

# Writers, Young and Old . . .

Stories by members of:

Prince George Seniors' Writing Circles

- 1010 Liard Street Residence
- Brunswick Street Activity Centre
- Alward Street Residence

and

Fundamental Level English Students

College of New Caledonia  
Prince George

## Acknowledgments

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## Introduction

The Prince George Seniors' Writing Circles began in September 1996 as the result of a cost-shared government grant. Behind the walls of the many senior residences and activity centres in Prince George, is a wealth of untapped historical experience. This is the first time our seniors have had the opportunity to join these intellectually stimulating circles through which they have developed and used the literacy skills necessary to put their experiences on paper. We catch a glimpse of past traditions through their writings. These "youth of yesterday" have much to offer the youth of today. They transport us back in time through historical accounts and stories which speak of survival and hope, as they fought barriers establishing homes in virgin lands with little or no modern conveniences.

Modern society has seen the dissipation of the extended family. This program also has an intergenerational focus, so my Adult Basic Education students are sharing experiences, values and goals by attending plays together and sharing their writings formally at intergenerational events. The seniors are also guest speakers in my ABE class, giving first hand knowledge of past experiences, for example, one senior recounted her ex-

periences riding one of the first bombardiers (the precursor to the modern snowmobile).

It took great courage and determination for all the authors in this book to overcome feelings of "I can't write...I have nothing of importance to say". Through sharing ideas and experiences orally, these feelings changed. The writing began! It will continue!

Thank you to all our budding authors - P.G. Seniors' Writing Circles and Fundamental English Students, College of New Caledonia, Prince George, British Columbia.

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## The Day The Aeroplane Came To Our Farm

by Dave Bowman

I think from the time I first saw an aeroplane I was totally in love with them. They were rare in the 30's - maybe once a year one would come to the Vegreville Exhibition and take daring young people for rides in the open cockpit in front of the pilot. We rarely saw one other than that.

One summer day on the farm south of town, when I was about 12 years old, we kids heard an aeroplane quite close. We rushed outside, me in the lead of course. We knew we had to hurry or we'd miss it. They went so fast!

The plane was circling a small field near the house. Clara, May, Betty and I watched, fascinated. "Look!" I said. "He's gliding down. I think he's going to land!" We took off at a run, climbing through a fence to the field.

Sure enough - the plane came down to a rather bumpy landing over the gopher holes. We ran toward it, but stopped about 50 feet away out of respect, awe and a little fear of the noise and the still spinning propeller.



The pilot casually climbed out and sauntered over to us. "Where is Watt's landing field?" He asked.

I explained and pointed toward Clare Watt Senior's farm, a mile and a half away, where there was a strip. The pilot thanked me, walked back and climbed into the cockpit, revved up the motor, turned the plane, taxied to the end of the field, up a little rise, turned again,

and with full throttle lifted into the air in less than a minute.

What a thrill for us, and especially for me! Just think, an aeroplane landed in our field, and I even helped out the pilot!

Only then did we hear a plaintive cry and sob from the fence 200 yards behind us. Poor Betty, six years old, was caught in the barbed wire. She had spent the whole time trying to get untangled without tearing her clothes.

Much to our shame, we realized the excitement had been too much for us to notice we'd left our favorite little sister behind!

## The Queen of Hearts - 1996

by Adeline MacCrae



On February 14, 1996, I decided to go to the Queen of Hearts Ball at the Legion in Prince George. When my husband, Merrill MacCrae, was alive, we used to go to the Legion Ball each year as February 14 was our wedding anniversary. We had been married in 1933. Merrill had died August 11, 1990. This year, 1996, I decided to go to the ball with my friends.

The Hall was full of people. I knew a few. The place was full. The tables were all decorated, and there were white envelopes at each one's place. When all was ready and the preliminaries were done, they said now the ladies can open their envelopes and find who will be the Queen of Hearts. The lady sitting by me said, "Open your envelope". I had the Queen of Hearts! I told the lady, "You take it," but she said, "you got it," and she took my arm and held it up. I didn't want it. She had won it 2 years before me. I was in shock, I think. I didn't want to go, but they all called for me to get up, so I was escorted to the platform and seated. They put the Tiara on my head and pinned a corsage of flowers on my dress, and gave me the Queen of Hearts sash. Then they had to choose a consort for me - not having a husband. The men got the Jack of Hearts - and John Kuharchuk got the Jack. So there we sat through all the rest of the evening. There was an orchestra and dancing, and we all had a good lunch with many things to eat. Some spread! I don't dance. I told John his wife would be my substitute. After the ball, the limousine came to take us home. I sure had an armful of flowers and a potted plant, gifts and goodies and my corsage. And the ride home - 3:00 am in the morning. I get to keep the tiara and sash. What a night to remember!!

Caption - E. Shaw Hit A. Hogg  
by Ethel Pryce

Bob decided I should have my licence to drive my mother to her meetings. It wouldn't take him from his farm work, so at eighteen I took and passed my driver's test.

Before driving, I had to prove to my mother and Bob that I could crank the car, and also that I was able to change a tire. You know, use the jack etcetera.

Bob's car was a Chevrolet touring. The car that came with curtains you



snapped into place in bad weather.

Mom's Ladies' Aid ladies were practising for a play, and I drove her to the village to Mrs. Woods where they were meeting. I was to return at five o'clock to pick her up again.

At the appointed time, I drove down to get her, and I slowed up slightly as I approached the intersection which had our church on the right hand corner and a row of shrub bushes on the left. I drove out to make a left turn but didn't see the car coming from the village, and hit it, sending it in the opposite direction. Neither of us was seriously hurt.

Caption in the local paper read: "E. Shaw Hit A. Hogg". His name was Adrian Hogg. Get it!!!

## Coca-Cola

by Kathy Mercedes

One of the hardest experiences in my life was when I had to learn to speak English. When I came to Canada, I didn't speak any English, so I had to learn it in high school. My first day of school was so scary for me. It was January, 1990. White snow was all over, something I had never experienced before. The only word I knew how to say was "Coca-Cola". It was hard for everybody because the teacher and students tried to talk to me, and the only answer I would give them was the word "Coca-Cola".

## The Moose

by Annette Nadeua

My girlfriend Inga was a very outdoors woman. She liked sports, hiking, skiing and mostly hunting. She had to have her moose every year. I went hunting a few times with her and had a few experiences. But one thing I had never done was to shoot with a big gun.

One morning at about 10:00 am, we were driving along the river on the Willow River Road looking for game. All at once, we turned a corner and here was a big Bull moose, standing still, so we got out of the car. Inga said to me, "Here is your rifle, so you shoot first, and if you miss, I'll get him." Well, here I am. I've never shot a big rifle in my life, so I looked at the moose, put the gun at my shoulder, turned my head, shut my eyes and bang!! I didn't believe it. I hit him, but I shot him in the neck. Inga shot him down.

Suddenly, along came two men who said we had shot their moose. They claimed they had shot the moose before. We started to argue with them, so they said, "We'll help you dress the moose, but we want half." So

we did give them half. The aggravating part was that after a week, we heard about those two men. They didn't even have a licence! I bet they were saying, "We sure got those two women - half a moose for nothing!" I would call those men liars and cheaters.



## My Life As a Child

by Vernie Bencher

I was born, May 26, 1915 and raised on a ranch in the Coteau Hills in Saskatchewan. My dad had ten sections of land, all hills. He loved horses and had over one hundred mares and three stallions, so there was usually over 100 colts every year.

We only had one cow that kept us in milk. Our neighbour raised cattle. Grandma had given us a cow. This cow found a “boyfriend” at the neighbour’s cattle ranch, and so a calf was born. She was called Polkadot because she was white with black spots all over. I learned to milk her at the age of six, so we were kept in milk.

We also had an old horse called Blizzard. I used to go out into the pasture where the horses were. There was a big rock out there. I would get Blizzard beside it and climb onto the rock. That way I could get up on him. Blizzard would then lead the rest of the horses to the corral. So, any time Papa wanted the horses, he asked me to get them for him.

## That’s My Kid

by Sherry Hinds

Sometimes, she can be sweet as strawberries like when she wants to go to Pine Center Mall. At other times, she can be as helpful as an elf, especially at Christmas time. On the other hand, she can be as stubborn as a mule when she does not want to do something.

In her physical appearance she has the most beautiful big, wide, brown eyes and long thick brown hair down to her mid-back. She is four feet ten inches tall and thin. Her skin is creamy white scattered with brown freckles. She has remarkably tiny little hands. She is my daughter Jennifer-Lee.

## My First Car Accident

by Ethel Disher

Indian summer was early that year, and I was pleased. So many things had gone wrong the first part of it. I guess I was anxious for it to end.

The snow melted in early March, and some friends and I decided to take a trip to Seattle. But things were different south of the border. There was about 8 inches of slush on the highway. We got as far as Ferndale, and I was going to pass a road grader, but coming in the distance was another vehicle. I was sure I had time to pass, but decided to wait. I stepped on the brake and slid 125 feet into the road grader.

My car was a two door, and the front seats were not anchored as they are today. Consequently, the friend in the back seat pushed the one in the front passenger seat into the windshield.

Her face was badly cut up. The back seat friend had her legs cut on the bottom of the front seat. The steering wheel broke and cut my forehead around to the left ear. We were in hospital over night.

The doctor who fixed my head did it with wire under the skin and left a twisted end on the forehead. I assumed it was to pull out the wire when the wound was healed. He said to have my doctor remove it in ten days. I had just changed doctors on recommendation of a friend, and I went to him to have the wire removed. He cut off the twisted end and acted like he was finished, so I made an appointment with the doctor in Ferndale to actually have it removed the day I had to go to court there.

When we went to court I saw a lawyer first, and he said he would be of no value to me as my charge was "too fast for conditions", and even if I had been going ten miles an hour, they could charge me with the same thing. So I paid the fifty dollar fine in American money. After the court case, I went to the doctor in Ferndale to have the wire in my head removed. After the wire was removed, we made arrangements to have my demolished car brought back to Canada.

I worked at the race track during that summer, and on my first day at work in April, one of the horse owners came by for a program and said, “Did somebody try to cut your throat and miss?” I was quite a mess!

The worry of the girls (passengers) suing my insurance company continued, and although they tried to act friendly, it was difficult for them, and court was worse.

My lawyer claimed that the front seat passenger had such bad acne, the cuts she received made her face no worse! The back seat passenger said she had a hard time walking and couldn't dance, but my lawyer pointed out she was wearing spike heels. She also claimed she had seen the speedometer needle on sixty miles an hour. The judgement was in favor of the insurance company, as the judge said that if I had been go-

ing sixty, we would have all been killed. I lost my car, as I had no collision coverage, and after that I found it hard to get a company to insure another vehicle for me. But when I did, the cost was astronomical.

Sometimes, I would think back to the day I went to the doctor to have the wire removed. After he had cut off the twisted end, I said I was having trouble sleeping, so he gave me twenty four sleeping pills. Maybe I should have taken them all at once. But that's another story!



## Dangerous – Fearful Walk Home

by Larry Smith

I left John's place around midnight to head home. The two mile walk from John's place to my place is a long lonely walk. Coblake road is a narrow sandy windy road carved through heavily wooded forest. I had walked about a mile when the clouds parted, letting the full moon shine overhead.

Suddenly, I got this cold chill that ran from the bottom of my spine and rested at the base of my neck. I had a feeling that something was watching me. I shrugged the feeling off as being due to the cool breeze that was blowing out of the north. I walked a half mile further, listening to the wolves howling in the distance. To my right, in the dense woods, I heard a ruffling sound, and my heart jumped up into my throat. "What is this?" I said to myself. A sound like this had never bothered me before, but tonight it was different.

As I walked on, I tried to figure out what was bothering me so much because I still had that feeling that something was watching me. I rounded a bend in the road.

Looking down the straight stretch, I noticed a dark shape that looked like a wolf. As I walked closer, the dark shape ran down the road and disappeared into the woods. I continued paying close attention to the road's edge where the animal had gone off the road. Finally, I rounded the last bend of the road where I could see my driveway. The driveway was about a hundred yards away.

All of a sudden, I got that scary feeling again which sent chills up and down my spine. Nervous spasms ran through my body, and my heart pounded against my ribs. Suddenly, I saw the wolf come charging out of the woods. To my surprise and relief, the wolf was only John's dog, Hound. Recovering from the fear and letting my heart slow, I swore, "Hound, you dumb mut, you almost gave me a heart attack!" Hound, John's dog, walked me home. The scare was over!

## My Christmas Gift

by Mary Vanderploeg

One Saturday, my husband had taken our four sons with him to Estevan shopping. At four o'clock I had finished my cleaning and baking for the weekend. There was a knock at our door. When I opened it, the man standing there asked if he could use the telephone to call the local garage to find out when he and his friends were to be picked up. In our area, there were several ponds of water, and in the fall they were full of wild ducks, and they were hunting ducks. The man asked if he could buy a loaf of my fresh baked bread, as his group had been out since six a.m. without any lunch. I told him to bring his friends in, and I would make them something to eat.

When the three men came in, I served them hot roast beef and gravy, home made bread, butter, pickles, coffee and pie. When they had finished, they wanted to pay me, but we didn't take money for food. They thanked me for the meal and went back to get their ride to town.

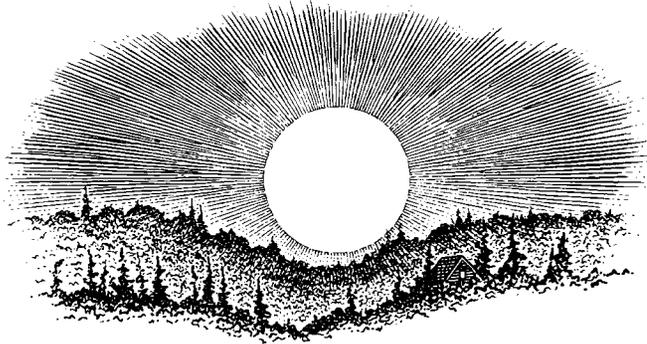
That Christmas a huge box with my name on it came to the local post office.

When I opened it, there was a ten pound box of chocolates with a card telling me how much they had enjoyed the meal.



## The Sun

by Maureen Legg



As I stood on the cliff's edge with the bright shining stars above and the crashing waves below, my thoughts returned to that day long ago. The rising of the sun was more beautiful than anything I had ever seen before. Bright orange, yellow and pink filled the sky, reminding me of being in our open field full of wild flowers. The wind, blowing over my face and through my hair, reminded me of my mother's touch many, many years ago when I was just a kid. I felt as if there was no other place like this on earth.

## Fire On The Roof

by Joyce Hora

I think of one cold Monday morning. I was running the washing machine out on the porch because it was a gas run machine. My daughter came out and said to me, "Mom there is a fire up on the roof." I went in and, sure enough, it was burning around where the pipe went through the roof. I went into a panic, and I don't know to this day how I got up there, but I did with a pail of water in my hand. I got the fire out, but then I didn't know how I was going to get down. I was afraid I would fall, but then I thought I couldn't just sit there on the peak of the roof till Lewis got home, or I would freeze. Somehow, I got up my courage and got down.

## Mystery Photographs

by Beth Coates

Several years ago, at a garage sale here in Prince George, I picked up a bundle of 10 or 12 old photographs. I didn't recognize any of the subjects, but I was intrigued by their interesting faces. I asked the seller who they were, but she had no idea - they were just in the house when she rented it. I noticed several pictures bore the names of southern Manitoba and North Dakota photographers. I was raised in that area, and we were planning a visit there before long, so I bought the collection. I felt they must be part of someone's history. Maybe I could learn more.

When I brought them home, my husband and I looked them over together. One picture was of a family - a Mr & Mrs. White and their children. One boy was named Locky. My husband re-

called there had been a Locky White farming a few miles from his family. I had my first clue!

When I got back to my home town, Pilot Mound, I asked my sister if she knew anything about Locky White. She told me he lived in a nursing home just a few blocks away, so the next morning we went to visit Locky. He was well into his nineties and quite senile. It was impossible to have any kind of meaningful conversation with him. I took out my pictures to show him. None of them triggered any response, until I came to the family picture. He immediately identified his mother and his father and himself, but not the other family members. I left the pictures there, thinking other members of his family might recognize some of them.

A few days later, I was visiting my cousin Louise in Crystal City, the next village, and I told her how Locky had recognized his parents. She said I should have taken them to Mrs. Melvin. "Who's she?" I asked. "Locky's sister", I was told. "She's almost ninety, but as sharp as a tack." She lived in a Seniors residence there in Crystal City, so my next visit was with her. I told her a bit about the pictures. She described the

family photograph to a T. She said she was the curly headed little girl sitting on her father's knee. Her copy of this picture had long been lost and she was excited to get another copy. I told her about leaving them with Locky, but told her to feel free to do what she thought best with them.

The rest of this story happened after we returned to Prince George. Mrs. Melvin got the collection from Locky. Every time one of the old timers came to visit, she brought them out and bit by bit, they were identifying them. One day her visitor was Gertie Graham, the wife of a retired farmer who had moved to town and was living a few doors from the house I was raised in. Gertie was the only person who could identify them all. She even discovered her own parents' wedding photograph, another picture that had long been lost. She immediately had prints made for all her family.

I've talked to Gertie many times on later visits, but neither of us has discovered any link between that garage sale here in Prince George and my home town in Manitoba. Little did I realize that my fifty cent purchase would lead back to my childhood home.

## The Chautauqua

by Laura Dunford

My memory of the Chautauqua goes back to the period 1929 to probably 1935. This was during the Great Depression Era and the Chautauqua was mostly seen in the small prairie towns.

Several years ago, I looked for some information as to where it all began. I can only remember that there was a Lake Chautauqua somewhere in the U.S. where a theatre group sprung up.

As time went by, they began to travel with their shows. Over time, they added a small classical music ensemble. They also offered a special event for the children - an old fashioned puppet marionette show with wood characters on strings acting out a play. There were voices in the background. Performances were in the afternoon and evening.

Each town that sponsored them had to guarantee a certain amount of money to

be raised first. A large tent was set up, and I think it was a five day event.

I was just starting school when the first Chautaugua came that I remember. There was always a "Chautaugua Lady" allowed to come to visit the schools. She sang a few little songs and told us about the performances. There was also a special parade for the children and prizes were awarded for best costumes, etc.

Because there was no such thing as T.V. then, any type of stage performance was usually welcome. Also, there wasn't much money around for luxuries in most families, but somehow the expenses were always met. I never heard of the Chatauqua getting rained out, as this was during the terrible drought years. However, I read recently of a terrible dust storm in one Alberta town that caused much havoc to the tent.

I wonder if any of the entertainers of that day are still living. It would be so nice to hear or read of their experiences travelling from town to town.

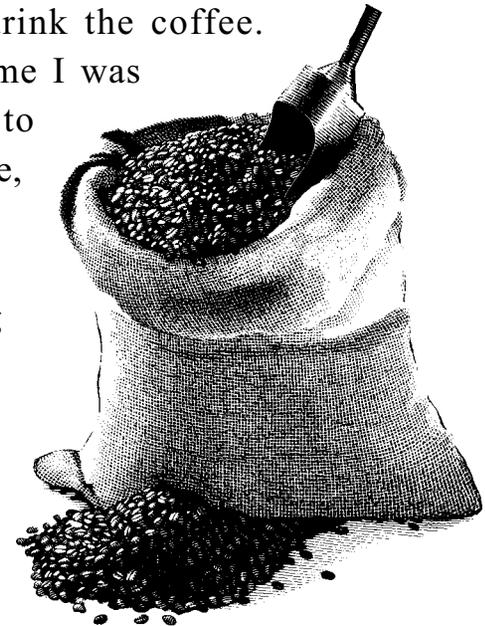
I'm sure some of them continued their careers elsewhere after those years ended. As for me, it has left many pleasant memories of my childhood days in a small prairie community.

## We Didn't Have Coffee!

by Leona Portress

When I was young, we didn't have coffee. I never knew what coffee was. I knew only about tea. Instead of coffee, my grandma and grandpa roasted barley in the oven. It went brown, and they took the barely out and let it cool off. After that, they put the barley in the coffee pot with water and let it cook on the wood stove. I wasn't allowed to drink the coffee.

They told me I was too young to drink coffee, so I drank tea. Now I'm getting older, I'll drink anything that tastes good!!



## The Hobo Years

by Laura Dunford

Beginning around 1929 to mid 1930 were the main years of the “hobo” lifestyle, or as often they were referred to “railroad bums”. There was a very popular recording artist at this time by the name of Jimmie Rodgers, also known as the “Singing Brakeman”. He was an American and worked on the railroad. He composed a lot of railroad songs of which the one called “Hobo Bill’s Last Ride” was very popular. A hobo’s life was not really one by choice, but of necessity; therefore it cannot be compared to the Hippie lifestyle many years later.



The great Stock Market Crash of 1929, of which many books have been written, had taken place. But what many people of Saskatchewan and Alberta remember of this “Great Depression”, was the terrible drought years. Saskatchewan was harder hit than Alberta I believe,

so I remember that a great many young men from there were riding the freight trains to go where they might find employment - a place where there might still be some grain to harvest in the fall. Some of the men were lucky and were even hired on as farm hands for winter.

My memories of all this as a youngster in Alberta was first of all of how so many men could land in a small town on these freight cars. It looked so dangerous too. We lived close to the railroad station like many other families, so there were many of these men coming to our doors asking for a sandwich. My mother never turned anyone away without something to eat. A lot of fami-

lies within in our village were able to keep chickens and even a cow if one had a small barn. In summer, the cows could graze where we could find empty lots with grass and they had other feed in the winter. Milk and eggs were plentiful then. Sometimes we did manage to grow some garden vegetables too, so as long as families had flour, sugar, and other staple foods, we got by. Sharing with neighbors was common.

The “hobos” often had a little camp set up by grain elevators for shelter. Sometimes they made a fire in a small pit to boil water in tin pails to make tea. We used to give them eggs to boil, also bread and milk. I don’t remember any harm coming to anyone, or them causing problems or vandalism. They always seemed very polite. Some seemed very shy, and perhaps embarrassed, to have to ask for food.

Some years later I heard about a prank two fellows travelling together played on a farm woman. They took turns asking for food. As the one whose turn it was came up to the lane to the back door, he saw a lemon pie cooling on the kitchen window sill. He stole the pie, met his friend and they sat in a secluded spot to eat it. Afterwards, he persuaded his partner to take the plate back and thank the woman for the delicious pie. The greeting he received was not what he expected. She was washing her kitchen with a rag mop. She chased him down the road, rag mop in hand, and he was getting slobbered wherever it landed on him. When he got back to meet his pal, he was so furious, but they both ended up having a good laugh. I’m sure there were many humorous stories told along with the sad back then.

## Making Maple Syrup

by Ethel Pryce

Spring. The banks of snow we had during the winter were melting away and thoughts of making maple syrup was uppermost in the men's minds. The sap pails and supplies were brought down from the upstairs, unused, back bedroom where they had been stored.

Bob and Billy tapped about fifty Maple trees in the bush at the back of our 100 acre farm. A small hole was bored in each tree, and a spile, which is a metal spout, was inserted in the hole, and a pail was hung to gather the sap. The sap was gathered once or twice a day, according to the run, and sap was emptied into a barrel at the sugar shanty.

The sugar shanty was a lean-to that helped to keep



the barrel out of the weather and housed the wood for the fireplace.

The syrup pan was six feet by four, and it sat on stones forming the edge of the open fire place. A long handled dipper was used to stir the sap in the pan as it gently boiled. More sap was added as needed.

When it was done to their satisfaction, it was brought to the house. Mother would put it in a big kettle, take the white of an egg beaten slightly, put the kettle on the stove, and the white of the egg was stirred into the syrup. As it came to a boil, the white of the egg would gather any impurities as scum which was removed several times with a large spoon. Finally, the syrup would be strained through a thin cotton cloth and put into sterilized quart jars.

One day, my friend, Flora, and I decided to go looking for leeks in their bush and

ours. Wild leeks are something you ate at night before going to bed. At our bush, we had a drink of sap and stirred the pan of sap with the dipper. Then Flora said, "I wonder what leeks taste like cooked?" "Lets find out," I replied. We cleaned four. They are like green onions. We put them in the dipper with a little sap from the pan and held the dipper in the bubbling sap.

Everything was doing just fine when my concentration was interrupted, and I released my hold on the handle of the dipper. Over it tipped, and leeks went into the pan of sap. There was a scramble to get the leeks out of the pan any way we could. We threw them away and never did get to taste them. There never was any mention of a strange taste either.

When it was time to sugar off, a few neighbours were invited in for cards and a feed of taffee. The taffee was dribbled over clean snow in milk pans. I didn't care for the taffy, but I liked the maple sugar I made.

The pails and spiles were again brought to the house washed and put in the back room for another year.

## The Shivaree

by Laura Dunford

The big day had arrived. My oldest sister was getting married. Now this would be a typical wedding in a small community on the prairies during the Great Depression. I think the year was 1930. The wedding took place in our Lutheran Church in the morning. Anyhow, everyone in our home was rushing around getting dressed in our best clothes and the finishing touches were put to the bride's attire. My mother was preparing a noon meal for the families of the bride and groom and a few close friends.

My sister was marrying a young farmer who was in partnership with his father on a farm about three miles from town. In those days a lot of couples never went on a real honeymoon away from home, probably for lack of money. They just went to where they would be

making their home when the wedding and reception were over that day.

At about 7:00 pm we had to get ready to go the “Shivaree”. This was all new to me. I was about 6 years old, and, actually, it was the only one I ever attended. When we got to the farm, we met up with a lot of neighbors and other acquaintances who were armed with pots and pans, and anything else that could make a lot of noise outside. Everyone banged and rattled their goods. After this had gone on for a while, the bride and groom appeared at the door to welcome us all in. Coffee was put on to boil in a large pot on the old country kitchen stove. Sandwiches, cakes, and cookies were brought along by the gang to be served along with other goodies that were in the home. It was truly an old fashioned gathering, very simple indeed.

My sister had her piano moved to the farm, so after a while we gathered around the piano to sing old folk songs, etc. Most homes had these music books which are treasured memories now.

I don’t know when this “Shivaree” practice started, but I think it soon died out because I can’t recall many after that. By the mid 1930’s church halls or community halls were used for the receptions. Often included was a free dance for anyone in the community. No formal invitations were needed. This all goes back a long way, but us seniors have many treasured memories of the way things were then at weddings and the traditions involved.



## The Bombardier

by Mary Vanderploeg

On the prairie, in the winter, it was difficult to get to a doctor, dentist or the hospital. I lived on a farm and the nearest large town was thirty eight miles away, and the roads were not kept open for cars in those early years.

Gordon Forrester, our local John Deere dealer, bought a Bombardier. It was the first seen in the area. It was like a small van, but it had sleigh runners in the front and a small track on the back to drive through the snow. It was powered with gasoline, and the motor was like a car motor.

The driver steered the Bombardier with a wheel. Inside, it was warm and comfortable, and it would take two hours to get to Estevan traveling over drifts. I rode in it a few times. When there was an emergency, Gordon would take people to get the care they needed.

The Bombardier was the first snowmobile. It was invented by the Canadian, Armand Bombardier, in 1923. Snowmobiles are much more sophisticated these days.



## Eaton's Catalogue

by Laura Dunford

For many years "Eaton's Catalogue" was a very important book in Canadian families. My most memorable years are during the 1920's and 1930's. What excitement there was in the spring and again in the fall when the new ones arrived. Each member of the family had favorite pages to turn to first. The boys usually turned to the building toys or special wearing apparel. The girls were interested in dolls and, of course, pretty dresses.

One year, I won first prize in the July 1st parade for a little lamb decorated with ribbons and bows that I entered. I was about 8 years old, and when I came home, the first thing I did was to look in Eaton's Catalogue. I found a picture of a little red dress, so off went my money order of \$2 along with the order form. How pleased I was when the package arrived in the mail, and it was everything I had hoped for.

When I was 10 years old and my sister was almost 12, we were looking in the new Spring catalogue and wishing for the two piece suits for young girls. Actu-

ally, the ladies' fashion pages had their version too, which was a three quarter length coat and matching skirt. My brother who was a young school teacher, overheard us and asked how much they cost. "Eight dollars a suit," we said. Now I know, he wasn't making a lot of money then, teaching in a one room country school, but he told us to order them, and he would pay for them. We felt like the two best dressed young girls in our town that year.

This is a very special memory in my life because when the war broke out my dear brother put his teaching job on hold in 1939 to serve his country. Then, like many other young men, he made the supreme sacrifice. Killed in action, 1944!

Getting back to country school teachers, the Eaton's Catalogue was also important to them. When the Christmas

concerts took place, each child received a little gift from Santa. It was handy for the teachers to make out a list of names and ages, and amount to be spent. This then was sent to Eaton's where Santa's elves did the shopping, wrapping and tagging.

Eaton's Catalogue, then, was like going to a "Shopping Mall", or the "Internet" of today, with the convenience of shopping from home.

The old catalogues were recycled too. Children loved to cut out pictures for fun, or school projects. My sister and I and our friends made cut out dolls with changes of dresses for the girls, and suitable clothes for boys. Then what was left of it, went to the "out-house" its last recycling destination!!

Dear old "Eaton's Catalogue", you served Canadians so faithfully for many generations and left us with so many memories of the good old days.

## From New Brunswick To British Columbia

by Annette Nadeau

My name is Annette. I was born November 5, 1922.

I got married in 1944. I was living in Edmuston, New Brunswick. In 1945, I gave birth to my daughter, Hilda. My husband was working in different places.

My brother-in-law decided to come to British Columbia to work in a sawmill, so my husband decided to go with him. They came to Prince George, but I stayed in Edmuston. The rent on our house was not too expensive - \$10.00 a month.

One day, I got a letter from my husband telling me to sell our furniture and come to Prince George. So, my brother-in-law's wife, Leona, and I de-

cided to come to B.C. to be with our husbands. Leona and her husband had a boy named Norman. He was 7 years old. My little girl, Hilda, was 2 years old.



We left Edmuston, New Brunswick by train on the 7th April, 1947. We arrived in Jasper on the 12th April. My husband and brother-in-law were there to meet us. From Jasper, we came to Prince George and had to go and live in a sawmill camp in a small cabin.

The hardest thing for me was that I did not speak a word of English. The only thing I knew was “yes”, “no” and “thank you”. It was very hard for a while, but I had to learn. I bought myself a dictionary - French and English - and looked in Eaton’s catalogue and turned the pages until I found the articles I wanted. Then I learned how to spell them.

So, when you get it into your mind that you want to learn something, you will, even if it’s hard, “Where there’s a will there is a way”.

## Christmas In St. Omer

by Margaret Calvert

My most memorable Christmas happened so long ago, that now, it seems more like a pleasant dream in the midst of the sadness and loneliness of war.

Christmas 1944 found us at a Canadian hospital, stationed in St. Omer France. Most of us were from Western Canada, so that seemed to make us even further from home.

At that time, I was nursing on a ward with mostly Czechoslovakian patients. As I remember, there did not seem to be much of a language barrier. A good number of them were convalescent, full of fun and plans for Christmas, any-

thing to help forget, for a while, what was happening in their own country.

The whole hospital went all out for Christmas. It was very hard to find trees, but for two days, some of the staff went on the scrounge with trucks and all the wards got a tree. Orderlies came back when off duty to help decorate them. I couldn't help thinking "You should be at home doing this for your children."

The patients took great pride in their ward's decorations, and, naturally, there was a lot of rivalry between the various wards. It was amazing what they did with a few hospital supplies, also scrounged, of course. Absorbent cotton made lovely snow, especially with Epsom salt sprinkled on it. Red ink dies bandages beautifully for red streamers. The Czechs also made snowmen from absorbent cotton and paper and even a Santa Claus — only, being European, he

was St. Nicholas, quite a bit different from our jolly old man.



All kinds of signs were made, including “Merry Christmas” in Czechoslovakian, “Long may your lum reek” for the Scotties, and Christmas wishes to the nurses from the patients. Some of the latter were accompanied by cartoons. They were clever.

In our hospital each bed had quite a pretty blue blanket at the foot. Our patients created most lovely nativity scenes using these blankets, a few Christmas decorations bought in St. Omer, and a lot of imagination.

Our hospital had a Christmas Eve banquet, and then we started off Christmas morning with a special breakfast treat, half an orange and an egg each. What a surprise!

Then back to our wards to get the tables set up for our Christmas dinner for our patients. On our ward all but three of the patients were well enough to get up for the dinner. We set up two tables in the hall with a tree on each and several decorations including little snowmen. We had a real Canadian Christmas dinner for them which included turkey, mince pies and plum pudding.

For a few hours, we all forgot how far from home we

were or stopped wondering what the future held. We just celebrated together. The entertainment was supplied by our runner, a six foot Cape Bretoner, “who was just as good as a floor show,” according to my letter home.

The most amazing part of these memories is how happy they are and how beautiful the decorations were. Yet, as I re-read the letters I wrote home about that time, I feel the loneliness there, and as I look at the old snapshots of these decorated tables in the wards, they really look quite bare. It must be that the true spirit of Christmas enhanced and beautified that Christmas 1944.

## Salmon Glacier

by Bonnie Brereton

I remember it as if it were yesterday. Slowly I creep up a steep, desolate road that seems to go on forever. Everywhere I look are emerald green trees and monstrous, blue mountains. I open the window of the car and look to the right of me. My heart is pounding; I am so scared. Looking out the window, I see nothing but a tiny, spindly river a thousand feet below me. We are finally reaching the top of this incredible mountain. Before me, I see a gigantic, beautiful blue glacier. For miles, I can see into the mouth of this wonderful creation. The smell of pine trees in the clean, unpolluted air makes me feel so serene and peaceful. When we have to leave, I turn to take one last look, and the gleam off of the diamond blue ice hurts my eyes. I think this is one of the most beautiful things I will ever see in my life. This trip to the Salmon Glacier will be in my thoughts forever.

## Early Trips To Calgary

by Laura Dunford

It was 1928 when I was five years old that I remember my first trip to Calgary. We had a 1928 Chevrolet. The reason we probably had a car then was that my Dad needed it for business trips. We lived about 90 miles from Calgary, and the road was mostly dirt, and what a terrible trip if it rained! How wonderful it was when, in the mid 1930's, the roads were gravelled and eventually paved.

When we reached the outer limits of the city, my sister and I would be very excited, as by then, we were looking forward to our Mom and Dad taking us to a restaurant called "The White Lunch". I often wonder if it was called that because it was operated by all white people. I know many restaurants were operated by Chinese immigrants, especially in the small communities through the province.

My memories of that meal was that we walked along a long table where there were servers behind pans of hot food items, salads, buns, etc., and filled our plates. When we ordered milk it was in little 8 oz. glass bottles with little cardboard lids that had the name of the dairy company printed on them. One can still see these types of milk bottles in various sizes in museums. Somehow, I was always so fascinated by pouring out the milk into the drinking glass.

Next stop that was so exiting was to go to the F.W. Woolworth 5¢ and 10¢ store, as it was called then. My sister and I each got 25¢ to spend and whatever money we managed to save from collecting pop bottles or otherwise earned. If we needed new clothes or shoes we went to “Kresgies” or to the family stores that were popular in those days. Our last stop was the “City Market” where Dad used to pick out special

types of cured meats and sausage, specialty breads, fruit and vegetables. We started for home about 6:00 pm and filled buns with sliced meat to eat along the way, and dug into the bags of fruit to fill up on. It was around midnight when we got home. We made these trips about four times a year.

Just a few more nostalgic memories in closing. I remember fondly the clanging of the street cars and the “clippity cloppity” of horses hooves on the pavement, pulling the bread, milk, and ice wagons.

I think there were electric lights on some streets, and I remember the police at the main intersections directing traffic and the sound of their whistles. How clean all the streets were then, and I don't think the word “litter bug” was invented yet. How things have changed from so long ago.



## Gyro Beach

by Chandip Kandola

As you walk down Collet Road and turn right, you begin to hear the sounds of the rushing water in the lake. Nearing the dock, you step in soft warm sand. White seagulls are circling around a small area of the lake, and you can hear them singing. Settling down on the dock, with your feet in the sparkling cold blue water, eases your stress and relaxes your mind. Straight ahead, there are mountains, trees, cars that look like small toys, and you might see a boat or two go by with someone jet skiing behind it. There your thoughts can take you so far away that soon you realize that the sky is getting dark, and the lights that are surrounding the lake shine on the lake, making the lake look twinkly and calm. At that moment, you really appreciate the peace and quiet, yet you really have no choice but to leave and come back the next day.

## From Sweden To Prince George

by Mrs. Bjorklund

I arrived in Prince George, September 14, 1928 at the age of 17, and I'm still here! Mum and I came from Sweden. The two of us went out to a logging camp, Scrubner's camp. There were 2 camps - one small - one large (250 men). My mum and I looked after the cooking and the small camp. My mum cooked and I helped.

We came back into Prince George in the spring of 1929 and opened a restaurant on 3rd Avenue. We had no name for it, but it was decorated in Scandinavian style, and we featured Scandinavian food. The food was cooked and presented Scandinavian style. We had no menus. Mum and I just cooked whatever we felt like, and that was what we served that day.

In the fall of 1929 I went to work for Mrs. Martin Cain. Mr. Cain ran a logging camp and Mrs. Cain was a former school teacher. They lived in the area around the Sacred Heart Church. I looked after the house and the children every day of the week. I stayed with them for about 3 months.

After about 3 or 4 months, I went to work for George Trapping and his wife. He was a bricklayer and built such buildings as the Columbus Hotel. Because of his importance, a street in Prince George was named after him. Mrs. Trapping had breast cancer, and she had no children to look after her. I worked there until Mrs Trapping passed away. I'll never forget the day she passed away!

At about that time, mum remarried a man originally from Sweden. They were married here in Prince George. I decided to go back home to live with Mum. Shortly after that, I became engaged to Edwin.

We started working for a gang contracted to build culverts. Edwin and I worked from Prince George towards Smithers, and on the other side towards McBride. We didn't have B.C. Rail at the time. After we finished working on the culverts, I came back to Prince George. The depression was setting in and work was hard to find, so I didn't work for many years.

In 1932, Edwin and I were married. All my married life, which lasted 45 years, I lived in Aleesa Lake. After Edwin's death, I moved back to Prince George, and that's where I am today.



## My Favorite Place

by Dianne Russell

As I walk along the trail, I feel the coolness around me, and the softness under my feet. In front of me, there is moss on the trees, and I see the changing colour of the leaves. A light wind is blowing all around. The roots are showing through the ground. There are wild flowers growing where the sun hits making the air smell so fresh. Suddenly, I am at the edge of the bank! As I look over, I can see an old weathered farm house with a big beautiful garden and flower beds. As I sit down on the hard ground looking straight ahead, I can see the road with its hard, cold pavement. Then I see the train tracks that seem to go on forever. Past that is the river, flowing so fast. I look across the river. There is the park. It is all full of colours with the changing of the seasons.

As I scan past the park, I see the City of Prince George gripped in a cool fall day. With a feeling of serenity, I listen, and I can hear the birds singing and chirping. Then just at the right time, the sun goes down. The sky is filled with orange, yellows and reds. I feel at peace with myself and relaxed. I just think about the

beautiful day I had, and the darkness comes. I see Prince George all lit up, and I know it's time to go home.

## Winter – Peace River

by Esther Ritchie

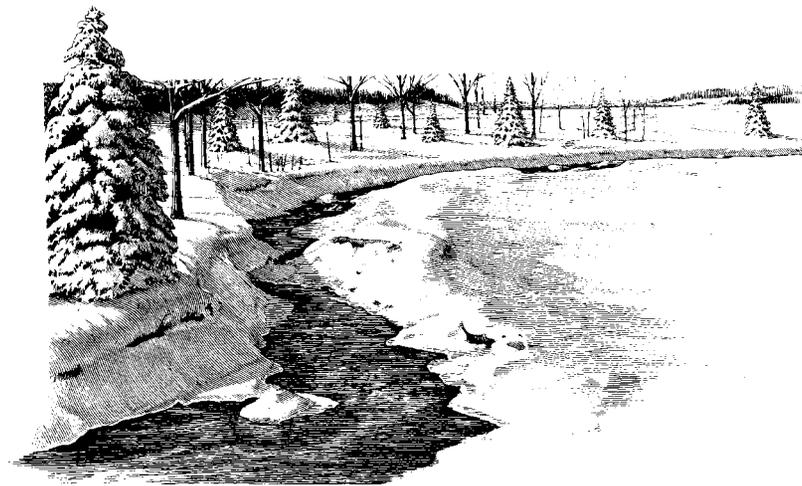
If you haven't experienced winter, come along with me to the Peace River country. This is mid-October - a beautiful evening. The skies tell of rain, but when you wake up in the morning, the world is blanketed - white... sparkling white... so clean. The sky is blue. The air has a fresh, cool touch. What has happened while we were snugly tucked away in our beds last night?

The first thing papa must do is build a fire in the big barrel stove in the front room. In a while, when we get up, we grab our clothes and run out to the warm stove to get dressed. We feel so lucky!! Mama puts on the rolled oats - porridge. It's served with real whipped cream - sure tastes so..o..o good! Then we dress for school. We dress warmly, for we have a mile to walk to school. We're all covered except for peep holes for our eyes.

Off to school! Somebody was up before us to get the fire going in the school house. It was warm there. Study, we must - if we want to be smart, for our future depends on that.

We have the same "bundle up" routine before going home. Mama had a warm drink ready for us when we got home.

Most of our winter was like this, but each day took us closer to spring. We could then thaw out and enjoy the sunshine and long days. Whoopee!!



## Penny

by Esther Chometsky

I was living in Saskatchewan and had been alone there with the children for almost a year as Steve (my husband) had been in British Columbia for that long before he could send for us to come and join him.

Penny was where he had found a job where there was housing. Penny is situated about 70 miles east of Prince George, near the Fraser River. We moved there November of 1956.

The children and I got off the train at three in the morning. The only light we could see was at Carrie Mellow's house, so we went there. She suggested we go to Anna Mello's rooming house, where we sat until morning. I had sent my husband, Steve, a telegram as to when we would be there. The station agent in Saskatchewan had mistakenly put the wrong date on it, so Steve didn't expect us until

the next morning. He had only been working in Penny a month or so at this time.

My first impression of Penny was not especially good since there was no road in or out of there. It was kind of scary in case of an emergency. However, we did settle in. We had come from a small town of 500 population, so it wasn't hard to get adjusted. We had nothing to begin with, but in no time, we had beds from the bunkhouse plus table and chairs from friendly neighbours. There was great community spirit there. Of course having a steady income certainly meant a lot.

Penny was a wonderful place for children, as they could play and ride their bikes with almost no traffic. During those years, we did have an emergency, when my son Harvey broke his leg. In no time, there were two planes landed on the river. While we were gone to town, someone took up a collection which paid for our plane trip. Wonderful people!

It turned out we stayed in Penny for six years! Then the mill closed down, and besides, we had to move to Prince George, as the children, Sandra and Harvey, needed a higher education. I look back on those years in Penny as some of the best years of our lives.