



Noel West/Mountain View Gazette

ON THE RUN - Bison move through deep snow on a Westward Ho property.

Visiting friends was fun

Rarely was there opportunity in my childhood to be included in a sleep-over, an event that had apparent value for one's self-esteem. An occasional friend stayed at our house, but it required some creative shuffling. We were already doubled up as it was. Also the fact that we didn't have indoor plumbing was sometimes awkward for our visitors. For my birthday just before we left the farm, I was allowed to have several friends stay. I think Mom had to convince me that I would enjoy the event. I didn't like change even then. We took possession of the living room, the central hub of our burgeoning house, which was a great inconvenience to everyone else.

Carol and I had both stayed with a family from the church a time or two and we spent a week each summer in the West Zion community during vacation Bible school. We each also helped at James River Bible Camp one summer. I didn't relish being too far from home. My most memorable visits were with my younger friend Elaine. She was a newcomer to the community, a later child who grew up mostly on her own. She had nieces who were older than she, a fact which she viewed as quite comical. Elaine had dark hair and eyes that sparkled with delight and she was quick to explode in giggles.

Her folks were of distinct personalities and perfectly complemented each other. Peggy was a super-efficient housekeeper, preferring to

work alone. Carol and I were accustomed to helping with dishes and setting tables, but our offers of assistance were always gently turned aside. She was consistently pleasant, provided good, aromatic meals, but did not involve herself in our activities.

I recall Peggy stretched out on the living room carpet exercising faithfully with a television personality. Once we strolled with her down the adjacent gravel road to the nearby Westward Ho Store. She purchased a large jug of milk and on impulse ice cream cones for three little girls.

Hector strode purposefully through our timid lives, trampling our insecurities with raucous laughter. He was sometimes abrasive but given to sudden singing and prone to cuddle and tickle.

Both parents were entirely unlike any Mennonite example we had had modelled for us.

Elaine and I liked to write, sometimes for hours at a time. She composed silly jingles about her older, somewhat distant brother that made both of us giggle. I used some of my practice verses for an assignment at school. We wrote until our wrists ached from the effort. It was hard work being an author as an early adolescent.

We also spent many hours outdoors, willingly keeping company with her buddy Mack, with his soft floppy ears and the "let me lean against you 'cause I love you" sort of doggy attitude. Also included in our

games were the long rope swing and the nearby corral fence where we sat and indulged in daydreams.

Elaine didn't have the usual chores or responsibilities we had, but she did practise playing the piano, serious business. She started lessons at four to five years and to my ears was very skilled at eight. I believe she continued to become a gifted musician, until she left home.

Their house had only two bedrooms, although it boasted a bright enclosed sunroom that Elaine claimed as hers. It made an excellent playroom/study/craft area. I don't recall any dolls being included in our play, but Elaine had quite an array of building blocks, like an early version of Lego. We built the layout for houses, stores and schools and perhaps used the designs for the basis of our stories.

My friend moved away while we were still youngsters. Our folks kept in touch and met often over the years. As adults we were still delighted to hear more of the saga of the Rutherfords. When I began writing regularly Mom sent my articles to Hector and Peggy and inevitably Elaine read them as well.

We commenced letter correspondence over 10 years ago, tentative at first, as it had been some years. Elaine worked for a time as a library assistant, as had I. She was also engaged in writing, had a non-fiction manuscript idling on a shelf and a work of fiction in progress that an agent showed interest in. Life has a habit of getting in the way of creativity.

It also has a way of repeating itself, circling back again to reconnect with old friends.



**JOYCE
HOEY**

Letters to the Editor

Fracking concerns

So, it has happened again - another fracking "accident". If you discarded the *Gazette* without noticing the picture on the front, you may be forgiven because the story ("Landowner wants answers", p. 14, Feb. 5) was split into two different pages.

In brief, a farmer owns land through which runs a small creek. It in turn drains into the Little Red Deer River. On Jan. 25, Chris Huhn, the farmer, discovers the spring emitting a very strong odour of sour sulphur. Nearby, a well was drilled and fracked by Imperial Oil. They told him that testing before and after fracking was unnecessary, that it posed "no risk". Wrong! In fact, the fracking operation takes a tremendous amount of water. Says Mr. Huhn, "Water in the spring was down by one-third." It is not difficult to see from where they took the water.

Fracking involves injecting highly pressurized water and chemicals into the drill holes. What chemicals? That is a closely-guarded industry secret. But I can tell you that flow-back from contaminated wells has high concentrations of cadmium, benzene, arsenic, naphthalene and radioactive radium. In other words, it's all poison. Sound like something you want in your drinking water?

Can we really allow these processes to go on without protest? Are we so complacent and smug that regulators are doing their job?

Let us get behind the hapless farmer and demand answers and action from ERCB. We want full protection under the law for our creeks and rivers and the whole Red Deer River watershed from grasping, greedy multinational giants.

*Florence Havill
Innisfail*

Disaster for the county

It has only been two short years ago that Mountain View County was a robust, vibrant county. There were many developments going on and many companies and associations were clamouring to do business with the county.

While the rest of the world was experiencing an economic recession, Mountain View County was a shining example of an economic boom.

There was good reason for this. Over the past decades we had elected some very good councillors. They had a vision of how the county should grow and develop, so they painstakingly went about developing a plan on how to get to where they wanted to be.

So with the help of planning boards made up of well-respected members of the community and a planning department made up of professional municipal planners they were able to develop a long-range plan. With this plan in place anybody doing business with the county knew what they had to do if they wanted to deal with the county, and they knew exactly what the county would do for them if they did.

This is how the county had built a sterling reputation as a fair, honest and trustworthy place to do business. This is why companies, organizations, and associations considered it an honour to do business with the county.

In 2010 election year the complete council (except the reeve, Al Kemmere) was replaced after the election. They had promised change. I believe that many people believed that a change was needed because they thought that the county was progressing too rapidly and progress should be tempered. But we were well equipped to make changes; we had a very good planning board and a good team of professional planners. It could have been very simple. But the new council promised to come up with a new Municipal Development Plan. The idea may have been sound, but the way they have gone about implementing it has caused horrendous damage to the county.

The previous council had dealings with many developers and companies that were interested in investing in the county.

They had all dealt in good faith, the companies had done all that was asked of them by the county and the county had made commitments and promises to the companies.

See Disaster p.7

Mountain View GAZETTE

Published weekly by:
Mountain View Publishing Inc.

5013 - 51 Street, Box 3910, Olds, Alberta T4H 1P6
Phone: (403) 556-7510 Fax: (403) 556-7515

E-mail Advertising: production@olds.greatwest.ca
E-mail Editorial content: gazette@olds.greatwest.ca
Website: www.mountainviewgazette.ca

Publisher: Murray Elliott
Editor: Dan Singleton
Photographer: Noel West
Reporters: Paul Frey, Olds
Paul Everest, Olds
Drew A. Penner, Innisfail
Kevin Vink, Didsbury
Patricia Riley, Sundre
Jared Siemens, Carstairs

Protected by the Canadian Copyright Act.
No material appearing in this publication may be copied or reproduced without the express written consent of the publisher. Failure to obtain such consent may result in legal action without further notice.

Third Class Mail • Registration No. 0040062952

How can we help you?

Letters to the editor: Letters submitted for publication must be signed and bear the address, phone number and e-mail address of the writer. Please keep your letter to 400 words or fewer. Letters may be edited for grammar, punctuation, spelling, length and libel. Unsigned letters will NOT be published. Use of pseudonyms will be permitted only under special circumstances, provided the writer's identity is known to The Gazette.

News and photos: If you have a news item or a photo opportunity you feel may be of interest to readers, please call 403-556-7510.

Display and classified advertising: Please call 403-556-7510 and we will be happy to help you place your advertisement.
DISPLAY ADVERTISING COPY DEADLINE: Thursday 12 noon.
CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING DEADLINE: Thursday 12 noon.