



## **26 Cousins: Illustrated Birthday Cards & Stories of Growing Up**

*Carolyn McNellis, John Nordloh*

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# 26 Cousins: Illustrated Birthday Cards & Stories of Growing Up

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Carolyn McNellis is a Mother of 8 and a Grandmother of 26; hence the title: '26 Cousins'. Since attending the American Academy of Art in Chicago, her artistic development has been an ever-evolving process of creatively trying new methods, materials, and subject matter. And yet, as important as this process has been, her 'family first' philosophy has been the center-piece of her life and instrumental in her illustrations for this book. "It's been wonderful watching the '26 Cousins' grow over the years; each an individual and each an inspiration for over 100 personalized Birthday Cards that try to capture those unique & humorous details of growing up: Like your first 'crush' (on Damian McGinty of Celtic Thunder) or your first pair of brand new hockey skates. When you start to look at the illustrations and read the different narratives, along with the '26 Cousin Profiles', it's almost like you are 10 again, hopping on your bike & heading out to meet your friends, without a care in the world." John Nordloh has been associated with Carolyn's family for many years. Always the 'go to' guy within the family when a resume, job search, or leaking drain needs attention (right away, if you wouldn't mind). He brings a unique perspective to each of Carolyn's illustrations and, in particular, to the '26 Cousins', as adorable and exceptional as they might be, even as teenagers. "And where Grammy (Carolyn) has added her masterful touches to each of the illustrations, including handmade, specially sized envelopes, I have tried to add a little insight and background, where a simple paragraph would never be enough. Each illustration has its own narrative and all are organized into 20 different chapters from: 'Pushing the Envelope' (& sometimes the bear gets you) to 'Vacations by the Lake' (Sun, Sand, & Surf with the water-moccasins). With the exceptional '26 Cousins' (I might be stretching here), what's going on in the illustrations is usually a whirlwind of activity; where you are lucky to be able to capture a small part of it just before one of them bounds into the house and jumps down the steps looking for a little help with an art project or a bike chain. And a glass of something special Grammy just whipped-up!"

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