 5 years old! So yeah, it looked incredibly high). There were classes in Kindergarten A (4-year-old children who wore red and a pink apron with a pocket on the front with their names painted on it) and Kindergarten B (5-year-old children).

I remember the day they took me to class, I studied in the morning. I remember waking up, drinking my bottle watching the cartoon of Felix the Cat and having to leave in the middle of this cartoon's episode. When I arrived, that school building looked gigantic; the teacher was waiting for us at the door. She had short black hair and was wearing a blue apron just like mine, except hers also had flowers painted next to something, which I was later told was that aunt's name that was written on it. Yeah, at that time, we called the teacher 'aunt'.

I remember that I was very happy to stay at school, I didn't even cry or found the place odd. Quite the contrary! I was amazed by that huge room, with little tables and chairs my size and there were little wooden boats that we played with that worked like swings. I had never seen anything like that!

I also remember when we were going to play in the playground that's where the gym is now. There it was a huge courtyard, with the middle



made of cement and sand at the edges. There were painted concrete pipes where I loved to hide inside and play with for as long as possible.

I really have a lot of memories, I don't know if it's because everything was so new and wonderful, or if I just remember it by chance... The fact is that I also remember the class where I learned the names of the geometric shapes. The teacher had a blue wooden square where we walked inside; there was also a green triangle, which was more difficult to pass through. The circle was red, and if there were any other shapes, I believe I must not have learned the name of them that day, as I only remember these three.

I remember I didn't understand why the other kids had such amazing snacks, like yogurt and cream-filled cookies. I always brought fruit, bread and plain juice or jello juice. I didn't like lunchtime, I didn't think it was cool, but today I know how much effort my parents made for me to be part of it.

I also remember that we were learning songs and that I was too shy to sing, I felt out of place because I didn't know anyone. Everyone had completed Kindergarten A, but I hadn't. However, the place was so beautiful that, very quickly, I made friends and everything was just fine.

In the middle of the year, they took away a three-story dollhouse that was in the living room, and I was very sad, because a dollhouse like that I had only seen on television, but right away a giant wooden house appeared in the living room, where we no longer played with the dolls, but we could all go and play inside the playhouse.

From the friendships of that time, I remember Daniela Danielle, who led me to choose my sister's name to match hers! I remember Francine, Breno, but none of them continued studying at YMCA in the first grade.

I can consider myself a lucky person, as one of my classmates, who is even in my graduation photo from Kindergarten B, studied in the same class as me until high school, not to mention that he lived the entire period of leadership together and we were chosen as junior officers of the YMCA (where only three participants had this honor), he is still my friend to this day.

YMCA gives us gifts that we take for life; It's exciting to be here writing these stories and knowing that today, 35 years later, I have a friend I can tell others about, that we have already worked together, that he's Clari's father, an amazing 12-year-old girl. I make good use of story to thank Marcelo Guerguen and say that, just as you supported me, you can count on me,



because a true YMCA friendship like that (seriously... we've known each other since Kindergarten!) is a real gift!

Choose one of the following stories to continue reading this book:

- **Option 1:** First grade, now it's time for "grown up" class. If you want to know more about this story, go to **#08**.
- **Option 2:** At only 8 years old, I had my first trip, three days away from my parents, go to **#15**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to go straight to the stories of the YMCA life, look in the book and start reading at **#14**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 03 Who's writing this book?

Well, people, first of all, it is a pleasure and an honor to participate in the celebration of 120 years of the YMCA! Do you know what the most amazing thing about it is? I remember the celebration of the 100 years of the YMCA of Rio Grande do Sul (but that's a story for another # hehehehe). So, let's go to the presentation!

My name is Ana Pregardier, today I am a writer, businesswoman, financial educator, poet and I am happy to have, since 2018, the title of Academic Immortal member and occupy chair number 08 at the Academy of Letters, Arts and Culture of Brazil whose honorable patron is the famous Brazilian writer Machado de Assis. Up until this moment, I have 32 published works, including books and computer games. (How has YMCA influenced all this? Pace yourself... You will soon have the opportunity to find out all about it).

I was born in 1980 (I am now 40 years old), in the city of Santa Maria, in the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. I came to live in Porto Alegre in 1985, when I was four years old. In 1986, my parents chose a school for me to attend and did what was then called Kindergarten B. Kindergarten B was the last year the children attended before entering first grade, where they learned how to read and write. It was in this year that the YMCA came into my life.

- **Option 1:** If you want to know how a 5-year-old saw YMCA for the first time, go to [#36](#).
- **Option 2:** If you want to learn more about my current work, go to [#16](#).
- **Option 3:** If you want to know more about how my life at YMCA impacted my nomination to Academia de Letras Artes e Cultura do Brasil, go to [#40](#).



## # 04 What happens now?

Telling stories about everything I have lived and learned with the YMCA is an exciting and virtually endless task. While writing this text to contribute to the 120th anniversary book of ACM (YMCA) of Rio Grande do Sul, memories started to come, and each story I wrote reminded me of several others that also shaped me and were decisive for my life.

Living as a YMCA member was so enriching and had the participation of so many people that I feel almost sad that I couldn't have mentioned the names of all of them and told all the stories I wanted to. However, I won't let this sadden me, as these stories, written especially for YMCA's 120th Year Book, are just the beginning of it all! I feel the responsibility to write more, tell more stories and quote, recognizing so many Acemistas (as YMCA members are called in Portuguese), those who changed my life. So, get ready, pretty soon, a new book will be released with these and many other unique stories! Now I feel eager to write: "Minhas Histórias Acemistas" (My Stories from YMCA)! I feel that I owe this recognition to all of those who contributed to making me who I am today!

While here in this book this is the ending #, this is not the end. It's just the beginning!!!

Being a YMCA member means the following: it means to live and be part of other people's lives, always doing good and contributing as we can so that, somehow, people can live better and that we can always spread the word about the Kingdom of Heaven, the importance of love, respect and happiness among the youth & everyone else!

Thank you YMCA for being part of my life!



## # 05 If you want to...

Amazing things happen as I write...

As I started writing about leadership, I paused to pick up a box with several memories I have from that time: papers, photos, the invitation to the opening class of the 1993 Pre-Leadership Course, the page with the devotional of the occasion, etc. As I looked at them, I have to confess that I felt emotional and so I decided to record a video to share this moment with you. Thus, as promised in the video, I leave you this devotional song that truly moved me and still touches me to this day.

*"If you want to  
If you want your dreams to come true,  
Start building them slowly.  
Small beginnings, sincere hard work  
it will make them grow with purity.  
If you want to live life with joy,  
Never hurry up,  
Do few things, but do them well,  
with simplicity and joy,  
day after day, stone after stone, build your dream of 'wandering'.  
Day by day, you will grow too.  
And you will see the glory of heaven."  
(Unknown author)*

In order to see the video, go to: Curso de Pré-Liderança ACM - 1993 (<https://youtu.be/4J3UEvXQb4>)

- **Option 1:** If you wish to continue reading about what YMCA leadership is all about, go to **#26**.
- **Option 2:** Social Volunteer Work - An experience that I thought didn't work, but in reality it was one of the most beautiful lessons I've had in life, to know more about it go to **#27**.
- **Option 3:** Sleep late on Saturday morning? Of course not! Let's go to Esquina Democrática (the 'Democratic Corner', a popular street in Porto Alegre). Go to **#30**.
- **Option 4:** The Pre-Leadership Course test, the hardest one in my life to date! Go to **#21**.
- **Option 5:** If you want to see other YMCA story options, go to **#14**.



## # 06 The Bonus

A straw mattress is like a big pillow sewn in the shape of a mattress, made of a VERY thick fabric so that it doesn't tear and so that animals, like spiders, do not enter, to live in the straw filling.

Straw mattresses are SUPER hard and aren't straight/firm, not to mention that every move you make, it also causes noise!

Since you came this far, I'll tell you one hehehehe.

Do you remember Marcelo and Mariana? My peers in Kindergarten and First Grade? They were in this camp. There was a cabin for the girls and another for the boys. When we entered the cabin and went to choose the beds, a colleague of mine was going to get the bed on the bottom, the one on the first floor which was at floor level. When she sat down on the mattress, a huge spider ran away! You can't even imagine how loud we screamed! A wooden hut, full of 8 and 9 year old girls, no light, just flashlights and a spider shows up! Yes, my friend Mari screamed a lot too! After that, we avoided the beds on the first floor. I chose the third floor and the biggest problem about it was waking up in the morning. When I got up, I always hit my head on the, lol, tin roof.

- Go back to [#15](#).



## # 07 Leadership Stories

Choose one of the Leadership stories you haven't read yet to continue this tour:

- **Option 1:** If you wish to continue reading about how YMCA leadership works, go to **#26**.
- **Option 2:** A memory that still touches my heart to this day (with a video included, hahahahah) go to **#05**.
- **Option 3:** Social Volunteer Work - An experience that I thought didn't work, but in reality it was one of the most beautiful lessons I've had in life. Go to **#27**.
- **Option 4:** How about sleeping late on Saturday morning? Of course not! Let's go to Esquina Democrática (the 'Democratic Corner', a popular street in Porto Alegre). Go to **#30**.
- **Option 5:** The Pre-Leadership Course test, the hardest one in my life to date! Go to **#21**.
- **Option 6:** If you want to see other YMCA story options, go to **#14**.



## # 08 First Grade

First day of class for 'grown-ups'! In 1987, I was six years old and I already knew my school well: the YMCA!!! I loved school, but now the class would be different, it was a class for 'grown-ups' and wearing uniforms! It was no longer the little kid blue apron, now we had a school shirt, skirt and sweatshirt! I remember packing my little yellow plastic school bag with the notebook, pencil case, calligraphy practice notebook (ok... I know it didn't do me much good because whoever knows my handwriting knows exactly what I'm talking about, lol) and I also took my Barbie doll to play with.

I was in the courtyard playing and waiting for the beginning of class when, suddenly, a siren went off. I stood there staring and all the children came out into the yard too. The teachers formed lines according to the specific class groups, I asked a teacher where I should go and she took me to my line. Still in line, I remember the teacher introducing herself as 'aunt' Rosângela Farias. She asked us to stand in line to hear the national anthem and then led us to the classroom.

Now I'm going to open a little parenthesis here, hahahahah: These days, I'm an academic and researcher about forming habits, I know how early experiences create memory traces (neuronal sequences that record how we respond to situations) that make us respond automatically to the same types of situations. Why did I open these parentheses? Because just writing now, I remembered that I sat next to the desk that was on the side of the room and in the second row. Interestingly, whenever I arrive at a lecture, conference or something like that, I always sit to one side of the room and in the second row. It's just a coincidence, isn't it? #sóquenão (popular Portuguese # to say "not really") So I close the parenthesis.

While I was waiting for the other children to be seated and some to arrive in the room with their parents, I watched Mariana Parahyba. She arrived with her mother and did not want her mom to leave. Then I invited her to sit beside me and we started talking. We became real friends. Outside class time, I would go to her house to play, dance to Xuxa's songs (popular Brazilian children's entertainer in the 80's) and call our 'telefriends'.

If you don't know what 'telefriends' are, don't worry, because this is a



time when landlines were very rare to have (I didn't have them at home) and even those who had a telephone should declare in their income tax they had such a hard to find amenity... Can you believe that? So, 'telefriends' was a kind of chat, another chat room like feature that you called without never knowing who would be on the other side of the line. Then you talked to people you didn't even know. It was a paid and very expensive service! I remember we had a lot of fun when we called, but this happened few times, because Mari's parents' phone bill arrived, we were scolded and we never called again!

Today, looking at the situation better, I think the reprimand was more about the risk we put ourselves (two children, me six and Mari seven years old) talking to adults we didn't know. I still keep in touch with Mari to this day, but that's a story for another #!

- **Option 1:** If you want to know more stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#12**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to hear about YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#25**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 09 Looking up

One of our strategies that we used to bring people together at Esquina Democrática and then do the educational activities was as follows.

We all went to downtown Porto Alegre, we distanced ourselves from one another. One of us walked by, stopped near the corner and started looking up at one of the 20-story buildings with a worried and curious gaze. Little by little, those of us who had been walking started stopping and staring too. In less than five minutes, there was a standing crowd looking at the top of the building and you could even hear people commenting that there was someone who wanted to jump off the roof of the building.

When we noticed that the subject started to come up, we got together and got the audience's attention. We introduced ourselves as YMCA youth leaders and our purpose was to be able to socialize and carry out fun and educational games with all those present who wanted to participate.

All jokes aside, the most beautiful thing was to realize that people who passed by on the street did want to participate in fun and educational activities.

The Saturdays we went to Esquina Democrática were incredible, with plenty of memories and lessons learned. Just imagine: 12-year-old teenagers conducting fun and educational dynamics for hundreds of strangers of all ages. It was an experience that, in addition to providing me with good memories, taught me what it is and how to speak in a natural way and with results. I'm sure that all of us who participate in these moments, in addition to learning a lot, keep each image and memory with great affection in our heads and hearts!

- **Option 1:** For the day HE was in Porto Alegre handing out autographs, go to [#37](#).
- **Option 2:** If you want to hear about other YMCA's leadership stories, go to [#07](#).
- **Option 3:** If you want to know more about stories that happened at



Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#18**.

- **Option 4:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.

- **Option 5:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 10 What story are you reading?

- If you've already started reading some camp stories, go to **#07**.
- If you came to this story from high school stories and now want to know more about camp stories go to **#17**.



## # 11 Brazil's Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA)

The publication of ECA (Brazil's Statute of the Child and Adolescent) was a milestone in guaranteeing the full protection of children and adolescents who, until that time, did not have a legal system to protect them.

Unfortunately, practices that we all now know are not appropriate, such as hitting a child, were commonly used in families. Either with the excuse of being a form of "education" (which it obviously isn't) or simply as a way that adults had to act to provide discipline. Everything was seen as "normal" and "acceptable".

After the publication of ECA, we had a class explaining what it meant and what its purpose was. At first, it might seem like an ordinary high-school task, however, our class started asking the teacher a bunch of questions. Our teacher realized the apparent unjustified interest, thus, in the next class, she said we were going to hold a seminar about it. We are talking about 10 and 11 year olds.

We all sat in a circle, a classmate of mine was the mediator. The mediator was that person who wrote down who raised their hand because they wanted to speak and, as each person spoke, she pointed out who would be the next one.

I don't remember the exact words, but I do remember her introducing the topic in a gentle, peaceful, and loving way. She said that, unfortunately, cases where children and adolescents suffered aggressions at home were very common. As she spoke, some people in the class raised their hands to speak soon after that, each had their turn.

In our class, almost half of the students suffered serious physical aggression at home. Little by little, each person was talking, telling their story and sharing what they experienced. This is not a happy memory. It was very sad. We all cried a lot. From that moment on, we started to support each other in trying to ease the burden of all those who suffered from these reported abuses. I remember discussing several times whether or not we should report the aggressors.

In my class, everyone who suffered aggression decided not to report



it. Why is that? Because if the parents were arrested, who would support and care for these 10 and 11 year olds?

Although it seems that the teacher did not take the necessary steps, let's remember that the statute had just been created, and she was also not sure about how she should deal with it. One thing we have to recognize is that this humanistic and loving look from this teacher saved lives, giving strength, love and courage to many students.

- **Option 1:** If you want to know more stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#12**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to hear about YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#25**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 12 The School

Choose one of the stories you haven't read yet to find out about the facts that occurred at Colégio ACM Centro:

- **Option 1:** Have you ever stopped to think about what goes on in a 5-year-old's mind when he or she goes to school for the first time? If you want to know more about this story, go to **#02**.
- **Option 2:** First grade, now it's time for "grown up" class. If you want to know more about this story, go to **#08**.
- **Option 3:** At only 8 years old, I had my first trip, three days away from my parents, go to **#15**.
- **Option 4:** The first time someone asked to date me, go to **#34**.
- **Option 5:** After the creation of the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA), a class takes place that is much more than just a class. If you want to know more about this story, go to **#11**.
- **Option 6:** In addition to the content we learned, what's left? If you want to know this story of an oral Geography exam and the legacy it left, go to **#39**.
- **Option 7:** After a thousand years, technology helps us to meet again and new generations arrive. If you want to know more about this story, go to **#20**.
- **Option 8:** On the rise, the WhatsApp group averages 1,327 messages every 24 hours. Go to **#19**.
- **Option 9:** Time passes by, but some things never change. 6 years went by... If you want to know more about this story, go to **#38**.



## # 13 Exchange Program to Uruguay

We are in 1993, I was taking the pre-leadership course when a wonderful opportunity came by: an exchange program with ACJ - Asociación Cristiana de Jóvenes, in Montevideo, Uruguay. The exchange program would be for the people who played volleyball and for the leadership participants. The objective was for the volleyball teams to play a championship and for us, in the leadership team, to be able to exchange experiences with the leadership group from Uruguay.

I, obviously, wanted to go! However, it was impossible. The cost to go was US\$ 100.00 (dollars). The trip would be by bus and we would stay in the houses of Uruguayan YMCA members. But unfortunately, even though my parents really wanted to help me, it was impossible, as we didn't have all that money.

It was very sad, but then YMCA did something that was my way out! The school created a raffle for a Barsa Encyclopedia (which was very expensive at the time), each issue cost CR\$ 100.00 (100 Brazilian Cruzeiros, the currency back then) and, if I managed to sell 100 tickets, I would gather US\$ 100.00 dollars to pay for my trip.

I took the raffle booklet and started selling tickets right away. I remember walking from YMCA, going along Ave. Borges de Medeiros up to the Downtown area, entering every cafeteria, restaurant, shoe store, record store, and the like. I went into ALL the little stores under the Borges viaduct and talked about the volunteer work we did for the local YMCA, that I was part of the pre-leadership course, that I really wanted to go on this exchange program, but I couldn't afford it and I offered the raffle ticket for people to buy, earn the chance of winning a Barsa encyclopedia (famous in Brazil and later translated into Spanish), which was wonderful, and that would help me pay for the trip.

I remember it was difficult to sell everything. I was embarrassed to go in and talk to strangers, but I decided that I would go to all the stores, without skipping any, and tell them about my story. It wasn't easy in the first ones, but I overcame the shyness and didn't give up, until I managed to sell all the tickets and reached the necessary amount to be able to go on



the trip. I also remember asking my mom to buy at least one raffle 'number' because, who knows, we might be lucky enough to win the encyclopedia which was amazing and we weren't able to get afford it at that time.

I'm glad she bought this ticket because, even though I wasn't lucky enough to win the Barsa books, it allowed me to still have the little paper slip with my raffle number today. It's a very fond memory and one that I see today as a huge influence in my life.

Do you wanna know a little "secret"? I have a book called "The Dancing Flower - A Child's Financial Planning Story." In this book I tell the true story that my sister went through when she was six years old and managed to save money to buy flowers (a sunflower with a guitar and sunglasses) that danced when we whistled. However, there is a part of the story that didn't happen with Dani: when she walks through the club and talks to all the people telling them about the dream she has and leaves a flower with each person. This part I wrote remembering when I walked into each store and talked to each person telling them about my dream and that I needed to sell that raffle booklet - if I really wanted to travel abroad.

This is the story of my first international trip. The exchange program was wonderful, I learned a lot, I got to know another culture, as well as other people in the YMCA leadership initiative. This story taught me that we can achieve things, even if it seems impossible. We just need to think about how we can do it and not be afraid to get the job done!

- **Option 1:** If you want to learn about other YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to hear about YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#07**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to know more about stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#18**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 14 Summarizing it all

Plenty of stories to tell!!!

Some are fun, others are happy, but you will see many stories of all kinds about responsibility, transformation, sadness, violence, but they all have something in common:

How YMCA and being part of it impacted people's lives in these stories.

Choose what kind of stories you want to know more about:

- **Option 1:** School Stories - go to **#18**.
- **Option 2:** Camp Stories - go to **#17**.
- **Option 3:** Leadership Stories - go to **#25**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to go to the end of the story, go to **#04**.



## # 15 The first camp

One of the traditions of the YMCA school is the camps. All classes at the school, starting in the third year, went to camp once a year. That is, an entire class, about 20 to 30 children, between 8 and 9 years old, traveling without their parents, only with the YMCA leaders to take care of them, for three days and two nights out, in a place "somewhere in the woods". Can you imagine it?

Rincão do Coelho is located between the cities of Canela and São Francisco de Paula, in the Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul. Rincão is a beautiful place in the middle of the natural wonders of Rio Grande do Sul's mountains, featuring an araucaria forest, Morro do Eco (echo hill) and even howler monkeys (they look like little monkeys).

Nowadays, if you visit Rincão do Coelho, you'll be able to reach the cafeteria next to the huts by car, or if you take a bus, you'll only have to walk for 300 meters. You will also find masonry cabins, with electric power, bathrooms and air conditioning. Although there are already some cabins for families, they still have cabins that are more like simple lodgings with bunk beds, but with all the necessary infrastructure.

However, we are not talking about the present... It's 1989, and more than 30 years ago, things were "a little different."

In the first place, the bus did not reach the place where the cafeteria and huts were located; it stopped two kilometers before those and, although most of the children's bags were taken by car (Uncle Rubens Pacheco's baby blue Beetle - in memoriam), we still helped to carry them. Yeah folks, we helped carrying them during the WHOLE walk. Looking at it now, this may seem like it's not cool, but nothing was mandatory in this experience, even if someone didn't want to go, or if the parents wouldn't let them go, okay, it wouldn't count as absence and they would not miss any class subjects. The camp was a learning and life experience option that the YMCA offered.

But, back to the subject at hand, we arrived, carried the bags (and it was at the age of 8, after this trip, that I learned to always pack my bag without extra clothes! Hahahahah...) and then we went to the cafeteria.



In 1989, the only place in the camp that had power was the cafeteria, that is, to go to the huts, we had to use flashlights and, yes, at 8 years old, walk in the "middle of the woods", in the dark and with flashlights. Thankfully, they had the leaders to accompany us and help us overcome our fears. The cabins were also different from what they are now. Despite keeping the same "scary" names (Dungeon, Reformatory, Lonely One, The Twins, Lair and Canadian), they were made of wood, with zinc roof tiles, no roof lining, and the walls had wood-knot holes in which you could see the streets through them. Inside the cabin there was no power and no bathroom. Instead of bunk beds, they were tri-beds made of wooden slats, and the mattresses were filled with straw like material (do you know what a 'straw' mattress is? If you don't, go to [#13](#) and then come back here).

It was a new experience and, even though I was such a young child, I felt like a grown-up. I managed to walk with my flashlight at night in the dark. We walked in groups and together we learned that we didn't have to be afraid, we just had to pay attention and be careful. We slept, woke up super early, made our beds and, before breakfast, went to the flagpole point to learn how to fly the Brazilian Flag.

Among so many learning experiences, the bonds of friendship were strengthened, we learned many things and, to top it all off all, on the second night at camp, there was the bonfire of open hearts: a moment in which, around the fire, we dedicate a little leaf to the people we love - which is the symbol of the friendship and affection we have. Some people give the leaf to their best friends, others take it home to give it to a relative, others throw it on the fire, either to perpetuate that feeling or to reach those people who are no longer with us. At the end of the bonfire, we sang a song that I make a point to register here:

*"Friendship is like a beautiful flower that will never die.  
And always fresh, it will bloom,  
in our hearts.*

*Let us sing today to friendship  
let's sing fervently.  
That the gale*



*may not destroy  
such a noble and beautiful flower.*

*And the old times  
that passed by,  
fill us with nostalgia.  
And shall we never forget about our old friendships.*

*It's no more than a see you later  
It's no more than a brief goodbye  
Soon enough, by the fire  
we shall see each other again.*

*With our hands intertwined,  
sitting by the warmth from the fire,  
let us make tonight  
a circle of love.*

**Chorus**

*And our Lord  
may protect us  
and bless us  
and one day shall certainly  
bring us together again.*

**Chorus**

*Hummmmm, Hummmmm Hummmmm..."*

At this point, the handshake is shared with everyone having their arms crossed and holding hands.

Living this experience is indescribable, but everyone who is a YMCA member or has been to a campfire, knows what it means. And I dare say that, possibly, whoever read this song by singing it had tears in their eyes like the ones I have now.

This was the first camp I went to...

And who were the leaders there at the time? Ahhhhhh... have you ever heard of any of them? hahahaha

Caporal, Merissa and Moreno!!!



Dear leaders, know that you have positively influenced my life (and certainly that of many others). What is learned and lived at camp cannot be experienced anywhere else! Thank you so very much!

- **Option 1:** If you want to know more stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#12**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to hear about YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#25**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 16 A mini curriculum

One of the things I learned at YMCA is that we can always learn, and the more we live different experiences and reflect on them, the more we grow. Even when some things may seem disconnected, if we have the attention to observe and reflect on them, we can truly learn and build up a lot of knowledge!

I start with this premise, as my professional and academic life is quite eclectic. I studied at YMCA for 11 years, graduated as a Business Administration major at Unisinos (University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos) and, after that, I never stopped studying.

I got an MBA in Project Management at Fundação Getúlio Vargas, another MBA in Business Management and Business Intuition - which took place, partially, in Italy - and an MBA in Knowledge Management and the Ontopsychological Paradigm, at Antônio Meneghetti Faculdade. I specialized in Clinical Neuroscience at Unyleya and also specialized in Psychology at the State University of St. Petersburg, in Russia. And, currently, I'm almost finishing the specialization in Neuroeducation at Estácio de Sá University.

Yeah, people, studying has become something amazing to me, and a lot of it came from YMCA. The curiosity to know things more and more deeply so that I can, from that, do good deeds and improve people's lives. These are the YMCA values that I learned and continue to guide me to this day.

I had a career in the banking area for 14 years and, today, I have owned my company called Intus Forma for 13 years.

Intus - from Latin, internal, interior, inside.

Forma - from Latin, that which specifies each being, individual or thing, the design, the unique expression of each individuation.

I chose this name because I learned, from an early age, in the YMCA Leadership that each one of us is unique and that respecting and listening to what each person is makes life better. All I wanted with my company was to be able to take things that I thought were very important and turn it into a job.

I wanted to help people improve their lives by changing their habits and for that, during my specialization in Russia, I started to research and try



to understand a fact that happened when I was a leader at YMCA.

Whenever we returned from the camps, the children's mothers and fathers would tell me: "Aunt Ana, so and so came back completely different from camp, they came back helping me with stuff, doing chores, brushing their teeth, etc."

They were varied things, but they always came back different. So I immersed myself in scientific research to understand what I was doing in the camps that brought about this change in children.

The result of more than eight years of study, research, testing and scientific validation was the creation of Método Lúdico-Vivencial de Formação de Hábitos - LVFH (Playful-Experiential Method of Habit Formation), which is now scientifically recognized and has more than 100,000 people impacted as a result of the registered changing of habits.

And it was at the camps that I discovered the spark of what is now my motivation for everything I do! It was after these studies, investigating and identifying every physical, neuronal, psychic, emotional, cultural (among others) detail that impact the construction of our habits that I started writing my findings.

These days, I use the method to create every work and project, whether it's a business training development, a lecture, or a book!

Or do you think it is by chance that this book is structured this way?

With #s instead of chapters?

This is the result of the LVFH method, which made me a member of Academia de Letras, Artes e Cultura do Brasil and which, in addition to being the result of years of research, is the fruit of my YMCA days, as it was there in the camps that - even without knowing about it yet - it all started out.

- **Option 1:** If you want to know more about how my life at YMCA impacted my nomination to Academia de Letras Artes e Cultura do Brasil, go to **#40**.
- **Option 2:** If you wish to know more about YMCA leadership, go to **#25**.
- **Option 3:** To learn more about Camp Stories, go to **#17**.



## # 17 Camp Stories

There are two themes that I need to control myself to write about, because when it comes to leadership or camps, I believe the best option would be to set up camp somewhere, gather around the fire and tell these stories right there. And even so, I still think that three days and two nights wouldn't be enough to tell you all the stories that only I can remember. Even though it is an almost impossible mission, I will try to separate some stories that happened in camps, but I will also include here stories about exchange programs with YMCA from other places or countries.

- **Option 1:** The first Camp with 8 years old in 1989. In order to read this story, go to **#15**.
- **Option 2:** The exchange program with the YMCA from Uruguay, an odyssey of commitment to overcome crisis and its impact on my financial education. Go to **#13**.
- **Option 3:** The great expectation: leading a camp for the first time. To read this story, go to **#28**.
- **Option 4:** In addition to the camps, cantonments were also carried out, such as the first aid cantonment. To read this story, go to **#33**.
- **Option 5:** When I led the Planfor-RS camp, Projeto Pescar, it was one of the most difficult decisions I saw a group having to make. Go to **#24**.
- **Option 6:** If you want to see other YMCA story options, go to **#14**.

\* Reference for people who watched television in the early 90's - Quote from the Castelo Rá-Tim-Bum children's TV program. To watch it on Youtube, the reference is <https://youtu.be/1OiiSvjO4Fg>



## # 18 The YMCA School

Among the various experiences that YMCA provides for us, one of them is the School. For me, this was the gateway to this world. We all go through schools and, for some people, this experience was more important, for others not so much, but I can say that having studied at the YMCA was, for me, fundamental to my training, not only in studies, but, mainly, in life. There are places that shape us and leave a legacy that makes us who we truly are. YMCA and Rincão do Coelho (where the camps took place) are those places that made me who I am today.

Among the stories from school, I'll bring some of mine and others from my classmates. Just choose one and have fun!

- **Option 1:** If you want to hear about childhood stories, go to **#36**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to hear about pre-teen stories, go to **#29**.
- **Option 3:** The bonds of friendship remain. If you want current stories, go to **#32**.



## # 19 Lots of talk to catch up on

After the reunion churrasco (typical Southern Brazilian barbecue), the messages intensified. We looked like a classroom again, but this time through the WhatsApp group. A thousand conversations happening at the same time, someone always getting involved in other people's conversations, Lilian singing, Sid with his sharp sense of humor, Luciano mediating bullcrap (or encouraging it, hahahahah), Elcio saying that wolves don't wear collars, Ewerton being the usual smart pants, and so on!

There came a time when, from Sunday night until I woke up on Monday morning, there were 1,327 unread messages! Whoever woke up and saw the group first (usually me, Kellyzinha, Paty or Lilian) would send a summary of the previous day on topics of the main points discussed.

Among the many subjects, it is clear that the love letters and the memories "from who loved whom" came to light, the group changed its name to "Secret Truths" and, among many laughs, lots of memories that we treasure with love and a lot of respect, we shared these "secrets".

The bonds of fellowship, respect, and affection that we've created at YMCA so long ago became even more evident as we got to know who those "children" had become.

I really wanted to talk about the most delicate moments we lived together in this group. Moments in which this group was the support and the base that helped us overcome very sad and extreme situations. Several episodes have taken place over the six years of the group's existence, and I know that each one of us, who is part of this group, which is a small piece of the YMCA universe, knows the moments when we were the force that someone from group needed and when it was we who were strengthened with this group.

This is the YMCA spirit that has been present since the Paris Basis Declaration of 1855, and continues to be present in this group as well as in the 1998 Declaration that says the following:

"The YMCA is a world-wide Christian, ecumenical, voluntary movement for women and men with special emphasis on and the genuine involvement of young people and that it seeks to share the Christian ideal of



building a human community of justice with love, peace and reconciliation for the fullness of life for all creation.” (available at <https://www.acm-rs.com.br/atividade/filosofia-acemista/>)

- **Option 1:** If you want to know more stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre’s YMCA school), go to **#12**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to hear about YMCA’s leadership stories, go to **#25**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 20 The Reencounter

When the school term ends, we start working, go to college, some move to another city, others get married, and so on. The undeniable fact is that each of these friends, who lived as a huge group on a daily basis, began to build their own lives and, many times, we ended up distancing ourselves from people we were very fond of. This separation doesn't mean that we like it one another less than before, it just demonstrates that, for some reason in life, we needed to go different ways. And it's all good! Twenty years after high school, curiously I see a post on Facebook inviting people to leave their phone number to be included in the YMCA group. Of course, I went ahead and sent my phone number.

Upon entering the group, I realized that we were in almost 60 people. Not all of them had been my classmates. This is because, normally, there were three classes for each school year and, often, whoever was from class A, in a given year, ended up going to class B, in the following year. Even though there were some people who weren't directly my peers, we all knew each other.

Along with the euphoria of rediscovering these old friendships, we decided to have a reunion churrasco. We rented a place, spent the day there, had fun, laughed and met the new generations! Beautiful and amazing children, daughters and sons of our classmates! Here's an honorable mention for Lulu, Sid and Helen's daughter. If you haven't heard any story with the dear Sidnei Bendheim Correa (Sid!), chances are you'll still read about him in this book, hahahahah. Lulu was only 27 days old and has already attended the YMCA churrasco, spent the whole day there and must have had fun, because there was no crying or complaint from this lovely newborn. In addition to all those sweeties that were already there in this first churrasco, our group has already grown a lot! And plenty of things have already happened! Babies were born, friendships became close again, jobs, businesses and partnerships emerged, marriages started, others ended, some went back together, etc.

From this reunion churrasco and from so many other meetings we had, we realized that even nowadays the lives of most of us continue



to have YMCA values present in our daily lives. Whether we talk about personal relationships, professional ones, how we raise our children, or how we always strive and seek ways to collaborate with a more egalitarian society, with respect and love.

- **Option 1:** If you want to know more stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#12**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to hear about YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#25**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 21 1993 Pre-leadership test

During the pre-leadership course and in the years that followed, we faced many challenges. There were some fun situations, about friendship and companionship; others difficult and sad. Regardless of what happened, it was curious how those teenagers, aged around 12 and then 13, 14 and 15 years old, built a strong base in this group to overcome various pains based on their dedication to always doing good and helping others. Whether we are talking about people in vulnerable situations or even considering our own weaknesses.

We support people who needed our volunteer work and we supported each other in several moments. We faced together cases of domestic violence, abuse, family situations with cases of alcoholism and drugs, but we supported and helped one another. One of our colleagues from the pre-leadership course, Oscar Barbosa, had an accident and spent the entire year of the course with both legs in a cast, but even so, having two legs like that did not stop him from completing the entire course, participating in the cantonments and even going to Esquina Democrática with us. We really helped each other.

I remember as if it were a day when Marcelo and I were at Oscar's house to work on an assignment on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the 1990s, there was a great movement where several countries reaffirmed or adhered to the declaration created in 1948.

I remember that this was one of the works that we needed to hand in order to complete the course, and at a time when Google wasn't an option and we didn't even have access to the internet.

Only the books of Oscar's father helped us find the answers we needed. He was a lawyer and a year or two after that he passed away. I don't remember the date exactly, but I remember how much it shook us all. I had even been Oscar's neighbor years before the pre-leadership course. I remember them coming over to our house (two floors apart) for dinner, studying YMCA history, doing leadership tasks, and teaching my three-year-old brother to play chess (and, yes, he learned at three).

But, back to the story of the leadership test. This experience that I will



tell you about was lived by me and individually by all of those who were in the course that year. It was an oral and individual test, where only one of us entered the room in the children's department, closed the door and nobody knew what was going on inside. We just knew that there were several important people from YMCA in there.

To make things easier... If you are curious to know in detail what this "bizarre" pre-leadership test was like, go to **#22** and then re-read the text from the next paragraph on. Otherwise, you can continue reading the story as follows.

I make a point of paying homage to that beautiful pre-leadership group that made history. All leadership classes do it, but I can talk about what I saw, lived and felt, back then. Thank you, my YMCA friends and leaders who were also part of my family!

- **Option 1:** If you are curious to know in detail what this "bizarre" pre-leadership test was like, go to **#22**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to hear about other YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#25**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to know more about stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#18**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
- **Option 5:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 22 Pre-leadership test

The test lasted an entire morning. We arrived at YMCA around 8:30 am on Saturday and the doors to the juvenile department were closed. We waited nervously, sitting on the blue bench in front of the old gym that is now a beautifully renovated gym. Each of us who arrived there asked what was going on and why the door was closed. I remember going to the door and knocking. Solemnly, Mari - who worked in the Department of Minors - appeared, cracked the door and told us to wait, as we would be called one by one.

The side windows of both departmental rooms were also covered. It was impossible to see what was in the room. At 9 am, the door opened and Mari called one of us. I don't remember who was the first one to go in or take the test; I just know they just called us by name. The person walked in and, after what seemed like a huge amount of time, she left. She said she could not tell anything about what had happened in the classroom, otherwise she would fail the course.

I wasn't the first or second to be called, more like the third or fourth... I don't know. All I know is that, after I left the exam, I had to wait for about two hours until 12:30, when all the exams were over to find out if I had passed or not.

My name was called and they closed the door. I walked in, the department was absolutely empty and silent. I closed the door behind me and walked into the first room. At the back, there was a sliding door that delimited an auxiliary room. This door was closed and everything looked empty. I decided to head to the sliding door and see what was in the auxiliary room. When I opened the door...

- Go to **#35** to read on.



## # 23 Leadership Stories

Choose one of the Leadership stories you haven't read yet to continue this tour:

- **Option 1:** If you wish to continue reading about how YMCA leadership works, go to **#26**.
- **Option 2:** A memory that still touches my heart to this day (with a video included, hahahahah) go to **#05**.
- **Option 3:** Social Volunteer Work - An experience that I thought didn't work, but in reality it was one of the most beautiful lessons I've had in life. Go to **#27**.
- **Option 4:** How about sleeping late on Saturday morning? Of course not! Let's go to Esquina Democrática (the 'Democratic Corner', a popular street in Porto Alegre). Go to **#30**.
- **Option 5:** The Pre-Leadership Course test, the hardest one in my life to date! Go to **#21**.
- **Option 6:** If you want to see other YMCA story options, go to **#14**.



## # 24 A difficult decision

In 1998, even though I was already working and going to college, I had the opportunity to participate as leader of a YMCA camp that was part of the Planfor-RS Projeto Pescar (the Teaching How to Fish Program, to prepare the youth for the job market and for life).

This camp was held with vulnerable youth who were participating in the project. Among several dynamic activities we did, I'll tell you about two that truly moved me.

1) In that group there were young people who had already gone through many difficulties, but they were all on a journey to learn and train in order to have a better life, to work and to be able to create a future for themselves that was different from the one that was "designed" for them.

We carried out a dynamic group exercise to externalize and seek to overcome this past that left many marks and still haunted some of them. In this dynamic task, each one had a deflated balloon and, in turn, when they felt comfortable, they would start to inflate the balloon. Every time they blew the balloon up, they would tell what was the situation or feeling they wanted to put in that balloon, which would then be popped to put an end to these feelings. It was a very deep dynamic activity; some young people had already been involved in trafficking, others had already seen deaths, and the rest had already suffered all kinds of abuse and violence. I believe the exercise lasted almost an afternoon and it was very liberating. I know that a dynamic activity like this does not eliminate the scars and doesn't change reality, but I also know that, after we finished, the eyes of those young people were different and that they were totally and completely certain that their future would not be defined by the past they lived.

2) After this balloon therapeutic exercise, the group should make a decision: they had collected a lot of donation food. All the food was gathered in the middle of the circle where we were; there was a lot of it. The group should decide whether to share the food among themselves or to donate it to an institution.

For us, who are blessed to have food at home, this may seem like an easy decision, but imagine what it means for someone who doesn't have



food at home, for someone who has already stolen to be able to eat. It was a long conversation among the group. We leaders do not influence anything, we just follow along. It was the hardest decision I've seen a group make. After much talking about their situations, they concluded that:

"Now that our future will be different and that we will know what to do for work and to earn money, we can manage in a week, at most, to start earning something to buy food. So, let's donate this food to the daycare center in our community, because our siblings, who go to school there, with the main purpose to be able to eat, will be fed properly."

After this camp, they finished the course and continued working. I've had many exciting and fun camps, but this one, without a doubt, was one of the most memorable for me.

Choose one of the options to continue reading:

- **Option 1:** If you want to learn about other YMCA camp stories, go to **#31**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to know more about stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#18**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to hear about YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#25**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 25 Leadership Stories

Oh My... I'm even afraid to start writing about leadership. We always have decisive moments in our lives, those that keep on influencing our existence for good. These are pivotal moments. YMCA leadership is one of those experiences, as it is not only a course: it means to be part of the YMCA leadership is to live a unique experience.

Since I don't know if you participated in the leadership, let's start with some options:

- **Option 1:** If you wish to continue reading about how YMCA leadership works, go to **#26**.
- **Option 2:** A memory that still touches my heart to this day (with a video included, hahahahah) go to **#05**.
- **Option 3:** Social Volunteer Work - An experience that I thought didn't work, but in reality it was one of the most beautiful lessons I've had in life, to know more about it go to **#27**.
- **Option 4:** How about sleeping late on Saturday morning? Of course not! Let's go to Esquina Democrática (the 'Democratic Corner', a popular street in Porto Alegre). Go to **#30**.
- **Option 5:** The Pre-Leadership Course test, the hardest one in my life to date! Go to **#21**.
- **Option 6:** If you want to see other YMCA story options, go to **#14**.



## # 26 Opening class

The YMCA leadership has always been formed by people who strive to build a human community of justice with love, peace and reconciliation with fullness for life and for all creation.

What I mean is: once you are a YMCA leader, wherever you are, these principles stay with you!

At that time, in the 90s, the course began with an inaugural class that had the presence of the most important people of the YMCA. Our class was held in the YMCA's main hall, on May 13th, 1993, at 6:30 pm, where, after the opening and devotional (a song that still moves me to this day, so much that I couldn't stop recording and posting this moment on social media), we heard from Mr. Leopoldo Moacir Lima, the president of that YMCA, followed by the secretary general, prof. Marco Antônio Hochscheid.

After all the formalities, Mr. Jesus Mostaceros (He was like a father to me at that time in my life), who coordinated the Leadership Course together with Michael, informed that the course would start the following weekend and that it would take place every Saturday, from 9 am to 12 pm, until the month of November.

The course had classes on YMCA history, first aid, recreation, psychology, how to speak in public, human rights, among several other subjects.

The inaugural class was concluded by the lecturer and YMCA member Zolair Trindade de Oliveira with the theme "Leadership and Voluntary Work in the Community and in the YMCA".

There are many lessons and this was just the first step in this incredible experience that was the YMCA Leadership.

- **Option 1:** If you want to learn more about the devotional music and watch the video, go to **#05**.
- **Option 2:** Social Volunteer Work - An experience that I thought didn't work, but in reality it was one of the most beautiful lessons I've had in life. Go to **#27**.
- **Option 3:** How about sleeping late on Saturday morning? Of course not!



Let's go to Esquina Democrática (the 'Democratic Corner', a popular street in Porto Alegre). Go to **#30**.

- **Option 4:** The Pre-Leadership Course test, the hardest one in my life to date! Go to **#21**.

- **Option 5:** If you want to see other YMCA story options, go to **#14**.



## # 27 FADERS

During the pre-leadership period, we had many classes that prepared us for volunteering, there were various types of performances, with children with hearing and physical disabilities, and one of the opportunities that arose was to work, one afternoon a week, in an institution that was called FADERS - Foundation for Articulation and Development of Public Policies for People with Disabilities and High Skills in Rio Grande do Sul. FADERS was a school on the outskirts of Porto Alegre, where several autistic children, some with Down syndrome and other types of particularities, studied at. This voluntary work started in 1993, and we continued to work there until 1995.

Several pre-leaders passed through this experience, but there were three of us who started and followed through continuously for two years. Every week, Ana Fontoura, Marcelo Guerguen and I took the bus, went to FADERS and held educational activities with the children, between the ages of 4 and 12 years old. But here I want to tell you about our first activity at FADERS.

We got together the week before and prepared the schedule for the entire afternoon, with games that entertained and developed various abilities, such as socialization skills, motor coordination, balance and imagination. The schedule was beautiful, balanced and everything indicated that it would be a success. We prepared the necessary materials to take to school and, the following week, we went to the place.

When we arrived, the teachers welcomed us with a lot of affection and great joy. The children were brought in and we started doing the activities. I clearly remember that, in one of the activities, we separated the children in lines and they were supposed to walk or run to the end of the room, choose a figure they liked and come back. After that, they would use those images to compose a drawing they would make. It was a simple activity, but when it started, some children ran, picked up the figure and didn't go back to the line; they went straight to sit down to draw their picture.

We, who were used to a certain kind of dynamic, started to feel that something wasn't working, that we weren't able to accomplish what we planned. There was a girl about five years old who the teachers had



warned us that she could get angry or violent and if that happened they would help us. The fact is that the afternoon played out very different from what we had envisioned, but we sat down with the children, drawing and talking to them. Later in the afternoon (after about three and a half hours), the children showered us with kisses and hugs and went back to their classrooms.

We knew the kids liked it, but the feeling of frustration was enormous because we weren't able to do what we had planned out. After releasing the children, the teachers came to talk to us and congratulated us on the success of the activity. I remember the dialogue as if it were today:

– What a wonderful afternoon!!! The children loved it, we must congratulate you! They want you to come back, we hope you enjoyed it too! Said one of the teachers.

Ana, Marcelo and I looked at each other and told them that we were a little sad for not having managed to do our job well, because things hadn't turned out as we imagined. And that's when I learned (and I'm sure Marcelo and Ana did too) a great lesson.

The teacher said it was a success, because these children have their time and their way of doing things, that the most important thing is that we enter the world of children with love and care and without feeling sorry for them or treating them in a different way. We had respected each one's time and managed to work out our goals, which were socialization skills, motor coordination, balance and imagination.

This statement from the teacher really moved us, we learned A LOT from this experience. Each person, each human being is unique and we do not need everything to happen same way we planned for results to be achieved. After that day, there were two more years in which we went to FADERS every week, with great joy, and the children were waiting for us and celebrating when we arrived! Oh, and what about that five-year-old girl? She was autistic and, from day one, she was super-friends with me; she was by my side all the time and, after a few months, even though she was a good friend of mine and would not let go of me, she started to get really close and play with several other friends from school.

Even though this happened when I was a pre-leader YMCA teenager, I have this experience as one of the success stories in my professional life, as



it gave me the basis to know how to deal with other infinite future situations.

- **Option 1:** If you want to hear about other YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#07**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to know more about stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#18**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 28 Leading the first camp

In 1994, I was 13 years old. I was already a graduated pre-leader (wow! super grown-up, hahahaha). But joking aside, that meant a lot. We had many responsibilities within the leadership. Every week there were face-to-face work at FADERS with children with Down's Syndrome, autistic children, etc. We had work in highly vulnerable communities, with underprivileged children, with children incarcerated in institutions that housed minors who broke the law, others with cancer, some with HIV; it was really a lot of activities and responsibility.

Although we always loved every performance, there was one that was the "the cherry on top of the cake" and, even if I don't like, hahahahaha, cherries, being able to lead a camp was what I and EVERYONE wanted! And, after waiting for almost a year for this, Ana Fontoura and I were invited to lead a camp for a school class that was in the fifth year of elementary school, about 30 to 35 pre-teens aged 11 (of course because... we were much older than them, noooottt, lol).

We prepared a lot, we made the schedule for the three days and two nights. In front of the YMCA, on a winter morning, at 8 am, with the bus parked, we were waiting for the group to arrive. Each student who arrived there helped to load their luggage onto the bus, checked the documentation and parental authorization, resolved doubts and, little by little, the whole class was already inside the bus talking, shouting and happy to be going to the three-day camp.

The trip was hectic and smooth at the same time, as were most trips to camp. When we arrived, Ana and I (yes, we were the two Anas) were greeted by the group that was leaving and that, in a typical game of affection and playing pranks, sang to welcome us:

"I hope it rains for three days without stopping!" I hope it rains for three days without stopping!"

It wasn't raining, but that little melody sung by the class that was leaving seemed like a prophecy. We arrived, took the children to their huts and went to talk to Rubens.

('Uncle' Rubens, whom I've known since 1989, when I went to my first camp, passed away from Covid-19, this year, in 2021. Rubens Pacheco



is certainly missed all over YMCA, as it's impossible to remember him without smiling. I haven't met any other YMCA leader, team member or secretary who was legitimately funny, silly, annoying and that everyone loved so dearly).

Well, but we arrived and Rubens would be the responsible grown-up. As we didn't have any boy leaders with us, they called a leader so that he could accompany the boys to their huts at night. After the kids got settled, when they entered the cafeteria... the rain started.

Guys, stop and think:

Two 13-year-old girls responsible for entertaining and educating 35 11-year-old pre-teens for three days and two nights in the rain! That is, without being able to do any outdoor activities! Only indoor activities and parlor games.

At these times I think how good it was to learn how to plan ahead. Ana and I had the complete street schedule, with flag hunting and lots of cool games, but we had also, as a precaution, made a schedule for rain (we didn't want our first camp to be rainy, but we'd better be prepared).

Anyway, the camp was a lot of fun, the group came back like real buddies. Three days of rain made us all so close and friendly that everything was perfect and fun. After that first experience, I had more than 136 camps. I say this because I kept track of every camp I went to on my wardrobe door, but there was a year that I went through so many that I got lost in my tracking system. Therefore, I can only say that there were more than 136. But after that first camp, many others came.

I led with many people beside me, but I must say: there are some leaders who knew me by just exchanging glances, as if it were some sort of transmission of thoughts. Without anyone saying a thing, we knew when it was time for one to speak, for the other to start a new game. Ana Fontoura Pereira, Sidnei Correa and Marcelo Guerguen, with you in my team, we could have a class of 100 children and be blindfolded, because I'm sure everything would be under control and fun! Folks, that's what YMCA leadership is all about. It's being mates, it's trust, it's doing good, it's always trying to contribute so that people's lives are better, it's making sure you'll always have someone, another YMCA leader, who is your soul sister or brother and who will support you no matter what.



Choose one of the options to continue reading:

- **Option 1:** If you want to learn about other YMCA camp stories, go to **#31**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to know more about stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#18**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to hear about YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#25**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 29 Pre-teen school days

Pre-adolescence is such a delicate time...

For almost everything we want to do, we are still considered as children. However, for all responsibilities we are old enough. It's a time of change, everything starts to have a different color, flavor and perception. Some moments are good, others not so much. But one thing is certain: we take with us many memories and lessons learned from that time when everything was new. Choose one of the pre-teen stories.

- **Option 1:** The first time someone asked to date me, go to [#34](#).
- **Option 2:** After the creation of the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA), a class takes place that is much more than just a class. If you want to know more about this story, go to [#11](#).
- **Option 3:** In addition to the content we learned, what's left? If you want to know this story of an oral Geography exam and the legacy it left, go to [#39](#).
- **Option 4:** If you want to see other options of YMCA story options, go to [#14](#).



## # 30 Esquina Democrática

During the pre-leadership and leadership period, we performed a lot of activities. Activities with vulnerable children at the Cancer Institute, at the institution that took care of children with HIV, etc. Among so many amazing activities, there was one that was monthly. Every first Saturday of every month, our group of pre-leaders, instead of attending the class, went to Esquina Democrática, one of the main corners of the city of Porto Alegre, located in the historic center: a boardwalk where thousands of people pass by every day.

So... we would go to this corner, do an activity to attract the public's attention, and then we would start doing other actions aimed at children, young people and adults who passed by on the street and wanted to participate. They were always fun activities, but had an educational scope. The dynamics of the tasks varied between songs and games.

It was crazy, because we were part of a group that was, on average, 12 years old (of course we were always accompanied by Jesus Mostaceros and other leaders). I remember two memorable Saturdays.

But... would you like to read about them?

Choose one of these iconic cases to read more about them, or move on to other stories:

- **Option 1:** For the day HE was in Porto Alegre handing out autographs, go to **#37**.
- **Option 2:** The day Esquina Democrática stopped and everyone was looking up at a building, go to **#09**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to hear about other YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#07**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to know more about stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#18**.
- **Option 5:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
- **Option 6:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 31 Camp Stories

Choose one of the stories you haven't read yet:

- **Option 1:** The first Camp with 8 years old in 1989. In order to read this story, go to **#15**.
- **Option 2:** The exchange program with the YMCA from Uruguay, an odyssey of commitment to overcome crisis and its impact on my financial education, go to **#13**.
- **Option 3:** The great expectation:leading a camp for the first time. To read this story, go to **#28**.
- **Option 4:** In addition to the camps, cantonments were also held. In order to read the story of the first-aid cantonment, go to **#33**.
- **Option 5:** When I led the Planfor-RS camp, Projeto Pescar, it was one of the most difficult decisions I saw a group having to make. Go to **#24**.
- **Option 6:** If you want to see other options of YMCA story options, go to **#14**.



## # 32 Classmates after 25 years

After studying at the YMCA school in Porto Alegre for so many years, I had lived many unique experiences. It is clear that every school has the obligation to teach students different contents and subjects that are necessary and important for life. However, in my perception, one of the most striking features of YMCA is the way in which school education transcends the formal character of the curriculum content. As you read the stories in this book, you will witness several situations that can leave you feeling like:but that could have happened in any school and with any child. And yes, you are right. Everything I report in this book could have happened at any school.

So, why is it important to talk about these stories?

It is important because they are an example of what it is like to live the YMCA spirit, of how situations, apparently common, built a solid foundation. In these stories you will see how today these experiences still resonate and make results in my daily life and that of many YMCA members.

Time passes by and we often drift away from the people we've been friends with for so long, but some really interesting things end up taking place. Sometimes we reencounter old friends by chance; in other cases, technology helps us with that. This is our case! Almost 30 years after school, we met again and it's been over five years since we've been together once more! If you want to know more about some current stories that were born at YMCA, in its school, just choose one and enjoy it!

- **Option 1:** After a thousand years, technology helps us to meet again and new generations arrive. If you want to know more about this story, go to **#20**.
- **Option 2:** On the rise, the WhatsApp group averages 1,327 messages every 24 hours. Go to **#19**.
- **Option 3:** Time passes by, but some things never change. 6 years went by...If you want to know more about this story, go to **#38**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to see other options of YMCA story options, go to **#14**.



## # 33 First Aid Cantonment

In addition to the camps, we did another type of activity that was called cantonment. The cantonments took place at the YMCA itself; they were activities that usually started on Saturday afternoon, we took sleeping bags, slept in the gymnasium or in the exercise room, and left on Sunday before noon. There were cantonments of various types, usually starting with recreational-educational activities and then going to the pool and some even had a party (very much like a night club outing) where, in a safe place and without any alcoholic beverages, we could have fun, dance and hang out until we were tired and, in the end, snooze in our sleeping bags, lol.

In this story, I'll tell you about one of the cantonments of the leadership group. During the leadership course, in 1995, after attending first aid classes, we had the cantonment with a practical test that would define whether or not we were approved in this subject.

We arrived, we had several practical tests - ranging from how to act in situations of accidents, cardiac arrest, open fractures or not, to poisoning, snake bites, cuts, hemorrhages, epileptic attacks, among several other life-threatening situations. Before dinner, we also had a practical test on rescue in case of drowning. In pairs, one of us would fake a dive (in the YMCA pool, which at that time was 2.4 meters deep) and the other in the pair would have to jump into the water, reach the one underwater, and rescue this person in the appropriate way, according to what we were taught.

It was a tough test in terms of physical endurance, as it was not enough to know exactly how to hold someone who is "inert and drowned"; you also had to be able to get back to the edge of the pool and get the person out of the water by yourself. Fortunately, we all passed. After this test, we just wanted to eat and sleep. And that's what we did.

I remember that, in the middle of the night, they woke me up in a hurry saying:

- Ana, Jesus (last name Mostaceros) has a hemorrhage! Hurry up, your help is needed!

I jumped out of my sleeping bag, ran, and when I got to the children's department, Jesus was sitting in a chair with his head thrown back, with



a red dot between his eyebrows indicating where the bleeding would be. Quickly, I started to act appropriately to stop the “bleeding”. Even though I already knew, at that moment, that it wasn’t a real situation, I acted as if it were. And, after making the needed decisions and following all the steps of what should be done after stopping the bleeding, I was told to go back to sleep.

The next day I learned that this was indeed the test of the cantonment and that all the leaders, at some point in the night, were woken up in the same way and had to face different situations.

Of course, having learned first aid does not qualify me to perform a rescue. However, I have already gone through situations in my life, such as an accident, in which having this knowledge was decisive in protecting life and enabling the possibility of a rescue. This is something that is worth a lot!

Choose one of the options to continue reading:

- **Option 1:** If you want to learn about other YMCA camp stories, go to **#31**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to know more about stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre’s YMCA school), go to **#18**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to hear about YMCA’s leadership stories, go to **#25**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 34 Childhood love interests

This is a story from when I was 10 years old. It all started at that year's class camp. I had a friend named Carol, and one day we went to camp and sat side by side on the bus seat during the trip. We arrived, played several games and, on the second day, the leaders took us to a beautiful place, a river that is close to the camp. It was a walk that seemed endless (ok, now I know it's not that far, but at that age it felt like it) and, on the way back from the tour, the whole class saw something amazing! Dayse and Gustavo were walking hand in hand! HOLDING HANDS!!! They were dating!!!! Amidst the frisson of this event, a classmate of mine, Gabriel, came over to talk to me:

– Ana, I like Carol and I wanted to date her, but she doesn't want to date me.

Really, Carol liked (in the way children like) another friend, and I told him that. But he begged me for help and asked me to help him by pretending I was dating him so Carol would be jealous. Not really knowing what to do or how to act, we went to talk to the "coolest and most experienced" ones (I can't take say this without laughing non-stop, hahahahah). We walked to the side to get closer to Gustavo and Dayse. We told the whole story and they agreed that it could be a good strategy and they taught us that we always needed to sit next to each other and walk hand in hand.

We put the strategy into action for the rest of the camp and, on the bus, we even sat side by side. But it didn't work out. Carol still did not want to have anything to do with him. Then, on the way back, he gave up and said he didn't like her anymore, thanked me so much for being so nice to help him, and everything was fine.

We returned to Porto Alegre and classes continued as usual.

About a month after camp, Gabriel came to talk to me again:

– Ana, you know what?! I don't like Carol anymore. I found out that I like you. Would like to date me?

I panicked. I was only 10 years old. I wasn't even sure what to think or feel about that. I replied asking for some time to think about it. It was a Friday, so I had the entire weekend to decide.



I spent the entire weekend thinking about it, but decided I was too young to date. On Monday, at recess, he came to talk to me and asked if I had thought about it, and the “super mature” dialogue followed:

– Gabriel, I thought about it carefully. I think I like you (obviously I didn’t know for sure, but I was shaken by it), but we’re too young to date.

– But Ana, we are the same age.

– I know, Gabriel, but we’re only 10 years old!

– But I’m older now! Next month I’ll be 11! That surely means we can date!

To make a long story short:

1. I stood my ground and we didn’t date back then.

2. I started to like him after that and continued being fond of him for another two years without dating the boy.

3. I learned that feeling jealous doesn’t make sense and that this is a strategy that doesn’t work! Hahahahaha (P.S.: is it because of this experience that I still think that way? #MnesicTrace #WhoeverReadTheOtherStoryShallUnderstand

• **Option 1:** If you want to know more stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre’s YMCA school), go to **#12**.

• **Option 2:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.

• **Option 3:** If you want to hear about YMCA’s leadership stories, go to **#25**.

• **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 35 The 1993 leadership test dilemma

When I opened the sliding door a screaming sound started!

There were about 7 to 10 adults in that room, but everyone was acting like they were small children, fighting over toys, throwing themselves on the floor, one crying sitting in the corner of the room, others running and screaming. There were chairs scattered everywhere. Let's face it, they weren't just any adults... They were people from the YMCA team, the administrative staff! There were important people there... fighting and crying sitting on the floor or under a chair. I don't remember them all, but I remember Jesus Mostaceros, Maurício, Cláudio, Léo, Nara, Francisco Guerguen (who is Marcelo's father, my friend, and was the psychologist and coordinator of SOE – School Guidance Service) and Zolair (we were afraid of him, hahahahah, I don't know why). There were other important people too, but really, right now, my memory doesn't allow me to remember all of their names.

In short, I came across a bunch of senior adults at YMCA acting like little kids. And there's only one thing worse than a small child having a tantrum or making a mess. It is an adult imitating a small child throwing a tantrum and making a mess!

The first thing I did was to call those running to help me play a SUPER cool game. I arranged the chairs in a circle, called those who were fighting and those who were crying in the corners of the room. In about 3 to 5 minutes, they were all ready for me to start explaining the game. When I started talking: Well, guys, the game we're going to play is the following.

I was interrupted and, magically, they returned to being important adults for the institution, in an almost frightening posture. They said that I had passed the first stage and that, at that moment, they would ask questions that I should answer accordingly. The hearing would begin (LITERALLY!).

They asked questions about YMCA's history, about the Paris Basis, about first aid, and then an unusual question came up.

– Do you enjoy reading? They asked me.

– Yes, I do, I replied calmly, as I really enjoyed reading and had discovered coleção vagalume (the firefly book collection, Brazilian youngster fiction



books) which led me to read about one whole book a month.

- How many books have you read this year?
- I think about 6 or 7.
- Have you read Edson Arantes do Nascimento's latest book?

I panicked again! If I said yes, I would be lying, but if I said no, it would seem like everything I said before was a lie. It was a no-win situation, any answer would be bad. After those three embarrassing seconds when all of this played out in my head, I replied:

- No.
- But do you even know which book we're talking about?
- No, I really don't know.
- OK, that's all. You can wait outside until the test result comes out.

You know you can't comment on what happened here, under penalty of failing the course, right?

- Yes, I do understand that!

I left the room scared to death! Truly wondering if I had failed or not? If I love reading so much, how come I didn't know this author and this book?

Remember, we didn't have cell phones and Google at that time to search for answers. I know that after nearly two hours and several other colleagues walking in and out of the room, the list came out. I had been approved! I celebrated a lot with my friends there on that blue bench.

After the test, when it was already possible to talk about what had happened, I found out that Edson Arantes do Nascimento was Pelé, the famous soccer player! And no, he hadn't written anything back then, he didn't have a book out yet. Thinking back today, I believe they wanted to put me in a moral dilemma to see if I would keep the ethics in the answer or, to keep up appearances, would I try to deceive them?!

There's no doubt, they certainly got me. It was the hardest test of my life. I didn't want to disappoint those people I held dear to my heart, as leadership was very important to me. But, even at the risk of disappointing them, for not being such a good reader (because I didn't know that book that, in fact, didn't even exist), I preferred to keep my answers consistent with my beliefs. Guys, I was only 12 years old! And even nowadays, at 40 years old, this was the hardest test I've ever taken in all these years.

- Go to **#21** to read on.



## # 36 School – Childhood Days

Choose one of the childhood stories you haven't read yet:

- **Option 1:** Have you ever stopped to think about what goes on in a 5-year-old's mind when he or she goes to school for the first time? If you want to know more about this story, go to **#02**.
- **Option 2:** First grade, now it's time for "grown up" class. If you want to know more about this story, go to **#08**.
- **Option 3:** At only 8 years old, I had my first trip, three days away from my parents, go to **#15**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to see other options of YMCA story options, go to **#14**.



## # 37 “His” Autograph

It was one of those special Saturdays when we would go to Esquina Democrática for conducting varied activities. On this day, we had the participation of one of the oldest leaders: we called him Moreira (Eduardo Moreira). He had some resemblance to the singer Ed Motta (actually, he wasn't that much alike, but, anyways...) He dressed in a suit, grabbed a briefcase, and started walking down Esquina Democrática. We and the others spread out so we didn't look like we were together, and suddenly someone yelled:

– Wow, he's in Porto Alegre! Please give an autograph!

Within minutes, there was a crowd of people around Moreira asking him for autographs! Hundreds of people walking down the street wanted “His” autograph.

After the general commotion, we got organized and told the crowd that this was a dynamic activity, that we were YMCA leaders and we invited everyone to participate in the educational games that we would play that day. It was beautiful! They were hundreds of people in a circle, on the busiest corner of town, playing and learning as a group. They were fathers, mothers, children, young people, the elderly, all together. I still have here, among my belongings, the relic of a piece of paper with “his” superstar autograph.

- **Option 1:** The day Esquina Democrática stopped and everyone was looking up at a building, go to **#09**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to hear about other YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#07**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to know more about stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#18**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
- **Option 5:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 38 And always fresh it will bloom

There were more than 10 years of living together during our school days, almost 20 years apart and now it's been six years since we've been close again. Are those 60 people who were in the group and at the reunion churrasco still the same that are keeping in touch now? Not all remained and some of them joined later.

The important thing is that the bonds we created as YMCA students and members remain and, today, we are 20 friends that YMCA has joined and made possible. We are friends of all walks of life who, each in their own way, are close, present and important in the lives of one another.

I take this hashtag to thank YMCA for showing us that "friendship is a beautiful flower that will never die and that will always be fresh and blooming in our hearts." Also, the Y gives us living evidence that "the old days that are gone, fill us with longing. And shall we never forget about our old friendships and that "it's no more than a see you later! It's no more than a brief goodbye. Soon enough by the fire we shall see each other again".

It is no coincidence that by the fire, at a churrasco, we meet again and continue "With our hands intertwined sitting by the warmth from the fire and so we form with this group a circle of love."

Thank you, my beloved YMCA friends, for being a part of my life and for allowing me to be a part of yours.

Current group members:

Eduardo (Alemão – a true partner to sit by the door in the classroom and look at the street, hahahahah), Cátia, Devis, Fabiano Oliveira (my brother), Luciano Ferrari (a dear friend who I have great affection for), Marcelo Guerguen and Sidnei Correa (no comments from these two, they have already appeared too much in the book, hahahahah), Pati Grison, Patrícia Paty Reis (and Betina! my dear friends and buddies, always!), Viviane Trindade Barbisan (come on, let's create something else crazy about games, augmented reality, cryptocurrencies or whatever, right?), Mariana Parahyba, Alexandre, Guga Fernandes, Élcio Machado, Ewerton Navarro, Kelly Portolan (a friend who gave me so much support and strength when I really needed it), Lilian Gutierrez (my friend, coffee and chit chat partner)



, Norton, Pablo Duranti and I, Ana Pregardier.

Now, hahahahahaha, after having cried writing this, hehehehehe, shall we go on? That's because there are still many stories for me to write and tell you all about!

- **Option 1:** If you want to know more stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre's YMCA school), go to **#12**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
- **Option 3:** If you want to hear about YMCA's leadership stories, go to **#25**.
- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 39 A good Geography lesson for life

Here I will tell you about the class and a Geography test we took with teacher Islamar. To put it in context, I start by saying that teacher Islamar (who taught me exactly 30 years ago and still teaches at YMCA today) was a lot of fun. I learned a lot in her class! We played War to learn borders, countries, continents, we drew maps, made theaters, etc.

(You know what?! Nowadays, I am a writer, educator and businesswoman. I am dedicated to the theme of training and changing habits. I have three non-negotiable values that I always stick with: Ethics, Results and Quality. There is also something that is a requirement for any product and project that I or my company carry out: IT HAS TO BE FUN!!! Looking back now, I believe that I learned a lot of that in these Geography classes with professor Islamar, at YMCA).

Well, but let's get to the case regarding the test. One day, the teacher told us that we would have an oral and individual test, in which we would have to know and say ALL of the 50 states of the United States. It was madness! How to get to memorize all of the 50 US states? I thought of a thousand ways and created a strategy: my bed was on top of the bunk, so I made posters in different colors and with the states in alphabetical order. I took these posters and glued them to the ceiling as if they were a path that I should follow, as if they were stations which, in that order, I should stop by.

I started memorizing them. I decorated the first one and then went to the right direction on the ceiling, where I had the second poster and repeated the first + the second that was on the right. When I already knew without mistakes the first two, I started to memorize the third one, which was below. It was a sequence...I recited the first, went to the right, recited the second, then went down and recited the third one.

That way, I was even able to speak the 50 states without any mistakes.

I took the test. I aced it! And it's ok, I don't remember the 50 states right now, but...

This experience taught me something that I use A LOT today, and which I now know has a technical name. This form of memorization is called the memory palace technique. It consists of building a visual and



physical path - like the corridors of a palace - where information is allocated and, thus, just follow the same “path” and you shall remember everything.

Did I know I learned this in teacher Islamar’s class? Of course not. Did having this experience and her participation in this story change my life? Totally! Think carefully. How can I remember so many details, stories and people to be able to write this book just now?

Thanks, teacher Islamar!

- **Option 1:** If you want to know more stories that happened at Colégio ACM (Porto Alegre’s YMCA school), go to **#12**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to learn about YMCA camp stories, go to **#17**.
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- **Option 4:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



## # 40 Brazilian Academy of Letters, Arts and Culture

In May 2018, I received an email from Academia de Letras Artes e Cultura do Brasil. This email communicated that I had been nominated to run for the title of Immortal Scholar and that I should send all my works for scrutiny by the reviewing committee.

I was ecstatic!

Of course, first, I went to check if that email was true, if it wasn't a scam or something like that. I was delighted to find out that everything was real! Just the fact that I was nominated was joyful and victorious! Think carefully... Few writers at the age of 37 are recognized by the Academy!

At the time, I sent my 13 published books for them to review and, obviously, I celebrated the nomination with a typical Gaucho style churrasco get together. At that moment, I wasn't thinking about whether I would be chosen or not, I was just celebrating the recognition of having been nominated.

Three months later, I received another email informing me that, after the technical review of the works, due to the literary innovation of the multiverse writing style\*, they were inviting me to assume the title of Immortal Academic member, occupying chair number 08, which has as patron the great Brazilian writer Machado de Assis. On September 20th (odd it's September 20th, don't you think? The day of Revolução Farroupilha, also called Ragamuffin War) of 2018, I was honored with receiving the title in the Legislative Assembly of São Paulo.

### **\* What is multiverse literature?**

It's this book you are reading right now! It is a type of writing developed from the scientifically recognized LVFH (ludic experiential habit formation) method. The multiverse book considers free will and the creation of parallel realities that exist from every choice we make. In this type of literature, the readers are empowered and take the reins of the story they want to read. It does not rely on luck; it is a cause-effect relationship that occurs exclusively through the choices made by the

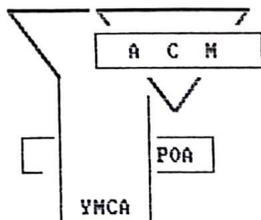


reader. Which means...It is you who have the power to choose WHAT to read and IF YOU WANT to read it.

Looking back now, more than 25 years later, I see that, in the 1990s, when I was part of the leadership program, we were already doing (unconsciously and without technical processes) this kind of multiverse story in some camp games. We created different plots and stories like that, but one of the most impressive was when we invented that Princess Diana had died in a car accident and, depending on how teams told the story and discovered facts and consequences of their actions, they reached different conclusions. (Ooohhhhhh, by the way, this was way before the real thing took place! When the accident really happened we were truly shocked!).

It's amazing how, if we know how to look at our childhood and adolescence history, we will have all the indications of what we love and what we are good at doing! At camps, I loved creating these games. The kids loved to participate! Parents loved that they always learned something good! And even if there wasn't, at that time, academic research to support these games, it was just a matter of time. That's because, today, those games can be studied through Science.

- **Option 1:** If you want to read about stories from life at YMCA, go to **#14**.
- **Option 2:** If you want to jump straight to the end of the story, look in the book and start reading at **#04**.



ASSOCIAÇÃO CRISTÃ DE MOÇOS DE PORTO ALEGRE  
DEPARTAMENTO DE MENORES E JOVENS

**FORMANDOS 1993**  
PRE-LIDERANÇA E LIDERANÇA

**CONVITE**

FORMANDOS

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Ana Paula F. Garcia  
Ana Paula Pregadier  
Bruno Miranda  
Cristiane Costa  
Diego de Souza  
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Jeferson Badaraco  
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Original Graduation invitation of the 1993 Pre-Leadership and Leadership teams. A tribute to YMCA leaders during the 120 years of history.



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