

ALBERTA Street News

Volume 15

Issue 10

October, 2018



**Deadmonton, Edmonton's
Professional Haunted House.**

Story on Page 2

**Above: People dressed in military
costumes work outdoors.**

Photo by Linda Dumont

**Left: Joshua Branston and Shaun Giroux,
in costume as Sergeant Rock.**

Giroux is the outdoor manager

Photo by Josh Branston

ALBERTA STREET NEWS

**Founder/Publisher/
Editor, Design -
Linda Dumont**

Writers:

**Maria B.
John Zapantis
Joanne Benger
Allan Sheppard
Andie W.L.
Linda Dumont
Timothy Wild
Angelique Branston
Norma Harms
Sharon Austin**

Photos:

**John Zapantis
Linda Dumont
Josh Branston**

Cover photos:

**Deadmonton
by Linda Dumont and Josh
Branston**

**Deadline for next issue is
October 15**

**Alberta Street News
9533-106A Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta,
T5H 0S9
780-428-0805
dumontlc@hotmail.com**

**Web:
albertastreetnews.org**

**THE VIEWS
PRESENTED ARE THOSE
OF THE CONTRIBUTORS.**

Deadmonton Haunted House open to scare

By Linda Dumont

Deadmonton, Edmonton's professional Halloween haunted house located at 7031-Gateway Boulevard, opened for the 2018 season on September 27 and will be open nightly until November 4. The apocalyptic theme for this year is 'Quarantined'. There is a different theme every year.

The storyline for Quarantined is as follows - "Climate change has melted the ice caps faster than anyone predicted. Coastal cities around the world are under water and governments everywhere scramble to move their populations inland. Meanwhile a group of scientists, headed by Dr. Ro Lang from the Drangr Institute, travel to America where the disappearing ice caps have revealed soil and plant life that has been buried for over 20 million year. Dr. Lang's last report excitedly describes the discovery of a living fossil of the microscopic world. Some common ancestor of viruses and bacteria 'it appears immune to modern day antibiotics and anti viruses. It replicates at an astonishing rate. Testing how it interacts with live tissue in the morning.' No other transmissions were received from the research team. After five days of no contact a rescue team was sent to find out what went wrong and to bring back any survivors. Two days later the team's vessel returns with a lone survivor from the rescue team, slipping in and out of consciousness and missing his left hand. Headquarters checks the video footage for answers. It is damaged but they salvage enough to see the lab showered with blood and severed limbs. They hear the screams of the rescue team as the video cuts out. Crippled by their efforts to deal with the fast rising sea levels, world governments are in no position to deal with the pandemic brought back by the rescue team. Those infested are disfigured, then driven to extreme rage, violence and cannibalism, spreading the disease to their victims. In a few short and horrible months, it has spread across the globe. From the ashes of civilization a rogue survivalist group has emerged. They gather survivors and bring them to their quarantined compound. Those with scientific backgrounds are given top priority as they desperately search for a cure to stave of the apocalypse.

Ryan Kozar is the owner of Deadmonton. He is also the fright master in the creation and design of the scary storyline and theme inspired rooms. This is the fifth year for Deadmonton and the first in their new location. For the past three years they were at the Paramount Theatre on Jasper Avenue and the first year were located across from Grant MacEwan College.

Shaun Giroux aka Sergeant Rock, is the outside manager and the mastermind behind the outside storyline where army personnel keep the people in line while they are waiting to get inside and eliminate those who are diseased. From the time participants enter the line up they are immersed in the story line. A woman dressed as an army medical officer announces, "You have entered a quarantined area. You will all line up. Look around to see if anyone has signs of infection including boils". Men dressed in military uniforms under the command of Sergeant Rock bark out orders to keep the line up in control and check people for signs of the disease. Actors who appear obviously diseased seek refuge in the crowd until they dragged off by the officers.

Before people can enter the house their hands are scanned by the military nurse to make sure they are clear of infection. Inside the house, they walk through 18 theme inspired rooms, each depicting some aspect of the story line, to emerge in the Deadmonton Store, that sells a wide selection of costumes, masks, accessories and even scary contact lenses.

Deadmonton is open 7 to midnight on weekdays and 6 to 10 on weekends. It is not recommended for children under age 12.



Right: The entrance to
Deadmonton house
Photo by Joshua Branston

Hallowe'en Trivia

By Joanne Bengner

The following unscientific information has been collected from a variety of unreliable sources.

1. A dead man will become a vampire if a dog or cat jumps over his body.
2. As a charm against the powers of darkness wear peony seeds at your neck.
3. You can get rid of vampires with silver bottles, silver stakes, wooden stakes, crosses, holy water, roses, garlic, sunlight, ringing bells or prayer.
4. If terrified pray loudly or recite nursery rhymes to break the spell.
5. A baby born with a tooth is in danger of growing up to become a vampire or a werewolf.
6. A bonfire on Halloween night will keep witches away
7. If you want a lucky year ahead, carry a rabbit's foot that comes from a white rabbit shot in a cemetery on Halloween night.
8. You can become a werewolf if bitten or cursed. If bitten, you will become a werewolf on the next full moon.
9. A werewolf will be cured if you know the Christian name he had before his transformation and call it out three times.
10. Werewolves can be killed by vampires, which are the only living thing that can kill a werewolf, or by being shot with a silver bullet that has been blessed by a priest.
11. Vampires can be killed with a silver bullet, a stake through the heart or exposure to sunlight.
12. You are safe from werewolves in a car if you keep the windows and doors closed.
13. You cannot outrun a werewolf for nothing can go faster than a werewolf, not even a horse.
14. Werewolves roam at night, eating babies and exhuming corpses so stay clear of graveyards on Halloween night.
15. To protect yourself against witchcraft wear a brooch shaped like a small broom
16. In the movie *Zombieland*, a contaminated burger started it and ordinary bullets killed zombies.
17. On Halloween the souls of dead people return to their homes for a last visit. Give them a treat and they won't harm you.
18. To escape from a vampire or werewolf, walk through a running stream. They cannot follow you across water.
19. To protect children from ghosts, tie a red thread around their wrists.
20. Don't harm cats. Witches are shape changers and may appear to us as cats.
21. There are three kinds of witches. White witches do good, black witches do bad and grey witches are able to do both good and bad.
22. If all else fails, lock the door and cower in your bed.



October

By Joanne Bengner

It is October and all of us who read *Anne of Green Gables* share her thought, "I'm so glad with live in a world where there are Octobers."

October 1 is St. Theresa's Feast Day. St. Theresa, our little flower, showed us we can help others through even the smallest of charitable acts. We can give money, food or clothes, and we can help enlighten and spread joy by such kind and loving acts a sharing a smile, being patient or saying kind words to strangers.

2. October 8 is Thanksgiving Day, also known as Turkey Day and The Long Weekend. Gather the family together and eat turkey with cranberry sauce and finish up with pumpkin pie. Be grateful for family and food and if you have neither, be grateful you don't have family feuds and obesity to worry about. One dear lady tells me she has Thanksgiving dinner for four – "Me, myself and I and Jesus."

3. October 10 is Mental Health Day. We are rapidly moving towards the point where we will not see mental health as different from physical health – something's wrong and must be fixed.

4. The entire month of October is Cyber Secu-

urity month as well as Small Business month. The week of October 14 to 20 puts a greater focus on it with Small Business Week combined with National Co-op Week. This week even includes International Credit Union Day on October 18. In the spirit of St. Theresa we are celebrating the little guys who are hoping and striving. Good luck to all co-op and credit union members who are joining together and pooling their money to help each other get ahead. Good luck also to the brave souls who have opened up new small businesses to meet a need the multinationals could not fill. Some work at home. Some join others in marketing through craft fairs, farmers' markets and the like. All give local personal service. Celebrate this week by visiting a small business.

5 October 28 is the last Sunday in October and we old timers must leave the clock alone. Sure, Daylight Saving time used to last from the last Sunday in April to the last Sunday in October. That was a fixed rule we learned in school. It no longer applies. This year Daylight Saving Time lasts from March 11 to November 4. We have been given the gift of extra DST whether we want it or not.

6. October 31 is Halloween, which is all things to all people. For some it is National Magic Day, the anniversary of Harry Houdini's death. For others it is the religious celebration of All Saints' Day followed by All Souls' Day.

In Mexico it is the Day of the Dead with parades of people dressed as skeletons and wearing skull masks. Families go to cemeteries to visit dead relatives and share a meal with them. The superstitious believe the wall between this world and the next grows thin on Halloween night so spirits of the dead, both good and bad, can come to earth and walk among us. For some it is Fright Night with haunted houses, ghost stories and horror movies. For the majority of us it is the popular children's celebration with costumes, jack-o-lanterns and children going door to door saying "Trick or Treat" or "Halloween Apples". Whatever Halloween is to you, Happy Halloween. Have a good one.

Please support our vendors!
Vendors pay 75 cents per paper. Papers are sold by donation
Vendors can pick up papers at
10548-96 St.
from 5:30 to 9 p.m.

2018 Annual Flexxaire Parkinson's Step 'N Stride raises over \$250,000

Story and photo by John Zapanis

Parkinson's disease is a degenerative disorder that attacks motor and non-motor activity when the chemical, dopamine, starts to deteriorate in the brain. When that occurs, various problems prevail, that could range from recognizable tremors to rigidity and slowness of movement in people living with Parkinson's. The average age of diagnosis is 58. Parkinson's is the second most common degenerative disorder. Thousands of Albertans are afflicted each year. The cause is unknown and there is still no cure for the disease. It does not discriminate, which encouraged 375 brave and caring souls to participate in the 2018 Annual Flexxaire Parkinson's Step 'N Stride Run and Walk that was hosted by the Parkinson's Association of Alberta on Saturday September 8th at Rundle Park in Edmonton.

This year's MC was Edmonton CTV television personality Bianca Millions, who did the honours in counting down the clock to start off the runners and walkers. They chose to run or walk on either a running route which consisted of a 10 km track, or a walking route that ranged from 1 km to 3 km or 5 km along Rundle Park and back to the starter's line.

The run commenced at 10:30 a.m. followed by the walk at 11 a.m. Once the runners and walkers had completed their journey the group was treated to free coffee, courtesy of Tim Horton's and hamburgers and hot dogs pro-

vided compliments of Sobey's Foods.

Joseph McGuire, 37, was at the event surrounded by family members and friends, who decided to walk with him to support his struggles with Parkinson's. The former semi truck driver, who drove for 17 years, was first diagnosed for onset Parkinson's one year ago. He started to feel its impact four years ago at age 33. His grandfather was the only member in his family tree ever known to have been afflicted by Parkinson's.

He first started noticing problems with Parkinson's one day when he experienced a tightening of the muscles in his left arm. Once an avid football player, he was told by a doctor that he tore his bicep throwing a football. When he heard that startling news, he soon doubted the doctor's opinion. To add to the confusion, the doctor also told him he had jumper's knee, tennis knee and as time progressed further the doctor thought it was fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome and decided to medicate Joseph to ease his pain. This year, he started experiencing tremors, symptoms of Parkinson's along with bradykinesia. Concerned about these mysterious symptoms, he went to see a neurologist, who conducted a battery of tests to determine the overall problem and he was finally diagnosed with onset Parkinson's.

In an interview with ASN, McGuire elaborated on the day when he knew that his problems were starting. McGuire said, "I knew I was in trouble when my hands wouldn't start working properly. I climbed up into the truck and I fell backwards off the truck and almost ended up under a trailer that was backing up beside me. So that was my last day of work."

Other problems before his fall from that truck were occurring throughout that time, McGuire said, "I already had problems with holding things and throwing things and throwing them across the room by accident, or dropping them. So that was the point when I knew this was not normal. I said to myself, I need to get checked out."

When he went to see a neurologist, the experience of being examined by an obnoxious professional wasn't a fun-time, McGuire said, "I was sent to one neurologist, who, because of my age, was already judgmental, questioning

and laughing that I had a cane, telling me to stop shaking. When I told him I couldn't stop shaking, he told me maybe I should see a psychiatrist."

The child-like antics of this professional encouraged McGuire to seriously pull away from seeking further advice. He sought the medical advice of his GP, who then referred him to a neurologist that eventually diagnosed his problem as Parkinson's. He currently takes a total of 31 medications to manage his disease. He is also being treated for depression and takes two different medications to manage that problem. To this day, he's not quite certain what may have led to his Parkinson's, but has a hunch that it's possible that it may have had something to do with inhaling chemicals, while working a lot of jobs related to chemical production work. McGuire said, "I had a lot of jobs with a lot of chemicals, but I was kind of assured that they, the doctors, don't think that led to it. I actually have asthma. You know they're trying to find what the cause of Parkinson's is. It's not hereditary in my case, because my family doesn't have it. Maybe there's a chance of chemical exposure being a part of it."

When the going gets tough and it's all a little too much, when physical obstacles seem to get in his way, some days Joseph has to call it a day, McGuire said, "A lot of things that I used to do, when I try it, the frustration is overwhelming. It takes you over. You have no chance of being positive that day, but other days you get frustrated and you just kind of drop it and move on and try something else and come back next time, when you feel better."

Right after the completion of the barbeque, a small closed door presentation took place inside one of the smaller community halls at Rundle Park. One keynote speaker named Eddie Jossy lives with Parkinson's. He was first diagnosed for the disease in 2010. One day he noticed an array of problems commonly evident as the symptoms for Parkinson's. When he climbed stairs, he'd experienced coordination problems. He'd shuffle when he walked, feeling rigid in his body. His hand writing became a lot smaller than usual. He had a hard time reading.

During one aspect of his presentation he made a valid point on how exercise has helped him stabilize ground with Parkinson's. Jossy said, "Luckily for me, my brother-in-law, Darryl, had just recently completed an adult fitness course and he was up to the challenge. Darryl believed that if my body was strong to start with, it would take it longer to break down as the disease progressed. It made sense to me, but I didn't know at that time how many different exercises there were for me to try. He built me a stationary electric bike and gave me a lot of exercises to do. I had check lists and stat sheets to record my efforts, which Darryl kept pretty good tabs on."



The 2018 Annual Flexxaire Parkinson's Step 'N Stride brought out the best of participants. Above left Richard's girlfriend Halle Livingston, Richard McGuire, Richard's Dad Joseph McGuire and Anthony, a friend of Richard's. Richard and Anthony are teammates playing for the Edmonton Wildcats Junior Football Team.



Calgary Core ASN Vendor Nick Diclich will be a Spirit Guide Fixture where his paper stands were located.

DIKLICH, NIKICA (Nick)

December 6, 1958-August 8, 2018

By Andie W.L.

I have been thinking about the time I was told from a client at Elements, formerly Calgary Self Help, that the late Nick D. had been rushed to the hospital from his home about April 10, 2018. He apparently had a stroke! When I had heard about Nick being in the Foothills Hospital I went up to see him several times a week. Then I phoned the Foothills Hospital about June 18 and was told by the unit clerk that Nick was moved to an extended care and she wasn't able to tell me where, because I wasn't a family member and Nick wasn't assigned to my care. I asked around the core area, and no one seemed to know where Nick was.

I tried several times to meet him to have coffee and a meal in the fall and winter of 2017 - 18. We would meet, but he didn't want me to sit with him. I had to sit at another table across or about two tables down from him. I never gave up on him. I took it that he was wanting to share his conversation and I would take the time out to chat and listen to him. I wasn't about to judge him because he wanted me not to sit with him, but to sit at another table. We also had many conversations when I was passing him in the core and going by

he was going through. It bought tears to my eyes, to listen to his hardships, being overwhelmed in dealing with his life at that time. I knew Nick had a support system, resources and safety net that he could go to. He had, in my eyes, the best kind of health care team to help him whenever he was troubled. I know that no one, me included, would want to give up on Nick.

I saw Nick occasionally and always stopped to chat with him in March, 2018, walking eastbound on the south side of the 7th Avenue SW. to sell papers on the corner of 3 St & 7th Ave SW. in the early afternoons to about the supper hour. And I saw him selling papers. It appeared that he had several customers there. They would stop to buy back issues and the new paper for the month.

I will miss seeing Nick on the corners where he sold ASN paper's in the core area. He was definitely a fixture at the paper stands where he had spent many hours in the mornings and afternoons, to the supper hours. I know that he had told me he had taken breaks in the late mornings to volunteer to answer the main phone line in the room at Elements. After his volunteer hours, he would venture back out to the paper stands where he was known to be

a fixture to those corners in the core. The last time I saw Nick selling papers was the end of March.

Nick was the 2nd last ASN vendor is to sell papers here in Calgary, AB. And I'm the only Indigenous - Siksika - urban woman to be still selling the ASN paper. I will keep on selling the ASN Street Newspaper for as long as the paper is in print and I won't forget Nick D. For many years he sold the Calgary Street Talk until 2010, then started selling the ASN paper from Edmonton, AB. in 2011.

Some of the customers are in disbelief that I'm the only street paper vendor in Calgary and have asked why this has happened. To make it brief, I say vendors have moved on to other cities and provinces, died or retired. Some customers remember being told by former vendors that there were at one time 40 to 60 vendors selling the paper back in 2004. They remember when the Calgary Street Talk ended their publication in July 2010.

The number of vendors declined to about six remaining vendors since 2011. I want to end my story by saying that Nick was my social friend and I was someone for to him to lean on when he needed to find someone who would listen to him no matter what was on his mind. He spoke his mind around me! He would also often call me to chat on his cell phone. I enjoyed chatting with Nick!

"Soon my daily routine included lots of exercise, riding bike, yoga, walking and running. I retired in 2004 and exercise quickly became my new job. We believed that physical exercise can slow down the disease and keep me moving."

"Currently Parkinson's has no known cure, but research has shown that physical exercise can slow down the disease. The physical activity can be in the form of walking, swimming, biking, or any activity you enjoy and keep your entire body moving."

"Parkinson's is a big job, but it is a job that I can consider to be worth the effort and the fight each day. I know my day will involve some sort of exercise. I know that if I continue

to do these exercises my life will improve. My balance will continue to be strong, so I can move around. My voice lessons will enable me to have a strong voice to be heard. I will keep stretching and pushing my body to new limits. I will stand tall and strong. You can improve your life. I would like to think every day in ways most people don't understand."

Nine other cities in Alberta held Step 'N Stride events on September 8th and 9th as a total of more than \$250,000 was raised for Parkinson's programs, services and research. The Edmonton event's success is also attributed to its many volunteers, runners, walkers and sponsors along with the Parkinson's Associa-

tion of Alberta's staff and Operations Manager Brandi La Bonte and Fund Development and Events Coordinator April Adler who deserve a big thank you for helping to keep the spirit alive in hopes of one day finding a cure for Parkinson's.

To find out more about how to get involved in future events regarding Parkinson's contact Parkinson's Association of Alberta Fund Development & Events Coordinator April Adler Phone. 780-425-6400 ext 230 or email aadler@parkinsonassociation.ca

Brother, can you spare some time

By Allan Sheppard

My contribution last month called out the Interac consortium for what seemed to me dog-whistle rhetoric in advertising for its debit card system. I had seen an advertising panel at Southgate Mall that coyly offered the Interac card as a way to rid oneself of the nuisances of “spare change,” which I took, I think not unreasonably, to be an euphemism for panhandling. (Interac may say it had other meanings in mind, but I found the suggestion of panhandling obvious.) I confessed, along the way, that I seldom give money to panhandlers, citing my own low-income status. That was true, as far as it went: every dollar of my disposable income, and sometimes more, goes to my single-parent daughter-in-law and my three grandchildren. If I face a choice between doing something for myself, for my grandchildren, or a panhandler on the street, I never have doubts about what I will choose and anticipate having to choose. But there is another reason beyond my priorities in relative poverty: panhandlers make me feel uncomfortable. They invite, sometimes seem to demand, a social interaction that I don’t know how to handle.

That may seem odd, coming from someone who, as long-time ASN readers will recall, has often advocated for panhandlers to have their rights and needs respected and accommodated. But advocating for openness and generosity in impersonal print is not the same as practicing those virtues face-to-face—especially for someone who has felt awkward in most social situations all my life.

These thoughts were prompted by a meme that was shared to my Facebook timeline recently. The meme, headlined *How to Respond to Panhandling*, was created by the Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition (GCHC).

“When you meet a fellow human who is asking for help,” the meme notes, “it may make you feel uncomfortable. This does not mean that person does not deserve the same rights as you.” The meme adds, for benefit of those who might not agree that panhandlers have rights, let alone rights equal to everyone else, “Cities are increasingly criminalizing people who are financially poor with laws, such as making it illegal to sit on sidewalks. This works to remove people from sight, but is not a humane or sustainable solution.”

What a neat, concise, low-key, non-accusatory way of encapsulating the issues: using the law to address a social challenge is neither humane nor sustainable. (Well, duh!)

And making poor people invisible inevitably makes things worse: the best way for socially awkward people like me to learn to be comfortable with poor people (or anyone else) is to have opportunities to interact with them; the best way for communities to learn to respect the rights of poor people among them is to have opportuni-

ties to interact with them.

Instead of isolating poor and destitute citizens, we should find ways to accommodate and integrate them. Stop looking for ways to label poor people as them; find ways to include them as us. (Well, double duh!)

That won’t happen overnight, if it happens at all. We are too committed to the notion that all our successes are always and only due to our own efforts to consider the notion that others’ failures can be, might be, often probably are due to circumstances beyond their control. Both notions are sometimes true but often not. And when failures are due to personal choices—when someone messes up—isn’t that where humaneness and compassion might reasonably enter the picture?

The GCHC meme punches hard for compassion. Its design features a sketch figure of a panhandler holding a sign that says, “Seeking compassion.” Not “Seeking money”: “Seeking compassion.”

The figure is surrounded by balloon quotes with suggested responses to panhandling:

“Hello, I am not able to give money, but I hope you have a good day.”

“I have to keep walking, but thanks for saying hello.”

“Hi, how are you?”

“Sure, here is a little bit. Have a good day.”

For those who, like me, tend to forget things we plan to say when an anticipated moment comes, the meme offers a three-point strategy for all encounters:

- Make eye contact
- Smile
- Have compassion

Good things can happen when we accept vulnerability.

Perhaps the meme’s suggestions seem bland and unimaginative. The point is not to engage in philosophical discussion or debate, but simply to acknowledge and respect common humanity; to think of us, rather than them. And one can improvise around the basic messages.

Another point: One suggested response invites a conversation, but the others allow one to move on with greater humanity and courtesy than the curtly muttered sorry that is often all I can manage. Panhandlers may ask for and need money, but they often need and want something else: to be seen, acknowledged, included within the pale.

Not all of us have money to spare. But who among us is so spiritually impoverished as to have no compassion to spare for someone in need?

Should I raise my hand and answer yes to that question? I am ambivalent about what my answer should be: Sometimes, perhaps. And you?

There is no right answer to such a question, only an honest one.

Go figure... (1)

Occasionally, on an LRT platform or train, I see or am confronted by Edmonton Transit System police officers asking for tickets, passes, or transfers to validate access to the platform or train. Anyone caught without proof of payment, and there are usually a few, receives a ticket for a \$250 fine. It’s our transit system’s way, I suppose, of deterring abuse of its honour system for fare payment on the LRT.

Seems reasonable. Except when it isn’t. While the ETS enforces, I assume at considerable expense, a zero-tolerance policy for free riders on the LRT, it accommodates them freely and generously on buses. Over many years of travel by transit in Edmonton, I have seen bus drivers allow dozens of people of all kinds and colours to travel, and even get transfers, without paying a fare. I can only recall one case where someone, presumably a student wanting to ride the short distance from Southgate to Harry Ainlay School, was refused.

How and why does the ETS justify zero tolerance on one mode of service and not on the other? Most of the people I see getting tickets appear to be young—students or perhaps homeless youth—or homeless people of all ages. Some may be scofflaws, but I assume many do not have the money for fares (leading them to roll the dice on the LRT) or to pay fines. For some it is the beginning of a slow, inexorable progress of criminalization; for some, already criminalized, just one more straw added to the burden of marginalization.

Go figure: Is the policy really worth the social cost?

Fashion is Fickle

By Sharon Austin

Fashion is fickle; ever changing, unpredictable, and sometimes very foolish. Recently, my sister and I were reminiscing about all the fashions that we have seen come and go through the years. We had a good laugh over some of the ridiculous outfits that were in fashion when we were young. Who could forget the bellbottoms and fringes of the sixties, or the mini dresses and white go-go boots? In the seventies, I remember the polyester dresses made of a stiff fabric called fortrel. Those dresses didn’t wrinkle, were machine washable, and were so stiff they could practically stand up by themselves. I had a pale blue one with gold buttons that was indestructible and probably still looks the same after 48 years. Some were wearing gaucho pants with braid trim and platform shoes; what an unflattering style. Then there were the “hot pants” which was a short little dress with matching shorts. I had a pink print set of hot pants which, at the time, I thought was so cute. Even some service stations had their summer students who pumped gas wear a uniform of red, white, and blue hot pants.

The present tents

By Timothy Wild

In the powerful and still highly relevant novel *In Dubious Battle*, John Steinbeck wrote about a Communist initiated strike of migrant agricultural workers in the orchards of California. The strike eventually fails as the wealthy orchard owners enlist the coercive machinery of state power to crush the strike, and use a variety of softer means to alienate the strikers (and their families) from the rest of the working class in the area. Unfortunately this reflected a typical pattern of consent and coercion when dealing with industrial action in North America, particularly in the highly political period between the two world wars – the General Strikes in Amherst, Winnipeg, Seattle and San Francisco immediately spring to mind. The state, personified in the uniforms of the police and the military, was quick to respond to the shrill call of the outraged, and frightened, upper classes. However, despite the eventual defeat of the workers chronicled in the novel, there were some smaller victories experienced by the strikers, not the least of which was a heightened sense of solidarity and class consciousness, together with the renewed disposition to act in a collective manner.

Another positive aspect of the strike depicted in Steinbeck's novel was an increase in the organizational skills, capacity and confidence of the workers. Although outside Communists initially came to the area to organize the agricultural labourers, a cadre of local leadership soon developed within the cohort of the workers themselves. These home-grown leaders – who, perhaps, had a better understanding of the local conditions, culture and aspirations than the ideologically motivated and committed organizers – played a pivotal role in developing and implementing both the tactics and the strategy of the work stoppage. The workers also created a commune of sorts on the land of a sympathizer (who was eventually burned out), where they animated a democratic, inclusive and responsive community structure.

I was thinking of Steinbeck's portrayal of life in the strikers' camp when I recently went to visit a "tent city" in Nanaimo, British Columbia. The tents (together with some smaller, vintage motor homes and a number of

more primitive lean-tos) have been there for a couple of months, with the primary purpose being to draw attention to the extreme lack of affordable and appropriate housing on Vancouver Island. A number of hand painted cardboard signs were affixed to the chain link fence surrounding the site, and voiced such sentiments as "Stop the soldiers of NIMBY" "I choose to help those in need over force and greed in Canada" and "Homes and Justice".

Yet, unlike Steinbeck's perhaps idealized community, it didn't seem to me that the physical structure of the camp in Nanaimo was particularly well organized or even neat; there was garbage strewn around the place, and bits and parts of broken bicycles were scattered around the city. It was not the well starched, organized camp of Steinbeck, and the rain, the clouds and mud certainly did not add to the appeal of the location. However, that being said, there was a man walking around the area, raking the ground to collect some of the garbage. Additionally, at a lean-to which seemed to serve as a collective gathering area with sofas, single chairs and a washstand, there was a list of rules for the site, which included Rule 1 "No gendered violence" and Rule 7 "Volunteer". Finally, a number of tents were surrounded by artificial flowers and lawn chairs, which ironically added to the folksy feel of the encampment. But we must remember the basic point that the tent city is there for political, not aesthetic, reasons and the community being built was based on notions of social justice and change not bourgeois sensibilities. It is about supporting human rights not erecting picket fences.

I did talk with a number of residents about the politics of the city, and tried to get more information on the ideological disposition of the group; I was trying to make sense of the ideology of the joint. All of the people I spoke with said that they didn't actually really know about the politics of the place and what the overall aims were, beyond the patent need for an increase in the stock of affordable housing. But the people who graciously spent time with me did provide a glimpse into aspects of their lives, including the scourge of addiction, the unrelenting impact of domestic violence, the implications of being outside the work-income nexus (due to age and/or health), the consequences of institutionalized racism against Indigenous people, and the barriers to folks

with limited educational and vocational experience. They shared their humanity with me. I was also talking to a woman who was staying at the same hotel as me, and I learned that she was trying to find adequate shelter for herself and her two young children while she went to school in Nanaimo, but alternated between staying in tents and motels in the meantime. The prospects of finding a place looked pretty bleak. That's what the tent city was built in response to. It isn't a novel. It is reality constructed on the intersection of marginalization and ineffective public policy. The trick, however, is how to aggregate and articulate these stories into a comprehensive political message?

I believe that this points to the necessity of creating a political grouping composed of both the people actually experiencing social, cultural and economic marginalization and their allies. Both groups are needed to deal with the monster of post-industrial capitalist society. I continue to argue that working class consciousness was, and is, the essential key to transformative change. Organization is still needed. However, it appears that politics will happen in a looser, non-parliamentary fashion based on shorter terms, specific involvement and collaboration between a wide range of social movements. For example, both Chantal Mouffe and Saul Newman suggest that the old fashioned, strictly class bound politics is long dead, and a new, semi-autonomous way of politics, based on the broader and more inclusive constructs of gender, culture and, certainly, class reimagined has to be implemented. The authors also argue that the effective political action should be founded upon short term tactical involvement, rather than a long term commitment to the categorical imperatives of a particular political ideology. I think that the unfocused nature of the tent city is a reflection of this essentially anarchist position. It marks a messy, tentative yet powerful move towards a better world. It serves as a way to bring social conditions to the attention of the general public, can build a segment of local leadership and can serve as a focal point to rally the support of other anti-capitalist forces. Social change cannot be clinical and precise – it is based on the grafted growth of collaboration, collectivity and compassion. And, perhaps, the wonderful messiness of the tent city is a reflection of the beautiful potential of a just, humane and inclusive society?

Worst of all, were the huge shoulders and big hair of the eighties. Everything came with shoulder pads that would make a linebacker envious and don't forget the neon colours, leg-warmers, and acid wash clothing. The nineties gave us baggy jeans and overalls, which really only look good on farmers. In the early 2000's, patchwork jeans and popcorn shirts burst on the fashion scene. A popcorn shirt was a crinkled polyester shirt that looked like it would fit a cat but expanded as you put it on. 2010 gave us skinny jeans, Uggs boots,

and shiny fabrics with lots of bling.

The strangest thing about fashion is what we call ridiculous today may be high fashion tomorrow. One time I was visiting my 83 year old father-in-law when one of his neighbours happened to stroll by. "Can't you do something about that?" she questioned pointing to my father-in-law who was happily feeding his flock of pigeons far across the yard. "The way he's dressed, he looks ridiculous." He was wearing burgundy fleece jogging shorts held up by wide black suspenders and a black

t-shirt with a motorcycle picture on the front. On his feet he had floppy gray wool socks with the red stripe and moccasins. Looking at him, I did not see ridiculous! I saw an elderly man enjoying his well-deserved retirement in the way that he wanted. I saw the man who had paid his dues welding battleships during the war; the entrepreneur who had started his own successful motorcycle business starting with a few bikes in the back yard. "Seems to me," I said, "By the time your 80 you've earned the right to wear whatever you want."

The True Meaning of a Sibling's Presence

By Maria B.

Having my sister come for a visit allowed me to realize the incredible meaning that every one of my siblings has in my life.

While in our family everyone has taken a different path, and we are miles away from each other; the atmosphere remains of that longing, which becomes a personification with their presence. There are all those feelings of reassurance, of having someone to do things with, even watching our favorite program. Throughout our childhood we learned to depend on each other and to protect each other. This article I would like to dedicated to my youngest sister.

It is very sad when children are created through power, control, pain and degradation; it does not give any of these children the opportunity to develop in a household where you don't feel that you are unconditionally accepted and loved.

It is amazing the different personalities each one of us has, but one thing we hold in common is the struggle to hold on to each other. Every one of us had different secrets of our family, different views and different histories and we have learned not to even compare who suffered the most. Everyone has her own history and carries the pain and the memories that are so much a part of our lives.

As for myself, as far as I can remember I was a child with a lot of fears. I remember when I was about four, I would wake up and run to my mother's room feeling that the shadows would grab me. She would let me stay with her but mentioned that I had a lot of nightmares.

While the source of my fears will always remain a mystery, through my developing years, my fears had many faces and were very forcefull. They seemed to minimize but when I realized that I was looking at myself through

my father's eyes, this seemed to increase my fears - fears of failing, fears of abandonment, fears of getting hurt, fears of how I looked. I hated everything about myself. When I realized that I had to change the core beliefs that I had about myself, my impression about myself started to change. I also realized that I was not only denying who I was but I was denying the child within me that I needed to embrace and love.

I have learned to live the truth of who I am. I am able to accept my failures and my mistakes and use them as learning steps. I have learned to be kind to myself, not to call myself names and to understand myself with kindness.

Interestingly enough, while my younger sister was visiting, without realizing it, I let myself feel my fears and weaknesses. I allowed myself to be taken back to those times where we did everything together, where there were disagreements with the understanding that they would never affect the incredibly strong bond that exists between us. I felt that I had to protect her in order to avoid her having any bad experiences, causing an understandable resistance on her part as she was her own independent person, full of confidence in her own safety and well being.

In my mind I could not understand why she would be so offended that I was trying to protect her, because I did not want anything to happen to her while she was visiting.

While we were visiting different places I was able to share with her the magnificence of nature and all those beautiful places. When we went into a store, after we showed each



other what we had purchased or helped each other with choosing something, it was an incredible feeling. We shared feelings, we shares likes, we took pictures of each other. It was fantastic times that we shared together.

Through visiting different places, we talked about my fear of heights and other things I feared. The culminating moment arrived when I have to walk through a road grill, my fear in full bloom. I told her and she told me. "It is o.k. sister, put your hands on my shoulders and we will cross this." and we did it. She did not judge my fear, she just helped me and I felt safe.

I know that even after so many years being apart, we will always continue to be there for each other. We will continue to share the good times, the sad times, the fearful times. Sharing everything with her ignited the knowledge that our bond will be forever. It doesn't matter how many miles separate us.

Thank you, sister, for being with me in good times, not so good times and through my fearful times. We understand and accept each other without conditions. I am so blessed for having YOU IN MY Life.

My Life by Norma Harms

Stating last January life was going nowhere,

I could not go to church or visit family or friends

All I did was stay home and sleep all day, all night,

All I did was take my pills which did not work -

All I did was keep sleeping every day,

All I did was that I wanted to die,

All I did was want to give up on everybody and everything

All I wanted to do was go to the hospital But there was no room in the inn!

I took seven shock treatments and now I am alive to tell the story

All I know is that I am alive today to tell the story

Thanks be to God!

Amen.



Alberta Street News writer Norma Harms, left, wearing the jacket John Zapantis designed and purchased with editor Linda Dumont.