



route **NORTH** roots
m a g a z i n e

Water bombers

■ Life in the hot zone

The stack

■ The mother of all
community landmarks

Hometown hero

■ Reid Simpson has lived
his hockey dream

Elusive orchids

■ Miniature beauties
worth the hunt

Free September 2004 - Issue 3

Stomping 1955



Dave Negrych Contributing Writer

The teens of the town were mostly found, at the Jubilee, Friday nights.
Vickery's band on the stage, the rock and roll age, got to setting things just right!
Draped slacks, convoy coats, haircuts like a duck's rear,
And other trends that melted away with the passing of the years.
They went stag or with a group; perhaps on a date;
Smiling the girl, bashful the beau, perceiving a lifelong mate.
The jiving, the dancing, the secret romancing,
Maidens pining for a tall handsome brute,
But when things came to pass, most times alas,
They'd settle for a lesser galoot,
A second-choice specimen, who'd come up to call,
And dance them away from a night near the wall.
And so it went on, at the weekend fun, in that swinging old-time hall.
But to bite off taste of a wild, wacky place, and envision tremendous delights,
Wait one more day, and then make your way, to Creighton on Saturday night!
There the old town hall, served up a quaint call,

in springtime, in winter, in fall.
The joint was right-jammed from beginning to end, and nobody gave a good damn,
'bout the drunks and the hunks, and whatever stunk, in the corner down near the can.
A sodden geezer there, hip flask, eyes unclear, his dancing a chore,
Pickled silly on cheap rye from the government store.
A doctor so swilled, he was almost killed, a-running up walls,
And dropping dead-drunk on the floor!
Sheepskin Pete sawed on the fiddle, a miner played guitar,
Oscar on the clarinet, as Lawrence measured the bars,
A kid on the banjo, and a piano's notes unfurled,
Rockin', stompin', swaying the musical gusts swirled.
A string of hard-up bachelors, eyeing up the girls.
As the melodies a-drifted, the dancers twirled all around,
Schottisches, waltzes, polkas, women's toes in dreadful alarm,
And folks a-doing the butterfly, a-bruising up their arms.
With the frenzied commotion, oft times I have felt,
It's a wonder that the snow outside the place didn't melt!
The clods and the ladies, and the other local slicks,
At length to the strains of the last waltz did mix.
Yet despite the sweat and the reek, despite aching feet,
They'd remuster and get at it again the next week!■



On the Cover

Photo by Frank Fieber.
Dean Corman on his flying boat.

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From the editor

I haven't picked many blueberries in recent years but it all came back to me as I was picking a small glassfull for a photo to accompany Harry Antoniw's blueberry wine recipe on page 36.

As a kid there was something special about going blueberry picking. It was the only time the whole family would walk in the bush together, from our cabin on Big Island Lake (Manistikwan) to the higher ridges of bedrock toward Flin Flon. There were always lots of blueberries back there and our mission was to fill our pails. A two-quart honey pail with a wire loop was my favourite. Pa carried a three and a half gallon brass coloured pail which was usually full before we'd head for home.

Searching under willow bushes and in small clumps of trees amid the rocky ridges one learned life lessons. "Pick 'em clean where you are," Pa would say, "never mind running around looking for the perfect patch with berries like grapes. Don't run with a full pail," — oops.

I remember the tart taste of mossberries to cleanse the palette — after eating a few of those red berries the blueberries tasted

so sweet again. The wonderful smell of the hot earth as I crawled about on my knees, the buzz of the occasional horsefly interrupting the solitude of the blueberry patch.

When all the pails were filled we had a very satisfied walk home.

After a refreshing drink of "freshie" and a swim, Pa would take a large bowl, and the pails of berries down to the motorboat. He would fire up the 18 h.p. Evenrude and at just the right speed we'd begin pouring the berries from the pails into the bowl. The wind would blow away the leaves and small green berries and only the fat ripe blueberries would remain. This always had a certain magic about it and it saved a lot of work cleaning the berries. Ma canned the berries in mason jars and they were a wonderful dessert all winter.

In this issue, along with a feature on hockey player Reid Simpson, a story on the water bomber pilots, the secret lives of the dragonflies, the continuing saga of Myrna Guymer's "extreme snowbirding" adventures, and many more stories out of the north, we bring you a recipe for blueberry wine.

Blueberry wine — talk about a celebration of summer. Enjoy.

Frank Fieber, Editor

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In our last issue, the extreme snowbirds had just finished five weeks of tent camping when they found a new friend, Paco, with a room for rent — and two sailboats.



The four guys who experienced grief with me off the shores of Teacapan

— PHOTOS, MYRNA GUYMER

Cruising in Mazatlan

Myrna Guymer
Contributing Writer

After five weeks of tent living in a trailer park, our new dwelling had my husband, Glen, and me feeling that our time in Mazatlan, Mexico was off to a fresh start.

Our room, though small, had all the necessary amenities. The kitchenette meant no more squatting frog-like to cook. Our private bathroom meant no more toilet paper tucked underarm for mad dashes to the public john. Sleeping in the tent had been restful but now we were only one street from the Pacific Ocean. The whooshing sounds of rolling surf washed over us each night and sent us restfully into dreamland.

Outside in the brick-walled yard,

bougainvillea trees proclaimed greetings in radiant shades of magenta, fuschia and coral. Papaya, banana, lime and mango trees begged to be picked. Under the thatched palm roof of the palapa (patio), we sipped coffee and tea while doves, orioles, crows, sparrows and sundry other unidentified birds announced morning. The rooster who crowed all night must have been napping then.

Treating us like family, our landlord, Francisco Gonzalez Dadda, (Paco) took us into his care. He became our good friend and mentor.

“You should learn Spanish,” Paco, 39, said, and offered to teach us. He had learned English while studying in Britain and travelling in other countries around the world as a ship’s officer. Later he became a merchant marine captain.

Several evenings a week we gathered with dictionaries and enthusiasm to learn useful phrases and words that would enable us to better communicate.

Our initiation included Mexican food. He cooked up tortillas, quesadillas, shrimp wrapped in bacon and hamburgers like those that he had sold as a young fellow in his native Mexico City. With Paco we had no worries about eating in restaurants. However, one evening after our lesson, Paco, Glen and I ate seafood soup in a popular restaurant. Shortly after eating, when simultaneous projectile explosions from both ends of my body were not stopping, Paco called an ambulance.

In the hospital, stomach pumping didn’t stop the 12-hour rejection. But two days of intravenous infusion had

Spanish lessons, sailing lessons and soaking up the sun

me cured; and definitely cured me of any desire to ever eat oysters again.

"Listening to you nearly had Paco and me wrenching too," Glen told me later.

Besides rooms for let, Paco owned another business, Yacht Sailing and Sport Fishing. Once Glen got wind that two of Paco's boats were sailboats, he biked to the marina every day with rags and tools trailing from every pocket. Paco had no complaint with Glen refinishing teak or repairing rigging. Glen even lengthened the boom of one sailboat. With the devotion my husband has for boats, it would not have surprised me to discover him building another sailing craft.

My Canadian, and attempts at Mexican, cooking must have passed favourably with Paco for Glen and I were both invited aboard each time Paco suggested, "Let's go sailing."

The Sea of Cortez, those coastal waters between the Baja California and the western shores of Mexico, provides enough ocean adventure to satisfy my yen for the deep. My Popeye husband may not agree, but characteristics of the Sea have my full respect. Connected to the Pacific Ocean, the Sea of Cortez is 240 kilometers (150 miles) across at the widest point and its length measures over 1,100 km (700 m). Currents range from six km/h (4 m.p.h.) in open water to an incredible 30 km/h (20 m.p.h.) in other areas. High tides can influence depth levels to such a degree that drops between three to four metres (eight to ten feet) can occur in just 20 to 30 minutes.

On sailing trips with Paco, we have photographed, and even petted, cavorting Pacific White-sided dolphins, matching their wide grins with our own. I'm convinced they smile and laugh as they run before the bow of the boat. Their breaching, spinning and flaunting of their marvelous swimming and diving antics make our sleek ship look like a barge in comparison.

Near the main harbour of Mazatlan is a cluster of rocks known locally as Sea Lion Rock. There a large group of



A hook fin dolphin, making an impressive splash and dive. Below: Comforts in our new abode in Mazatlan, no more squatting to cook.



sea lions wallow year-round entertaining tourists with loud arf, arf, arfing. As boat loads of tourists pass by, they slide from their small rock outcropping, lolling in the waves with one fin pointing skyward as though to wave. Possibly they are thumbing a snout at the intrusion on their afternoon basking.

Giant sea turtles as big around as car tires, grab one's attention at sea too. On a calm day, they float dead-like with sunbathing birds riding piggy-back until an intruder approaches. Then, the turtle silently submerges, barely making a ripple, and leaves its passenger to fly off or get a dunking.

Teacapan, a tiny fishing village 130 km (80 m) south of Mazatlan on one of Mexico's largest estuaries, is best known for bird watching. Along mangrove lagoons and canals, birders can see herons, flamingos, Canadian ducks, and numerous other species of birds. The village is situated on the tip of a 30 kilometre (18 m) sparsely populated peninsula. The peninsula forms a natural harbour of sorts but even at high tide the shifting bottom sands at the entrance can cause grief for keelboats. A lot of grief.

My first overnight ocean sailing adventure with four guys met with just such grief. At night. When the gas tank ran out. In 10 foot swells. And when the anchor line got tangled around the propellor. And the skipper had to be lowered into the water from the back of the boat. And those same swells threatened to drown the skipper. And when he threatened to keel haul the dummy who left the anchor line dragging.

The rest of the night we pitched and rolled at anchor. At sunrise as the fishermen were heading out to sea, our skipper called one of them to pilot us through the channel. Thoughts of a return trip onboard were too much for one of the four guys aboard our boat. The last we saw of him was his backside disappearing into the morning mist. Guess he figured there was less grief riding the bus.

"There IS more to life than sailing," I often say to Glen. His dazed look always tells me that he does NOT agree.

And there is more to Mexico too. ■



Bananas, ripe for the picking.

With their shimmering wings
and sparkling, metallic bodies,

dragonflies

are among the most
beautiful
of insects. And they
eat mosquitoes, too.



Darners dragonfly *Aeshna* sp.

- PHOTO BY FRANK FIEBER

Andrew Keddie Contributing Writer

In 1979 a small English coal-mining town made news headlines because of a dragonfly with a half-metre wingspan. One can easily imagine this large fossilized insect hurtling through the air, capturing and devouring hapless prey.

Of course, the air some 300 million years ago in the Carboniferous period was probably unlike the air today. It likely was denser and had much higher levels of oxygen. Both factors are considered important to the flight capability of the “giant” insects of long ago. Their flight mechanism — muscles, wings and associated skeletal structures — would not be sufficient to get and keep them off the ground today.

The ancient dragonfly I just described was a member of the Protodonata, ancestors of the damselflies and dragonflies. The largest of these today has a wingspan of 10 cm.

Most of us are familiar with adult dragonflies. These superb fliers, often brightly coloured, are voracious predators and quite unafraid of humans.

They dart about us at the beach, in the boat or on the patio.

Their seemingly haphazard flight is actually a food-gathering activity.

An excellent sense of vision, aided by large compound eyes, makes it possible for them to capture prey in the air. Most dragonflies, and their relatives, damselflies, feed on small insects such as mosquitoes, midges, and small moths, with some of the larger dragonflies feeding on bees, butterflies and even other dragonflies.

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Adult dragonflies can be difficult to catch even with a large net. Some collectors have resorted to shotguns loaded with fine shot to knock them out of the air (I don't think there was a bag limit).

Dragonflies and damselflies are not "true" flies but members of the Order Odonata.

Worldwide there are approximately 5,000 species, mostly tropical. Several hundred species have been collected in Canada, with about 67 in Saskatchewan.

Insects in immature stages are aquatic and predaceous, like their adult counterparts, and live in lakes, ponds and streams.

Insects in the immature stages, known as nymphs (or larvae), feed on smaller aquatic organisms, with some nymphs of the larger species capturing tadpoles and even small fish.

Food capture in this environment varies among species as well.

Some nymphs move cautiously through aquatic vegetation, picking off prey that they encounter. Others lie in ambush, some even digging burrows to camouflage their presence.

These nymphs have highly modified mouthparts.



A lower lip hinged and folded back and extended with incredible speed to impale its prey on impressive teeth or spines.

The truly aquatic species can breathe while submerged. In some species, tufts or blade-like extensions on the abdomen provide the surface area for extracting oxygen from the water.

Other species use internal gills, similar to gills in fish. While the function is the same, however, the body location is quite different.

In dragonfly nymphs, these gills are found in the rectum and water is pumped in and out of the rectum through the anus.

This can be described as breathing through the butt.

Most species complete development within a year, with the insect in its final immature stage climbing out of the water to complete metamorphosis and emerge as an adult.

From the collection of the author - River Jewelwings - a pair of damselflies caught in tandem, 1973.

- PHOTO BY SUNIL RAJPUT

Continued page 8



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Continued from page 7

You can see the cast skin (exoskeleton) of this stage on dock pilings, boathouse walls, or plants. Once fully emerged with wings expanded and flightworthy, adults take to the air.

The adults look very different from their nymphal stages, and indeed they have undergone a dramatic transformation.

Now they breathe in the air rather than underwater, and fly rather than walk or swim. In addition to food gathering, flight is essential to finding a mate.

Courtship behaviour is quite varied and often elaborate. The males of some species set up territories, which they patrol in regular flight patterns.

While difficult to prove, a reasonable motive for this behaviour is the desire to fend off other males and increase encounters with females of the species.

One of the most beautiful damselflies that I have encountered in the boreal forest is *Calopteryx aquabilis*, known to some as the river jewelwing.

The metallic bodies of the adults sparkle in bright sunlight and their black wingtips make the fluttering flight of this species, the largest of the damselflies in our area, a treat to observe. You may note that two specimens are pinned one above another in one view. This pair was caught in tandem. The male grasps the female behind the head so that she can bend her abdomen forward below the male and recover sperm, thereby completing the mating act. This in tandem mating position is characteristic of the Odonata and,

as you can guess, makes them vulnerable to collectors, given that their thoughts are likely elsewhere. In this species the female grasps onto vegetation, sticking her abdomen below the water surface to insert the eggs into the submerged stem. The male, meanwhile, remains on guard in the immediate vicinity. In other species, eggs are simply dropped onto the water surface or laid on plant tissue.

Many species complete their lifecycle in a single year while others, especially in the cooler climates of the far north, can take years.

Dragonflies and damselflies are uniformly beneficial both as immatures and as adults — perhaps that is why they receive good press. However, I like to think that their great beauty and interesting flight patterns also contribute to their popularity. My older brothers, children during the Second World War, envisioned the aerial displays as encounters between Allied and enemy aircraft. My friends and I found our own entertainment with these insects. We would throw bits of paper into the air in an effort to fool the flying adults. Those in the immediate area would veer briefly toward this debris in hopes of food, but only once — a clear indication of their ability to learn. I still cheer them on whenever I see them, encouraging them to destroy as many mosquitoes as possible.

And whenever I visit Denare Beach, I make a pilgrimage to see my old friend, the river jewelwing. ■

Dr. Keddie was born and raised in Flin Flon.

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Orchids — tiny flowers, big rewards



Orchids of the North don't look like the ones in the florist shop, and you would probably walk by most of them without noticing. But they're worth a look.

The elusive Calypso orchid.

Wendy Gregoire Contributing Writer

What image comes to mind when you think of orchids? A beautiful corsage, a spike of flowers on a potted plant, a bottle of vanilla extract? Most of us think of orchids as exotic tropical flowers. You might be surprised, however, to know that we have wild orchids in our area.

Our orchids don't look like the ones in the florist shop and you would probably walk by most of them without noticing because they have quite small flowers and blend into their environments. Don't let their size stop you from taking a look. Bend down closer for a better view and you will marvel at the intricacies of their flowers. If you approach even closer you might catch their fragrant scent as well. This closer inspection might mean getting a little wet or receiving a "booter", but a plant watcher doesn't mind the adversities when the

rewards are so fascinating.

So where do we find our very own orchids? One of the larger and easiest to locate is the yellow lady's slipper. Most people will see splashes of yellow in the ditches and mistake them for dandelions. Stopping at the side of the road for a few moments can clear up the any misconceptions and let you in for a big surprise. Check out the lower pouch-shaped lip. It can be as big as a jumbo marble or resemble a narrow and long AAA size shoe. Their petals and sepals can be corkscrewed or flat in shape and range in colour from greenish-yellow to brownish-purple. Each one has its own personality.

In some of the same ditches, just as the yellow lady's slippers are nearing their end, the showy lady's slippers start their reign. They seem to hide among the small conifers and shrubs of moist ditches making it easy to walk or drive right by without noticing them. What a discovery they are! The showy lady's slipper is the tallest,

largest and I think most photogenic of our orchids.

One flower would fill the cup of your hand, not that you would pick it of course. They keep telling me, "Take my picture" and I do over and over again.

You can also look for smaller flowered orchids that blend in with their environment. Spotting the first one is the hardest and after that they seem to be everywhere.

Sometimes you know someone who has seen an orchid and is willing to take you to the spot.

Several summers ago, someone took us to see the very rare dragon's mouth orchid.

We hiked in over an old road, along a forested trail, passing by a bear-hunting stand, and finally arrived at the edge of a floating bog.

There, among the hummocks of sphagnum bog, I could see a small purple flower poking its head out. The flower looked like a dragon opening its mouth and exposing a colourful fuzzy tongue. It wasn't until this year that we could visit the spot again and we did so almost twice a week for several weeks.

Being in the right place at the right time is also an important factor. The fairy slipper, a.k.a. Venus' slipper or Calypso orchid, is a good example of this.

A walk through the thick mosses under old pine forests in the summer will yield little if any evidence of its existence, except for a rare persistent capsule. In the fall, a dark single oval-shaped leaf begins to emerge, just as the other plant's leaves begin to wither away.

This leaf hides under a blanket of snow all winter waiting for the snow to melt so it can be the first orchid in flower.

Start looking for it as soon as the prairie crocus finishes flowering. In less than two weeks, it buds, flowers, and produces a capsule. Then the leaves disappear and it won't be seen again till the leaf reappears in the fall. The fairy slipper is the most dainty, delicate and fragile of our orchids. So fragile, in fact that touching it can cause it to die. We view it carefully at a reasonable distance. Again pictures help capture its character and even though it is not as photogenic as the showy lady's slipper, it is the one I



Top: Dragon's mouth.
Below: Showy lady's slipper. Two orchids worth searching for in our area.

- PHOTOS BY WENDY GREGOIRE



most like to paint in watercolour because of its ethereal qualities. When I happen upon them, I feel that I am witnessing a magical group of fairies in discussion.

I have taken you on a short tour of how to find orchids in our area, but I have left out specific site information for a reason.

It seems some people are not willing to leave rare plants in their environments. ■

Orchid Names

Some of the orchids I have named have more than one common name.

I am including a list of scientific names of orchids that we have actually found this year. These should help you with finding more information about some of the orchids in our area:

Arethusa bulbosa
dragon's mouth,
swamp pink

Cypripedium calceolus
yellow lady's slipper

Cypripedium reginae
showy lady's slipper

Calypso bulbosa
Calypso orchid, Venus'
slipper, fairy slipper

Orchis rotundifolia
round-leaved orchid

Habenaria dilatata
white bog orchid

Habenaria hyperborean
northern green bog-orchid

Liparis loeselii
twayblade

Corallorhiza maculata
spotted coral root

Corallorhiza striata
striped coral root

Gregoire will be leading another short guided excursion on September 12, in the Mistik Creek area. The tour will leave the Sam Waller Museum at noon and the Cranberry Portage bus depot at 1 p.m. Call Ron at the museum in The Pas to register, 204-623-3805.

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The new paint job in progress, 2004.



Bill Jackson captured this view from above the clouds.



The 825-foot stack dominates the evening skyline.



The new stack at 40 feet — that's a cement truck inside.

Frank Fieber route NORTH roots

In the spring of 1973 the residents of Flin Flon watched in awe as a new 825 foot stack emerged from the skyline. In one continuous run, workers poured 5,000 cubic yards of concrete. A steel liner was then constructed inside and the

stack went into service in November 1974, replacing two short stacks built in 1930. Air quality was dramatically improved for area residents and 30 years later the stack is still doing its job. This year the stack was given a fresh coat of paint extending the anti-corrosion paint about one-third of the way down from the top. ■

In the Pink

**When it comes to
fishing lures,
size matters.
So does colour.**

Raymond Gauthier
Contributing Writer

This spring, just before ice out, Barrie Martin and I were walking into One Portage Lake for a little bit of fishing for speckles. I spotted a jig hanging from a branch along the trail. It was a 1/16 oz. jig with a pink painted head, pink chenille body and pink feathers protruding out of the back of the chenille.

I stuck it in my pocket and forgot about it. Pink is not a colour I would choose. Pink is a colour for women and little babies, not a man like me. I choose strong vivid colours like blaze orange, chartreuse, fire engine red, etc.

Saskatchewan spring opener for walleye finally came. Barrie and I decided to go to Table Creek. The lakes were still frozen over.

We arrived at the bridge late in the morning after the sun had warmed the air up from plain cold to just cool. With the excitement that comes with the season opener, we launched our boat.

Surprisingly, there was just one other vehicle parked at the bridge. We had the creek to ourselves.

We started fishing with 1/4 oz. jigs. Barrie fished spinners and I tried live leaches. We quickly discovered the problem.

Every time a line touched the creek bottom it would hook onto a dead wild rice stalk and would have to be reeled in and cleaned off. After a half hour of frustration, where I felt more like a gardener raking up the front lawn



than a fisherman, we decided to experiment.

Barrie switched to spinner rigs. Although they kept the lure off the bottom, they required us to travel too quickly to get the desired reaction from the lethargic walleyes.

The walleyes were spawning, so eating was not their main priority. We had to find a way to put our bait in front of their noses and keep it there long enough to entice them to take the lure.

We were working our way through our tackle boxes when I remembered the little pink jig in my jacket pocket. I pulled it out, tied it on and started casting. The 1/16 oz. lead head and the bulkier body kept the lure from driving into the bottom and picking up the wild rice stalks. Yes, we still caught weeds but at least we were spending more time working the lures than we were cleaning the weeds off the lures.

Barrie duplicated my weight but couldn't copy the colour. Pink wasn't in his tackle box either. We managed to catch our limit fairly quickly after we had established the right lure size.

Two days later we were back on Table Creek. As we were rigging up, Barrie produced a bag of rubber body grubs.

They were pink.

Our second trip was much less frustrating than the first, and just as successful. We quickly caught six nice walleyes. Then we decided to go to the lake and try the mouth.

By this time I had become very fond of my pink jig and being the only one I had, I protected it as well as I could. Every time a jackfish bit my pretty pink hook, I would cut

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the line off and retie. When it came to hook sets, I would find myself tightening up gently instead of my normal firm yank.

We were drifting across the bay in front of the creek mouth. We had caught one nice walleye, a very large perch and quite a number of northern pike. We were approaching the shoreline, where the water was getting shallow. Suddenly, my line took a jump towards the boat. Experience told me that my little pink jig had just been swallowed by a big jackfish.

Slowly, carefully, I tightened up my slack line, envisioning the little pink jig and the 12-pound test mono line deep in the big jack's mouth, full of razor-like teeth.

As I tightened up on the line, Barrie and I watched a very large body slowly rise up from the bottom and take shape about two feet below the surface. It was a walleye, one of the longest walleyes that I have ever seen. As we watched, the huge fish opened its mouth and spit out my pretty pink jig. Oh, for a good hook set.

If I had only improved my colour collection to include pink, I would have had another big fish story to brag about. Instead, I'm crying over another big one that got away. ■



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Gail Anderson
Columnist

Bats

in her belfry



I have Bats. Those awful looking little creatures with wings, ears, and teeth.

They live in the rafters and pine boards on the outside of my home.

They cannot get indoors thank goodness, or Gail would be out of here as fast as her little short legs could travel.

Now they say it's good to have bats.

My husband reassures me we are blessed because they eat the bugs and mosquitoes.

I'm thinking I just might rather buy the new electronic device for mosquito control and send the bats to

a new home.
How many bats do I have you wonder?

All I know is that there are way too many for me.

It started out with only a few that decided my house may be the perfect location to settle.

Now
I have to tell you... bats are rodents I think . . . they certainly multiply like rodents!

In the evening when the sun is down its like a jet plane airstrip here, bats zoom in and out, up and down, and I have visions of them in my hair.

I am sure that if it happened one should get into my hair there would be a new dance step invented on the spot.



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**They may
— or may not —
pose a threat,
but they're
driving her batty**

Ewwwwwwwwww! I just shiver at the thought.

During the day, the bats stay in the rafters and between the boards.

You will never see them, but they most certainly make themselves heard. Squeak, squeak, flutter, flutter, and now and then squeals when the little beggars fight, I can hear them when I'm on the deck.

I was doing some painting of the deck yesterday.

As I was in my bent over position with paintbrush in hand, being ever so helpful, suddenly a squabble broke out in the rafters.

Good God! I was in upright position so fast, hand over butt and one over my hair, and needless to say, more brown paint on my legs than on the deck.

These bats are driving me crazy!

I find myself talking to them now. I look up at the rafters and I yell at them. I'm getting worried that the neighbours are going to send that little white truck to come and take me away soon.

One evening a while ago, my two grandsons sat out on the deck after sundown with a fish net in hopes of catching one.

It was rather funny watching them sitting there so quiet and whispering "shuuuuuush" to each other.

They held a comb in their hands, running their fingernails across the teeth making a sonic sound. Of course dear old gramps taught them that trick.

Once gramma enlightened them, and mentioned the bats would get in their hair and suck their blood, the little beggars almost pushed each other off the deck trying to get in the house. Oh Lord, the look on their faces, hee hee.

I was also told that bat poop is an

excellent source of fertilizer. My plan is, if I'm going to be stuck with these creatures I may as well make it a business and start bagging the droppings for retail.

Exactly how I will sell it I'm not sure, perhaps by the ounce as it is as small as mouse poop.

Anyone care to place the first order? I am joking of course. But I

must say, the grass grows higher against the house.

Well, folks! From the bat house at Bakers Narrows, I bid you adieu, and if the little white truck comes to get me please come visit me in the batty ward. ■

Gail Anderson writes regularly for route NORTH roots.



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The Birder's Backpack

After my last column I received a number of emails asking for field guide recommendations. The emails came after our trip to St.



Brenda Schmidt
Columnist

Walburg, Sask. where we attended the Nature Saskatchewan spring meet. As I unpacked I thought about the guides that have become an integral part of our lives. Some field guides live in our backpacks. Others are more seasonal or regional and are used only occasionally. A birder's backpack also contains guides to things other than birds.

Renowned field guide authors John Acorn and Heinjo Lahring were the guest speakers at the spring meet. We own several of their guides. In fact, Acorn's talk was about field guides and his favourite bird guides proved to be the same as ours.

In our opinion, National Audubon Society: The Sibley Guide to Birds by David Allen Sibley is by far the best guide available. It's widely respected by birdwatchers no matter their level of

experience. When you buy a field guide, make sure you read the introduction. Sibley gives exceptional advice on learning to identify birds and the bird topography section lays out the parts of a bird and field marks in a sensible way.

The National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds of North America is a fine guide as well. Both it and the Sibley guide stay in our backpack at all times. For northern boreal birding, a guide to warblers will prove helpful, especially when you're trying to sort out the fall and immature plumages.



Birding guides to help your search.

For this we rely on The Peterson Field Guide Series: A Field Guide to Warblers of North America by Jon Dunn and Kimball Garret.

We have a good variety of sparrows in the north as well. Sparrows of the United States and Canada: The Photographic Guide by David Beadle and James Rising offers detailed information and excellent photographs to help birders sort through the species and their variations. Take the Song Sparrow for instance. While you observe its size, field marks, habitat, behaviour and voice, you compare it to similar species such as the Lincoln's, Swamp and Savannah Sparrows, keeping in mind that not all Song Sparrows look the same.

According to this guide, the Song Sparrow has 29 subspecies.

Gulls: A Guide to Identification by P. J. Grant is vital for birders who choose to puzzle over these birds. Gulls are among the most challenging birds to identify and age. Some gulls take up to 40 months to reach adult plumage.

Hawks in Flight by Pete Dunne, David Sibley and Clay Sutton is a great book. Hawk watching can be challenging anywhere, but more so in the north because of the rock and trees. Often the soaring hawk disappears before you've had a good look. Birders who study

this book prior to seeing the hawk will have a much easier time identifying it.

While these bird guides provide basic information about bird behaviour, including where the species is found and what it eats, other field guides are required for more detailed information on habitat.

Plants of the Western Boreal Forest and Aspen Parkland by Derek Johnson, Linda Kershaw, Andy MacKinnon and Jim Pojar has been around since 1995 and is concise and user friendly.

Heinjo Lahring's Water and Wetland Plants of the Prairie Provinces was published in 2003 and is a must-have for naturalists.

One highlight of our trip to St. Walburg was the field trip. We stood by and listened to Lahring and Anna Leighton, botanist and co-editor of Blue Jay, a journal of natural history and conservation, as they carefully exam-

ined plants and discussed the challenges of identification.

Another highlight was my conversation with Frank Roy, author of Birds of the Elbow. I told him how the variable song of the American Redstart confuses me every spring. He laughed knowingly. We discussed geographical variations as we listened for quieter species among the Ovenbird and Red-eyed Vireo songs. As we listened, we watched others kneel in the ditch to compare a Mealy primrose to its picture in Wildflowers Across the Prairies. There Harvey found an emerald green beetle that no one could identify. As people gathered to see this jewel-like bug catch the light, someone, of course, asked for a guide.■

Brenda Schmidt is an award-winning writer and has been birding in the north for over 17 years. To find out more go to <http://www.sasktelweb-site.net/schev>

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The water bombers

Frank Fieber
route NORTH roots

It's really a flying boat with a 93 foot wing span. An odd shaped aircraft built for one purpose — to scoop up a six-ton load of water, swoop in close enough to drop the water on a raging forest fire and then get away quickly enough to do it all over again. It takes a steady hand, a clear head and a lot of co-ordination on the part of everyone involved.

Manitoba has seven CL-215 water bombers on the ready from late April until October; they're stationed in Gimli, The Pas and Thompson. Each tanker base hosts two bombers, a bird-dog Cessna 310 and a crew. A pilot and a co-pilot man each bomber, and a pilot and an air attack officer man the bird-dog aircraft. All aircraft are on wheels.

When a fire call comes in, they can be in the air within minutes. The bird dog arrives first to assess the fire and determine where best to direct the bombers — where they'll pick up water and exactly how they'll approach the fire. The main function of the bird dog is traffic control.

As soon as the bomber aircraft is airborne, the landing gear is raised into the body of the aircraft and water flaps are closed over the gap

to create a drag free "boat bottom" on the aircraft. As the bomber approaches the lake surface at 145 km/h and the belly settles gently into the water, two scoops about four by six inches roll out to scoop water into the tanks above.

Imagine the drag if you were travelling 140 km/h in a boat and you tried to stick the end of a paddle into the water. The 1,200-gallon tanks fill up in about 10 seconds. Right now we'll kill that urban myth about a scuba diver getting picked up by a water bomber and deposited on a fire — the scoops couldn't pass a one-pound fish. With the tanks full, the co-pilot flicks a switch to close the scoops and the pilot lifts off to head for the fire.

The fire-boss, a conservation officer, will usually arrive shortly after in a helicopter. He's now in charge of the fire, co-ordinating the ground and air action.

A fire which is being driven by the wind will progress in the direction of the wind, with the head of the fire being the hottest part, as new dry material is consumed. On large fires, the bombers usually work along the side of the burn, approaching the head from behind. Sometimes a fire can be pinched off or directed into a swamp, another time it may be a matter of raising the humidity in front of the head to cool it down so ground workers can get on it.

"On a big fire you can feel the heat right through the window from half a mile away," says Dean Corman, an eight-year veteran of the bomber team. "Flames can go 400 feet into the air when fresh fuel is encountered. The aircraft is very maneuverable, she can turn on a dime."

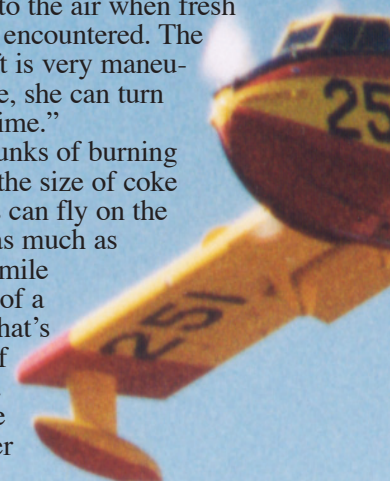
Chunks of burning wood the size of coke bottles can fly on the wind as much as half a mile ahead of a fire. That's a lot of power.

The bomber can cruise for 10 hours cross-country but usually they only take 6,000 pounds of fuel — which will give them about four hours of flying time and more room for water.

The cost of a water bomber ranges from \$1 million for a used one, to up to \$30 million for some of the newest turbo jet models.

Manitoba has agreements with other provinces in Canada to travel to out-of-province fires when required, and there is also a cross border agreement with Minnesota. Last year Corman and the crew flew about 175 hours.

Meanwhile, until the alarm goes, the crew of The Pas tanker base will wait — keeping the plane ready, playing crib, and watching the weather. ■





Pilot has flying in his blood

Frank Fieber
route NORTH roots

Dean Corman is no stranger to flying. His father Ernie flew aircraft in the far north, returning to the family at Herb Lake every summer to vacation. Ernie Corman was killed in a crash in Resolute, North West Territories in 1977, when his son was just 11 years old.

Undeterred, at 15 Dean Corman was off to flying school, and then on to work for the Manitoba Government Air Services. Eight years ago he started on the water bombers.

“Ever since I was a kid I wanted to fly floats in the north,” says Corman, whose brother is also a pilot, flying helicopter in Alberta.

Corman has earned the respect of his colleagues.

“Dean is a crackerjack pilot,” says Gib McEachern, his mentor and fellow pilot at The Pas tanker base. “Probably the best we’ve got.”

When asked about the hardest part of the job, Corman says the waiting around.

“We’re on call during daylight hours seven days a week all summer. It’s hours and hours of boredom, punctuated by moments of sheer terror.”

Corman is clearly comfortable in the cockpit when he fires up the pair of 18 cylinder, 1,200 horsepower Pratt and Whitney engines, and I can sense by his demeanor that flying is in his blood.

Corman, 38, his wife Lea and two children spend their summers at Clearwater Lake and winters in The Pas. ■



Memories of Payuk Lake

John Forster
Contributing Writer

Fifty-two years ago, my parents bought our cabin at Payuk Lake from Mr. Elmer Overby. Our memories are nothing but good.

Just getting there was an adventure. As old-timers will remember, No. 10 highway was something, especially after a heavy rain. Years ago where Mistik Creek ran under No. 10 highway, the spring thaw would wash it out. Until repairs were made a foot bridge would be installed, then a bailey bridge would be a temporary thoroughfare. We had to leave our car on the north side, then the

fun of packing all we could through the mud. Of course dad's first load was refreshment called "standard beer". (I finally found out he bought this brand because nobody else could stand it.)

We would then take our old plywood boat and five horse power viking motor down Payuk Lake, then up Mistik Creek, over Mistik Rapids (only in spring time) up to Highway No. 10 and return with the rest of the supplies.

In those days our turn-off was close to Twin Lake's and I wish the newer generation could fly from Flin Flon to Cranberry Portage and see the original highway and all the curves.

Nels and Freda MacDonald owned Mistik



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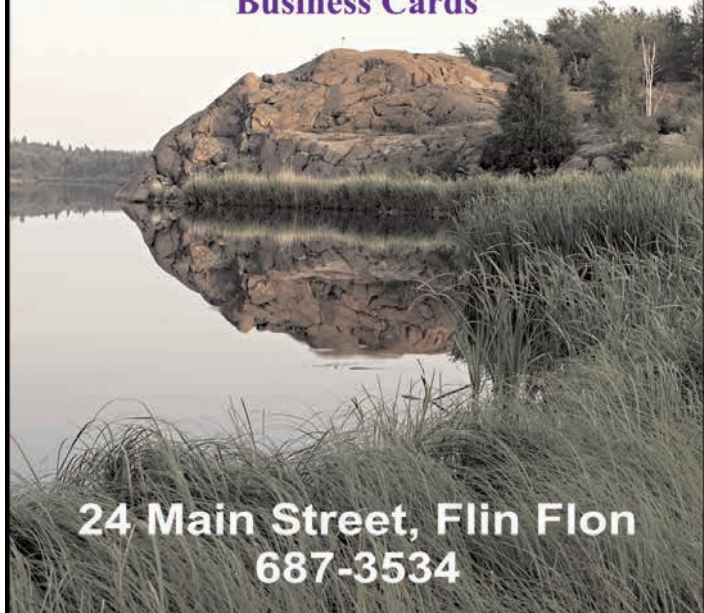
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lodge at Payuk Lake and had four cabins. Mistik Lodge closed for business many years ago. There was no electricity and in those days every winter they would have to cut blocks of ice and put them in the ice house. My job was to pack sawdust between the blocks of ice. I was told this was the most important job — anything to get him out of the way.

The regular customers at Mistik Lodge hailed from the Dakotas, Arkansas, Illinois and Minnesota. One of the originals was Jack and Melba Sharp from Arkansas. They have been coming for 44 years.

The Greshik family from Jamestown, North Dakota were the previous owners of Sharp's cabin. Mr. Greshik was a pilot. Len was also a large farmer and owned a crop-spraying business. Unfortunately he lost his life spraying crops. It was incredible some of the gadgets he brought up north. One was a machine for cutting ice blocks. It was on skids with an engine; it had a large blade that was lowered into the ice, back and forth, then the ice would be cut into squares, then loaded onto sleighs, then pulled up to the ice house. He had the first generator and can remember the rows of large glass batteries for storage.

One winter they came up north on a moose hunting trip and were over Simon House Lake when they spotted a moose. They landed and Lynn went inland and shot this moose. A little while later an old trapper, who had a reputation for being quite a character, approached Lynn and informed him the moose he shot was his pet moose and \$100 would keep his silence to the proper authorities. Of course the trapper got the money and a moose.

Bill Waugh owned the cabin on the lakefront. He recovered a lot of money from compensation cases that were justly deserved by the hard-working people at the mines.

Bill was very cagey. Years ago my brother Terry and I were going to the lake and Bill was in his garden. He called us over and asked if we would like to have a gallon of home brew. Well what 14 year-old would turn that down? Two shovels and pick appeared. His comment was "Six feet down here in a wooden box is your bottle and all I want is a sip. But don't tell your mom or dad, especially your dad."

We got down about three feet and my brother Terry said "This is B.S.,

body he dug here before. Out of the hole." Bill said "one more foot, boys." — No way. Next day Bill had his out-house over the hole.

Another great neighbour was Wayne and Audrey Johnson. When we lost our dad in a mining accident in 1966, Wayne filled the empty gap as our guardian. Endless hours he helped our mom fixing up the cabin. He left boxes of his delicious vegetables in our porch from his large garden.

The work he did clearing the forest

and stumps was unreal. He would always tell when another stump was going into orbit because his dynamite would wake up the neighbourhood. His boat and motor were always there for friends who didn't have these.

Payuk, if you don't know, means number "one" in Cree, neso "two", nisto "three", nao "four", niyanun "five", nikotwasik "six", tapukok "seven", uyenanao "eight", kakatmitatut "nine". All these lakes are in a chain which all go into Payuk then into Lake Athapaskow. ■

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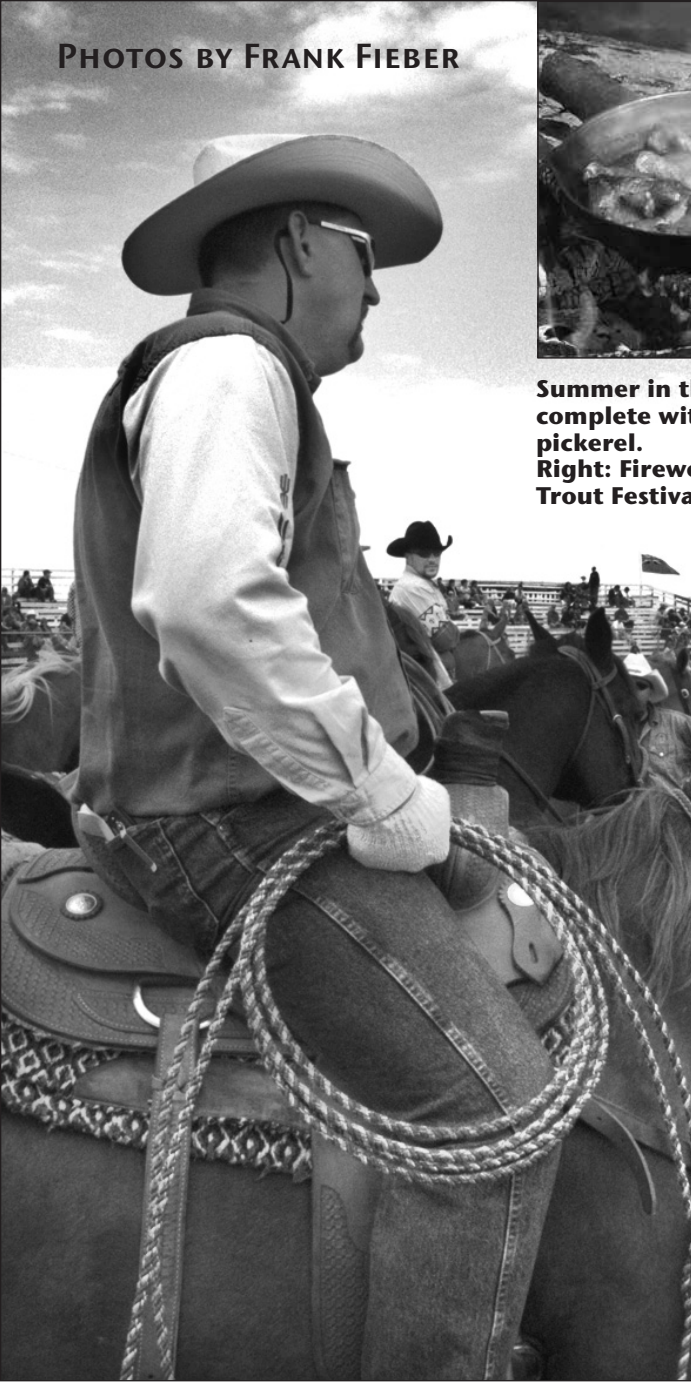
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Summer in the north wouldn't be complete without a shore lunch of pickerel.
Right: Fireworks at Denare Beach, Trout Festival.



Regional roundup



Left: Cowboy at the Opasquia Agricultural Society rodeo.
Top: Main Street Flin Flon, Trout Festival.

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Top: RCMP Musical Ride performed in Flin Flon and The Pas this summer. Below, from left: Stage show at the Manitoba Indigenous Games in The Pas. Marg Ferg of Flin Flon turned 100 on August 5. Chuckwagon races at The Pas.



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From Western Saskatchewan to Hudson Bay, I am

James R.B. Parres
Contributing Writer

I am . . . the Churchill River. I am awesome and powerful. I am spectacular at times, but I can also be serene. I am bountiful. I was created by the Great Spirit and called “Mississippi” many moons ago. When the Round Eyes with the white skin came to my land they called me “Churchill” and I thought this was amusing. Hilarious, in fact. I think of “Churchill” as my nickname.


I am a wondrous female. If Man is 98 per cent water and I am 100 per cent water this alone would make me a wondrous female. I am surely a very sophisticated lady. If you love me and treat me right I will look after you and



Portaging around the rapids, 1976.

provide for you because I am an amazing resource. If you scorn me and do me badly, I will come back to haunt you like an evil spirit because all things come full circle. Embrace me and be affectionate for I am your River and I can be your sweetheart.

As a female I quite often hold my secrets close to my breast but occasionally I am revealing. My life’s blood starts in western Saskatchewan and I journey for many miles to empty into Hudson Bay in northeastern Manitoba. I never get weary. I have many children and grandchildren and tributaries. Where my banks widen out to the shores of rock and clay covered by spruce and jackpine, birch or poplar, the Native Swampy Cree call this sagahagen (a lake) and these Aboriginal people together with the Europeans have put their Cree and Round Eye names on my children. I just chuckle. Names like Sokatisewin, Peter Pond, Ile a la Crosse, Snake, LaRonge, Key, Trade, Uskik, Iskwatum, Wintego, Pita, High rock, Granville, Southern Indian, Wasawakasik, Okipwatsikew, Loon,



A mighty drink
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. . . the Churchill River

Sisipuk, Pukatawagan, Flatrock, Nelson to illustrate some of their identities.

Strange names you say. Well, I can assure you they are all my children and they may be varied shapes and sizes but they are mine and I love them all.

For centuries I have been a highway and friend to all who cherish me and respect me. I host a wide variety of wildlife and I will for as long as I am able. Fish live in me. Moose and caribou drink me. Otters cavort in me to my amusement. All species I provide for and they are part of my wonderment. Some, however, mistake my playfulness and do not comprehend my awesome powers and sadly meet tragedy. Others do not understand me and try to cross on me before I can provide safe passage on my frozen

exterior. I creak and groan to try to warn them to be careful but oft times they do not listen.

For untold centuries I have observed that all life ends in death and I wonder if I will expire some day. Where I play with the jutting rocks that are my cradle, please be cautious. If you merely gaze in wonderment and portage then I am pleased. If you want to be a daredevil, it is at your peril for my personality can occasionally turn gruff. Despite the Engineering attempts to harness me, I still flow wild and free. I wander surreptitiously



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across this great, immense land. I am a fathomable delight for some and unfathomable for others. I tumble and I rumble. I cascade and I splash. I roar, I cough, I twist and I wind in the elegant beauty of what I am. I have even been known to gallivant and cavort.

Yes, I am truly a "mighty drink of water." I am . . . the Churchill River.



The mighty Churchill River
- PHOTOS BY FRANK FIEBER



Men came by the 100s to labour in the mines of Flin Flon. Many muckers worked 30 to 40 years underground

I'm only a broken down

A poem by John Akert
Retired Miner

I'm only a broken down
mucker
My life in the mine I have
spent
I've been fooled and played
for a sucker,
My back's all broken and
bent.
The drifting machine was my
fiddle,
The sloper my big bass drum,
The pick and the shovel my
clappers,
My spirits, the demon rum.

My youth was happy-go-
lucky
Scarlet women were my
delight,
As soon as a wrong word was
spoken
I'd put up my dukes and fight.
But pay day was my hey-day



John Akert

On beer and rum I'd get
drunk,
Then I'd wake up in the
morning,
Broke and feeling so punk.
How I scoffed at the man in
the office
Called him belittin' names

But I realized now that I'm
older
I used my back, where he
used his brains.
The drifting machine done for
my hearing,
The mine gasses have
dimmed my sight
I know my last days are near-
ing,
But I'll rally for one last fight

I'm only a broken down
mucker
My life in the mine I have
spent
I've been fooled and played
for a sucker
My back is all broken and
bent.
I know my last days are near-
ing,
I know it only to well
I'll be working, sweating and
swearing
With a pick and a shovel in
Hell.



before retiring.

- PHOTO BY BUTCHER AND RUNNELS, 1938

mucker

77 year old, John Akert is a retired mucker - living with his wife, Shirley, in Penticton, B.C. John came to Flin Flon by canoe in 1926, he was only 7 months old - travelling in the arms of his mother. Mom was from New York city, dad, Arne, was from Salt Lake City. Arne came to Flin Flon to run the brand new assay lab for HBM&S. John spent 26 years at "the company", 13 of those years underground at various HBM&S mines. John is also well know for a dynamite golf swing.



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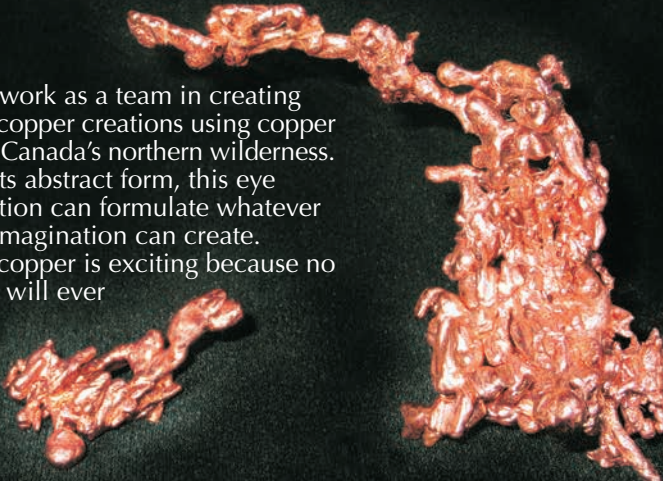
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Long-time resident of The Pas has packed a lot of living, and learning, into his 97 years

The Streit story

Frank Fieber
route NORTH roots

At 97 years old Rudy Streit still has something to say.

"That's Rudy, right there," says the nurse as I head down the long shiny hallway in St. Paul's residence in The Pas.

His hands are folded gently over his cane; he sits up straight, alert, calm and confident. The nurse introduces us and disappears.

"I'm 97 years old," he says, "and I'm not an ordinary man, I cannot tell a lie. I've been close to death so many times during my life that I know the man above has kept me alive for a purpose."

Rudy Streit was born in Switzerland in 1908, the last child of elderly parents. His mother died when he was three years old. His father worked as a labourer all his life and was 67 when Rudy's five older sisters and brothers began to worry about his long walk to work. He was walking five kilometers to and from work every day, so they bought him a pass on the electric train. The very first day he used his pass, he was killed, struck down as he crossed the highway outside the station. Rudy was eight years old.

The car that struck Rudy's father was owned

by a large company and they were held responsible, and established a trust fund for Rudy and one brother.

Rudy was living with a married sister and her husband. "This man wanted to get his hands on the whole trust fund and he really made life tough on me."

When Rudy was 15, he went to live with a wealthy family, learning the trades of harness making and upholstery. At 18, he left Switzerland, and boarded a ship for Canada.

Streit still had about \$700 from the trust fund when he landed in Halifax 10 days later. Another three days on the train and he arrived in Winnipeg on July 1, 1926.

"I knew I had to find a job quickly, so my money would not be depleted," he says. The Swiss Consul in Winnipeg found him a job on a ranch. "I was a good horseman, and I could make harness too."

That job was a start, but Streit was destined for more. He laboured a bit for CN rail and in the bush, and in 1927 he came north to The Pas. He worked on the railroad being built from The Pas to Flin Flon, and on the Churchill line.

In the winters he commercial fished Clearwater Lake, in the spring he trapped muskrats.

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Rudy Streit
- PHOTO BY FRANK FIEBER

home base for 18 years. Each year, when he reached his quota of fish on Clearwater Lake, he'd head north to Barrington Lake, where he'd haul his catch out by CP air.

"It used to cost me nine and a half cents per 100 pounds to fly my fish to Cold Lake (Sherridon). We had a packing plant there and then we'd ship out to The Pas (on the railroad) to Booth Fisheries, who shipped all the fish to the U.S. Every year about six weeks after we finished shipping fish, we'd get a bonus cheque from the U.S. customer, two cents a pound for the weight we'd delivered. That

was pretty good money."

In 1935 Rudy began courting, sending letters to his future wife Daisy in Dauphin. When they married, she came to his homestead at Clearwater Lake. They moved into The Pas when the children came of school age. There, Rudy settled into harness making for The Pas Lumber Company.

Within a dozen years or so, the horses were being replaced by machinery and Rudy moved into carpentry. This work took him all over the north. It wasn't long before his supervisory skills were in demand — he had a knack for handling men and seeing the big picture of the job site.

He worked on both the Naval Base and Rocket Base in Churchill.

International Nickel Company in Thompson also relied on his expertise.

He built warehouses, hangers, and other buildings across northern Manitoba for Northern Affairs.

He remembers vividly the construction of Easterville, a townsite built in the 1960's as compensation for the flooding of lands by the Grand Rapids power dam. Rudy and his crews built 100 buildings in nine months, but what is even more memorable is a bear story.

"I tamed five black bears there. I began feeding them leftovers from the cookhouse. First they came from the bush about 100 feet away, cautiously

taking the food and running back to the edge of the bush, then eventually I had them eating out of my hand. The men sat back in the cookhouse, afraid I would be chewed up, but that bear was so gentle she sniffed me all over and took a sausage right out of my mouth. They will not harm me."

That's the kind of confidence Streit has shown all his life. At 97 he says he's had time to "concentrate" on what really matters.

Rudy and Daisy were married for 43 years before she was taken with cancer, 26 years ago. They had six sons and a daughter. Rudy's eyes get brighter when he begins to list his grand and great-grandchildren. Doctors, lawyers, bankers and chain store owners are among them.

He's written a book, which will eventually be bound and packaged for his grandchildren to have knowledge of their own family history.

"I'm still here for a reason, I believe, and I'd like to write one more book," he says. The message — how to love, to share.

"I'd dedicate my work to help the people estranged from one another, for the betterment of man. That's my purpose."

After I take a few pictures of Streit, he takes me into his room, to show me a picture of Daisy. "That's Daisy," he says with a smile. Forty-three years together." ■

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Looking for Cheesecake

John St. Godard
Contributing Writer

Branding works. My attention is drawn to a red windmill, emblazoned on a bag of potato chips. Old Dutch. Memories rush in. I pick up the bag of chips and hold it like a proud father. I am back in Manitoba, on my way to Flin Flon. The door swings open to the whiz of morning traffic; Ashern's gas pumps bustle under a hot prairie sun. The bone-bleached highway beckons.

An 825-foot smokestack is to Flin Flon what windmills are to the Dutch. (Although windmills probably don't offer the same aroma in a down-draft.) It is the first thing we see, and the constant stream of smoke means a paycheque for most Flin Flonners.

There can be no mistaking Flin Flon, but much has changed. I'm 25 years older, and my car-mates, Al and Alita Mealy — father and daughter ex-pats with a family cottage at nearby Denare

High school reunions are like family reunions. After a short warm-up, we try to pick up where we left off.

Beach — are convinced they see Indigo bushes and Marsh Marigolds along the highway. When I lived here, I saw a ditch. Who knew?

I have returned for my high school reunion. The class of '79. The fact that I didn't graduate is moot. In fact, my presence confirms the appropriateness of this province's motto: Friendly Manitoba. There will be a party, please come.

My first stop is on Princess Boulevard, where my parents and their five squirming children, all under 10, fit snugly into a tiny, three-bedroom bungalow. We were a family that believed in miracles, and as such, had only one bathroom. Down the street from my old house, Tony and Mary-Lou Spooner

raised five children, including my friend John. Today, they're comfortably rooted at the same address. But for their waves of grey hair, they are their former selves: Tony a retired geologist and an active outdoorsman; Mary-Lou a singer in local musicals and volunteer at the school. I share their morning coffee and remember when the backyards had no fences, and I could peel barefoot to their house to wake up John.

The banner at the front of the Elks Hall reads, Hapnot School Reunion: Rekindling The Flames of Friendship.

But reconnecting with some of my Hapnot schoolmates is like attempting a fill-in-the-blanks test, after dozing through class. Plenty of holes. I don't always get it right.

"So, Nadine ... did you speak Greek at home?"

"No, we're Hungarian."

One for them. As a constant reminder of our final year at Hapnot, our name tags are bejewelled with snazzy photos, circa 1979.

Small groups begin to form, and

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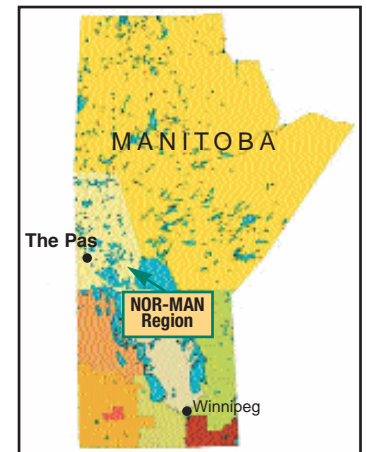
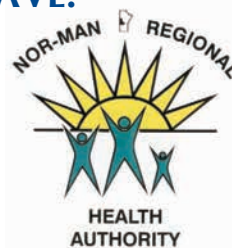
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After dinner smiles. Back, from left, Gary Wallaker, John St. Godard, Kerri Kostuchuk. Front, Darrel Chudy, Dawn Russel, John Spooner.

pose for photos. People dance, but we're a step (or two?) behind our former selves. If I'd walked in on this party 25 years ago, I'd have fallen out the door in hysterics, bolting for the nearest bush party.

During dinner, I look just beyond our table and ask, "Is that cheesecake?"

Karen Leifso strains to look also. "Who is Cheesecake?" she asks, genuinely mystified.

This is a legitimate question in my hometown, where nicknames include Zoony, Shabooya, and the Candy Bar Boys. Who is Cheesecake, for sure.

High school reunions are like family reunions. After a short warm-up,

we try to pick up where we left off. We often assume no one's changed, and mistakenly believe that others will fit neatly back into their 1979 wrappers. We jostle for position, or we assume our old ones, if not too painful, and laugh it up.

Before the reunion, many of us would have walked past one another on the street. We left Hapnot as teenagers, and tonight we are middle aged. Most have children, some grandchildren. But we have become RCMP Staff Sergeants, insurance brokers, and school teachers. Our Flin Flon friends have raised their families here, and work at HBM&S ("the company"), as computer technicians, in the field of education and at retail outlets.

We've changed. Flin Flon's changed.

I live in Montreal now, but I'll always be from Flin Flon. Clearly, I've been branded.

But now I'm wondering. Montreal gives me a comfortable distance from which to gush. The real question I need to ask myself is, "Will I be back to Flin Flon? And if so, Why?"

Well, I don't know about if or when, but why? That's easy.

I'm still looking for Cheesecake. ■

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Blue

Harry Antoniw
Contributing Writer

The blueberry season is here and it's time to think of that awesome tasting bluish red wine. This recipe will produce a little better than a gallon of wine, but may be multiplied as many times as you wish. Select ripe, but sound fruit, reject any mouldy berries.

BLUEBERRY WINE

2 lb. Blueberries
1 lb. light raisins
Juice of 1 lemon
3 lb. white sugar
1 gal. water
1 campden tablet
1 tsp. yeast nutrient
1/2 pkg. wine yeast

Wash fruit. In a clean, sterile crock (two gallons or larger) or in a large enough plastic vessel, pour half gallon of hot water over the sugar and stir thoroughly to dissolve. Add the blueberries, raisins, lemon juice, campden tablet and yeast nutrient. Pour the other half gallon of hot water and stir thoroughly. Do not crush the berries (raisins may be crushed or chopped up before hand).

Cover the crock with plastic and tie tightly to prevent fruit flies from entering. Allow the mixture to sit overnight. Sprinkle the yeast but do not stir for at least four hours. Keep at room temperature.

As in all pulp fermentation, this will have to be stirred daily to keep the fruit moist during the primary ferment. Ferment on the pulp for seven days, or if using a hydrometer, until the specific gravity drops to

PHOTO BY
FRANK FIEBER

berry wine

between 30 to 50.

On the eighth day, strain the pulp (berries, raisins) with colander and siphon into gallons. I prefer glass gallons, sometimes there are problems with certain plastics. Attach fermentation locks. Keep at room temperature and siphon off again in three weeks time. Again attach fermentation locks and store in a cool area, a basement will do, for six months or until clear. Before bottling my wine, I use stabilizer powder to prevent renewed fermentation, otherwise, bottles may blow.

I prefer to siphon off or rack my wine two or three times during the six month

period, this will clean your wine much faster and get rid of any yeast. It's important to keep the plastic tied tightly and locks half filled with water. Check this periodically. If fruit flies invade your wine, you will have home-made vinegar! If you are making two to four gallons of wine at a time, use only one package of wine yeast.

No time to make the wine now? Pick your berries now and freeze them. Make wine during the long winter months.

In our next issue, we will publish a recipe for chokecherry wine. When chokecherries are ripe, pick and freeze them to use later.

Enjoy your wine!■

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Reid Simpson has lived his dream for 15 years, now he's ready for whatever life brings

people. But there comes a point in time when you've got to think about doing something else."

Being a hardworking, team-oriented tough guy has kept Simpson employed all these years. He's worked for nine different NHL clubs and is only one team shy of the league record for most uniforms worn, a distinction shared by retirees J.J. Daigneault and Michel Petit.

Simpson's played 301 NHL games so far, first pulling the sweater of Bob Clarke's Philadelphia Flyers over his shoulder pads for one night in 1991-92. Quite possibly he played for the last time in the NHL as a member of the Pittsburgh Penguins, with whom he saw action in two games last season. Mostly, though, he spent 2003-04 with Pittsburgh's American Hockey League farm team in Wilkes-Barre/Scranton, Pa.

In between there have been stops with the Minnesota North Stars, New Jersey Devils, Chicago Blackhawks, Tampa Bay Lightning, St. Louis Blues, Montreal Canadiens and Nashville Predators.

While he waits for word on the upcoming season, Simpson has spent his summer travelling and working out to stay in shape, just in case.

"For me at this age it's all about conditioning. If I'm in good shape I know I can still play in the National Hockey League. If you're at any sub-par conditioning level then you just can't play anymore because there are so many young guys that are coming in who are bigger and faster."

Simpson began playing professionally in the fall of 1989 with the AHL's Hershey Bears after finishing his junior career with the Prince Albert Raiders of the Western Hockey League. The Flyers selected him in the fourth round of that year's entry draft.

Jeff MacKinnon Contributing Writer

Reid Simpson expected his body to give out long before he lost the desire.

He was just hoping to get a few good years in as a professional hockey player before he went off to join the real world. But 15 years? No way.

That's why the Flin Flon export won't shed any tears if it turns out he's through as a professional at the age of 35. He's gotten plenty out of the game.

Simpson was still a free agent as of

early August. He was among those unsigned veteran players in limbo because of a labour dispute that is threatening to wipe out the 2004-05 National Hockey League season.

Simpson may not wait for the smoke to clear from the pending NHL mess. He says he's thinking about retiring.

"It's been 15 years. I never thought I would play this long," says the 6-foot-2, 215-pound left-winger.

"When I was 26, 27 I thought I'd play until I was 30 and that would have been great.

"I've gotten to play in a lot of different cities and I've met a lot of great

it a game?

His other stops in the minors have included Kalamazoo in Michigan, the state where Simpson now spends most of his summers, Albany, N.Y., Cleveland, Ohio and Milwaukee, Wis. Simpson says he's not too interested in signing on with the AHL just to keep playing. He's been there and done that.

There may be one other option — the World Hockey Association.

A group led by the Golden Jet, Bobby Hull, is moving ahead with plans to resurrect the WHA to begin play on Oct. 29 in eight North American cities.

They're zeroing in on NHL players approaching the end of their careers and on AHL farmhands. The WHA is being met with much skepticism, however. And two of its Canadian cities, Toronto and Hamilton, hadn't

lined up a place to play. Finances are also being questioned.

If Simpson is to join the WHA it most certainly would be as a member of the Dallas Americans, who are owned by a friend, Rick Monroe. Monroe owns a sports marketing firm in Los Angeles.

"(Rick's) got all his ducks in a row, so he's ready to go if the league goes. He's a good guy. He loves hockey and he's got a couple of people working for him who know hockey. I'm not sure how it's going to work, so we'll just see how it goes."

In the meantime, Simpson was planning on returning home to Flin Flon in August to play in the Roller Goodwin Memorial tournament. He's already been home once this summer, when he took in the Trout Festival and spoke to the graduating class of

Hapnot.

In a way Simpson is in the same boat as those teenagers. They're all wondering where they're headed in life. "It's weird because you're 35 years old and you're contemplating a career change and you haven't really done anything else. There's nothing wrong with that. There's not really any time to do anything else when you're playing hockey."

Simpson says throughout his career he's always played with his home town in mind.

"It's a pretty proud town and when someone makes it they're really supportive. I've felt that support throughout my whole career," he says.

"It's always been one of those things where you didn't want to let anyone down either, because people in Flin Flon are watching. You always wanted to give it your best effort."

No one can say that Simpson hasn't done that. ■

Simpson is the son of Bob Simpson and Angela Simpson of Flin Flon.



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