

# ALBERTA Street News

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**This family of Hungarian partridges was spotted in the Northmount Community in Edmonton.**

**Photo by John Zapantis**



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# ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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## We will remember 2020

**By Linda Dumont**

As we face the challenges of the year ahead, we will remember 2020 as the year when everything changed. Who ever would have believed we would all be walking around wearing masks or that we would be limited in so many of our activities.

We don't know what the new normal will be like, but the ten months of pandemic will definitely leave a lasting mark on the world.

Many businesses are gone for good - Army and Navy closed down last spring, now other stores are holding closing out sales. In addition, many small businesses everywhere are gone.

For Alberta Street News, I made a decision to continue publication even with limited opportunity for sales, and continue to keep an on line presence to avoid becoming another casualty of the pandemic.

The Shaw Conference Centre has become the drop in for homeless people where they can get three meals a day and use bathrooms, wash clothing etc. The Mustard Seed has another drop in shelter on the south side.

From some Christians, who are listening to end time prophets I have heard doom and gloom messages foretelling the end of the world. The conspiracy theories appear to be running rampant, a reflection of the underlying fear that has gripped the world. There are all kinds of fears - the vaccine will contain microchips heralding the mark of the beast for unwary persons who take it, COVID-19 was man made to reduce the world population by 2021, Canada is becoming a communist country.....

I have survived likely because of immunizations for scarlet fever, diphtheria, typhoid fever, tetanus, polio and smallpox. All of them were at one time fatal diseases that wiped out many children. I did get German measles when I was a year old and nearly died, but they now immunize for that as well.

I have lived long enough to have seen many end time prophets proved to be false prophets when their prophecies failed to



come to pass. Some said according to the Mayan calendar, the world was supposed to end in 1984 when the planets lined up. The end was nigh again in 1993 if you believed in the Children of God movement. As the year 2000 approached there were people rushing to buy generators and stocking up on water for that end of the world scenario. I remember driving home that midnight to a world that appeared completely unchanged.

The one end time prophecy that appears to be coming to pass is that "many false prophets shall come speaking great, swelling words of wisdom and taking silly women captive." I prefer not to be one of those silly women.

Whatever happens in the new year, we need not change our basic principles of love and respect for one another, nor turn away from our fellow man in need. Times of crisis are the times when our true nature is revealed. And if this were indeed the end time that we are living in, it is even more important to face this time with grace and to continue to do all that we can to create a better future, limited though it would be.

As for me, I believe there is still a future, and once that vaccine rolls out, we will gather momentum to reclaim things we had to lay aside for a period of time.

As Paul Artriedes said in Dune, "Fear is the mind killer."

We are not afraid!

If you have not read Dune, a new Dune movie is coming out soon.

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



# New Year. New Start

By Joanne Bengier

January is Hot Tea Month and hopefully a cold month for the saying is "A summerish January, a winterish spring.

January 1 is New Years Day. Eat peas on New Years Day and you will have good luck all year. Sicilians also eat lasagna for luck and consider it unlucky to eat any other pasta today. Some resolve to have a Dry January with no drink for the entire month as the saying goes, "New Years was fun but now its done. Joyful night, sorrowful morning." Dry or not, Happy New Year and may you have food, health and good spirits in 2021.

January 4 is National Trivia Day, National Spaghetti Day, and toss the Fruitcake Day.

January 6 is National Whipped Cream Day, National Kito Day, and National Bird Day. The Christmas bird count ends today.

January 5 is Epiphany, or the Feast of the Three Kings which celebrates the arrival of the magi. It is Ukrainian Christmas Eve and as soon as the first star appears in the sky. the meal begins. There are twelve meatless dishes to represent the 12 apostles. In Ireland it is Small Christmas and it is lucky to share Small Christmas dinner with a dark haired stranger. January 6 is when Christmas decorations are taken down in most countries but some prefer January 14 (Octave of Epiphany) or February 2 (Candlemas). The season of Epiphany begins now and will continue until Lent.

January 7 is Ukrainian Christmas with hay or straw under the table to represent the stable.

January 11 is Milk Day, Hot Toddy Day and National Girl Hugs Boy Day. Air hugs, please. January 11, 1964 is the day the Surgeon General first warned of the dangers of smoking.

January 12 is Pharmacists Day.

January 13 is St. Hilary's Day. Close Season is over and you can get married from now until Lent.

January 14 is Rubber Ducky Day. It is also Ukrainian New Year. Happy New Year. New year, new start. It is also Organize Your House Day and Octave of St. Epiphany when some take their Christmas decorations down.

January 16 we commemorate United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. It has also been National Religious Freedom Day in the United States since 1993.

January 17, 1706 was the birthday of Benjamin Franklin who wrote, "Be always at war with your vices and at peace with your neighbour and let each New Year find you a better person."

January 18, the third Monday of the month, is Blue Monday, the most depressing day of the year as holiday expenses finally catch up with you. Pay those bills if you can. If you are short of cash, remember it is also Use Your Gift Card Day.

January 18 is National Winnie the Pooh Day. As A.A.A. Milne wrote, Winnie the Pooh said, "I am a bear of very little brain and long words bother me." Hug your teddy bear today.

January 20 is Martin Luther King Day. How he would have approved of "Black Lives Matter" protests and peace marches. Do something about racism today.

January 25 is John Hancock's Birthday, which is National Handwriting Day. Work at making your signature more impressive.

January 25 is Robbie Burns' birthday when we celebrate all things Scottish, wear kilts and eat haggis. Robbie Burns wrote, "An honest man is the noblest work of God" and "The best laid plans of mice and men go aft a-gley."

January 25 is also St. Paul's Day. It is an old belief that the weather of the entire year depends on what happens today. "Sun on St. Paul's Day means a good year, rain or snow foretells indifferent weather, mist means want, while thunder predicts twelve months of winds and death" according to the Shepherds' Almanac of 1626. Here's hoping for sun.

January 26 is National Peanut Butter Day as well as National Spouses Day.

January 28 it is 82 years since the Lego Company patented its lego bricks. Happy birthday Lego.

The last week in January is National N95 Mask Week. The saying is, "You pay for cigarettes twice, once when you get them and once when they get you. Butt out.



## Lucy

By Norma Harms

*You were more than just a friend to me, Lucy  
 You were like a sister, too,  
 Always caring, always thoughtful  
 Through every trial of life.  
 Always praying always singing  
 Always there to say I care.  
 You were more than just a friend to me Lucy.  
 You were like a sister, too.  
 And when I wanted to give up on life  
 I would phone you  
 And you would always say  
 Never give up.  
 God will make a way  
 Where there is no way  
 You were more than just a friend for me,  
 Lucy.  
 You were like a sister, too.  
 In the good times and the bad times  
 You were always there to lend a helping hand  
 You gave and gave some more  
 But never gave up the battle of living for Jesus  
 alone  
 And I know my dear sister, that you are in heaven  
 with Jesus.  
 In your new eternal home.  
 You were more than just a friend to me, Lucy.  
 You were a sister, too.  
 I will love you and miss you forever.*



Lucy passed away November 3, a victim of COVID-19. She was a resident of the General Hospital Continuing Care Centre in Edmonton. When she was near death, family members were permitted to visit, protected by masks, gowns and gloves. They could not touch her. They were instructed to wash all of the clothes they wore to the hospital, shower and wash their hair when they reached home. Although Lucy regularly attended Peoples Church before the pandemic, she had no funeral service, just a number of people gathering for the interment at the cemetery. Photo by Norma Harms

## Happy Lunar New Year

By Joanne Bengier

This month we have the Chinese New Year, which is also referred to as the Lunar New Year or the Spring Festival. It marks the end of the Chinese winter and the beginning of planting season, and can occur any time between January 21 and February 20. This year Chinese New Year occurs on February 12 as we enter the Year of the Ox. Oxen were born in 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009, and of course 2021. People born in the year of the ox are bright and patient and are known to be good listeners. They like success and are disdainful of failure in love and business matters. The ox is attracted to the snake, rooster and rat but should avoid the ram at all costs.

If you are an ox you must take care this year for the Chinese believe that in the year of your zodiac animal you are in a year of rebirth. Rebirth and renew your life with an eye to the future. Some people wear red all year for protection when it is their

zodiac year.

The celebration lasts 15 days and is a time of family reunions and celebrating the family which includes both the living and the dead. Continuity of the family is very important to the Chinese. Departed ancestors are honoured with gifts of fake money, fake gold bricks and other paper symbols of prosperity that are then burned so they can have continued good luck and good fortune in their afterlife.

Older relatives give money in red envelopes to the children. When they do this they are symbolically transferring money to the next generation, their future heirs.

Red is used extensively in the New Year celebrations. Red clothes are worn and homes are decorated in red as protection against Nian, the evil monster who is present at the New Year. Fireworks will also hold Nian at Bay.

It is usual to clean the house before the new year. Then, during the celebration it is important that the family does not fight and nothing must be broken. No sharp objects should be used and it is unlucky to cut hair or fingernails. The menu often includes pork and oranges and the extended family should have a happy loving reunion.

# OPINION

## Why Don't They Do Enough To Help the Poor?

*Because they don't want to, it would be counterproductive to their desires.*

**By Rod Graham.**

The mayor merely does what the chamber of commerce wants. He is their little errand boy - if he's a bad little boy they will push him out. The chambers of commerce do what the status quo in the community want. And the status quo - the 'good citizens' in the community are heartless devils. The police and security community also do what the chambers of commerce want, and what the status quo want.

They want the poor kept in a state of shock - trauma, suffering. In poverty. Living as walking dead people they are manageable. They don't want them really 'helped' - if they were, they would do what the business people are most afraid of -

they might actually live as human beings - enjoying life itself. If they were to enjoy life - they would be mobile - not hiding in the bushes and in corners of the infrastructure and on the street.

They might become really visible, visible and mobile too, and healthy. If they were mobile and healthy and moving

around - they would be seen. And nothing makes the snooty XXXX in Canada more uncomfortable than seeing, or God forbid, being in the presence of a poor citizen in our wonderful democracy.




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## Thoughts During an Extreme Cold Warning

**By Joanne Benger**

1. Most cars have dash read outs that won't record temperatures below minus 40. But its cold outside, minus 48 with the wind chill.
2. There are emergency power alerts. Reserve energy is being used. I feel so guilty I turn the thermostat down to 18 and wear three sweaters.
3. The furnace runs non stop. I have visions of my next heating bill. Do they have any poor houses left in this city?
4. I don't do the laundry during energy emergencies. I picture my best clothes trapped in a washer full of frozen water.
5. You know it's cold when you see people waking around with icicles hanging from their noses.
6. We've learned the hard way. It's not safe to kiss outdoors when the temperature is under -35. Blow that air kiss instead.
7. You know it's cold when your glasses freeze to your face.
8. We all want to look cool but dress warm. To this end forget fashion. Toque hair is in. Bundle up. It doesn't matter how fat

you look.

9. You can't be sure if that man in the belaclava is a robber or a serious winter athlete.

10. School buses don't run and all social events are cancelled. This is pure democracy. The popular and unpopular are equal.

11. We've replaced "Have a good day," with "Stay warm out there."

12. I now understand the old saying, "Stick to your underwear until your underwear sticks to you."

13. I know how to get to the muster point for a warming centre should my electricity go off but I have never been there and don't know what to expect. It's never had to be used yet.

14. The plumber just drove past again and I am grateful my furnace still clicks on and my toilet still flushes. I have two of the necessities of life.

15. We're all a risk for hypothermia and we can get frost bite in a minute if we go out. Cabin fever is epidemic and SAD is common.

16. We must go low tech. Batteries die faster in the cold and dead batteries can lead to dead people.





## What price freedom? (And what benefit?)

By Allan Sheppard

"Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose..."

Kris Kristofferson and Fred Foster's classic country-pop song, *Me and Bobby McGee*, has been an earworm burrowing through my brain for weeks now. It steals into my consciousness whenever I hear anti-maskers or their political enablers (Jason Kenney, that means you!) cry Freedom! (or the loss of it) over mandatory masking and other common-sense public precautions against Covid-19.

The lyrics invite different interpretations and meditations. Here, for what they are worth, are my thoughts in perilous times: The Kristofferson/Foster lyrics suggest one meaning of freedom: freedom is what remains, when we let go of everything else. Freedom means not being burdened with things. That's not the religiously inflected meaning favoured by pandemic naysayers, but it makes sense to me: freedom means living in the moment; today, not for tomorrow. It does not mean doing whatever the hell one wants, at whatever cost to anyone (everyone) else.

The next line to the song underscores that unheroic drift: "Nothin' ain't worth nothin' but it's free." Having nothing is not a luxury. It has no inherent value, but at least it's free; in both senses: costing nothing and making no demands.

In the right circumstances, with the right companions, through lamentation and celebration (singing the blues), one can live fully and well in the moment:

"Feelin' good was easy, Lord, when Bobby sang the blues

"And buddy, that was good enough for me

"Good enough for me and my Bobby McGee."

But that kind of freedom is fragile, it is not a foundation for a fulfilled life. Or for a relationship; Bobby drifts away, surely inevitably, leaving only memories. "Nothin' left is all she left for me." They are happy memories, but...

Hundreds of artists have sung *Me and Bobby McGee*, on record and in performance. Most notable among them: Janis Joplin, who recorded the song in 1970, scant days before her death. Joplin's version remains hugely popular, topping all others in browser and YouTube searches. That popularity is certainly due to Joplin's unique and widely appreciated blues rock style, but I suggest credit should also go to a subtle, but profound, change she made to the lyrics and, thereby, to the thrust of the song.

Instead of "nothin' ain't worth nothin', but it's free," Joplin sings, "Nothin' ain't worth nothin', if it ain't free." With that simple change, Joplin's version transcends the original's notion of freedom derived from detachment due to choice (or inertia, going with the flow) to remind us of something more complex and disturbing.

There are many kinds of nothingness, and many kinds of life lived with nothing to lose. To paraphrase Shakespeare's words and distort their meaning, some are born into nothingness, some achieve it, and some have nothingness thrust upon them. To achieve nothingness, to experience the benefits of detachment by deliberately letting go of things, as advocated by mystics and self-help gurus, is worth attempting, and something we can admire and respect, when achieved.

To be born into nothingness, or to have it thrust upon oneself, is not admirable or desirable, especially when it takes the common forms of endemic poverty, oppression, repression, and literal or metaphorical slavery. With three little words, "if it ain't," Joplin reminds us that having nothing to lose in the literal sense does not release anyone from the burdens our consumerist society forces us to suffer, tolerate, or seek, unless one chooses to live without them. Without opportunity to become attached to things, detachment from them is an imposition; it is not enlightenment.

That Joplin should have changed the lyrics as she did is not surprising. Though white, she placed herself within the tradition of blues singing that rose out of Black experience of slavery, sharecropping, and Jim Crow governance in the American South.

She understood that having nothing to lose can be a matter of socially approved oppression, not just choice or bad luck. Having nothing to lose thrust upon oneself or someone else, without having made the choice, is an insult to our common humanity. It is an example of inhumanity to others (and, if we are honest, to ourselves) that we should be ashamed to tolerate. Yet we do tolerate it, shamelessly, while pretending we do not, even as we deem ourselves virtuous in our doings and pretensions.

To those of us who can choose them, attachments to things, including people, ideas, and beliefs, can seem impediments to happiness and freedom. To those who have no choice but to do without, having, acquiring, and holding onto things can seem the only way to experience happiness and freedom.

What does this have to do with anti-maskers and COVID-19?

Let me say first that we need naysayers and doubters in our lives and communities. The essence of freedom, as I understand it and aspire to it, is not the right and capacity to do and say whatever I want; whenever, however, and to whom-ever I choose. It is the right and capacity to resist anyone and anything that threatens my integrity as an individual and as an equal participant in the common humanity I enjoy and share with every other individual, no matter who or where.

That and is absolute. The right to say no is non-negotiable. But it carries responsibilities.

Freedom is not the right to say, as I understand the anti-maskers would have it, "You can't tell me what to do," to anyone who would put limits on my choices and behaviour. It is the right to say (and have said to me) "I should not have to tell you what to do. You (and I) should know what to do; as individuals certainly, but also as members of a family, a community, or a nation: humanity. I should be able to trust you to do the right thing, as you should be able to trust me."

The right thing is not (or should not be) a case of either/or (them/me). It should be, and in times of crisis must be, both/and (them/me).

Yeah, right, anti-maskers say. They have no trust left. They feel betrayed by governments and politicians; corporate leaders and entrepreneurs; banks and financial institutions; law enforcement and justice systems; medical, academic, artistic, and

media elites; employers; property owners; neighbours; even, too often, family and friends.

They are all trusted out. They have lost much. Or they feel on the verge of losing much: everything they have worked, or would work, their lives for. They see the system rigged against them. They see myriads of others and othernesses threatening and competing against them and their aspirations unfairly.

You must earn my trust, they say: step by step, increment by increment. Betray my trust once, shame on you. Betray it twice, shame on me. Betray as a matter of policy or indifference, and you leave me no choice: to trust only myself and the close few to whom I owe allegiance, or from whom I can demand it.

The most extreme among them seem to say, "I will defend my possessions—my toys, my tangibles, my things—with all my strength and will. But if you find ways to cheat me out of them, I will defend to the death my obsessions: my faith, my beliefs, my loyalties, my certainties; my intangibles. My identity."

For anti-maskers, not wearing a mask, social distancing, and accepting other preventive measures—doing the right thing in a community context—seem to be an expression of freedom, individual liberty, courageous choice, in the face of social disapproval, amounting to enforced, sheeplike conformity.

"Give me liberty or give me death!" they seem to say, channelling American Founding Father, Virginia governor (and

lifelong slaveholder), Patrick Henry. The bitter reality for some of them is that their expressions of personal liberty do result in their deaths, often with last-minute regrets and recantations, if reports from the Covid-19 frontlines in the U.S. can be believed.

Despite seeming to understand the ambiguities of freedom, Janis Joplin, died in an expression of personal freedom, due to an accidental drug overdose, ironically reminding us that, no matter how much we let go or are forced to give up, there is always one final thing left to lose: life itself. Sad and, in so many ways, wasteful as her death was, Joplin's final assertion of personal freedom, and its tragic outcome, did not put anyone else's life, liberty, or security at risk. She made what we can regard as a bad choice, and she paid the ultimate price. But she (and others who have died the same way) did not infect anyone close to her, or the community at large, with a fatal contagion.

Anti-maskers are not so considerate, intentionally or by default. Some of them deny the existence of the virus or the disease, but most surely realize what is obvious: COVID-19 exists, and it kills, often people who are most vulnerable and who are least in position to make choices about their own circumstances. They make what I believe is a conscious decision to take risks they know exist. That is their right, and they are welcome to it.

They can expose themselves to whatever risks they choose. What they cannot, must not be allowed to, do is expose the rest

of us—the community in which they are embedded—to risks we are not willing to accept and share with them.

Yet that is what every freedom-worshipping anti-masker does by appearing in public spaces without a mask and other preventive precautions. It can be all about you, if you are the only one involved; when it includes me, or him, or her, or them, it becomes about us. And that means doing the right thing—making the right choices—to respect and protect each other.

I don't blame or wish to shame anti-maskers for feeling as they do. I have no doubt they have good reasons for drawing imaginary lines in imaginary philosophical sands. I can only reply, with deep respect, that those reasons, whatever they are, are possessions or obsessions that we must let go, if we are to emerge from our current crisis stronger, rather than weaker. Trust begins with trusting. Taking the first step, especially for those who feel their trust has been betrayed, is a hard but necessary beginning on a long road to mutual trust. That many of us should find the first steps so difficult reflects less on them than on our communities. Above all, it reflects on the leadership, or lack thereof, shown by our elected and accepted leaders. At a time when our leaders should be working to restore and build trust, we are lumbered with politicians and charlatans who manipulate trust, who play with it transactionally (for personal and in-group gain) rather than strategically. (Jason Kenney, that means you, among others.)

## Attack of the mad woman

By Linda Dumont

We watch horror movies with rabidly out of control people possessed by who knows what but never expect to encounter them in person.

It was a quiet Saturday afternoon. Snow was falling and the side of the street had a build up of snow.

I was in the car in front of my house on 95th street preparing to drive off, when the phone rang. It is a one way street so I pulled over to the right side of the street again to answer the call. My son was on the line. As we were talking, a woman approached from up ahead, carrying two sticks. Suddenly she

veered towards the car and began to beat frantically on the side window, her face a contorted mask of rage. She struck the widow and the windshield in front of me repeatedly until the windshield gave way into a whorl of crack. She didn't just beat on the car, she spat repeatedly on the window next to me, her face twisting.

I put the car in gear, but it spun out in the deep snow, so I had to reverse before I could drive ahead. The woman continued her attack damaging the mirror and leaving dents all around the window and on the door. I was afraid another whack on the windshield would shatter the glass completely but the car moved forward and I was able to drive around the corner and call the police. They said she was probably high on crystal meth.

I didn't know the woman. The car had \$3,662 in damages, and I had to pay

the \$500 deductible because the woman didn't have insurance to cover her actions.

I am left wondering. Did she think she knew me from somewhere or was it just a random act of violence. Was she a mental patient off her medication and hallucinating or was she high on drugs? Will she strike again?

I no longer feel safe outside my house. I no longer park by the side of the street to answer the phone and when I have to go to the mail box, I look both ways to make sure there is no woman approaching.

# MMM Adopt a Family helps families in need

Story and Photo by John Zapantis

It's amazing how an individual's emotional state can sometimes elevate a person's creativity, inevitably advancing a worthwhile cause. Sarah Hall is that moral example of what she was experiencing about a year after moving from Edmonton to Morinville. She was feeling totally isolated in a new town with three children of her own and another on the way in addition to her list of priorities. So, on one of those very isolated and lonely days, she was determined to break that lonely feeling of isolation and searched around town to find some friends. In time she'd met a total of six new friends and maintained those contacts as a social circle.

Once she got the ball rolling in maintaining those contacts she was influenced to come up with the concept of starting her own mom's group on Facebook, where she constantly maintained a group social interaction with these casual contacts, while sharing camaraderie and lifetime friendships.

Word through that popular grapevine

on Facebook was quickly spreading its cyber reach like wildfire, as more women joined the ranks of this mom's group and within two weeks, Sarah had established over 100 newer members to her hard working efforts that added strongly to this incredible movement. The exciting thought of proudly encountering a total of 100 new members in such a short period of time, encouraged Sarah to host a wine and cheese night, just to add to the enthusiasm of a very meaningful social engagement for its single moms.

The year 2012 was about to become a very special calling for the mom's group founder Sarah Hall, when another member of her Facebook group approached Hall asking her to take on the noble task of helping a desperate and needy family in despair.

In a interview with ASN Sarah Hall elaborates on that unique situation in helping her to realize what her calling in life would one day mean to other families in despair, Hall said, "In 2012 we had been operating for about a year. We had just over 1000 members at that point and another somebody had approached me to

help a family that was really struggling, a family of seven. They were just really down on their luck.

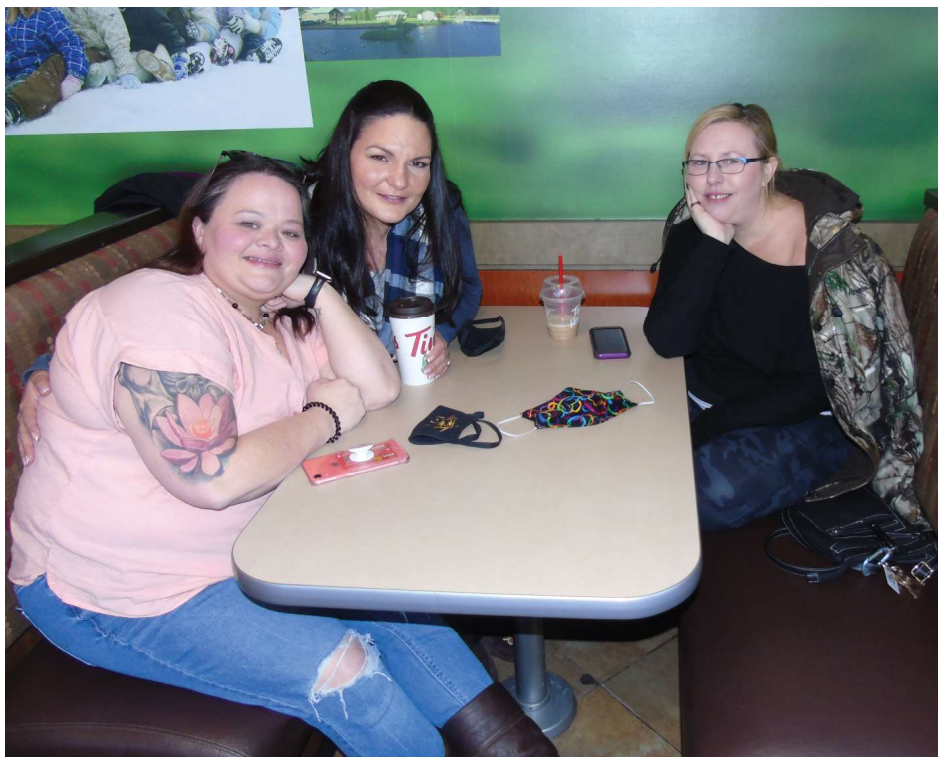
"I thought, well, I can't help them personally. I didn't have the funds. Maybe if a bunch of us got together the mom's group could create something amazing. The situation was, the father had just lost his job. The mom was the only one that was working. They had five kids. The dad was laid off, just before Christmas. The dad was working on the oil rigs in Fort McMurray.

"What happened then, was the car broke down. So mom wasn't able to make it to work and she got fired. I think she worked in a grocery store, but she was the only income for that family at that time. There were things that they needed. They needed to get their car fixed. They needed some basic groceries, some help with the bills. Now we couldn't help with bills necessarily, but we thought food and gifts and stuff for Christmas, we were all able to do"

Right at that moment, Sarah realized that she had a very special calling to commit to and the exciting thought of taking on such a challenging task to help that family down on their luck, encouraged a very determined Sarah to step up and help make that big difference that without her knowledge of knowing at the time, was about to change her life forever. Hall said, "So at the same time that I had posted about this family's needs. I wrote, 'Hey, does anybody know a mechanic, or can anybody help supply gifts for kids of these ages. A friend of ours, Misty Featherly, posted the exact same time to help a family with the same thing.

"Misty Featherly is actually the School Trustee for the Sturgeon School Division. So she had posted the same time for a family that she knew that was going through the same thing, and that she had the same idea. We were like, 'Why don't we just make it a collection for these two families and see where it goes.' Well, we had so much input from the people that were in the mom's group at that time. We had so much stuff and then more families were being nominated by other moms saying, 'Hey, I know another family that could use help too.'

"So by the end of that season, we didn't know what the heck we were doing. We were operating out of Morinville Public School, because the public school got on



**MMM Adopt-A-Family volunteers at Tim Hortons. Left to right are Brandi Robinson, Adopt-A-Family Founder Sarah Hall and Jennifer Smith.**



board. One of the families was from the public school. The next thing you know, we had thirteen families that we helped. I don't know how we pulled it off that year, because we were just flying by the seat of our pants, literally. Like people say, building the plane as you fly it!"

Those miraculous feats of human kindness encouraged Sarah Hall to inevitably change the mom's group on Facebook to Morinville Marvelous Moms. Then, while giving it some more serious thought, feeling a moral obligation in helping families and making that big difference, she included an additional name symbolic of her compassion in nominating families in need and renamed it Morinville Marvelous Moms Adopt-A-Family (MMM Adopt-A-Family).

The following year in 2013, to add to her society's list of great accomplishments, MMM Adopt-A-Family doubled their reputable track record in helping 26 families in the Sturgeon County area.

Word was getting around on the organization's Facebook page and volunteers picked up on the postings asking for volunteer help. Hall elaborates on the reactions of newer volunteers stepping up to join in and extending their hands of support,

Hall said, "As the years went by, we had systems come into place. We had permanent volunteers come in. People that wanted to help. We had so many volunteers. Every year we had to turn people away, because there's just not enough space to fit in the people, right, but we have it quite well organized. I'd say right now with a really good system, a system right now that people are copying in other places. I get phone calls about it all the time."

Two winning contributing factors determine why MMM Adopt-A-Family founder Sarah Hall has such sympathy for families who desperately need her organization's services and why she is so passionate about her moral duty to serve those in need.

Hall said, "I was just lucky that I was in that position, because this whole initiative means so much to me. Growing up in poverty. I know what it means to make things better for others. That was because of my mother. I want to emphasize that we, probably all moms, feel that connection and realize what our moms did for us, but dads don't carry that mental load that moms do. Dads don't reach out to

their circles, or are surrounded by circles, like moms are. We will do anything. We will swallow our pride and ask for help when we desperately need it. Mind you, it takes a long time to get to that point."

The reputable organization works in partnership with various self-help organizations.

One of the many vital components that is essential to families, is the local food banks that MMM Adopt-A-Family works with that operates in the Sturgeon County area.

Every year the demand for food support doubles and the MMM Adopt-A-Family offers a nomination process as a helpful policy that works more conveniently for individuals and families that are often turned away from the support of other food banks, Hall explains the effectiveness of her organization's results when giving a referral to a family looking for a food hamper. Hall said, "What was happening was, there were families in Sturgeon County that maybe weren't eligible to get food from the Legal Food Bank, or our food bank, or Gibbon's Food Bank. They weren't being able to get the resources that they needed. So they weren't able to go to the food bank.

"They weren't able to get extra help for bills, those kinds of things, because they didn't fit into a municipality that they were able to help. So we were able to help, because we don't have a jurisdiction. We're not led by a provincial mandate or anything. So we're able to help these families by referral. We do our due diligence where we're able to connect with the Red Water Food Bank, or the Gibbons Food Bank, or Onoway Food Bank, to see if their families are already being helped and that also helps to protect everybody, so that nobody's double dipping and everybody whose needing help, is getting the help they need."

"The organization provides many options for people or families, who need an informal referral when inquiring on food support, Hall said. "An informal referral means that there's no paper process from our end that we need to do. If a family reaches out to us, or someone reaches out to us saying, 'Hey this family needs help, OK, well here's the number, they can call us. They can go here if they need us for help supports. They can call FCSS. It depends on what is needed.'"

The caring organization's reach is sympathetic in filling that void, when other

agencies have to turn people and families away when on overflow. Hall said, "Now if they had gone to the food bank and they needed more food then that would be the call that somebody would make to us. They can't get any more food through the food bank. The family needs a gas card, or a food hamper, or something like that. That's something we can help with, another one is like, so a school counselor will call, once in a while. This family needs to get to a medical appointment at the Stollery so we help with a gas card. Gas cards are a big one that we get and it usually has to do with medical needs. So those are the types of one offs that we do, but those come from a counsellor or an outreach worker as a request to us. If somebody just called us, we can't do that; it's not our mandate and I wish we could."

Christmas was too far away during the writing of this article and Hall elaborates on her organization's application process by people in need to be filled out for those essential items that are needed for Christmas, Hall said, "So we get applications. So right now we're in the application process. The applications are coming in. So we build food hampers most of the time, when we're getting a food hamper through a food bank, or getting toys, or things like that you're usually getting a bag of toys unwrapped, you know boys from three to six, girls from eight to ten years of age.

"Ours is a little different. We call and talk to our families. We find out what their allergies are. We find out what their situations are. We find out what their special kinds of needs are. So if they have special needs kids, well maybe that one kid needs a walker, or something like that. We'll use our resources through a network of moms maybe, find a used one, that kind of thing. We can help to fill those needs. Otherwise we collect money in donations full time and any one of those specialty items, the jacket or maybe work boots for a dad that needs to start a new job. Things like that we will get that. We will get that information from the family and do our best to match exactly what is going to help the most right now and that's where we're special."

Donations are great for supporting a cause, but various organizations have stepped up to the plate, while hosting

**Continued on page 11**  
fund raisers and allocating those funds to

# \$20 ONE WAY

## taxi service

### is a flag company I hope to start soon

By John Zapantis,

I'm a go getter and always have been destined to succeed with what ever I've pursued and have succeeded in the long term.

Recently I came up with this creatively entertaining idea that I'm well aware of that would not bore you the readers when following my story on paper.

I've worked a lot of challenging jobs in my time and have also been known to be creative in the work place as a Media Relations Coordinator with Alberta Street News.

I've come up with innovative ideas that have helped to enhance the marketability of our provincial street newspaper.

One of many ideas that I took pride in was when I came up with the creative idea of influencing the Edmonton Journal to donate two free vendor boxes to our paper and in exchange for the free boxes, I assured management at the Journal that I'd commend their staff members in charge of donating those boxes in a future write up that I did on this project that helped to make that difference for our paper.

I'd mentioned to a member in management that once the boxes were donated, I'd be taking them to Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT) where the Painting and Decorating students of NAIT would refurbish and re-paint those boxes with black lettering reading Alberta Street News with a yellow backdrop covering the boxes.

Then I notified the Italian Bakery, who agreed to drive the boxes out to the Town of Morinville where I once worked as an ASN vendor back in September 2012 to September 2013. I established enough clients through my vending efforts to later employ two vendor boxes that I'd be placing at two adjacent restaurant locations at Morinville's A&W restaurant and Friends and Neighbours Restaurant. They were later installed between September 2013 to February 2014 up until a cold snap froze our two boxes and made them inoperable. I eventually paid a client of our paper \$50 dollars to remove those two eye sores.



**John Zapantis proudly displays the \$20 ONE WAY sign he designed for his proposed taxi service.**

**Photo by Linda Dumont**

I've done so much as far as organizing, adding to the excitement of working in this honorary position that I currently hold.

Now with the COVID-19 era that's upon us, world governments have recently confirmed to the world that vaccines have been developed, tested, and some have been approved and will be distributed shortly in order to help us defeat this deadly virus, I'm no longer feeling depressed about what's ahead, other then determined to share some exciting news about establishing my own taxi service flag company which I've named and have the patent rights to call \$20 ONE WAY.

It's a one of a kind taxi company that will pick you up in any area of Edmonton and then essentially drive you one way straight to the Edmonton International Airport often referred to as an airport limo service.

Some from the many convenient policies that I've implemented for travelling customers could range from my cab being licensed to employ a combination utility driver and security ride- along, who'll not only provide a security presence for my passengers with three riding in the back seat, but security for me while behind the wheel.

I intend on proposing this in a future Edmonton City Council Meeting, where I suppose members of city council

would essentially vote on my proposal to see if they approve of taking this new reform to another level which could possibly advance the quality of service for Edmonton's Taxi industry.

Also my riders would be assured of a reimbursement cost if my taxi was to have been held up by an accident on the QE2 Hi-way, causing them to be late for an airplane departure at the Edmonton International Airport, but when that happens and I know there will be a time it will, I'd assure the riders that they could also re-book their flight for another date and time and as a convenience, I'd pick them up again and drive them there at no charge.

My cab's colours would obviously be a retro black and white with the logo placed on both the drivers door and front passenger door. The logo I've designed duplicates the white ONE WAY arrow you often see in a one way street colored typically white with the common colour black on the ONE WAY letters and a &20 dollar sign incased in the middle of the arrow. Now if I can be eligible for my taxi licence and it gets approval in the distant future, it's very possible that you will see for the very first time a once in a life time, one of a kind \$20 ONE WAY taxi rolling up to your door at your convenience. I hope you all had a Merry Christmas and have a Happy 2021 (Free of COVID-19) New Years!



**MMM – Continued from page 9**  
fund raisers and allocating those funds to MMM Adopt-A-Family's programs and services. Some of those organizations and businesses include The Mid Stream Society, Andrew Carpentry, Jandel Homes, Higher Grounds for Coffee and a proud booster when spreading the word about the organization's great work in the community, the Morinville News.

The dedicated and hard working organization also is thankful not only to its many generous donors, but especially thankful to the over 3,000 single mothers, married women, foster parents and single fathers who are all accounted for, that reside within the jurisdictional boundaries of Sturgeon County.

MMM Adopt-A-Family Founder Sarah Hall and her supportive volunteers will continue to provide support to people in need when serving to fill that void. She's hoping that someone else will one day fill her shoes, when she's no longer around and continue to carry that legacy in giving.

Hall said, "I guess I want it to evolve as an organization that is still all encompassing and inclusive, but has such good systems that anybody can come in and run it. "So what I mean is our systems have the organization setup. I want them to be so fool proof that it doesn't matter who comes in. Of course we wouldn't want to have a drain in the heart and really not care about it, but they would be able

to talk it over, because what happens so much in organizations, I see it all the time, is there is always one person that knows how everything goes. So everything runs smoothly and there's no questions and they know the content and they know exactly what needs to be done. I think every organization should strive for that!"

When not working in her respective place at MMM-Adopt-A-Family, Sarah juggles her time between working as a responsible parent, working in the health-care field, and sitting on various committees and governing boards involved in various community functions. She holds the distinctive honoured portfolios of Morinville Town Councillor and Deputy Mayor.

## After all what are librarians for!

By John Zapantis

I am amazed by the computer knowledge and savvy that the St. Albert librarians are capable of.

They seem to always successfully get me out of a rut, when ever I experience some kind of glitch on my computer, like some kitten all tangled up in a ball of yarn. I felt like a troubled kitten compared to what they know, while trying to establish a new email at this library, after being hacked the day before on my own home computer.

So I was again being guided through the proper channels, while typing in my newly created library password and email user name during the time, when I just needed a copy of a story I completed writing for the Alberta Street News January/February Bi-monthly issue.

The help I received that day, was just as

good as previous times with other computer trouble shooting librarians, who were always supportive and reliable while helping me to navigate the unpredictable elements of computer malfunction.

This time I tried getting into my computer with a newly created password and email address, but despite following up on what essentially needed to activate my computer properly, so that I could get onto my Yahoo server to print off a copy of a story that I previously wrote for the Alberta Street News, to no avail. My program on my Yahoo account for typing my business letters and ASN stories wouldn't activate.

So I went to get one of the librarians, Michelle S. at the library's main desk, asking for her guidance in getting me on track and in about one minute, she had every thing under control, while pin pointing the nature of my computer's problem.

She suggested the only way to get back

into my Yahoo server in obtaining a written copy of that story that I wrote the day before, was to essentially give me the library's email address. She referred too this as a one time thing.

She then typed in for me, the library's code that would perform its magic in opening up my program, so that I could get a copy printed off of that revised version of my story for ASN.

In no time flat, Michelle S. had managed to fix this eye sore of a problem and everything was finally back to normal again, as I now pressed print to get a copy of my revised story.

I was more than relieved feeling rescued by this wonderful and selfless soul of a lady, no longer feeling like that little helpless kitten all tangled up in that confusing ball of yarn and all that it took to get me untangled was that friendly and professional librarian named Michelle S. whom I thank for her time and effort in helping to make my day . . .after all what are librarians for!

## Rules in place of resolutions

By Joanne Benger

In times past people didn't write resolutions. They wrote a list of rules they would try to follow throughout their lives. This list of rules was found in the study of King Charles 1 after he was executed in 1649. Twelve Good Rules: 1. Urge no healths. 3. Profane no divine ordinances. 3. Touch no state affairs. 4. Keep secrets. 6. Make no comparisons. 7. Maintain no ill opinions. 8. Keep no bad company. 9. Encourage no vice. 10. Make no long meals. 11. Repeat no

grievances. 12. Lay no wagers.

I have updated them to Twelve Rules for 2021: 1. No drink, no drugs. 2. Don't swear. 3. Mind your own business. 4. Keep secrets. 5. Don't fight. 6. Become self actualized. 7. Hate no one. 8. Stay away from low life. 9. Encourage goodness. 10. Eat healthy. 11. Don't gossip. 12. No grumbling.

The set of rules can be more specific. For those of us who find it hard to say no when we want to say yes a list of rules to lean on might make it easier. Pandemic Rules: 1. Get flu shot. 2. Use wipes. 3. No hand shaking. 4. Wear a mask. 5. Wash my hands. 6. Isolate. 7. Don't shout or sing. 8. No visits. 9. No visitors. 10. Don't gather. 12. Keep distance.

For those of us who have watched protests on TV and become very aware of our short comings the list might be even more like this. Twelve Social Rules: 1. Respect LG-BTQ. 2. Fight racism. 3. Allow no bullying. 4. Allow no trash talk of specific groups. 7. Give to the food bank. 8. Volunteer. 7. Declutter and donate. 8. Protect the weak. 9. Save neglected animals. 10. Get involved. 11. Live green. 12 Give a voice to the voiceless.

We may not be able to live up to our rules today but we can always try harder tomorrow. It's hard when a friendly unmasked person wants to shake my hand, but there is Rule Three.

# It's February. Let Cupid your heart incline

By Joanne Benger

If February has much snow, a fine summer dost foreshow. Hold that promise close as we enter February the month that most people get depressed with SAD.

February is all things to all people. It is Psychology Month, National Embroidery Month, Jump Rope for Health Month, Friendship Month, Black History Month, Apple Month, and Adopt a Rabbit Month. The first week of February is White Cane Week as well as Eating Disorder Awareness Week. The third week is Random Acts of Kindness Week. It's unlucky to ask for a loan for the first three days of the month.

February 2 is Groundhog Day. In Europe it is Candlemas, and they only have hedgehogs. Our groundhogs are marmots, often called prairie dogs or woodchucks. The most famous groundhog is Punxsutawney Phil, who is pulled out of his electrically heater burrow at Goble's Knob, Pennsylvania, and asked if he can see his shadow. If he whispers 'Yes', we have six more weeks of winter. Phil has never been wrong since he began in 1887.

February 4 is World Cancer Day when we celebrate progress in cancer research.

February 6 is St. Dorothea's Day, a day said to bring that snow shovel out.

February 7, 1906, Tommy Burns became the first Canadian to become a heavy weight champion when he beat Marvin Hart. Watch a boxing video.

February 12 is Chinese New Year celebrated by the Chinese, Koreans and Vietnamese. Wear red for luck and eat pork for good health and oranges for prosperity.

February 12 is also Darwin's birthday when a Phylum Feast, a shared meal using as many different species as possible, was eaten by biologists in his honour. In Galapagos, Darwin lived on iguana and on James Island he ate giant tortoises. He also reportedly consumed armadillos, agoutis and rheas.

February 14 is World Radio Day. Turn off the TV and listen to your radio all day. This is also Oil and Gas Celebration Day. Oil was discovered in Leduc 74 years ago today.

February 14 is Valentines Day." A magic spell will bind me fast and make me love you to the last. Let Cupid then your heart incline. To take me for your Valentine." Wear red for luck today. In the U.S. they send Valentines to war vets today, a practice started by Ann Landers.

February 15 is Nirvana Day in Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism. Nirvana is a state of supreme bliss, a cessation of individual existence and the attainment of a calm, sinless state.

February 15 is also Family Day as well as Presidents Day south of the border. Celebrate your family and celebrate Canada for this is Flag Day. Our red, white and leaf flag dates back to February 15, 1965.

February 16 is Pancake Day. Eat a pancake before 8 a.m. for a lucky year ahead. Mardi Gras is the French name for Pancake Day or Shrove Tuesday, which is celebrated with carnivals in New Orleans, Rio De Janeiro, Nice and Cologne.

February 17 is Ash Wednesday as the 40 days of Lent begin. Lent is the Christian period of fasting and penitence that will end midnight April 11.

February 21, 1975 the beaver became the official symbol of Canada. February 21 is also National Mother Language Day when we celebrate our diversity of cultures.

February 22 is Margarita Day, February 23 is Tootsie Roll Day, February 24 is Tortilla Day and February 27 is Hot Fudge Day. Enjoy.

February 24 is Pink Shirt Day when we wear pink to show we do not tolerate bullying.

February 24 is also St. Mathias Day. He was the 12th apostle chosen by lot to take the place of Judas, who betrayed Jesus.

February 26 is Purim, the Jewish Feast of Lots. It celebrates the deliverance of Persian Jews from a massacre that is described in the book of Esther. It is a day of merry-making, feasting and wearing costumes.

February 27 is International Polar Bear Day. We think of how global warming has impacted on the polar bear and try to reduce our carbon foot print.

Right: A family of deer pose for cameraman John Zapantis outside Edmonton in Sturgeon County. Photo by John Zapantis





# Celebrating Raebie Burns, the Ploughman Poet

By Joanne Benger

Robert Burns, born January 25, 1759, was known as the Ploughman Poet. With the invention of John Small's one man plough in 1787, ploughmen became the new heroes of rural Scotland. From October to March the solitary ploughman walked behind the plough, manhandling it as he controlled the reins of his two horses. It took great skill to plough a straight furrow and in the summer he would take part in ploughing matches at the fairs.

The ploughman wore trousers because it had been illegal to wear kilts or anything tartan since the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 (George IV would bring back the kilt in 1822). To keep the cuffs out of the mud as he ploughed, the ploughman wore a leather strap around each trouser leg just below the knee. This was called a Nicketam, and soon Nicketams became the badge of the ploughman on and off the field.

The single ploughman lived alone in a small house called a bothie and he cooked his own meals. He was given a daily allowance of 36 ounces of rolled oats, a pint of milk and some salt. Three times a day he made brose by pouring boiling water over the oatmeal and adding salt. Then he ate the brose with milk. Once in a while he had meat, the parts of the animal that couldn't be sold made into haggis or blood pudding.

You can spend the day in solitude like the ploughman. Tie a Nicketam around each leg and eat brose as your only food all day long. But before you eat don't forget to say The Selkirk Grace written by Robert Burns.

'Some have meat and cannot eat  
And some wad eat that want it  
But we have meat and we can eat  
And to the Lord be thankit.'

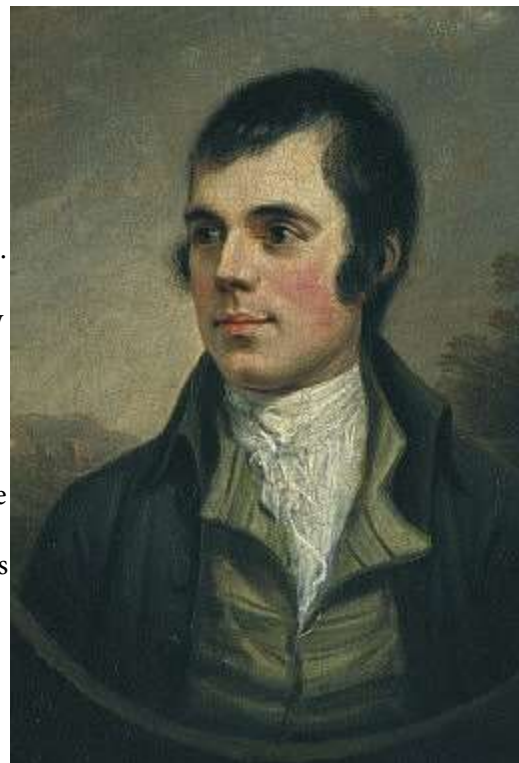
If this meal is too Spartan skip ahead a century and eat Neeps and Tatties (turnips and potatoes). These New World foods were first eaten by the nobility but they grew so well they soon became the food of common people. By 1830 potatoes made up 75% of the diet of Highland families. The neeps and tatties were cooked together in one pot over a peat fire.

Often the big meal of the day was Neep Brose, oatmeal mixed with turnip. The solitary ploughman might also have Cockcrow'n'Lo -. Chicken soup without chicken – just boiled moore grass.

Even now haggis is served with potatoes and turnips. Blood pudding has become black sausage, fried and served with the cooked breakfast in fine restaurants along with bacon and eggs.

Whatever you choose to eat have a wonderful Ploughman Day whether you wear the Nicketams or a kilt, let the words of Robert Burns take over for we have grown up with them. He wrote 'Coming Through the Rye' and 'Auld Lang Syne' so sing songs. Download his poems and you will find that we all use lines from them, slightly changed, as popular sayings. 'Freedom and whiskey go together.' 'He's no better than he should be' 'It's man's inhumanity to man;' 'No man can control time or tide' 'He's a gentleman and a scholar and a judge of good whiskey.' 'To see her was to love her.'

Still, in spite of his talents, Robert Burns in his own words was 'left like a true poet without a sixpence.' On his deathbed he wrote two letters asking for money to keep him out of debtor's prison as well as begging for money for his wife, Jean, expecting their sixth child. Wee Maxwell was born July 25, 1796, he day his father was



**Robert Burns**

buried, and he died in obscurity.

Robert Burns had already written the secret of his poetic success and financial failure in this poem:

Some, rhyme a neebor's name to  
lash  
Some rhyme \*vain thought) for  
needless cash,  
Some rhyme to court the country  
slash  
And raise a din  
For me, an aim I never fash.  
I rhyme for fun.

Over the years Robert Burns has remained the inspiration for people with unique talents, who enjoy what they are doing and trust that they will get due reward some time in the future. Eat your brose and drink your milk and let his philosophy be yours for as he wrote in William Muir's Epitaph:  
'If there's another world he lives in  
bliss  
If here is none, he made the best of  
this.'

# The ABCs of Capitalism

By Timothy Wild

Recently, during the Soul of the Next Economy conference, I had the opportunity to sit on a panel discussing the “gig economy”. The idea behind the panel was to consider the issue of surviving or thriving in that sector of the economy. As I will discuss later, the term itself is very loose, imprecise and problematic; but the concept is basically that workers act as self-employed contractors to complete specific pieces of work, known as gigs. The term spans the usual types of professional contacting and consultation initiatives, but also covers international micro-contract work and less secure – and less economically viable – gig work, such as the labour performed by people who deliver food (Skip the Dishes) or provide ride services (for example through Uber).

I suppose for those who expected my wholesale endorsement of the return to old-fashioned exploitative piece work as the salvation of the working classes, I was a bit of a disappointment. One of the panelists provided information on the demographics of many workers in the sector and highlighted some of the numerous difficulties faced by these folks. But another panelist said that it was a wonderful opportunity for people to really exploit their skills and profitably fill a particular niche in the market. He used the example of a heart surgeon for high performance athletes. That is true I guess; such specialists probably do enjoy some market value.

But there are also a lot of gig workers who do not necessarily have a marketable skill to exploit, and they are simply selling their labour at a reduced rate. When I mentioned this point, my fellow panelist indicated that gig work provided opportunities for low skill workers to obtain a job, and perhaps work a couple more to have a standard of living of sorts. A person with a car could always deliver pizza. I countered with the fact that many of these jobs are undertaken by new Canadians, whose professional

international credentials are not recognized in Canada, and it is difficult for a number of instrumental reasons for them to be accredited to our standards. Furthermore, gig work cuts into time for education and socialization (to develop social capital) – both of which add to one’s marketability. I then added, for good measure, that these survival jobs also have a certain structural bias. These nuances aside, the most concerning and readily apparent shortcoming of gig work is that it does not provide a sustainable living wage. Yes, there are exceptions to this generalization, but to ideologically trot out the illusory benefits of such a segmentation of labour does a disservice to both reality and the overall debate.

First, for many workers in the gig economy, it is more a matter of survival rather than thriving. Folks have to use their own capital (cars) for Uber, for example, and the wear and tear is taken from their meagre earnings. There are also safety issues related to the economic need to pick up customers. Then there is the fact that the gig workers – as contractors – are not usually covered by workplace supports such as EI, WCB support and other income assistance / supplement programmes. This reminds me of the point that it is illegal to work for less than minimum wage as an employee; this is put into place so that workers can’t undercut each other in a nickel and diming race to the bottom. Otherwise, some folks might be desperate enough to work strictly for room and board as in, for example, South Carolina before 1865. The gig economy also undermines the concept of a living wage, let alone a decent wage. In a nutshell, gig work and other forms of insecure employment are the cornerstones of the perpetuation of poverty.

The link between profit and low wages is hardly new, of course. Prior to the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies in 1833, marginal tracks of land – unsuitable to technological innovations such as ploughs – were worked by the labour of enslaved people. The thinking was that the limits of capital inefficiencies in production, and the lower quality of arable land, could be compensated by unfree labour in terms of profit taking.

A desiccated preference for profit over freedom, agency, autonomy and justice – sound familiar?

But equally important is the language used. Antonio Gramsci suggested that language resulted in consent, which was just as necessary as coercion in implementing and maintaining capitalist relations of production and power. Words still count, and they lead to ideas which then lead to aggregated and widely accepted notions of “common sense” and what is acceptable, indeed permissible, in terms of larger public debate. In the film *School of Rock*, Jack Black is accidentally called for a substitute teacher position, and asks what the “gig pays”. His use is important because I think many people use the word “gig” in a lightweight manner. It seems a fun word and, perhaps, conjures up ideas of a Lake Bonavista garage band being able to play a set at their high school; or a jobbing actor getting a role as Farmer Number 1 in a Radio Canada biopic of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. Yet this sense of fun is not replicated on all points on the gig continuum. The Skip the Dishes worker and the Corporate Coach operate in completely different universes. In fact, the term is largely useless apart from one thing – it masks the exploitation of low paid workers and seems to provide a false perception of agency and autonomy when, in fact, it is related to the growth of profits through the decrease of labour costs, simply by the provision of low wages.

Ultimately, the term “sweated labour” does not have the same cache or conscience numbing effect of “gig worker”, but it is more reflective of the lived reality of this type of work for many. By changing the language associated with the idea, however, we can then build a new sense of consciousness and a disposition to act collectively on that awareness. The bottom line is that all jobs should pay at least a living wage, and be augmented by benefits, a sense of community, personal development and opportunities for the achievement of hope. To me, that spells justice!





In spite of the challenges of COVID-19, Thrive served 2100 meals for the Christmas holiday, at three locations: Edmonton Intercultural Centre, Fusion Fellowship and Refuge Mission Hall. Here is a play by play of the event. Volunteers - actually they are not just a volunteer to me - VALUABLE - included security outside, then Team Boardwalk with assembly line serving stations for everything to be served, while maintaining social distancing.

The meal started with a hot turkey dinner, then ham and turkey sandwiches, mandarin orange, homemade bread pudding, Fat Franks cookies, Bon Ton gourmet desserts, WoW Factory candy cane mousse cheesecake, hot cups of coffee and a huge gift bag.

The dinner was a huge success and I am grateful for monetary donations. Donors included Bon Ton Bakery, The WoW Factory Desserts, Boardwalk Community Rentals, Millwoods Lions Breakfast Club, Edmonton Jolly Fellows Lions, Edmonton Millwoods Lions, <https://e-clubhouse.org/sites/ese/>, Edmonton South Edmonton Lions Club - Lions e-Clubhouse, (The Edmonton South Edmonton Lions Club is a part of Lions Clubs International, a network of volunteers who work together to answer the needs that challenge communities around the world.), e-clubhouse.org The Edmonton South Lions Club, Santa Yeg, Edmonton Foodbank, Hotel Nova, Gayle Holyk, Colleen Couet Pomeroy, Blaine Brooks, Myles Podaima, Shirley Southwood, Krista Leicht, Fouad Helal, Refuge Mission House, Thiessen Dedicated Trust Foundation, Church of Christ Victorious/ Elizabeth Giroux, Mimi Garbutt, Dawn Prescott, Jeff Tetz, Rosena Johns, Tri West Group, Brian David MacPhee, Diane Toner, Billie-Jo Wolfe, Fusion Fellowship, Sherry Adams, Mark Adams. Rob Robin Aromin for providing the music, Carol Curtis, Team Rayme, Louise, Rod, Andrew, Corrine and Preston Green with team.

If you are interested in sponsoring Thrive for future events or becoming a volunteer, call Elaine at 780 983 1409.



## FICTION

# The Right Path

By Sharon Austin

The gray two lane highway wound through the hills before him without a dwelling in sight. It was late fall and the bare branches of the trees reached forlornly up to the cold blue grey sky. Two sun dogs arced on either side of the pale sun; their small rainbows giving hope of a change to warmer weather.

Cole Winter was lost in thought as he drove the white company van steadily onward to the next small town. He was a university student and his part time job was driving pharmaceutical supplies to doctor's offices and pharmacies along the coast. Usually he enjoyed the drive but today Tiffany's last words were a constant torment.

"I'm sorry, Cole," she said in her breathy voice, "But we're just from two different worlds. You're always working and I want to enjoy myself. Percy McLeod has asked me to the country club dance and you know your family doesn't belong. I do wish you all the best.....I'll see you around sometime."

He really hadn't thought their different backgrounds would be such a problem but it was all over now. Cole sighed deeply as his next stop came in sight. Near the pharmacy there was a gas station and store and a small tourist rest stop. After delivering the boxes Cole decided to stretch his legs and go for a short walk up to the lookout.

Past the weathered picnic tables two trails diverged; one bare and packed down while the other was covered with dry brown leaves. After a few seconds hesitation, Cole chose the less travelled path. He had only gone a short distance when he thought he heard the pitiful cries of a kitten. Following the sound Cole came upon a thin multicoloured cat frantically trying to reach her paw down through a metal grate on the ground. Coming closer Cole saw a fluffy orange kitten

had fallen through the grate and was trapped inside the two foot deep cement box beneath.

"Hold on, Little Momma, he soothed the frightened cat. "I can get your kitten out of there."

After several tries he pried the grate up and scooped up the kitten. It ran to the mother cat who began to purr and rub against Cole's leg. "Do you only have one kitten?" He questioned as if the mother cat could somehow answer him. Cole followed the cat as she walked slowly with her kitten to behind a wooden kindling box. There in a sheltered spot two other kittens, one grey and one black and white, peeped at him with round blue frightened eyes. As Cole patted the mother cat he saw she had a deep gash on her hind leg and bite marks on her neck as if some animal had attacked her. Cole left them all cuddled up together as he went to the store to see if the owner knew the cat was injured.

"That sure ain't our cat," the store owner protested loudly, "And we sure don't want no fool kittens round here. Some tourist must have dumped them off. I can't believe them city folks! Don't worry I'll get rid of them," he said to the stout grey haired woman scowling behind the counter.

"I'll take them," Cole heard himself say quickly. Would you have a cardboard box?"

"Out back, by the dumpster," the woman answered smirking at him. It was obvious that she thought he was foolish.

"Is there a vet in this town?" Cole questioned. "The mother cat is hurt."

"Part time vet on main street," the man sneered.

As Cole walked away he could see the reflection of the man making "crazy" signals behind him but he didn't care. He had always had cats growing up and he enjoyed their company. He could tell that Little Momma as he called her had once had a home for she wasn't afraid like the feral cats that his mom fed. In fact the cat was quite content in the box with her kittens as

she rode in the back seat of the van.

"Aren't they sweet?" the vet's pretty young receptionist said as she stroked the soft fur of the kittens. Her blue eyes sparkled as she smiled warmly at Cole. "That was so nice of you to rescue these cats. You're a modern day good samaritan for sure."

The kittens were all in good shape but poor Little Momma needed stitches on her leg, antibiotics, and fluids for dehydration. Cole checked the time and realized he was way behind schedule for the next delivery. "I'll have to leave the cats," he said, "But I can be back by ten tonight."

"I'm sorry," the vet said with regret, "We close at nine and I can't stay late tonight."

"Wait a minute," the pretty receptionist, whose name tag read "Bella", cried. "He can pay the bill now and I can wait for him to come by at ten."

"You'd do that?" Cole questioned, surprised.

"Anything for these sweet kittens," Bella laughed.

Later that night Cole pulled into the vet's parking lot and there was Bella, true to her word, waiting in her car with the cats.

"I want to hear how Little Momma and the kittens make out so I wrote my phone number on the box. Maybe I could have one of the kittens when it's old enough," she smiled warmly at Cole.

Cole and Bella talked and laughed for over an hour before she had to go. On the way home Cole smiled to himself. He had definitely chosen the right path in the woods. The leafy untravelled path had led him to the promise of a bright new tomorrow.

