

It Randomly Occurred

BY HUGH LEE RAY SMEE

Unexpected events and luck shape all of our lives. For most of us, they play relatively minor roles: we'll find some money, slip on a patch of ice, get a snow day at school, or things like that. Take Muhammad Bukhari or Sharon Donchev, both residents of the Toronto area, for example.

5 While visiting Quebec City, Muhammad was unlucky enough to lose his wallet. When he arrived back home in Scarborough, there was a message on his answering machine. A man named Andrew, coincidentally also from the Greater Toronto Area, had found his wallet and wanted to return it to Muhammad. What luck! Sharon Donchev was just as lucky and grateful
10 when a complete stranger gave her a ticket for a floor seat at a Bon Jovi concert in Toronto. Small random acts of kindness and **strokes** of luck like these happen all the time.

Pam and David, instructors at the Art of Living in Montreal, took the idea of randomness and transformed it into a school project for 350 students
15 from L'École Val-des-Ormes. For one month, the students performed random acts of kindness and received 10-cent **pledges** for each act. By the end of the month, the kids had succeeded in raising \$1,000. In an additional stroke of good luck, Laurentian Bank and V2V Technologies were so touched and inspired by the story that each company decided to
20 **match** that amount. This brought the total amount of money raised to \$3,000, all thanks to luck, randomness and some very motivated teachers and kids. And what did they do with the money? They decided to make someone else feel extremely lucky. They wanted to buy an adapted bicycle for a student at school who'd recently had his legs amputated. The only
25 problem, though, was the \$5,000 price tag. In a final stroke of good fortune, the president of the company that makes the bicycle decided to let the bike go at **cost price**: \$3,000.

For other people, like Seguro Ndabene and Joan Ginther, luck has played a far more significant role in their lives.

30 Ndabene, of Airdrie, Alberta, won a shocking total of five large prizes in various Canadian lotteries. His total winnings were almost \$20 million, with his most recent win coming in 2009. American Joan Ginther also won several lottery grand prizes. She somehow hit four jackpots, winning just over \$20 million in various Texas lotteries. It is almost impossible, yet it

Glossary

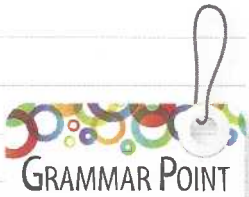
strokes:

unexpected results

pledges: promises of payment

match: make an equal contribution

cost price: the price of an item before profit



GRAMMAR POINT

Look at the sentence in

orange in the text.

What kind of sentence is it?

To learn more, see pages 234–237.

Glossary

ran into:

encountered; met

vacuum: absence of air

haystack: pile of straw or hay

bruises: black and blue marks under the skin that result from a hard hit or bump

ordeal: difficult experience

mishap: accident

tale: story

35 happened. Fortune made a huge impact in the lives of Ndabene and Ginther. In the case of Irishman Larry Moriarty, the absence of luck in the lottery affected his life.

Back in 2005, Larry **ran into** his friend Dolores McNamara outside a shop in Limerick, Ireland. The two spoke for a while, then Larry did what any
40 gentleman would do: he let Dolores go ahead of him when it came time to buy their lottery tickets. That decision cost Larry the biggest EuroMillions jackpot at the time: almost £80 million. Dolores won and Larry didn't. Seems like luck had clearly decided who to favour that day.

But there is one person who should go down in history as the unluckiest,
45 or possibly luckiest, man ever. Who is this man? Croatian music teacher Frane Selak. People who know of him scratch their heads and wonder how a series of random events and sheer luck in Selak's life actually came to be.

It all began in January 1962, when Selak was travelling on a train between Sarajevo and Dubrovnik. The train somehow jumped the tracks and fell
50 into a frigid river, and 17 people died. Selak broke his arm and suffered from hypothermia, but he survived. About a year later, Selak was on an airplane to Rijeka when another seemingly random event took place: the door to the airplane flew right off and the resulting **vacuum** sucked Selak out of the plane, sending him falling right into a **haystack**! He awoke in
55 a hospital with minor injuries, only to discover that the plane had crashed after his exit, killing 19 people. Several years later, Selak once again found himself in a life-and-death situation when the bus he was riding in fell into a river, killing four passengers. Selak received some cuts and **bruises** from the **ordeal**. Then, in 1970, Selak was driving his car when it inexplicably
60 caught fire. Another seemingly random event! Selak had just enough time to escape before the car exploded. Three years after that, another car **mishap** left Selak with no hair, but still living and grateful. As if that weren't enough, in 1995, in Zagreb, a bus hit Selak, and he once again lived to tell the **tale**. By this point, his friends had already nicknamed
65 him "Lucky." A year later, incredibly enough, the car he was driving went off a mountain road, then crashed and exploded, but not before Selak jumped out and landed safely in a tree. In a final demonstration of luck at its most extreme, Selak decided to buy a lottery ticket in 2003. This was the first lottery ticket he had bought in 40 years. It probably comes as no
70 surprise at this point that Selak won just over a million dollars.

If you ask Selak about his luck, he will admit that he's had quite a bit of it, except in his relationships. Selak has married and divorced four times.