

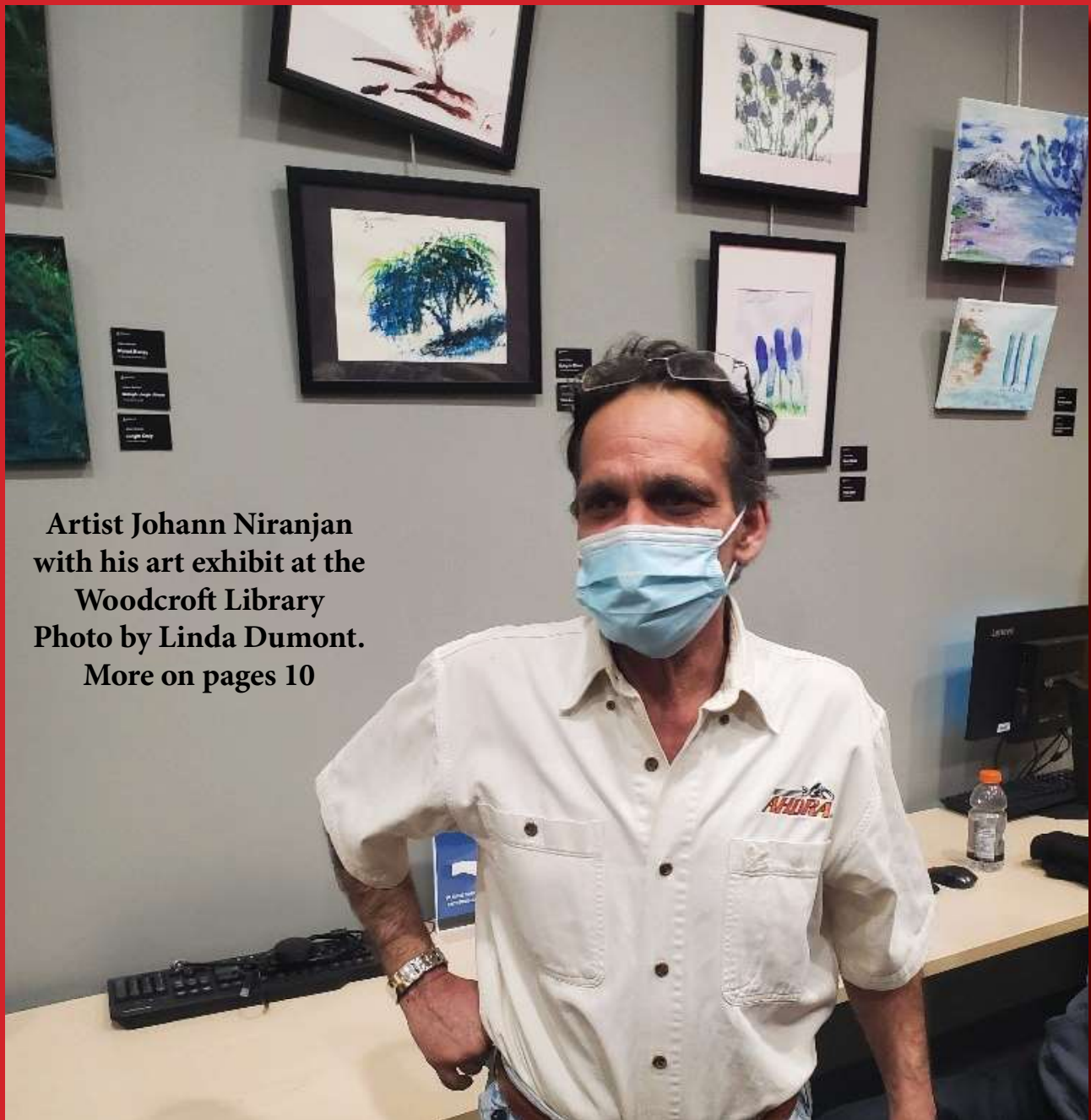
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# ALBERTA Street News

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Artist Johann Niranjan  
with his art exhibit at the  
Woodcroft Library  
Photo by Linda Dumont.  
More on pages 10

## ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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# Remembering Doreen Ella Klause (July 22, 1941 – November 11, 2021)

By Joanne Benger

Doreen was just a friendly neighbour who was a home care nurse and retired. Then my husband died in 2015 and Doreen became my close friend. She helped me with the funeral and went on to teach me the skills I needed to live alone. We attended seminars to help me age in place and she was delighted when I resumed my writing and became volunteer writer for Alberta Street News.

Then Doreen's health declined. Soon she was closing down her house and moving to a seniors' apartment at Thorhild so she'd be close to the children she loved. As she downsized, she filled my garden shed with donations for Edmonton's homeless – clothes, bedding and useful items. "I like to think we'll save a few lives," she said.

Of course Doreen was in her element in the apartment. She said, "Lots of people haven't been getting the hearing aids, teeth and pull ups they are entitled to," and she took great pleasure in setting that right. As she once said, "Helping people is my only hobby." And she made the most of that hobby. I imagine Doreen now, standing at the Golden Gate, making sure everyone gets into heaven along with her.

I will miss my dear friend. Rest in peace, Doreen.



## CORRECTION

In the Alberta Street News January/February 2022 issue, the story headlined: 2021 ETS Stuff-A-Bus Campaign keeps stuffing those buses the story incorrectly mentions that 16 ETS buses were parked in front of 16 Sobey's store locations, while receiving donated grocery bags of non-perishable food items that were brought to and dropped off in various buses by donors, to help the Food Bank in its drive to feed the hungry. The correct information should have read that 16 ETS buses were parked at 16 Save On Foods locations. Alberta Street News would like to apologize for any inconvenience caused to the organizers, sponsors, donors and readers of this important fund-raising cause.

THE VIEWS PRESENTED ARE THOSE OF THE CONTRIBUTORS.

# Lamb or lion, March is marching in

By Joanne Bengier

We are all waiting to see if March will come in like a lamb and go out like a lion as it should or come in like a lion and go out like a lamb as it often does. "The March wind roars like a lion in the sky And makes us shiver as it passes by. When winds are soft and days are warm and clear, just like the gentle lamb, the spring is here."

March was the first month of the Roman year, named for Mars the god of war. Now it is Red Cross Month, National Kidney Health Month, Epilepsy Month, Fraud Prevention Month, Dieticians Month and Irish American Heritage Month as well as Pothole Season.

March 1 is Maha Shivaratri. If you are Hindu and Mi'raj, if you are Islamic and Shrove Tuesday if you are a Christian. It is also World Compliment Day so try to say something nice to everyone you meet.

March 2 is Ash Wednesday, St. Chad's Day and Dr. Seuss Day. Eat green eggs and ham. Just add a drop or two of blue food colouring to yellow scrambled eggs and like magic, you have green eggs.

March 3 is World Wildlife Day and often the day March comes in like a lion for the old saying is, "First comes David, next comes Chad, then comes Winnel roaring mad." Expect a Winnel story. This is followed by World Prayer Day on March 4.

March 6, 1912, Oreos were first sold so celebrate with an Oreo. This is followed by National Cereal Day on March 7 so pour yourself a bowl of happiness.

March 6 to 12, the second week of March, is World Glaucoma Week.

March 8 is International Women's Week when we honour women who have contributed to our society and support those who are still striving for gender equality in the work place. The week surrounding it is Women's Week.

March 9, 1959 Mattel's Barbie doll was launched at a New York toy fair. Happy Birthday Barbie!

March 11 is the National Day of observance for those who have lost their lives to COVID for it was on March 11, 2020 that WHO declared a Global Pandemic and lockdowns began. On this second anniversary many will honour a lost ones with candles and prayers and celebrate their lives. March 11 is also the eleventh anniversary of the Japanese earthquake and at 2:46 we honour those lost lives with a minute of silence. It is a sad day of mourning.

March 12 is World Kidney Day and this is followed by Daylight Savings Time on March 13. The rule is "Spring ahead, fall back. And the debate is on. Keep DST or not. Farmers complain that chickens and cows take several weeks to adjust. Meanwhile statistics showed traffic accidents were reduced by one per cent in the U.S. and U.K. because there is more light at night when most accidents occur.

March 14 is Commonwealth Day as well as Pie Day because in math, pi is 3.14. Enjoy your favourite pie today. This is followed by March 15, the ides of March. Julius Caesar was assassinated March 15, 44 BC, so "beware the ides of March."

March 18 is Full Moon. It is the Crow or Snow Blindness Moon. This is also Recycling Day, which is followed by March 19, World Quilting Day. Pioneers often made quilts out of recycled old clothes.

March 20 is International Day of Happiness and with good reason. This is the Spring Equinox. Winter is over. Celebrate by standing an egg on end Columbus style. This can only be done on the equinox when all is in balance according to legend.

March 5 is Greek Independence Day.

March 29 to 31 we can expect March to out like a lion. According to the old poem, "March borrowed from Aprile, Three days and they were ill. The first o'them was wind and wet. The second o' them was snow and sleet. The third o' them was sic a freeze. That the birds legs stuck to the trees."

March 31 is Crayola Crayon Day. We are never too old to enjoy an adult colouring book.



## Mary's New Year's wishes Come true

By Joanne Bengier

1. I asked for abundance. We got abundant snow.
2. I asked for lots of phone calls. I have been getting at least one scam call or robocall every day.
3. I asked to be able to save money. Extreme Cold warnings and Extreme Snow Days kept me inside so I couldn't spend money.
4. I asked for the Fifth Wave to end. It did. We are in the Sixth Wave now.
5. I asked for a friendly exercise class in this area. I ended up shovelling snow as friendly neighbours also shovelled and waved and shouted back.
6. I asked for a life on the up and up. Along came inflation. My grocery bills are up, utility bills are up, everything is up and up.
7. I asked for a more positive life. Alberta's positivity rate rose to 35.
8. I asked to become more organized. With new restrictions I stayed in so much I tidied all my drawers and closets just to fight boredom.

# The Kaitz Index and the working class

By Timothy Wild

As noted by the Australian sociologist, Shaun Wilson, in his book *Living Wages and the Welfare State*, the Kaitz Index is “a simple measure that tracks the relative value of the minimum wage compared to the median wage”. Wilson uses the Index to help frame his broader analysis comparing the scope and effectiveness of public policy in six countries following the “Anglo-American social Model” to those of other clusters of welfare type modalities. Essentially, the six countries (Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the USA) have comparatively lower wage rates – and more low wage workers – than those of both the Nordic countries and southern Europe. Of the Anglo-American countries, Canada’s Kaitz percentage was 51%, which marked a 10% increase since 2000 and was largely influenced by positive minimum wage policies at the provincial level by NDP or Liberal governments in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. In comparison, the USA’s rate was 32% while that of New Zealand was 66%.

The Kaitz Index is a useful descriptive tool. It provides a mechanism for a quantitative comparison of different wage, indeed income, rates. However, it does not offer any prescriptions for what those rates should be. It does not advocate for what percentage of the median income a minimum wage should be set at. The Index is also unable to speak to the economic viability of that wage. That, as they say, is the stuff of politics. And despite the beliefs of many economists, it is politics, rather than the market, that determines these rates. Wilson convincingly demonstrates that the comparatively low wages of the six Anglo-American countries are due to the political dominance of neoliberalism. He argues that this ideology creates conditions designed to support the private accumulation of profits and rent-taking achieved, in part, through the payment of low wages together with the provision of risibly pathetic income replacement rates. Sound familiar?

I would also suggest that this ideology perpetuates the policy impact of the British Poor Law Amendment of 1834 which introduced “least eligibility”, a principle that legislated the idea that even the highest level of charitable support should be set at a level lower than the lowest wage. As a result, the working classes were taught to fear the indignity of the Poor House and were conditioned to accept low wages, often earned in unsafe conditions. The spectre of the Poor Law continues to haunt social policy development and income support / replacement today. Wages are kept low due to the lack of full-employment policies and the undermining of the scope and strength of unions, but income replacement rates are kept even lower. Politics indeed.

We can use the Kaitz Index to gain some comparative understanding of incomes in our province. In January 2022, the ATB reported that the median weekly income in Alberta was \$1241.94. I am not quite sure how this figure was calculated, nor do I know how zero-hour contracts and the wax fruits of the gig economy were blended into this amount. However, let’s for the sake of argument say that this figure is based on a full-time worker being employed for 35 hours per week. Taking the current Alberta Minimum Wage of \$15.00 per hour at 35 hours, that would lead to a full-time minimum wage worker earning \$525 a week. And, to add another figure for comparison, drawing upon Vibrant Communities Calgary’s calculation of a Living Wage at \$18.60 per hour, the weekly income of someone earning that wage would be \$651. Using the Kaitz Index, the minimum wage is approximately 42% of the median income, while a living wage provides the worker with an income that is just over 52% of the median.

Then we might also consider that a person on AISH receives a monthly income of \$1685 per month, which using the same calculations results in about \$389 per week (31%). A single person with 2 children surviving on social assistance, living in private housing, receives about \$1293 per month or approximately \$298 per week, which results in a Kaitz Index score of about 24%. I recognize that folks receiving AISH or social assistance also have access to other benefits, including some measure of health insurance and prescription coverage. Furthermore,

many low-income workers work considerably more than 35 hours per week. But I think that the numbers speak for themselves. Albertans experiencing life on the social and economic margins, are paying the price for the accumulation of income and wealth by the so-called economic elites.

These wage and income rates in Alberta also clearly illuminate the struggles facing many Albertans when it comes to meeting the increasing costs of living. Wilson argues that “Direct government intervention in the areas of areas of housing and childcare are extremely cost-effective ways of reducing living costs. For this reason, there is greater interest in universal public services as opposed to a universal basic income.” However, this reflects the political choice dimension. The provincial UCP is clear where they stand. In Alberta, for example, the Kenney regime has failed to link income support programs to annual changes in the cost-of-living. Additionally, the \$15 minimum wage remains untouched, barring those who saw their wages decrease due to their age, their relationship to the boss or their wearing of a short kilt while at work serving alcohol.

The solution is to be found in politics not econometrics or the vagaries of the market. There are things that can be done to increase the effectiveness and dignity of working-class wages and aid in the long overdue redistribution of wealth and income. In terms of pre-distributive policies, wages should be increased, using the Living Wage rates as the social minimum for wage rates. Automatic cost of living increases should be legislated as a matter of course. Those dimensions can then be augmented, as noted by Wilson, through more redistributive strategies, such as the provision of affordable housing and Quality, Universal, Affordable and Developmentally Appropriate (QUAD) childcare, together with taxation changes including more tax credits for the working class, higher taxes on the economic elites and higher thresholds for the lower band of taxation. But for this to occur, the working class needs to recognize the power of collectivity, and act to obtain collective and dignified access to public goods and “universal public services”.

## Loss of a friend

By Darlene Collins

It's nice to write again. I've always been a good, decent First Nations woman, who is surprised at my friends, who turn against me and forget about me. I've known my friend, Effie for 30 years and Effie became ill about five years ago. She is scheduled for the hospital in the morning and she didn't acknowledge me when I was there. As a matter of fact, she called Courtney instead. I'm crushed that I couldn't say good bye to her.

You see Effie got breast cancer. She made it. Now she has colon cancer and its stage four. I'll probably never see her again. And I wasn't given the chance to even hug her.

Good bye Effie. Then I see her mother in Inuvik, N.W.T.

## Was it road rage, or a personal attack that led to volatile behaviour?

By John Zapantis

Someone once told me you can determine what people are about by their motives.

I certainly found that out while trying to run out of the way of an oncoming driver, who went into a rage, who insisted that I walk quickly in front of his van, while crossing the street to get to the other side of a traffic light intersection. This incident took place sometime in the late afternoon in September of last year.

All this went down when I walked out of a Tim Horton's up to a traffic light intersection and was crossing westbound along Hermitage Road towards Victoria Trail in Edmonton, I decided to walk more quickly onto the intersection in front of me, when I noticed the traffic light clock counting down at 10 seconds. I hurried my pace to beat the timing of this pulsating clock. By the time I was halfway across the street, the seconds on that on and off show of numbers had counted down to two seconds left to go before it was to turn red, forcing me to pick up the pace, while trying to make it safely to the other side.

Midway up that crossing were two young teenage girls approaching me and they passed by me to get to the other side. At that same time, in the middle of this intersection, I heard a loud on and off honking from a man honking from his waiting van. He then yelled out to me angrily, "Get going."

I hesitated for a moment and stopped abruptly wondering why he was so erratic in his behavior. To play it safe, I figured I'd give him the right of way so I waved him over to pass by me so that I could safely make a run for the other side. But he remained still facing me in his vehicle, yelling in a vulgar tone, "Get the F-going"

I also noticed that his drivers' window was rolled down a third of the way, which is why I could hear him loud and clear. I decided to make my way across, thinking now that I'd be safe to continue on to the other side. Looking over my right shoulder I realized it wasn't safe for this so called concerned motorist, who seemed to be in a hurry, decided to drive his van, straight towards me, reaching within a foot of me, while trying to run me down with that angered look on his face. I pushed down hard on my right foot and did a one foot hop, just getting out of his way in time to avoid his vehicle from driving right into me.

The rush of adrenaline gave me the added thrust to safely clear out from being hit by this arrogant and irresponsible driver as I finally made it all in one piece to the other side. Being that I'm an observant writer and never have been known to want to miss out on a spontaneous and

## Just keeping on

By Darlene Collins

I keep writing because I have no phone, no heat, no access to any help. The phone in this unit was taken apart by one of the residents who was high on crystal meth. It's the drug of choice now as well as heroin. Whatever happened to Operation Friendship? It's now Operation Seniors' Trap house. All the residents in this centre are allowed to party and do drugs all night, plus the in the back basement there's a prostitution ring.

I had a chance to talk to my daughter, who's involved and told me a few things about 'down below'. She told me she has to service up to 15 to 20 guys and its scary to see them all at her, date raping her and giving her a drug so he can do it. My grandson is also brought into this. They have been hostage here and there no one believes me. My own daughter told me they are both being held against their own will.

intense story, especially like this one, I always make certain that I carry two pieces of essential resources - a pen in my shirt pocket and a staple of past store receipts hoarded in my wallet in my back pocket. If an unusual situation were ever to occur for possible story writing material, I'd be ready to write it into a story for a future issue in the Alberta Street News.

As this dangerous driver continued to drive off in his raging hurry, for whatever reason, I pointed my finger at him, hoping he noticed me pointing at him from his vehicle's rearview mirror as a way of sending a message to him that what he had just done was un-warranted. It was also my way of distracting him, to force him to continue driving on-wards, instead of giving him the index finger, which probably wouldn't have given me enough time to write down his license if he was to turn that van around and try to run me down again. But cleverly pointing that finger of mine right at him was also intended to give him the feeling of empowerment. That was my intention to distract him, so that I'd have more than enough time to write down his license number as he continued to drive away from me.

I'd say no later than two hours had passed, while playing this horrific scene over and over in my head, until at that point in time I was encouraged to write down this story to put it all in perspective. A few hours after this event had taken place, I reflected a little about this driver in his van. He did look familiar, when I processed this scenario in my deep thought, over and over again. I'd now come to the realization that this driver was not only a familiar face, so was his voice. My memory recall now served me right. I could recall speaking to this stranger once, along with his two buddies, at another Tim Horton's on the corner of 50th Street and 129 Avenue. What distinctively stands out about the strange encounter with this volatile driver, was when he and his two friends started egging me on and mocking me about some indirect issue in particular, which I now can't remember what it exactly was that they were talking to me about. But as I now reflect on that driver's motives, on that day, when he tried to run me over with his van, I'm starting to realize he must have hated me from the get go for whatever reason.

I know myself I'm a nice guy with good intentions, but despite my nature, I've also had to deal with unavoidable circumstances through no fault of my own, with the odd disturbers, whom I've had to deal with and did, while rising above those adversities that seemed to have created a few enemies in the end. In regards to those obstacles thrown my way, could it be possible that I was being targeted by this madman driver, or was it a coincidence that he was in a hurry to get to somewhere on time?

I may never find out why but what I do know for certain is that I can say now that the guy behind that steering wheel may just have to answer to me the next time I see him. If I do catch up to him again his ride isn't going to be so rewarding, when we meet. I'll make certain he isn't in his vehicle when I allow him to come to the other side and I know I won't be in my vehicle either, when that time comes!

# The Box

## Fiction by Sharon Austin

Everyone at the high school seemed quiet and subdued and Tom noticed that three more classmates were absent. Some said their families had fled in the night, others thought they had been captured and forced to fight with the new regime. Tom was very worried for the college where his father was a professor had been closed and father was a vocal part of the resistance. Sometimes he wished that they had fled the country along with uncle Paul and his young family but father thought he could make a difference with his democratic political views. It was just the two of them now, for mother had passed away from influenza three years before.

Back at home, the house was dark save for the light coming from father's office. Father was sitting at his desk looking worried and disheveled, and dark shadows haunted his eyes. "They came for Professor Johnson today and I fear that I will be next," he said gravely. "There isn't much time to say all I want to say for you must flee across the border and get to Uncle Paul. I've prepared you a duffle bag with a sleeping bag, a few clothes, and all the food I could gather."

"No Father," Tom cried. "I will never leave you. We will fight them together when they come." Father smiled at young Tom's bravado but he had anticipated this. "We have no weapons son," Father said calmly. "Our weapons are our words and they pale in the face of guns. Besides, I have a very important mission for you to carry out." Father handed Tom his ornate carved wooden cigar box locked with a sturdy brass lock. "You must carry this box and deliver it to Uncle Paul; lives depend on it. Here is a map of your route that you must commit to memory for others will follow and it must not fall into enemy hands. Now come, we will eat one last meal together and then you must go. Father had cooked a meal of sausage and eggs and fried potatoes with onions. Fresh produce was hard to come by these days.

"What's in the box? Tom questioned, overwhelmed by this new turn of events.

"That, I cannot tell you. Promise me you will not open the box until you are with Uncle Paul. Now go, and take the dog with you for protection," Father

hugged him for a long time.

In the gathering darkness Tom and Bowser walked quickly avoiding the main roads and staying within the fringe of the forest. The terrain was rough and the hundred-mile journey to the border seemed impossible now. He could feel the wood of the precious box against the skin of his chest for he had tucked it safely in the deep pocket of the vest he wore beneath his clothes. Whatever was in the box would thump lightly against the wood as he moved it. Tom wondered if it could be some secret code or documents to help the resistance. He was proud that father had entrusted him with this mission and he would do his best to see it through. It was early spring and the nights were still below freezing but the effort of walking kept him warm. As the morning sun streaked the sky with pink and gold Tom retreated farther into the woods and found a sheltered place to rest and hide out beneath the sleeping bag. He and Bowser ate some bread and cheese and drank water from the canteen. There was no way to know how far he had come, but once he reached the river, he was to follow it to the border. The big German Shephard, Bowser was a warm comfort nestled beside him in the hollow. Another full night of walking brought him to the river and he changed direction as he followed the downstream current. The river was mostly free of the winter ice except for the thin icy shards near the shoreline. The hardest part of the journey would be crossing that river when he got near Valley Haven. Once across the border he was to take the train to Lincoln and find Uncle Paul. Father had given him enough money for the train and to buy a bit of food but it wasn't much. All the banks had been closed and the accounts frozen.

Tom awoke with a start to hear Bowser's low growl and the sound of voices. It had been so long since he had heard a voice in the stillness that it sounded strange to him.

"Well, hello there, "a friendly voice called out. "What are you doing here?" The boy was obviously one of the rebels that had taken to hiding out in the woods to avoid being jailed. After Tom told him that he was trying to make it to the border the boy invited him back to their camp. The camp was just a rough bunch of shacks and tents but they had a warm fire burning and they offered him beans

and bread. That night as he slept in a tent by the fire, he was warm for the first time in days. He had even been able to take off his coat and put on a sweater from his duffle bag. Tom placed the precious wooden box beneath his makeshift pillow and went to sleep. Suddenly he awoke to Bowser's menacing growl and in the moon-light he could see a man going through his things.

"Stop thief," he yelled as Bowser lunged forward. The man fled, but his money was gone along with his extra socks but at least the precious wooden box was still safe. Quickly Tom gathered his things and fled quietly into the darkness. He could almost hear father saying, "Desperate times bring out the best and the worst in us all." Night after night he walked on, cold and hungry and pelted by freezing rain. Some days he wanted to just give up but the box and its secret contents spurred him on. At last, he reached Valley Haven and only the cold daunting river stood between him and freedom. Seeing a fisherman with a row boat, he dared to ask if he would take him across. The man was disappointed that he had no money but he would take him and Bowser across for all his belongings. The only thing Tom had left now was the box and that was really all that mattered. Without money, Tom and Bowser had to hop a freight train to make it to Lincoln. Early the next morning, the pair stood shivering and famished at Uncle Paul's door.

After Tom was warmed and fed, Uncle Paul took cutters to the box. Inside were five small objects wrapped in tissue paper. Eagerly, Tom unwrapped the first to find a small flat rock like the ones he had collected at the beach so long ago. On the rock father had painted the word PURPOSE in gold paint. One by one Tom unwrapped the flat stones painted with the words: FAITH, COURAGE, RESILIENCE, and HOPE. Tom stared at the stones deeply disappointed. He had risked his life to bring Uncle Paul a bunch of stones. Then he saw the letter that father had written him. He read it aloud to Uncle Paul:

Dear Son,

As David of Old used 5 small stones to defeat the enemy, I have prayed over

Continued on page 5

# Happy St. Patrick's Day

By Joanne Benger

St. Patrick (385 -461) is the patron saint of Ireland and his symbols are the harp and the shamrock. His real name is believed to be MaAewyn Succat and he was born in Briton, but none is sure where. France, Scotland, England and Wales all claim to be his birthplace. At 16 he was abducted and taken to Ireland as a slave. After six years of slavery he escaped to France where he became a priest and took the name of Patrick. At the age of 60, Patrick, who was now a bishop, had a dream in which the Irish were calling him back to Ireland to tell them about God. With the blessing of Pope Celestine, the bishop returned to Ireland with 25 followers and began to teach the gospel. He drove the snakes from Ireland by beating a drum and he was very popular as he Christianized the Irish. According to legend, when St. Patrick died, the sun didn't set for 12 days or nights so as to delay bringing on a new day in Ireland without him. In actual fact, it was light as day during the night for those twelve days because the thousands of people who had come to mourn him carried so many torches and candles.

## The shamrock

St. Patrick Christianized the shamrock as he Christianized the Irish for it had been considered holy by many prior religions. Both the Druids and the Celts considered it sacred and the Druids had worshipped it in the past. It got its name from the Arabic "shyamrakh" and the Persians revered it because it was emblematic of their triad. St. Patrick used the shamrock to show the Irish how God, like the three leaved shamrock, was three in one – the Father, the Son and Holy Ghost.

Most now agree that the true shamrock is the white clover that grows in many areas including Alberta. Collect some Alberta shamrocks this summer and press them in a book for next year's St. Patrick's Day. As you collect them, enjoy the superstitions that surround the shamrock. It is very lucky to find a four leaved clover for the four leaflets represent fame, wealth, a faithful lover and good health. Some even claim that if you find a four leaf clover you will meet your lover later that day. And the luck of the four leaved clover is doubled if, immediately after picking it, you give it to someone else.

A five leaved clover guarantees great riches but you must give it away immediately or you may find yourself threatened with illness. Even a two leaved clover has magical powers. If a girl place it in her right shoe she will end up marrying the first man she meets or someone with the same first name.

The shamrock has long been considered a symbol of love as in this hundred year old Irish American poem:

St. Patrick's in Ireland  
The shamrock and you  
I love with a heart  
That's both Irish and true.

## The Box

Continued from page 4

these stones to help you on your journey. First, I give you a purpose, a mission to complete against all odds. Next, I give you faith; faith that God will guide you and protect you along the way. The third stone is Courage. You will need great courage to face the cold and hunger and danger that you must endure. Next is resilience, that you will find a way to overcome the obstacles in your path. Last, I give you hope. Keep hope alive that when democracy is restored the prison doors will open and all of the political prisoners will be set free. I picture you now standing safely in Uncle Paul's kitchen and reading this letter. I will hold that vision in my mind until I see you again. The life you have saved is your own, and that means everything to me.

With All My Love, your father

Uncle Paul placed the small wooden box filled with the painted stones on the mantle beside a picture of Father. He drew his nephew to him in a warm hug. All they could do now was hope, and pray, and wait.

## Celebrating St. Patrick's Day

By Joanne Benger

The Irish used a delightful mix of folklore religion and humour and can bless you and curse you at the same time as the saying goes, "Wherever there's an Irishman, there's a lot of laughing, singing and love." The smooth talking Irishman is described as having "a shamrock tongue". Yeats said, "Ireland suffers from too much history." And Dr. Johnson said, "The Irish are a fair people. They never speak well of one another."

Here are some of my favourite Irish witticisms:

May your troubles be like grannie's teeth – few and far between.

Chancy as the Irish weather, may the Devil trip the man.

May England's difficulties be Ireland's opportunities.

May you never lose a feather as long as your shoes are under the bed together.

May God turn their hearts. If he can't turn their hearts may he turn their ankles so we'll know them by their limping.

## Irish Blessing

Begin the day and end the day as you begin and end an Irish visit with a beautiful Irish blessing such as these:

May your footsteps set you upon a lifetime journey of love.

May you wake up each day with his blessing and sleep each night in His keeping.

And may you always walk in His tender care.

May you always have work for your hands to do.

May your pockets hold a coin or two.

May the sun shine bright on your windowpane,

May the rainbow be certain to follow each rain.

May the hand of a friend always be near you

And may God fill your heart with gladness to cheer you.

## The Irish Greeting

We are all Irish for the day so greet everyone with "Top o' the morning to you" to which the response is, "And the rest o the day to you." The nickname for all Irishmen was Paddy so you can refer to yourself and others as Paddy today.

# The mayor listened to my ideas

By John Zapantis

People in general have the impression that politicians never listen to anyone's constructive advice. Politicians have been looked down upon by disgruntled voters, who've been hoodwinked only to realize that so called election promises are the ultimate vehicle for buying your vote. But may I share my testimony of how one particular politician with a bigger heart than most, along with a more positive and assuring vision of how we could improve the quality of life for Edmonton's thousands of electorates, had kept all of his election promises, while earning his votes. That encouraged me to take a big step in suggesting that this politician further expand the Light Rapid Transit System (LRT) access to three different areas throughout our city.

This day in history happened, when I was a reporter for the Edmonton Senior Newspaper while covering a story on the Silver Skate Festival back in 2008. It was at the event that I had the wonderful opportunity of meeting up with then three term Mayor Stephen Mandel, whom I happened to briefly interview on his perspective on this exciting event. After our brief interview ended, I asked him if I could pull him over to the side to give him some helpful advice about an idea I had in mind for some time, regarding the expansion of the LRT.

I then confidently and firmly advised him, "How about expanding the LRT in three different directions in our city. You could take one rail line and start it from downtown and bring it over to

Millwoods. Then take the second line of track from downtown going Westbound to West Edmonton Mall. Then take the third track from downtown and run it over to The City of St. Albert so that hockey fans can take that ride from St. Albert straight over to the new downtown hockey arena that you've proposed for future construction, making this source of transportation accessible for St. Albert Edmonton Oilers hockey fans, when dropping them off right in front of the new hockey arena. This way St. Albert fans won't have to drive their cars to downtown Edmonton while inconveniently struggling to find parking next to the new hockey arena."

The mayor smiled at me and let out an enthusiastically loud reply, "I just may do that."

A year later, what the mayor had said he may do, he eventually did. He proposed two of the three tracks that I had suggested for expansion. Eventually these tracks that I had proposed were approved for construction by the Mayor and Edmonton City Council. Currently the Millwood's rail line expansion that I had proposed is due to be ready and running by the fall of 2022. The second track proposed by me was originally intended to take an LRT train from downtown to West Edmonton Mall but it has been altered to drive farther west of West Edmonton Mall up to Lewis Estates. The third track that I proposed, for St. Albert didn't make the mayor's plans.

Mayor Don Iveson, who was voted in as Mayor right after Mandel's departure, when he decided not to run for office again, decided to expand another track from downtown to Castle Downs, which was approved for future expansion in 2020.

The creative and helpful idea of mine to expand our LRT subway system, while

transforming it into a cosmopolitan subway system, happened all because I opened my mouth to advance Edmonton's growth and economic diversity in allowing ETS LRT riders much more accessible transportation options to all other corners of our city. The benefits of this expansion have also created long-term construction employment for thousands of young men and women, who've been a part of this project since it was first proposed and continues expand its reach where needed to this day.

Former Mayor Stephen Mandel is publicly recognized as one of Edmonton's most productive mayor's ever. After all, he's not only a great listener, like I've come to personally realize, he practiced what he preached as a once three term nine year mayor.

Some of his many grand contributions and accomplishments include the construction and completion of the Royal Alberta Museum, the Edmonton Art Gallery and the Roger's Place hockey arena, home of the Edmonton Oilers. There was no payout for my contributing idea, but I must say I take great satisfaction in helping to contribute in some way to the change of our city's landscape, realizing that my little voice, has helped a lot of people in a variety of ways in taking that giant leap in helping to make that difference. When my voice was seriously heard by this particular politician, whom I can attest has kept all of his promises in making a big difference, while working closely with Edmonton's various community's and listening to the ideas of its many citizens, this team effort with Mandel and his people has inevitably helped with the productive and prosperous growth of our city.

## The downside of living in seniors housing by Darlene Collins

Here it is and several months have just about come and gone. There is nothing good about this new year. The Omicron variant is still here, taking people's lives and all that's heard from morning till night is sirens, sirens and more sirens.

There is this guy that moved in next door to me and his name is Mike. He's not all there, he takes lots of medication and he's nothing but a joker. He uses lots of crystal meth and likes to harass me, constantly bugs me with anything and everything. And the police dumped him off here at Operation Friendship and told the manager, Carmine, to house him so they know where he is. So why put him next to my room? He keeps putting mice in the room on my side of the common area.

What kind of people do this to allow people to be constantly played with by a big, old man who has mental problems and is just a big old man kid? This is just one of the things that I have to put up with. There's also the prostitutes at the back, 'down below' they call it. I could hear them getting beatings from the men who use this service and children are heard screaming from there at night. This is the most horrible place I have ever known in my life.

# Wear a daffodil for April

By Joanne Benger

Wear your daffodil with pride for April's Daffodil Days promote cancer awareness. April is also Earth Month, National Bedtime Month, Parkinson Disease Month and Oral Health Month. The origin of April's name is lost in time but it may have come from the Greek 'averire' meaning to open for the world opens up in spring or it could be named for Aphrodite the Greek name for Venus the Roman goddess of bloom and beauty and protectress of gardens.

April weather is changeable. "April weather, rain and sunshine both together". Take the good with the bad for "A cold April, the barn will fill" and "gardens will do well "if it rains on April 1, it will rain for 40 days."

April 1 is April Fools Day. People used to be sent on fools errands, told to fetch a glass hammer, a sky hook, a desk stretcher or other impossible items. Now we often fool with false information like telling people we can now get high speed internet through our plumbing. At noon we stop fooling and it becomes Turnpike Day when we try to pin a tail on people by stealth. The tail can be made of anything. Toilet paper is popular.

April 1 Ramadan starts. It is the ninth month in the Muslim lunar year and commemorates the first revelation of the Koran to Mohammed. Muslims fast during daylight hours with no food or drink throughout Ramadan.

April 6 is National Tartan Day and this is followed on April 7 with World Health Day and Beer Day. Wear your tartan, raise your glass and drink to health.

April 8 is World Beaver Day The Castor canadensis is Canada's largest rodent and it appears on our nickel.

April 9 is Vimy Ridge Anniversary day and on April 9, 2021 Prince Philip died peacefully at 99 and Rapper BMX died of a heart attack at 50. R.I.P prince Philip and BMX.

April 19 is the Hindu Rama Navami as well as Christian Palm Sunday. It is International Safety Pin Day, Siblings Day and National Day of Silence.

April 20, 1865 Jack Miner was born. He established North America's first bird sanctuary in Ontario in 1908 and he recognized the importance of international cooperation in protecting migrating birds. Before bird banding of birds was regulated he tagged thousands of waterfowl. April 10 to 16 is National Wildlife Week, celebrated in honour of Jack Miner, founder of the Canadian conservation movement.

April 11, 1980 Terry Fox began his Marathon of hope. It is also Grilled Cheese Day.

April 13-21 is Hindu Ramayana.

April 14 is the Sikh Valsakhi, celebrating the Punjabi New Year and spring harvest.

April 14 to 16 is the Christian Triduum of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. This is followed by Easter Sunday on April 17 and Easter Monday on April 18.

April 15 to 23 is Full Moon, Green Grass Moon or Egg Moon.

April 20 is 4-20 which is Mary Jane Reefer Day for those who smoke recreational marijuana.

April 21, 1926 Queen Elizabeth was born. Happy birthday, your majesty.

April 22 is Earth Day. Walk a little lighter on the earth and reduce your carbon foot print.

April 23, 1564 William Shakespeare was born. He wrote, "All the world's a stage and all men and women merely players." And "Neither a borrower nor a lender be."

April 26, 1785 John James Audubon was born. His famous bird paintings were published in the Birds of America (1827 to 1838) and there is now a National Audubon Certification program in the United States that focuses on saving bird-friendly grasslands. Over 55 million bird lovers have joined his society in the United States. April 28 is Armenian Genocide day when we have two minutes of silence to honour the dead.

April 29, 1913 the zipper was invented. This is also Wish Day. Make a wish when you see the first star tonight.

April 30 is Vietnamese Journey to Freedom Day, United States Honesty day and the last day for Canadians to submit their income tax returns as well as National Cookie Day.

## Enjoying Easter Alone

By Joanne Benger

As I write this it looks like I will be spending a third Easter alone. Easter has always been my favourite holiday and strangely, I am looking forward to it now that I have gotten the hang of things.

I plan to decorate my house as I did last year with an Easter wreath on the front door. Inside I will make a display of Easter cards plus the egg cups and small china chicks and rabbits that my husband and I collected during our travels. Most came from yard sales or thrift shops and arrived here in the motorcycle saddlebags so they have many memories. We especially liked egg cups because my husband was an Englishman, who actually used one. He said the answer to the age old question was that you should serve the egg small end down and crack the big end of the egg. Then you will get your wish.

For breakfast I will have ham and eggs, symbols of plenty. My ham will be a slice cut off my dinner ham and I will complete the meal with raisin bread.

Then I will put on my new Easter outfit. We need at least three items of new clothes on Easter day for luck and this year my Easter style of choice is hoodie and jeans. I will wear them on my daily walk and wave at everyone I see. That will be my Easter parade.

I haven't got my Easter ham yet. If I can't find a small ham I will buy a canned ham or perhaps a can of spam. I will decorate it with brown sugar glaze and pineapple slices centred with maraschino cherries. I am not fussy when it comes to meat but I must have sweet potatoes, spring vegetables and a salad. Then comes dessert. It's a recipe from years back when no celebration was complete without a jellied salad. I am not a gourmet cook so I make the fastest simplest salad possible. In the serving bowl I mix a package of dry jello powder (90g.) with one cup of drained crushed pineapple, two cups of creamed cottage cheese and two cups of whipped topping. It can be eaten right away or left to set.

My grandmother always said everyone should go to church at least one day a year – on Easter Sunday I will have a taped church service just in case I find nothing live on TV.

The rest of the day is for watching TV, phoning friends and eating the treasures the Easter bunny has left for me- chocolate bunnies, Cheeps and marshmallow eggs.

Yes, I am looking forward to spending Easter alone. Still, I must confess that I won't complain if things change and I can throw away my mask, mingle and go to church.

## Art Exhibit at Woodcroft Library



**Artist Daryl Gautier with his paintings on display at Woodcroft Library.  
Photo by Linda Dumont**



**Artist Linda Dumont with her nature paintings at Woodcroft Library.  
Photo by Daryl Gautier**

The Mustard Seed Planting Seeds of Hope artists have paintings on exhibit at the Woodcroft Library in Edmonton. The library features different artists and the art from the group will be on display until March 27.

"Your art brought much vibrancy, joy and beauty into our branch. All the pieces together in the exhibit were like a snack bar of good energy our community could come in and enjoy. Hosting your art has made our library a much more interesting place and we thank you," the staff at Woodcroft wrote.

The artists got together to view the exhibit on February 25.

People viewing the exhibit can arrange for purchase of the art by contacting the library staff for contact information and to see the price list for the pieces shown.



**Artist Sherien Lo with her paintings at Woodcroft Library. Sherien likes painting birds so is known as the 'bird lady'.  
Photo by Linda Dumont**

# Hate crimes

By Darlene Collins

A lot has happened since we last communicated. I have no house phone to call anyone. I am still being harassed by the three people I mentioned starting back five years ago. Nothing has really been done to date. I am on a what you call it – Hunger Strike, due to everything I've been through. I ended up having a heart attack. I caught the COVID 19 variant and was put in hospital for five weeks and I am still standing. I guess it's still not my time.

It's so sad how a loved one like my daughter could turn on me at any given time and turn my life upside down. Just from a few hate words, involving me in a HATE CRIME.

This will probably be my last words for a while. I am a very sick woman from this ordeal and now am all tired and need to get

some much needed medical attention and a good rest. There is no more I could possibly be put through and my spirit is on the mend again. I'm not giving up yet. I have to be heard or I'll go to the grave with this on my mind.

You know I used to have this man Dale AKA Preacher, who turned to my child for his woman. Plus I had a lot of respect for David B., only to find out he was sleeping with me and preacher's daughter in law. All three of them turned against me turning it into a hate crime. My three friends, Dale Cher and David. I'm sick and tired of them and all the new people they've dragged into this mess.

The Edmonton City Police defines a hate crime as an offense against a person or property, which is motivated in whole or in part by the suspects hate, prejudice or bias against an individual, an identifiable group based on real or perceived race, national or ethnic origin,

language, colour, religion, sex, age, mental/ physical disability, sexual orientation or any other emotional factor." I found out that the this offense carries a ten year sentence.

I don't think that one person will ever give up but will stalk me, follow me and won't give me peace until I'm dead so I've prepared myself mentally. I am ready for anything. I am so very disappointed that this seniors' centre is so corrupt. The people abusing in this building are the ones in control but not C. A., site manager. He's got no back bone to be a man and run this place as it should be.

Anyway, the residents are also the ones that take care of the place not Jacob, the security on duty, who couldn't catch a fly if he tried. Again, if it weren't for the people, Jacob would be toast. Around here you have to take care of yourself and face the rest, who are either too stoned or just plain don't care. No one else does. I'm outta here.

## Alberta budget fails vulnerable people in need of housing

By Jim Gurnett

At a time when money is gushing into the Alberta treasury, the 2022-2023 budget ignores the people with little economic capacity, and the challenges they face.

"This should be the time to make a substantial investment to begin recovery from many years of neglect in public funding for the right to adequate housing," says Edmonton Coalition on Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) president Laura Murphy.

"Instead the budget talks vaguely about yet another 10-year strategy for housing, with ominous hints of turning over units in the current portfolio to private business. But when it comes to actual dollars, large cuts are planned, including nearly 50 percent in assistance to the Alberta Social Housing Corporation," Murphy notes.

Alberta currently faces a shortfall of tens of thousands of units of non-market affordable housing, resulting in long waiting lists and growing homelessness. Tens of thousands of Albertans live in core housing need, meaning they are paying more than they can afford for their housing, and the housing they have may be inadequate and inappropriate. Currently in Edmonton over 6200 households are on wait lists for affordable community housing and over 4400 households are on wait lists for the rent assistance benefit.

Without adequate housing, temporary shelter is the only way to prevent the grave dangers of homelessness. The budget also proposes major cuts to funding in this area, with a reduction of one-third from the 2021-2022 year.

"Not only does the budget utterly fail to

ensure housing or shelter is funded, it continues a tight-fisted approach to income support programs that include funds so recipients can afford to rent," says Murphy. "The tiny increases proposed for these programs do not begin to keep up with population increases and inflation."

While the federal government has enacted legislation to provide for the progressive right to adequate housing, Alberta has taken no action to deliver similar commitments. Legislation passed in the last session of the Legislature (Bill 78- Housing Amendment Act) opened the door for the transfer of housing currently owned by the province to private businesses. The Alberta fiscal plan released with the budget declares support to deliver housing to an additional 25 000 households over the next decade, but the small funding announced in the budget for 2022-2023 would not allow such a result.

"If Alberta committed money to the National Housing Strategy's bilateral agreement at the same level as other provinces, there would be hundreds of millions of dollars more flowing to us from the federal government for housing, but the miserly Alberta commitment also denies the province this federal money," Murphy notes.

"Premier Jason Kenney talks about good times being back in Alberta, but for those people who have inadequate- or no- housing, these cheery words ring hollow. The many threats to a safe, healthy, secure life created by inadequate housing continue to threaten them," concludes Murphy.

### Background

Estimates, p. 48

AB Child & Family Benefit- \$345 million (21-22), \$335 million (22-23)

Estimates, p.52

2.2 Income support for people working- \$335 million (20-21), \$332.6 million (21-22), \$369.7 million (22-23)

2.3 Income support for people with barriers- \$248.8 million (20-21), \$232.2 million (21-22), \$237.4 million (22-23)

3.2 AISH- 1288.6 million (20-21), 1293.3 million (21-22), 1337.1 million (22-23)

5.2 Homeless shelters- \$94 million (20-21), \$73.4 million (21-22), \$48.7 million (22-23)

5.4 Homeless support outreach services- \$100.8 million (20-21), \$89.8 million (21-22), \$89.6 million (22-23)

Estimates, p. 187:

3.3 Assistance to AB Social Housing Corp.- \$112.4 million (20-21), \$119.9 million (21-22), \$102.3 million (22-23)

4.2 Capital payments to AB Social Housing Corp.- \$91.6 million (21-22), \$45.9 million (22-23)

### About ECOHH

The Edmonton Coalition Housing and Homelessness (ECOHH) was created in 1986. Membership consists of social profit organizations and businesses, as well as individuals. Its mandate includes education and advocacy on housing security, including homelessness and affordable housing.

ECOHH led the development of the public art sculpture honouring the importance of housing, located in Homeless Memorial Plaza, north of City Hall on 103A Avenue and has presented an annual memorial service for people who have died because of housing challenges in their lives, since 2006.

ECOHH's key messages are:

- Decent affordable housing is essential for all people.
- Good homes for all create strong healthy communities.
- Housing is more than four walls and a roof-- it's homes, support, and community.
- Lack of decent affordable housing has negative consequences for everyone.
- In Alberta we have the resources, knowledge, and skills to make sure everyone has a decent place to call home in a strong healthy com-

## A breakthrough finally made with tutoring by Morinville librarians

Story and Photo By John Zapantis

Some of us out there know that being stubborn for your own good will only get you so far in succeeding in the working world. But sooner or later we can't do it all on our own. That dead end came lately, when I was told by my ASN Editor, Linda Dumont, that I should from now on learn how to download and send my own photos to her computer instead of constantly depending on her to download them for me, when getting them published. Those photos have usually accompanied my many stories sent to her from my own computer.

I'm not saying that Linda couldn't be bothered, but since I first started writing for the Alberta Street News back in December of 2010, she's gone out of her way to meet me at various malls and eateries, showing her compassion by making the art of downloading a photo into her own lap top computer the convenience that it's become in helping to get my photos that have accompanied my written stories published. I greatly appreciate her selfless efforts in keeping me in the game as an established free lance contributing writer with the Alberta Street News.

You may wonder why a professional freelance writer like me would not be able to at times do the easiest task required of him, but oddly enough mastering the most complex challenges professionally. Well, to sum up that problem in a nut shell as easily as I can define it - it simply attributes to long term post-traumatic stress disorder. I've carried this problem pretty well all my life as far my early childhood since age six.

My father was a bread winner like my mother and both were hard working Greek immigrants, who successfully worked jobs and provided for our family, while establishing themselves as contributing and productive working class citizens. My father was always notable for looking out for my best interests. He once served in the Greek air-force and was a two time gold medalist in the 1951 Greek Games. The first Gold medal won was for Light weight boxing and the second gold medal he won was for the 100 meter run as a 100 meter sprinter.

So not to keep you in any further suspense, here's where I'll pin point where my problem made its origins in fearing failure and not wanting to learn the easiest thing let alone mastering the most complex challenges. When I was around 9 or 10 years old, I always looked to my father as the only God that I knew and served as a role model for success. I felt this

craving hunger to be a lot like him, knowing the legend and success he had become in his time and a great man to his family, friends co-workers and the many people he helped and inspired in a number of ways.

One day while helping him fix his car, being that he was a skilled mechanic at the time, I'd routinely hold the odd tool for him, passing them over to him so that he could continually maintain his own vehicle from time to time. That day I was not prepared for what would come and how that day would inevitably impact me mentally and emotionally for the rest of my life. That moment came rather unexpectedly, when my father asked me to pass him a wrench from the tool box. As I reached over to the box to grab a wrench, while about to hand it to him I suddenly dropped it. He exploded into an angry outburst and in a rage he commented loudly, "You're stupid and goofy!"

I was shaking like a leaf on a tree being blown over by a raging storm, constantly pleading for forgiveness. I can recall, along the way into the future, if you were to ask me to try to take a picture of you with your own camera, I'd feel the that lack of confidence kicking in, reflecting on that day in history of dropping that wrench, disappointing my father, which inevitably shattered some of my confidence throughout my elementary school years.

Despite the impact my father had on my lacking confidence at times, there was this distinctive gift that I was given, by what I'd claim passed down by the higher power. It was none other than the art of Creativeness, which I seemed to apply, when becoming a dominant short story writer and a junior cub reporter. I first started writing for our elementary school

newspaper called The Alex Taylor Journal. I wrote on an array of subject matter, from short story, to reporting on a new Safeway that was finally built in our community in Boyle Street right across from the apartment complexes where our family once lived called the Highland Courts on 90th street and Jasper Avenue. But as time went on, through the assurances of close friends, who recognized my abilities as an effective speaker, that assurance alone became a key factor in boosting my self-confidence and self-esteem in taking on new challenges that came my way.

Later in my adult years my writing interests where re-kindled as a letter writer for the Edmonton Journal, Edmonton Sun, the Calgary Herald and Calgary Sun, while briefly living in Calgary for four years off and on and working an array of jobs through Calgary's job temp companies like Diversified Industries, Task Force, Work Force and the old Calgary Drop-Ins casual labor office.

I've come a long ways in rising above my own adversity and catching up to being just as productive as any professional would be in the real working world. I've gone on to work as a freelance writer with over 13 newspaper publications in my 25 years as a freelance writer and originally started using a Brother electric type writer while first writing my first published article in the Voices Column of the Edmonton Journal for aspiring short story writers.

The list of mile stone accomplishments are way too long to name, but enough of those successful accomplishments. They have been enjoyable I must admit and have fully helped

Continued on page 13

**Morinville Library staff members Amy Maxwell, left, and Alliah Krahn have been very supportive in supporting ASN writer John Zapantis with his computer issues, since he first started confiding in their trouble shooting skills over eight years ago.**



# Departure From Hell House In Winnipeg

By Rodney Graham

As I wrote in the article, The Hell House In Winnipeg, things got worse by the week there. When I complained of being stalked and followed by security, police and health care workers in the past – so called ‘home-care workers’, it did stop – at least the home care people. But only for a while. Some of the people involved in the gossip/targeting, did stop. But not all. The home care thugs had by now recruited police in the community who were willing to harass me. Apparently, Manitoba Housing, as it says in their literature, ‘work closely with police and security to ensure a safe environment.’ That’s a real joke because they do anything but. As I’ve mentioned.

The police call it ‘tracking’. It’s easily done with the enormous resources police and security have nowadays. They can track you the minute you leave home, and everywhere, till you return home, so with false allegations from ‘professionals’ – nurses/health care thugs, and mental patients, the police finally got the authority to ‘track’ me 24/7.

On February 11th, I was awakened with a loud banging at my door. There were two men

at the door. I opened the door and one man identified himself as a Winnipeg police officer. He was plain clothed. He showed me a badge. There was another man with him. He did not show a badge. I realized this later. I think he was likely security. Probably one of the ones ‘tracking’ me too.

The policeman said they were there to caution me. That was it – he said, ‘We’re here to caution you to not take pictures of people’s vehicles in the parking lot.’

I told him of the harassment I had faced for years. He seemed surprised. I told him about the harassment and bullying. Then I asked them to leave.

Three hours later – another loud bang on the door. As I came to the door I noticed the door handle moving. Someone was trying to open the door. This time it was two female cops – uniformed. They were with the new property manager. I have to mention here that the new manager had no knowledge of the bullying and gossip in the building.

I told them I had no desire to talk to the police anymore. They told me that I could not refuse to talk to them because they were doing a wellness check on me. They were – apparently – concerned about my wellbeing.

A while later, a big envelope came flying under the door, it ended up about five feet inside. It was a note from the new property manager. It included an allegation – a very recent one since I never heard about it before, nor had anyone made such an allegation before, saying that I had recently threatened bodily harm to

tenants. It also claimed that I had said I wished all WRHA were dead. I had never had such an allegation before. Nor had I ever found out exactly why I had been stalked, followed, watched – harassed for years.

The next day I got a call from the psychiatrist who works out of the HIV clinic I go to infrequently – a couple of times a year. I had mentioned I had felt depressed and started seeing him about twice a year, too.

So, technically/legally, I was under his care.

He said he was going to sign authorization that I would have to be escorted by police to be ‘assessed’ in a psychiatric clinic. It would be for at least 70 hours. It could take one or two weeks he said.

I asked him who had the authority to determine how long it was. I just talked to him an hour ago and he denies saying this – But I thought he said it would be determined by the home care supervisor where I live at 125 Carriage Rd in Winnipeg – the one who had called the clinic and encouraged someone that I must be a threat to myself or others. And then they talked to him, persuading him that I was a threat to myself and others.

I am now in another province writing this on a lousy computer that is very slow. I left because the I believe the person, who called Health Sciences Centre, is a sadistic, malicious personality. I have lost my job. I have lost my residency. I am now – technically – homeless. I haven’t decided where to go yet, or what to do.

To be continued..

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**Tutoring** continued from page 12  
me re-stabilize ground while making many friendly connections in the communities.

So now getting back to what I was mentioning in the beginning of this story, when I was advised by my editor, Linda Dumont, that I should make an effort in learning how to download my own photos and send them over my computer directly to the editor’s computer where the submitted emailed photos would be included with stories that were sent from my computer,

Just recently I successfully made a breakthrough in downloading my own photos to my editor after being taught how to download photos and submitting them over the email from my computer. I discovered that by letting go of the ridiculous thought of feeling rushed by my editor, whom I’d be calling by phone to let her know that I’d be sending the photos to her with the assistance of a librarian from the Morinville Library. I had reached that important move to take up the challenge of letting go of that mental block instilled by my enraged father, who belittled me for dropping that wrench. I decided to ask the librarian to give me a step by step tutoring on how to download and send my photos to my editor. After receiving instruction by Morinville Librarian Amy Maxwell on the five essential steps in downloading and sending

my photos to my editor over my computer via the email procedure, I later was encouraged the following day to give it a go from my residence computer, I picked up my phone and gave my editor a call, letting her know that I’d be making an effort to send her my first ever down loaded photos from my computer to hers.

You could imagine the excitement in putting my old clutter to the side and overcoming the fear of failure. That little kid, who once dropped that wrench and was belittled by his hero, my dad, was now feeling like the Chief Operator at Huston Control at The NASA space Centre in Houston Texas.

When I finally mastered those five essential steps in downloading my photo and could hear my editor on the other end of that phone telling me that one of my test photos of an owl that I had once taken a picture of at the Edmonton Garrison CFB Army barracks had arrived in her file, I felt like that man at the controls at NASA, who successfully helped land that rocket on the moon in 1969, when the famous words of head astronaut Neil Armstrong followed as he had declared to the world that was watching that historical mile stone achievement, “The Eagle Has Landed!”

It was a milestone achievement for me as that little kid, who once dropped that wrench, to now confidently hold that pen that opens

doors endlessly to a very promising future. I’d like to extend my sincerest appreciation to Morinville’s many librarians who’ve helped in making this transition a convenience for myself, who’ll no longer have to get my editor to meet me at various malls and eateries just to download a few photos that have accompanied my published stories.

Those floor angels, who have often have made that effort in helping to make a difference in my life as a ASN writer and photographer, include Morinville Library staff members Amy Maxwell Alliah Krahn, Ginger and Margaret. And a special thanks to none other than Alberta Street News Founder/Editor Linda Dumont who kept reminding me on occasion that learning how to download on my own could be easily mastered. I thank her for her persistence and patience and am finally content that I can do this all on my own, and without inconveniently interrupting the other priorities of my editor, whose not only been selfless and generous with her time and efforts in looking after my needs. I can finally say, I’m now on my own with this and it feels great to be independent. Now I can finally say, the Eagle has Landed!

# Winds of change blowing hard in Alberta and Canada

By Allan Sheppard



Democracy...depends upon people of different political 'bents' reconciling varying views in a public forum. 'Are people with fixed opinions on issues...not supposed to enter public debate?' (Jason Kenney, in an Alberta Report interview, May 1996) Say what? Democracy? People? Of different political bents? With fixed opinions? Reconciling varying views?

This can't be Canada anymore, Toto. It must be Oxymoronistan (though Kenney's opponents might want to delete the "Oxy" part).

I assume Kenney, who habitually presents as the soul of seriousness, believed and meant the ideas Alberta Report attributes to him. He spoke after the so-called Winds of Change conference of conservatives in Calgary in late May 1996. He has certainly seemed to pursue a politics of fixed opinions since he was elected a Reform Party member of Parliament in June 1997.

Unfortunately, we assume, for him (though perhaps not for Canada and many Canadians) Kenney's fixed-opinion politics were constrained during his first decade in Ottawa by limited access to power as an opposition MP. His second decade found him in government, though constrained now by the practical demands of governance and the leadership of a pragmatic, if no less ideological, Stephen Harper.

Undaunted, Kenney invested much of

his considerable proselytizing and organizational skills mining, with apparently significant success, for fixed-opinion voters among immigrant communities, who are, after all, as entitled to hold opinions, whether fixed or flexible, as Mr. Kenney (and me and thee) and to share and vote them if and as they choose.

Soon after Trudeau Liberals defeated the Harper Conservatives in the October 2015 election, Kenney abandoned federal politics to lead the Progressive Conservatives in Alberta, long fertile ground for fixed opinion politics in Canada. After merging his PCs with the Wildrose Party and other conservatives to form the United Conservative Party, Kenney became premier in April 2019.

Kenney and the UCP began immediately introduced legislation enacting fixed opinions expressed by Kenney and others in the new party and government. In June 2019, they introduced Bill 8, the Education Amendment Act, ostensibly to restore "balance" between the rights of students and parents, but which critics argued compromised the rights, privacy, and safety of LGBTQ students involved with gay-straight alliances. How much true balance was achieved is still an open question; there is no doubt the legislation is consistent with fixed opinions about gender and parents' and children's rights long held and expressed by Kenney and others in his party.

In 2020, experts that critics said were hand-picked for views that were consistent with Kenney's and the government's fixed opinions began a review of Alberta's K-Grade 6 History and Social Studies curriculum that bowdlerized their content, particularly as it related to the history of Residential Schools and relations between First Nations and federal and provincial governments.

In 2021, the Kenney government, reacting to blockades and other protests across Canada at government offices, ports, and rail lines in sympathy with protesters blocking progress on the Coastal Gas Link pipeline through traditional Wet'suet'en territory in British Columbia, passed Bill 1, the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act that arguably amounts to a blanket prohibition of protest on all public roads, streets, and sidewalks, even ditches. Critics allege that Bill 1 specifically targets unions, environmental groups, and First Nations and their rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to free speech and

assembly. No one allegedly targeted by the Act has challenged it yet.

None of that is news to most Albertans. Nor should it be news to any of us that the politics of fixed opinions is alive, well, and kicking up stormy winds of change in Alberta, in Ottawa, and elsewhere. In the process it has undermined the credibility of Kenney, his government, and his defenders. To perhaps even more damaging long-term effect, it has cratered credibility of the Trudeau Liberal government and possibly compromised efforts to manage the pandemic and protect the health and lives of vulnerable Canadians (and, lest we forget, Albertans).

A handful of long-haul truckers, augmented and fomented by hardened political naysayers and rabble-rousers with fixed opinions about pandemic mask and vaccine mandates, turned downtown Ottawa streets into a parking lot-cum-tailgate protest and party. Their protest morphed into demands for regime change that carried whiffs of Western separatism and outright insurrection.

They brought our national capital to a standstill for three weeks through the simple expedient of gridlocking the area and blocking access to the seat of government with heavy equipment; staying put; and claiming to be exercising sacred Charter rights, while denying similar and equal rights to residents and, arguably to Canadians everywhere who did not agree with them or their methods.

To protest against governments and demonstrate for political values and goals is, indeed, a sacred right under the Charter. To squat on and refuse to move from public space belonging to all Canadians, not just the occupiers, until one's demands are met is surely neither a right nor lawful. Pragmatists might resist the temptation (and inevitable pressures) to put a hammer down hard on the participants, but no government and no leadership can give in to recalcitrance. Eventually, federal, provincial, and municipal authorities did what we all knew they had to do. They moved in force and broke up the occupation.

No one looks good in the aftermath. Not Prime Minister Trudeau and the federal government, who dithered and danced around the issues and demands raised by the occupiers. Not the Conservatives who (CPC leadership candidate Pierre Poilievre excepted) hastily retreated

**Continued on page 15**

# Spring has Sprung

By Joanne Benger

1. I can't believe it. The Extreme Cold Warnings and the Extreme Snow Warnings have ended. I no longer have an excuse to stay inside and do nothing. I will miss Snow Says and Icy Rain Days.
2. The furnace has stopped clicking on every ten minutes. My heating bills bill dropped and I will have money again.
3. Oh, wow, it's spring. I no longer need long underwear, but horrors, what happened to my lean tanned legs? Those white, marshmallow things emerged where my beautiful legs used to be. I blame the long underwear.
4. I turned down the thermostat and wore three sweaters all winter. Now, I am finding

- it hard to wear short sleeves. It seems awfully daring to reveal my elbows to the world.
5. I can't recognize people anymore. With everyone masked, I greeted parkas. Now that people have stopped wearing their parkas I don't know who they are.
6. It is impossible to recognize people by size. In winter all figures are alike under huge down filled parkas. Now they look all different shapes and I don't know who is who.
7. I finally was brave enough to take off my toque. I didn't have to comb my hair all winter and now I am not sure I can.
8. I don't know why they call them dry January and dry February when we had so much snow. All that snow has to go and we are having muddy spring. Mud here, mud there, mud everywhere. EIEIO.
9. The world was pristine and white and all yards were equal. Now the snow is melting and exposing our sins. Unmowed lawns, unraked leaves, and where did all that garbage come

from?

10. No matter how warm it is, I don't dare donate my parka yet for that March lion is sure to give us another cold blast or two.
11. Our weather is so changeable I never know what to wear. I plan a picnic and end up wearing a parka and my shorts.
12. To make matters worse, Daylight Saving Time is here now. Morning comes in the middle of the night and the evenings never seem to end.
13. And soon it will be Earth Day which is my Guilt Day. With reusable bag, I walked to the local store for groceries, See, my halo is glowing. That's good. No, bad. I bought bananas from Costa Rica. I imagine they came by ship, train and truck. See my carbon footprint growing.
14. It's time to start spring cleaning. It is now warm enough to put the dust bunnies outside.

## The moonlit night

By Angelique Branston

He stood there crying in the rain  
 Beautiful long black hair clinging to his back,  
 and legs,  
 Gently, lightly sweeping against the pavement.  
 His slender face contorted in agony.  
 It looked as if his soul, his heart was breaking  
 Pain and agony filled his beautiful black eyes  
 So beautiful, he could be mistaken for a woman.  
 I asked if he needed help . . .  
 He tilted his head to the side, his body shook  
 And then I saw it,  
 The long slender blade as it dripped blood and  
 water on the ground.  
 Yet I did not feel fear.  
 I worried for this heartbroken man,  
 So beautiful he could have fallen from heaven.  
 He gestured with his chin, time for me to go.  
 So I left him, crying, standing shaking in the  
 rain, as his world crumbled around him.  
 What awful things must have brought him to  
 that corner as the moon shone down on the glistening  
 pavement that spring night in Koyoto.  
 I never knew what became of him.  
 I find myself remembering him now and then  
 And I say a silent prayer for the beautiful crying  
 man.

## Winds of Change - continued from page 14

from early gestures and expressions of support to half-hearted appeals to respect for law and order (their traditional bread and butter) from the occupiers. Not the municipal, provincial, and federal police forces, who seemed caught off guard and unprepared, perhaps because they are designed and governed that way. Certainly not the occupiers, who allowed what began as a defensible, if quixotic, campaign for recognition and respect to morph into an in-your-face demonstration of the politics of fixed ideas married to the politics of grievance (some legitimate, much not).

Federal politics will likely change dramatically in years ahead; not, I fear, for the better.  
 And as for Jason Kenney and the UCP? They of the Critical Infrastructure Defence Act? They who allowed perhaps the most critical piece of infrastructure in Alberta, a border crossing at Coutts, to remain blockaded for almost three weeks? Some of whom spoke and acted in support of that clear breach of the intent, if not the now obvious targets, of the Act (who were not, as became glaringly apparent, the blockaders)? Even after revelations that at least four participants were heavily armed?

## My grand children

By Darlene Collins

My Christmas at my daughter's place at the west end was wonderful. I got to spend a week there and get to know my grand kids again. It was wonderful to talk to each of them alone, either doing dishes or just tidying up. I just realized how smart my grand kids are. My two year old can operate her mom's cell phone, the five year old can operate anything electrical in the house and crawl on the walls like Spiderman. The seven year old can do almost anything an adult can do. So smart. What's in their food? The two teenage boy and girl are so tall and very solid, not fat, just heavy. I'm proud of my child for bringing and keeping her children even though it's hard to do that sometimes.



**The love that you are unable to remember but you will be able to feel it, because you exist.**

**To My Friend Brigette by Maria B..**

### **SUCH A FREE AND MYSTIC SPIRIT AND THE YEARNING TO HAVE A CONNECTION.**

**I have gained the awareness that through the incredible love and kindness that my father had for his horses, and the incredible love that he had for his little girl, there is a strong connection which unveils and allows me to see with clarity that in reality I was never abandoned by my dad as through every step I gave, he has been there for me.**

**I embrace the closeness that I feel to my father and the realization of the love that he held in his heart for me, his little girl.**

**It was very hard when you had to go to war and I never got to say goodbye. Through my life I held a lantern in my heart and I felt it would guide you back  
But unfortunately**

**I you were never able to come back.**

**I cherish the fact that I can hear the murmur of your spirit and feel your presence in my life.  
After all I am still your little girl.**

## **God gave me a sign from up above and told me I was a fool too**

By John Zapantis

When trouble comes to you, walk away as the old adage goes. Well in most cases that saying doesn't always apply to me, not with the way I've experienced things in my day and the challenges I've had to face while proudly overcoming a lot of ignorance in my time, while rising above life's adversities. Speaking of ignorance in this story, as I'm about to further along, there will inevitably be a moral to this story.

One evening back in the month of September of 2021, I happened to be walking east-bound towards Safeway located at Northgate Centre Mall in Edmonton. I was on my way to do a little shopping at that Safeway store and while walking to that store, I noticed a group of young people all in their early twenties, consisting of two men and two women talking among themselves as they cut in front of me, while continuing to walk towards a pick-up truck parked on the mall's north end parking lot.

While continuing on I looked over my right shoulder and was caught by surprise. I noticed a taller man in that same group of four people, slowly raising his right arm and pointing his finger at me. His group of friends were now all staring at me.

That man pointing his finger at me was now egging me on to what seemed like a challenge to a fight, as he started to display his graceful and well-coordinated hand skills in the art of shadow boxing. This was all to impress his friends standing around him.

I continued to feel caught off guard, only to

witness the explosive sound of loud mocking laughter from his admiring friends, who seemed to be impressed by his arrogant exhibitionism. He then followed through by lifting his front leg upwards like he was throwing a Kung Fu front kick as a final warning of what the consequences would bring for me if I decided in taking him up on the challenge.

His peer group seemed more than satisfied with their friends display of so-called bravado and skillful use of hands and feet. They all turned around from facing me and continued to walk towards a pickup truck located about 50 feet ahead of them with their backs turned towards me.

I realized then that this so called 'tough guy' was obviously just out to impress his friends with that plastic display of so-called true courage that went with his transparent tough guy image that for me was translated as simply a manipulative coward. I decided to put it all to the test. I was about to even the score, to see if he would take me up to the challenge. While the group was just about a few feet away from getting into their pick-up truck, I continued to walk, still looking over my right shoulder. I then quickly started clapping my hands loudly to see if I could distract that group by having them turn around to see what the intrusive noise was all about.

Sure enough I succeeded in getting their undivided attention as they all turned around to see what the commotion was all about. They all noticed me clapping as my eyes stayed fixed on them, while still walking onwards continually looking at them over my right shoulder.

All their leader could do now was cowardly turn the other way and refuse to take on my challenge as his group of followers did the same, all turning around the other way with their backs turned towards me, while walking in the opposite direction.

This all signified to me that I had beat him

and his bunch at their own game. I now proudly wore a contented smile on my face, claiming my own victory over all four of these fools, while still looking over my right shoulder with my eyes continually fixed on them. When I decided to look ahead of me, suddenly I felt I was sucker punched in the nose and came to an abrupt stop in my walk. I was shocked to notice that the sucker punch delivered was from a commercial sign pole that I had walked right into, while not watching what was ahead of me. That was the price to pay for watching those losers over my right shoulder, while priding myself on my strategy used to even the score.

Realizing what had just happened to me, I cowered in embarrassment and looked over to see if that group of young people, along with their cowardly friend had noticed this unusual outcome. I expected them to notice my accidental run in with this commercial sign pole that had just finished punching me in the nose and to hear some humiliating laughter from that bunch that would have evened the score for all of them.

I was relieved to see now that they hadn't noticed because their backs were still turned away from me and they still walking towards their pick-up truck. I was more than pleased with the outcome, realizing that the cards had now all fallen in my favor. I could now proudly say I had out smarted all of them.

When I decided to examine the contents of that commercial sign that I had run into, I noticed what the sign read in black lettering on a white back drop - Emergency Access Route-No Parking.

I can now say that I can't deny that God gave me a warning sign and a punch in the nose as a reminder for not watching what was ahead, while foolishly mocking my enemies over their losses. He did give me a sign from up above as a reminder that I was being foolish too!