

# ALBERTA Street News

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On Good Friday, April 7, the 43rd annual Outdoor Way of the Cross invited people to think about the relevance of the gospel. The theme for this year was “Hope in the Midst of Crisis”.

Photo by Jim Gurnett

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## ALBERTA STREET NEWS

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# The 43rd Annual Outdoor Way of the Cross



Photo by Jim Gurnett

This year marked the 43rd annual Outdoor Way of the Cross held on Good Friday April 7. in Edmonton's inner city. About 120 people joined the march stopping for reflections on the theme of 'Hope in the Midst of Crisis.' This is the first time the event has been held in the inner city since 2019. Due to the pandemic a virtual version was held for three years.

The Outdoor Way of the Cross is organized by a group of volunteers from different Christian affiliations, who share a concern that Good Friday calls us to care for our neighbours and the world around us.

The walk began at Immigration Hall at 10 a.m. and finished at noon at Hope Mission, where a hot meal was served.

The march was led by walkers carrying a large wooden cross. Followers sang as they walked behind on the way to seven locations in a roughly 2.5 kilometre walk. At each stop the group listened to community leaders that spoke on different issues, offered prayers and led a song. Each location represented a different concern for vulnerable Edmontonians including indigenous justice, food insecurity, housing and violence.

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

# May is Leave a Legacy Month

By Joanne Bengner

May is Leave a Legacy Month as well as Asian Heritage Month Jewish Heritage Month and Hearing Awareness Month. As well it is National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. and National Correct Posture Month. May was named for a Roman goddess but no one is sure if it is Matera, goddess of honour, or Maiathe, the mother of Mercury. It is easy to picture Maiathe telling little Mercury to pay attention and stand up straight.

May sayings abound. "Mist in May and heat in June bring all things in tune." "Rain in May makes good hay." "Eat sage in May and you will live aye." But beware. "Marry in May and you'll rue the day." "If you tease a cat on Mayday it will become a witch." "Never eat oysters in May."

May 1 is May Day. Get up early and watch the sunrise and you'll have a year of good luck. Then collect dew and bathe in it for beauty. Be sure to leave a brilliant wreath on the front door of someone you love and this being Hawaii Aloha Day make leis of flowers and wear them as a necklace or crown.

May 3 is World Press Freedom Day and May 5 is Full Moon, the Aboriginal Planting of Flowers Moon or Frog Moon. As well is it National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

May 5 is also the Mexican Cinco de Mayo. Eat tacos and consider the power of hope. May 5, 1862, 2000 Mexican militia men had a totally unexpected victory over 6000 of Napoleon's soldiers. It gave them hope and as they continued to battle against impossible odds, soldiers would shout "Cinco de Mayo" and "Viva Mexico" to rally the troops until they actually won independence.

May 8 we have VE Day to celebrate the end of WW2 and May 10 Russians celebrate the end of WW2 with Victory Day.

May 13 is National Golf Day and May 14 is Dance Like a Chicken Day as well as Buttermilk Biscuit Day, which is followed by May 15 Chocolate Chip Day. Enjoy.

May 14 is also Mothers' Day. Sir Edward Arnold wrote "God couldn't be everywhere so he invented mothers." Wear a coloured carnation to honour your mother or a white carnation if she has passed on.

May 17 is National Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. Because it is Wednesday in the midweek of May, May 17 is the original Bible Study Day which has been extended to all religions reading their sacred texts. May 18 is Good Will Day formerly Peace Day or Wear Purple for Peace Day. If May 18 is rainy the summer will be warm and hot. May 20 has been declared World Bee Day by UN to raise awareness of declining bees world wide. Eat honey and reflect. May 20 is also Armed Forces Day when we honour those who serve or have served.

May 21 to 28, the last week of the month, Sunday to Sunday is World Poetry Week. It is also Aboriginal Awareness Week so celebrate Aboriginal arts and crafts.

May 2 is Victoria Day, now often referred to as Holiday Monday. Her actual birthday was May 24 but since 1952 Victoria Day is celebrated on the last Monday before the 24th. Frost should be past so you can plant your lovely garden and set out plants. The Victorians believed that if you are in a beautiful environment you will behave in a beautiful way.

May 24 is Baha'I Declaration of the Bab. May 26-27 is the Jewish Shavut and May 28 is the Christian Pentecost.

May 25 is Wear your Bear Day. Wear a bear t-shirt or brooch and take your favourite teddy bear for a teddy bear's picnic in the park, in your yard or even in your bed. This is Digestive Cookie Day so share them with your bear. In the U.S. this is Memorial Day when families often picnic in the cemetery of departed relatives.

May 29 is also Election Day. Wear your bear and vote.

May 31 is World No Tobacco Day. The aim is to make smokers stop and to encourage the rest to never start smoking. Love your lungs.

And that ends May. In Quebec they say you must finish your spring cleaning before the end of May. That means we enter June with everything in order. Here's to a happy June.



# Soccer star defeats testicular cancer

By John Zapantis

Like all great athletes of our time, there are commonly many distinctive traits that determine what makes them the tops in their game. You just have to look into three traits that are obvious about these top ranked athletes that would include, their gifted talent in their sport, passion for the challenge and their never ending persistent hard work at the game that determines why they are all top ranked athletes.

Marco Carducci, a star goal keeper who plays for the Canadian Premier League's the Calgary Calvary FC, has inevitably climbed that mountain peak of success as a dominant top ranked goal keeper in a number of professional soccer leagues in North America.

His first mile stone achievement was playing in the Premier Development League (PDL), while representing Calgary Foothills FC, winning the Golden Glove Award in 2018. Then he won two more Golden Glove Awards for 2019 and 2022 while playing with the Calgary Calvary FC of the Canadian Premier League (CPL) and he won other various accolades.

Born in 1996 in Calgary Alberta. Marco is the son

of an Italian father, who is employed with a courier company and a mother, who works as a nurse. He's the youngest of two brothers.

The love of the sport soccer has been a long standing love affair for the Carducci family, ever since Marco can remember, when his father who once played in a men's soccer league, first started kicking a soccer ball around a young Marco Carducci and his brother, where he was a young boy of four.

In a recent interview with ASN, Carducci elaborated on his early inceptions for the love of the game, Carducci said, "I have an older brother as well. The second we were walking, we were kicking the ball to."

When Marco was a young four year old, his father Marco Luciano, once a goal tender himself while playing in a men's soccer league, noticed his son's abilities in catching on quickly in handling the soccer ball, Carducci said, "It's hard to put into words. Almost everything starting from really young, I was kind of developing a love for the game, but dad also became someone who was essentially my coach.

He knew I had potential. He knew I actually loved the game. He was the one that nudged me into goal keeping. He loves the position. He actually played himself, when he was a younger man. I mean even to this day, even now and then, he loves to do it. It's all about goal keeping. That's what made me love the position and become a goal tender."

His passion for soccer while growing up was always his number one preference and he excelled in school as an all round athlete, Carducci said, "I always loved soccer. I was very athletic. I played all the sports, kind of growing up with my friends in school."

By age 14, his self-confidence was fully developed and he then realized that soccer was going to offer him plenty of opportunities where the sky was now the limit!, Carducci said, "The biggest thing for me was, I kind of went one step at a time. It got more competitive, more serious. I started to realize around the year 2013 at 14 years old, that it was a pretty legitimate opportunity for me to pursue it as a game."

While playing high school soccer, his consistent goal keeping skills really started to show outstanding potential, Carducci said, "I think it was a self belief. Also just this desire as a goal keeper. We're all a bit crazy, but the love of being that guy, whose putting his body on the line, trying to block the shots and everyone in any team sport knows, it's all about scoring goals, is right. I wanted to be the guy to stop them."

Carducci soon excelled as a progressive up and coming, while climbing up the ranks of

the Calgary youth minor soccer leagues and a successful stint with the following teams including MSB United FC, 2000-2005. MacKenzie, FC 2005-2006. Calgary Villians FC, 2006-2011.

He also represented the Canadian National team in various age categories, competing even in the 2013 FIFA Junior World Cup and other world tournaments.

When he reached age 17, Carducci signed his first professional soccer contract with Major League Soccer (MLS) the Vancouver Whitecaps FC, making his first professional goal keeping debut on March 4th, 2014, playing in his first championship game against the Toronto FC, where his team was defeated 2-1.

He played three years with the Whitecaps, but would not return for the following season.

For a while after that, his name became a notable one, among many teams who offered him a contract, that he turned down on numerous occasions.

He finally then signed on with the Calgary Foothills FC. Despite joining the team, that belonged to the PDL League, where he did tremendously well as a goal keeper, while helping his team to the 2018 to a PDL Championship and was voted as the best goal keeper in that season and being named to the 2018 PDL all league team and winning his first Golden Glove Award in 2018.

During that winning season for Carducci, the Canadian Premier League's the Calgary Calvary were eyeing the young rookies winning season and impressed with his championship accomplishments offered Carducci a much more viable player's contract in joining their organization. Carducci impressed by the lucrative offer, immediately acknowledge his interest in signing up with the Calgary Calvary FC and at the same time confirmed to his new club, that his goal was to consider a try with the Canadian National Team in playing in the 2026 World Cup.

During his first season with the Calvary, his team made league history, when his team started the season with a seven game winning streak. Carducci played in each of those seven games, picking up 4 clean sheets out of seven games.

The winning streak finally ended on June 22nd, after his team was defeated 1-0 by the Hamilton Forge FC.

The Calvary also reached a remarkable milestone in the Canadian Championship, making history as the first Canadian Premier League side, defeating the MLS opposition Vancouver Whitecaps FC, 2-1 in the quarter finals.

Carducci helped his team in this respect, achieving a clean sheet



Calgary Calvary's Marco Carducci has represented Canada over the years in numerous international competitions.

Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

in the quarter finals.

Carducci helped his team in this respect, achieving a clean sheet in the first leg and only giving up one goal in the second against his former team the Vancouver Whitecaps FC.

When the Calvary reached the semi finals, they were finally eliminated from playoff contention, by the Montreal Impact FC.

His playing abilities started to show for an outstanding season, despite losing in the 2019 season to the Hamilton Forge in the Canadian Premier League Championship. finals, Carducci was honored by the CPL as the CPL Goal Keeper Of The Year for the 2019 season.

In the 2019 year, he finished that season with nine clean sheets, tied with Triston Henry, another goal keeper, for most in the league.

Carducci, would again return for the 2020 season, during the COVID-19 pandemic, which shortened the season.

He finished the season with three clean sheets, in nine games, while his team completed the season with a third place finish. His contract was extended for the 2021-2022 season.

Despite all of his winning achievements, a loving and supportive family, friends, team

mates and a loyal fan following, life sometimes is known to dish out unruly and shocking news, that can sometimes hit close to home.

It was on that day in January of 2022, prior to the start of the soccer season while Marco was leaving a gym, he suddenly felt a minor pain in the testicular area. The pain started to become more intense and kept going and coming and later encouraged him to seek the advice of a doctor.

He was 25 at the time. The doctor referred him for testing to determine what that pain was all about. He had a physician conduct a battery of tests consisting of an ultrasound, CT-Scan and blood work as his diagnosis confirmed him for Testicular Cancer.

Carducci went into shock, after his results were revealed, Carducci said, "It was that whole time, you're thinking, 'OK, it's something that's going on. You were never really difficult to the worse case scenario. It's something, but it'll go away. When you hear the word, testicular cancer. It hit me like a train. It was scary. Thankfully, I had good care and support around me. It was certainly, an uncertain time and scary time."

36 hours after his diagnoses he was admit-

ted for cancer surgery. The surgery took place on February 16th, 2022, where the testicular cancer was removed.

He is grateful to the cancer community for how he has recovered from his own battle with the disease and as a way of showing his appreciation in return, he has helped raise money for the cause and currently attends a men's cancer support group called, One Ball.

He especially appreciates the support he's received from family, his girlfriend, close friends and team mates for the moral support he's received while in his previous journey with testicular cancer,

Carducci said, "It's a young man's cancer. It's more regular than you think. There's always an ability to create that awareness and advocate you know. It's so important to share that story and help anyone who may experience it. It's more common then we think and if we tell them their story at least one other guy will be prepared. Their life may be saved, because someone is aware of it. That means everything to me."

## Mary's Economic Maydreams

By Joanne Bengier

1. Are you getting that Affordability Grant? Me, too. Now I can afford to wear everything I want. I am so happy and it won't end until June.
2. What's that? Yes it is May already and June is almost here. That's really not fair. There are so many things I haven't bought yet. I am not ready to stop shopping.
3. Maybe we'll get a Prosperity grant next so we'll all become rich and then will come the Famosity Grant so we'll be rich and famous as well as having this affordability we get. What could we ask for more?
4. I heard on the news that half of us live pay-check to pay check.. That's good news. I am glad half of us have paychecks. Now if the half with pay checks would only marry the half without pay checks we would all have money. There could be a one time Weddingosity Grant so those without pay checks could have nice wedding dresses.
5. They say Food Bank used is up. Good for you Food Banks and congratulations. It just goes to show that if you serve good food customers will come I haven't been to the Food Bank yet but that's only because they don't have an ATM.
6. Interest rates have been going up. I am not sure which ones but we can never have to many interests and It is always nice when things are rosy and on the up and up.
7. I have been told there is another credit card scam and we must not give our pin numbers to those nice trust worthy people we meet on the line. Yes I think it is a good idea to save ourselves and keep a few secrets for the wedding night – like your pin number and the contents of your underwear drawer.
8. Thanks to that Affordability Grant my underwear drawer is well

stocked which is good. I think the underwear drawer is a true indication of our economic status because underwear is not something we have to wear to impress the pubic and keep up appearances so we won't lose our job.

9. Underwear is a very important part of our economy and I think it should be on the stock market instead of bears or bulls. We all wear underwear or we should Shame on you but many of us won't see a single live bear or bull this year so who cares what they are wearing.
10. Bernie Madoff died in jail and Crypto king went bankrupt. It just goes to show it's not safe to try to get rich too fast. Slow and steady wins the race said the tortoise to the hare.
11. Lately we hear a lot of businesses going into full bankruptcy protection I am not sure if this refers to the protection of masks, gloves and hand sanitizer or how and where they use them but I doesn't seem to prevent bankruptcy.
12. We all want health, wealth and happiness like the three fairy wishes. You can't have one without the other two or two without the other one. There are many ways of acquiring wealth but I am trying affirmations. I simply picture a happy, healthy me counting stacks of money.
13. I keep getting form letters from the oddest charities. They haven't seen my estate but they are politely asking me to leave it to them in my will. I think this is called fishing for money and I treat those letters like rotten fish.
14. I hear there is a lot of ID fraud about but I am not worried. Nobody would want to be me. Even I don't want to be me but I have no choice. I am like the man who found a burglar in his house one night. He said "Wake me up if you find something worth stealing." And went back to bed. That was one of my father's favourite jokes and like me he slept well.

### Novena: St. Clare

Ask St. Clare for three favours, one business and two impossible. Say nine Hail Marys for nine days whether you have faith or not. Pray with a candle let and let it burn to the end on the ninth day. And put this notice in the paper. JB.

# Voting for the Common Good

By Timothy Wild

Poverty is a political choice. It reflects a calculated decision that the financial wellbeing and comfort of the elites is significantly more important than the social, environmental, and economic wellbeing of the rest of us. This is readily apparent in the ongoing, and unnecessary, wealth and income inequality in our province, and the consignment of some Albertans to lives of poverty, gloom and despair. The clear reality is that the reaping and hoarding of economic profits trumps the common good.

Dramatic? It certainly is. But that's the reality. We choose poverty over justice. Those in power try to hide the simple brutality of this optional reality with hegemonic smoke screens, such as the risible trickle-down theory, that all will (eventually) experience the fruits of economic growth, or that all consumers will benefit from the "freedom of choice" in a morally neutral (yet effective) market of both individual and collective goods. But the fix is in. The appalling choice to continue poverty and inequality is firmly embedded in our society, including our electoral system, which is designed to perpetuate the status quo and constrain opposition.

I have been thinking a lot about elections lately and following the lead up to the provincial election that will be held in Alberta at the end of May. Bearing in mind that I am this writing in April, and things might have changed due to a campaign gaff, evidence of untoward phone calls or a leaked memo, but the upcoming election seems to be a close race. However, I would also argue that this is not the NDP of old, and they are, at best, a centrist party, while Premier Smith's version of the UCP is certainly centre-right. Basically, though, both parties are going for the centre and the middle of the road voter.

This makes sense from a Downsian electoral point of view in the current winner takes all, first-past-the-post (FPP) system. However, the current electoral system promotes limited choices that perpetuate injustice. For the most part, it is a self-contained loop of voters and parties. Most voters will generally vote for the centre when the party options are generally centrist. That is the politically rational thing to do. It is also rational for the political parties to be seemingly moderate, and essentially adopt the veneer of being socially liberal and fiscally conservative to appeal to the selfsame moderate voter. But I would argue that the cumulative dynamic of this approach leads

to public policies that are ineffective in furthering the common good. More specifically it leads to the continuation of poverty.

Fortunately, there are ways of conducting elections – and thereby representative politics – differently. The result would be the development, implementation and evaluation of public policies that more accurately reflect the dreams, needs and strengths of all of us. Rather than continuing to use the FPP method, where the candidate with the most votes (generally not the majority) in the constituency wins the seat, we need to adopt some measure of proportional representation (PR). PR would allow a more precise calculation of the value of all the votes of the electorate in the determination of legislative representation.

Obviously, PR would not immediately solve issues such as poverty, inequality, structural racism and environmental degradation, but it would provide for greater input into the scope and content of legislative debates. There would be more voices at the policy making table, which would then increase the likelihood of progressive legislation. The adoption of PR would also encourage a more active and engaged electorate as voters would not have to hold their noses and vote for one of two (or more) variants of the same ideology but would allow more electoral choices and the ability to make their votes truly count. It would be a long overdue tool to energize the electorate.

Australia has always been a leader in electoral reform. It was the first country to introduce the secret ballot; it has also been at the forefront of implementing models that attempt to give all votes equal value. In the recent New South Wales election, for example, voters had the opportunity to rank their choices. Labor won a workable minority in the Legislative Assembly, ousting the Liberal National Party (LNP) Coalition that had been in power for 12 years. Of greater interest to me, however, was the election for the Legislative Council (most states in Australia continue to have a bicameral legislature). There are 42 members of the Council each elected for an eight-year term, with half elected at one time, in a staggered fashion. Elections to the Council are conducted using a model of PR based on a threshold quota determined by the number of votes and the ranking of the candidates and / or parties.

Labor won the most seats, followed closely by the LNP Coalition. However, members of the Green Party, One Nation, the Liberal Democrats, the Shooters Fishers and Farmers, and the Legalize Cannabis Party were also elected. (Obviously, the re-election of someone from One Nation is not to be celebrated; but I think it is better to

deal with their narrow-minded and bigoted policies in the open of debate rather than allowing them to grow in the dark.)

Based on this experience, I would argue that the use of PR is to be commended for a number of reasons. First it allows parties to be more open with what they believe in and still have a chance to win a seat. In a FPP election it is more the case of being the least offensive of the centrist options. Secondly, it has the opportunity to promote greater engagement of the electorate. I hear people saying that politicians are all the same; PR would allow the voters to clearly have more options. Thirdly, a diversity of voices in our assemblies would result in better social policy. Ideas would be considered that are not currently discussed in the mainstream system. Additionally, the political science literature suggests that geographic entities that have some form of PR generally have lower income and wealth inequality than those still using first past the post. Surely this is a good thing?

Poverty is a political choice. Therefore, if we have more anti-poverty representatives in our assemblies and legislatures there would be a greater opportunity for progressive social change. If we had some form of PR in Alberta, we could have more voices advocating for social justice in our elected forums. If voters are aware of potential options, I would suggest they would choose the options that more closely reflect their values and aspirations. A left-wing party might not win the election, but candidates might win election on ideas such as universal basic income, implementation of a Living Wage framework, public healthcare, measures of full employment, affordable rental housing, free post-secondary education, and a more progressive system of taxation.

We hear a lot about ten-year plans to end homelessness, and initiatives to end child poverty by the year 2000. They haven't worked. The reason? Those in power do not want them to work as that would involve significant structural change and a recalibration of power. The bourgeois cool might wring their hands at injustice but, at the end of the day, don't want to undermine their economic privilege. As it currently stands, the powerful maintain that power through a cynical use of a perverted sense of democratic choice. But there are ways of doing politics differently. PR, by itself, is not the answer. Other areas of popular and grassroots democracy also need to be animated. However, PR is certainly a step in the right direction in giving people more political options that promise something more exciting and humane than the "fiscally conservative, socially liberal" centrist options currently on offer.

# Francis the Pig

By Photo by John Zapantis

The metallic sculptured art- work entitled Francis the Pig was created by artisan Danek Mozdzenski. The plaque's history of Francis has been re-summarized and simplified by ASN Photographer John Zapantis. In his words: he salutes Francis and his escape from an abattoir in 1990. He was on the run for five months, considered a fugitive, running wildly throughout Red Deer's Parklands. The whole city got in on the action for his capture, struggling to keep up with the runaway pig. Francis finally met his end, when he succumbed to injuries during his capture.

The following sponsors of this special project in his honour include: the City of Red Deer, the Red Deer Business Association, the Community Enhancement Program funded through the Alberta Fund and Fletchers Fine Foods. The art work is located at Rotary Recreation Park on the Southeast corner of 48 Street and 47th Avenue in downtown Red Deer, Alberta.



# How a bad fall on black ice got me to change my hardened attitude

By John Zapantis

After being removed from a restaurant in Red Deer for over staying the 20 minute time limit, I was in dispute with the manager of this fast food eatery. Standing strong on my morals was a task in its self despite telling the female manager how I was a benefit to their establishment. I was not only coming through their doors regularly each day to either buy a coffee, the odd order of French fries, or even the occasional hamburger, but she did not respect my loyalty as a customer. She claimed that I overstayed for a three hour period, while going from one table to two others in a span of three hours. She then demanded in a loud and aggressive tone of voice that I leave the restaurant.

That was it. I was determined never to come through those doors again and decided to take my business elsewhere. The following week I decided to start favoring the bar next door to this restaurant, a lounge that I will not name in order to protect the bar's identity, credibility and reputation because of a very serious incident that I accidentally gotten myself into.

On a Saturday, March 11th, I planned on evening the score with that fast food eatery place, which I will not name in this story

in order to protect the identities of the owners, but found through my ignorance pertaining to the law's of gravity, my methodical plan back fired on me. I happened to be walking in front of their store front window with an ignorant smile on my face, making it obvious that I was walking to the next door bar to support their rivals. While thinking that the staff was watching my new interests in their neighbouring rival, in my mind I was having a good laugh at their expense!

Just when I was thinking I had the last laugh, I slipped on black ice, falling backwards, banging my head against the sidewalk in front of the front door entrance of this bar. My mind, after this drastic fall, went back in time thinking about the last fall I had in February of 2014, which would later cause me a number of problems such as three separate laser eye surgeries that followed in 2016; a cataract laser eye surgery followed by two retinal detachment laser eyes surgeries that followed one another a month apart. The surgeries were essential in helping to preserve my eyesight in my left eye.

Hair line cracks in my three teeth could be seen - all from that previous similar fall in February of 2014, that resulted in them being extracted by my dentist and to this day, two other teeth have partially fallen out and still need to be looked into by my dentist in Edmonton.

After hitting the pavement really hard and immediately trying to recover from the bad memories of it all, I let out a thundering scream, turning over like tumble weed, then lay helplessly on the pavement with both hands covering the back of my head. A waitress from inside that bar, who had witnessed my fall, came out to see if I was Okay and asked me, "Are you Ok, can

I help you up?"

I stubbornly told her I'd pick myself up and started to lift myself off that sidewalk. She asked me if I'd like a free coffee. I acknowledged that I was in for the offer and we both went inside.

I grabbed myself a stool on front of the bar, where a TV screen of an Oilers' hockey game was in progress, thanking the bar maid for her concerns in checking up on me. Now I know they should have salted down that black ice that I had slipped on, but weren't onto it. I also realized that the free coffee may have been a distraction to prevent me from taking this matter to the courts and suing them for incompetency. But being that I've been treated like family, while coming to this bar on occasion just to have a coffee, while tipping the waitress two dollars just to watch an Edmonton Oilers hockey game, these workers to me are considered blood that's notably thicker than water. So, taking it to the courts is out of the question as I still have my health and, as you can still see, my fluency in writing hasn't been affected by this bad fall on concrete.

I've also prayed to God for a miracle that the implications from this fall, like the last one, won't occur again, so I've left all this in God's hand and God's will tells me that there are still reasons for everything and this fall happened to put me through an attitude change, when I was showing myself up in front of those other rival business neighbors next door to the bar that removed me from their premises. That caused my act of stupidity in evening the score on a vengeance that led to my care-less fall. It was a lesson to be learned - a hardened attitude can be adjusted through a unexpected fall and that was God's plan not mine for the better!

# Barbiquette – the fine art of barbecue etiquette

By Joanne Bengier

BBQ weather in Alberta is changeable. Wear a tank top but carry an umbrella, a winter jacket and toque, sunscreen an insect spray. Bear spray is optional.

2. If it is being held at a public camp site wear a baseball cap and sunglasses just in case you don't want to be recognized by passers-by at some point. When passers-by stare, nod if you're a man smile if you're a lady and do either or both if you are liberated.
3. The gentleman wearing the apron with the rude words is your Grill Master. Don't say those words out loud and don't even attempt to do what they tell you to do.
4. Whether you ask for rare or well done expect the meat to be raw on the inside and burnt on the outside. Drown it with ketchup and enjoy.
5. Cross your fingers and compliment the Grill Master's meat as often as you can.

## Spring Cleaning in May

By Joanne Bengier

1. The old saying is "Toss not a clout until Ay is out" and we definitely shouldn't wash blankets in May for that's washing friends away but French Canadians say all or spring cleaning must be completed before the end of May. It's a case of damned if you do and damned if w don't. To spring clean or not to spring clean that s the question.

2. I think it is time to put away winter wear. I haven't seen people wearing toques since March. Now what about the unwanted items that I am tossing out? I decided the back porch is no-mans land a holding area for things I don't want to keep for another winter. There are no calendars on the porch so it is neither May nor not May. I sort them into two groups: those to be tossed and those to be donated. The clothes I am donating may not be the best but that's why I am donating them, but, hey, that's how I looked the last time I wore them in public and I wasn't worried about being arrested or kicked out. They kept me warm and hopefully they will keep someone else warm. I have noticed most people have a furtive look, when

putting clothes in donation bins so I know many share my guilt. It hardly even seems kind to expect others to wear our cast-offs but do buy second hand and appreciate other people's unwanted clothes. As they say one man's garbage is another man's treasure.

3. Now I sort last years spring and summer clothes into two lots - those that are keepers and those that are porch bound. I have been catching up on styles by watching the shopping channel. I was thrilled to see they are still selling clothes like mine - skinny or straight legged jeans with big long generous tops that will discretely cover the world's biggest muffin tops and bulges. I was afraid I'd see wide legged trouser with tucked in blouses like I have see on some soap operas but thankfully that is still in the future for this area. I have very little to give away yet.

4. On to dusting. Winter air quality is a good excuse for leaving dust undisturbed but now windows can be opened for airing. I attack dust bunnies which have bee multiplying like rabbits all winter. I find that old covid mask makes a good dust mask. This is an improvement from being like Mom and her friends who used to wear handkerchiefs like bank robbers when dusting.

5. Windows next. Nobody cleans windows when it is 40 below and most of us never

6. Beer or coffee? Both are lukewarm but they help the meat go down.

7. Yes, there are no glasses. Smile and drink directly from the can.

8. If it is BYO be sure to share it. If it is BTO (bring their own) wait until they offer to share it.

9. Don't stand down wind from the barbecue if it is smoking like a volcano.

10. If you see ants crawling all over the bench it is a good idea to eat standing up.

11. If you see si flies drowning in the salad, discreetly remove them then politely decline a sample.

12. Always carry a package of allergy pills in plain sight Then you can refuse to eat that salad by saying "Sorry I have allergies."

14. Discreetly clean your shoe, tell yourself it is only yesterday's barbecue and cover the area with leaves to protect the next person's shoe.

15. If you see a great big wasp nest resist the urge to poke it with a stick.

16. Dessert is optional unless it is cooked on the barbecue. Then you must eat and enjoy every last morsel.

17 It is impolite to refuse left overs so graciously accept that salad with a polite "Thank you."

18. Remember to thank your hosts for inviting you and tell them what an enjoyable time you had.

see the glass because days are so short and we keep drapes closed for warmth. Now the windows are so murky you'd think they have trapped a blizzard or two. Luckily I was given a fancy electronic window cleaner for Christmas to make things easier. Following directions I charge up the battery. So far so good. I read the instructions telling me how to wet clean and vacuum dry using the water sprayer, a micro scrubbing pad and vacuum dry functions. I don't feel confident enough to try it out on windows where neighbours will see me struggling to master it so I do a few test runs on mirrors. It does an excellent job but I decide to stick with Windex and newspapers this time around because I am a creature of habit.

6. Now it is time to declutter and make room for summer. Anything that reminds me of Christmas, winter, Easter or spring must be put away to make room for airy flowery summer. The big throw cushion comes off the couch. The snow shovel returns to the shed and is joined by the ice melter. Winter pictures come down and are replaced by summery scenes. And yes, the Santa oven mitts and apron must be stored away. How did they get missed? I won't even wash winter blankets and comforters until June because I need all the friends I have but I stack them neatly by the washer.



# Another Moon Another June

By Joanne Bengner

Rejoice it is June. Yes we are having “another moon another June another honeymoon”. June was renamed for Juno the Roman protectress of women and marriage so June weddings are very luck. June is Pride Month, Seniors Month, Dads and Grads Month, Potty Training Awareness Month and National Indigenous History Month. Good weather in June means a good harvest. The saying is “If June is blessed for harvest we’ll thank the goddess.”

June 2 is Italian Republic Day. Eat pasta. June 3 is full moon which is called the Wild Rose Moon, the Honey Moon and the Egg Laying Moon in different areas.

June 5 is World Environment Day as well as National Hunger Awareness Day. Support your local food bank.

June 6 is D-Day when we remember the Battle of Normandy which took place June 6, 1944.

June 7 is National Food Safety Day. It is also Chocolate Ice Cream Day and National Doughnut Day. Indulge and enjoy.

June 8 is World Oceans Day and National Taco Day. Bon appetit. June 11 is St. Barnabus day when lawns are mowed or hay is cut. June 11 is also Children’s Day when children collect and carry flowering branches.

June 12 is Filipino Independence Day. June 13 is St. Anthony’s Day. For centuries people who have lost things prayed, “Dear St. Anthony come around. Something’s lost and must be found.”

June 15 is Bloomsday in Ireland celebrating James Joyce (1882 – 1941). He wrote of a week that was “all moanday, tardy, wailsday, thumpsday, firghtday, shatterday” and he wrote the riddle “When is a man not a man? When he is a sham.” June 15 is also World Awareness of Elder Abuse Day. In the UK they call it “Be kind to an elderly person day”.

June 17 is Wear Plaid for Dad Day, when we think of men’s health and cancer prevention. June 17 will be the first official birthday celebration for the new King Charles III. Happy birthday your majesty.

June 18 is Fathers’ Day. It was first celebrated in 1910 and has been in general use since 1934. Wear a red rose for a living father or a white rose for one who is departed. Originally a white lilac or a green leaf were worn. If it is sunny on June 18 the summer will be long and hot and father will enjoy that BBQ.

June 1 is the U.S. Juneteenth which marks the end of slavery. It is also World Refugee Day. Be kind to someone who has fled conflict.

June 21 is the Summer Solstice, the first day of summer. It is an important day to our First Nations people so it is celebrated as National Indigenous Peoples Day. Most cultures celebrate the longest day of the year, which is seen as a triumph of light over darkness. In El Salvador they call it ‘the sky of the longest day.

June 24 is Quebec’s St. Jean Baptiste Day. It is also Laura Secord Day. Laura became the hero of the War of 1812-14 when she walked through 20 miles of enemy held swamp and forest with her cow at her side so she could warn of an American attack. June 24 is also UFO Day. If you have seen one you are not alone. U.S. presidents Jimmy Carter Ronald, Reagan and George Bush all reported seeing UFOs.

June 26 is International Day in Support of Victims of Torture and June 27 is Canadian Multiculturalism Day when we accept and celebrate Canadians of all ethnic groups.

June 29 is Chicken Wings Day as well as Camera Day. Take a selfie of yourself eating chicken wings and share it.

June 30, the last Saturday in June, is the happiest day of the year as we enjoy the lazy hazy crazy days of summer. It is also Meteor Day so scan the skies and if you see a falling star make a wish.

## Bee Trivia

By Joanne Bengner

1. Fame is a bee

It has a song

It has a sting

Ah, too, it has wing. Emily Dickinson

2. The description “busy as a bee” first speared in print in 1536. Different areas have different versions of it. In Alabama they say “Busy as 40 bees in a tar barrel.” Of course that only applies to worker bees. Someone who sits and does no work is referred to as a Queen Bee.

3. The expression ‘a bee in your bonnet’ describes an idea that keeps bussing around in your head like bees in a bee hive. We sometimes call it an ear worm.

4. We have all seen cartoons of people running away from a swarm of angry bees after they disturb a wasp nest. They won’t get away. The average bee can travel up to eleven miles an hour which is about for times as fast as your average human.

5. It is believed that both bees and flowering plants evolved in the Crustacean period roughly 150 million years ago. The honeybee, which belongs to the family Api, didn’t appear until 25 million years ago and some scientists claim it is not a tree bee. The honeybee is actually a vegetarian wasp.

6. The temperature inside a bee hive is the same as that of the human body – 37 degrees Celsius or 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit.

7. The honey bee queen bee may live for five years whereas a worker is lucky to live 11 months and the lowly drone has a life expectancy of six months.

8. It takes the entire lives of a dozen bees to produce one tea-spoon of honey. The nectar that the bees collect is 60% water but in time it is cured to make honey that is only 20% water and has a ph of 3 to 4. Honey has no Best Before date because it is the only natural food that doesn’t spoil. In fact it can last for 1000s of years.

9. Bees vary in size so they build different sizes of honey combs. The worlds smallest honeybees are found in Hindustan and their honeycombs are small enough to fit into a child’s hand. The world’s largest honeybees are found in India and their honeycombs may be up to seven feet high and weigh as much as 400 pounds.

10. Honey is highly nutritious and rich in amino acids enzymes minerals and B-complex vitamins and has been seen as a health food throughout the ages. Galen n Ovid believed honey had aphrodisiac qualities and Pythagoras and Pliny the Elder and Hippocrates the Father of Medicine linked honey with longevity and in modern times Margery Wilson has told us honey is a grow younger food and many people are eating plain yogurt with honey in hopes of longevity.

# Wild Fire Season is here

By Joanne Bengner

It begins small. We see a haze in the distance and notice that the sky is taking on a grey tinge. We smell a faint smoke odour and laugh and say “Ed must be barbecuing again.”

We go to bed without a worry in the world and wake up to see a grey sky with an orange sun. It is so dark we have the lights on at noon. The sky gets darker and darker grey and the sun becomes a round red ball. It looks like the flag of Japan as invaded the sky. It could be an open. There is an eerie feeling like we are in a SF movie on some distant planet.

When all else fails turn on the TV and get a weather report. Yes they are saying we have an Air Quality Warning. Someone says we should keep doors and windows closed but that won't do any good. My house isn't air tight. They tell us the fire was started by lightning not man and they tell us where it is located and how big it is and how fast it is growing. And, yes, it is headed this way. Some areas have already been evacuated but not us. We are consid-

ered safe for now but should keep posted and be ready should the winds change.

We should avoid strenuous activity because of lack of oxygen. That is no problem. Most of us no longer have much energy. Some of the neighbours are coughing. Runny eyes and sore throats are common. We shuffle about listlessly and joke “I used to be a non-smoker but now I am smoking 24-7.” We worry about permanent lung damage and wonder at what point we should seek medical help. We are all more eager to call 911 for others than for ourselves..

No official word has come but we are all thinking of evacuation. We tidy our houses and hide our treasures because we have heard we'd have to leave our houses unlocked if we must leave. I wonder if I am the only one binging on freezer food. I wonder how much I'd be paid to restock the freezer. Cars are being packed and I am filling my evacuation bag. Will we all sleep together in one room homeless shelter style? I am packing night wear that covers every inch because I would sooner swelter than reveal all. I pack lots of underwear because I have heard they give evacuees clothes but no underwear. I plan a wardrobe of jeans t-shirts and hoodies. I put all my ID cash and credit cards in

one small purse that I can tuck under my clothes and place it in a large purse full of comfort needs – tooth paste, tooth brush deodorant, vitamins,, cosmetics, pen and notepad, hand sanitizer.... It gets fuller and fuller as does my suitcase. I sort and remove non-essentials that can go into car luggage. I realize I like my home and all I have in it and would hate to lose any of it to looters or fire.

Things get worse. From time to time someone says, “I think I see clouds.” But it is only more smoke. I am no longer aware of the smell of smoke even though Air Quality numbers are not coming down. I try to remember how the book on Atomic Winter ended. I wonder how this Global Warming Winter will end. I wonder if I will ever see a golden sun and blue skies again.

I go to bed fully dressed so I will be ready for instant evacuation. In the night I hear rain pelting down on the roof. I wake up to a fresh smelling wet world and blue skies. The danger is over. The rain helped put out the fire which is still burning but smaller and under control. I wearily begin the job of unpacking my evacuation bag and car luggage. The danger is past. I am safe.

## Some Father's Day riddles

By Joanne Bengner

1. What is a father's favourite tree? A. Pops like pop-lars.
  2. What do you call a father's bicycle? A popcycle.
  3. What is a father's favourite candy? A lollipop.
  4. What do you call a father who is liked by everyone? A popular pop.
  5. What did the big firecracker say to the small firecracker? My pop is bigger than your pop.
  6. What do you call a high flying father? A pop up.
  7. What do you call a father that pays for both graduation and the wedding? A funding father.
  8. If fathers were involved in a raid what would you call it? A pa-rade.
  - 9.. Why are so many fathers overweight? They are fathers not lean-hers.
  10. What always arrives in time on Father's Day? Mothers Day bills.
- A pailindrome – Dad's Mom Mom's Dad.



ASN Reporter and Photographer John Zapantis sneaked up on this deer, asking the deer to turn around for a moment, while doing a photo of it eating behind a home- owner's house in Red Deer.

# The Dress of Dreams

**Fiction by Sharon Austin**

Clara was relieved to see a dim light shining from the bedroom of the guest house. She ran down the garden path and rapped lightly on the door. An elderly lady with long grey curly hair peered out through the screen door. "Clara, is that you," she called above the din of the dogs barking excitedly behind her.

Clara pulled open the door. "Look, Marvella, I'm engaged," she cried excitedly thrusting out her hand. Marvella enfolded her in a warm hug and together they walked into the small kitchen.

"I'll make some tea and you can tell me all about it," Marvella smiled indulgently.

Marvella was the first person that Clara wanted to tell about her happy news. They had been through so much together; a lifetime really of happiness and tears, joy, and disappointment. Although she had once been a stranger, Marvella had become her mother, sister, and friend all rolled into one. As Clara watched her prepare the tea, she thought back to the first day that she had ever laid eyes on Marvella.

Clara was eight years old when her mother passed away after a long illness. Her father lived to work and spent all his time at the law firm where he was a senior partner. Even at home, he would be holed up in his office working on cases and Clara hardly saw him at all.

Father provided for them very well but he claimed he knew nothing about raising little girls. After her mother's death, her father was hard pressed to find a nanny and housekeeper. Marvella was the first person who answered his ad and her father hired her on the spot.

Clara remembered standing on the staircase and staring down at the woman as she shook hands with father. Marvella was a woman in her fifties with long curling dark hair, dark flashing eyes and a big wide smile. She was wearing a purple crushed velvet jacket teamed with a lemon-yellow skirt sprinkled with tiny purple flowers. On her feet were purple ballet flats. She looked like someone who had just stepped out of a movie and Clara liked her right away.

Seeing Clara on the stairs she had called up to her, "Hi there, I'm your new nanny. Get ready for some adventures!"

Father left Clara's care completely up to Marvella but she did see him once a week. Every Sunday he would take Clara out to dinner at the restaurant near their home.

Father always ordered the same thing for both; lemon chicken and pumpkin pie. Clara never did get up the nerve to tell him that she really didn't like either.

Marvella was as good as her word and life became a wonderful adventure. Sometimes they would ride bicycles to the park and have a picnic or rent a canoe and spend the day paddling down the river. Marvella volunteered at the local animal shelter and she and Clara would walk the shelter dogs and play with the cats. Clara fell in love with an older shelter dog named Hector and soon he became one of the family along with two cats Tiger and Moe.

Before bed, Marvella would tell her all about her wonderful life dancing in a dance troupe in Toronto. It sounded so glamorous and Clara would imagine the beautiful costumes and the crowds that Marvella described so well. Once she had danced in the theatres of Paris and London, wearing the costumes that she had designed herself. One day when Clara looked at her sketch book of costume designs, she saw a drawing of a lovely white wedding gown.

"Tell me where you wore this pretty one," Clara said intrigued. Marvella froze staring at the picture and she was silent a long time. "That dress," she said at last, "That was my wedding gown but I never got to wear it. My fiancé, Westley, was killed." She took the book and put it back in her trunk and Clara never saw it again.

Marvella brought the tea and the old sketch book. "You have been a daughter to me Clara, and I would be honoured if you would wear my wedding gown," she said softly. "I have it here in my trunk. It has been packed away for 40 years."

Marvella brought out a cardboard box tied with string. From the folds of white tissue paper she brought forth the beautiful gown that Clara had seen in the sketch so many years before but the years had not been kind. The white lace sleeves had turned yellow with age and several of the vertical strands of pearls that corseted the waist were loose and hanging. Worst of all, moths had eaten tiny holes in the flowing silk skirt. Clara stared at the dress in dismay until she saw Marvella's soft glowing smile.

"Isn't it marvellous, a true work of art. You will be such a beautiful bride. Of course, it will have to be altered as you are taller than I was. There is only one person I would trust to alter it and that is the one who made it, my friend Martha Cline."

Clearly, Marvella was not seeing the ruined dress as it really was. To her it was a beautiful creation of soft white silk and glowing pearls. Clara took the dress with her not wanting to hurt Marvella's feelings

but there was no way to wear a yellowed moth-eaten gown. She would fly to Toronto and see if this Martha Cline could work a miracle.

Martha Cline and her daughter Estelle ran a bridal and costume shop. Martha had been shocked when Clara mentioned Marvella when they spoke on the phone. "Marvella! Martha had exclaimed. I haven't heard that name in forty years! Bring the dress by and we'll have a chat about May."

It seemed Marvella was just a stage name and her real name was May.

Martha stroked the soft silk of the gown. "I remember making this for May's wedding. She was so happy and she had designed the most beautiful gown I had ever seen."

"What a shame that her fiancé died before the wedding," Clara said softly.

Martha looked up sharply. "Westley didn't die. I believe he really did love May but he was from a very rich family and when they heard he wanted to marry a poor dancer they soon put an end to it. It was either May or his rich lifestyle and he chose the money. May was heartbroken. She was so sure that our dance troupe would become famous or her designs would be discovered."

"At least the troupe danced in London and Paris," Clara mused.

"Hardly," Martha scoffed, "We never left the city. After Westley left her, May's mother died and the next thing we knew she was gone. Someone said she moved to the east coast but no one ever heard from her again, until now."

Clara sat quietly holding the dress until Estelle could have a look at it. It seemed that Marvella had left the sad past behind and created for herself a whole new narrative. Had she really come to believe that the dreams were reality? It didn't matter anyway; Marvella was a wonderful person and that was what mattered.

Estella came and held the dress up almost in awe. "At last, I see the gown that I have heard about all my life. The design is beautiful although the dress is far beyond repair. I will make an exact copy for you if May will sell me the design. I'd like to put this on the cover of our Bridal brochure. I want to see all her costume designs too."

"Marvella will be so happy," Clara declared. "At last, something wonderful is going to happen for Marvella."

Martha smiled gently at Clara. "Something wonderful already did happen for May. She had you. She had someone who loved her and believed in her. That is worth everything. She must think the world of you to give you her dress of dreams."

# Former farm hand enjoys volunteering

By John Zapantis

Hard work and especially his passion for helping people in need is what 70 year old Neil Martens is all about. But this blessing in using his gifted skills, while reaching out to help others, never came overnight.

Back during his earlier origins as a young and determined 11 year old, while growing up on his parent's farm, getting up early, two and a half hours before going to school, was the norm, while helping his parents out with the farm chores.

In an interview with ASN, the happily married man with children elaborates on what made him the caring and productive person that makes him the committed individual that he is, when helping to make that big difference in his community, Martens said, "I think I was eleven when I started doing chores and then started driving the tractor and bailing that sort of thing."

Hard grinding work while growing up on the farm near Haynes, Alberta, and defying all odds as an 11 year old, has helped his self-confidence, which has influenced him to be very kind to others.

Martens said, "Hard work never killed anybody. It makes you a better person because you get a sense of accomplishment, when the last load of bales is hauled off the field or when the combine stops running. All the grains are in the bin and it applies to the job."

Prior to heading off to school at age 11, his responsibilities to his parent's farm always came first, and included a load of responsibilities. This routine would require at least two and a half hours of a young Neil Martens help before heading out the door to go to school. Martens said, "My parents were primarily grain farmers. We had 200 feral hogs so they had to be fed twice a day and watered. We didn't have the modern barns. We hauled it upstairs in five gallon pails. Same with the chops. The pig pens had to be cleaned morning and night. We did that every day. Our work was done. We had a good breakfast and away we went to school."

The self-confidence that Neil Martens inevitably developed from his hard productive work on his parent's farm taught him how to essentially separate his farm priorities from his school homework at home, while having some added free time for his homework. Martens said, "I did homework all the time, because I wanted to keep my grades up."

The acknowledgement from his parents and praise he received from them for doing a consistent day's work on the farm really encouraged his self-confidence in the long-term, Martens said, "I think over the years you start getting confident in what you do as long as people aren't putting you down all the time by saying, 'You didn't do that. Right, you know it was fine.'"

Then I joined the 4 H-Club, when I was 11 years old. The 4 H-Club is where Neil learned all the proper fundamentals of farming, where young farm boys and girls were assessed on their farming skills that could be applied professionally in a farming environment. Martens elaborated on some of the priorities that were taught to him while a participant of this helpful program, Martens said, "It was for younger kids, from 11 to 18 to find out about responsibilities of raising a calf, for the calf club, or a horse. You had responsibilities. You had to feed your animals twice a day. You had to keep track of how much ration you fed it. You had to water it. You had to groom it if you had to take it for a walk. You know it's all a part of growing."

"So the club taught the fundamentals and it was run by the parents of the kids in the club. We also had a coordinator from Lacombe that would come out and teach."

During the off-season, his father worked in a coal mine for 40 years,

where his earnings would help finance the farm's operations.

His success while helping on his parent's farm, from ages 11 to 19, was a prosperous and productive experience that finally led to his inevitable road as a productive contributor. It was while reaching that successful peak at age 19, an abrupt duo of illnesses disrupted his commitments in helping out on the farm. He had a long-term battle with asthma and eczema, Martens said, "At age 19, I had asthma and eczema. I spent the last week of my high school in the hospital trying to recuperate. I decided that there had to be a better way for me."

For the next 35 years, Martens lived with the inconvenience of struggling with asthma and recently Martens had his doctor conduct a battery of tests that determined he would now be taken off his puffers that were known to help his **breathing. Now that he no longer lives with asthma, he's made a vow to stay away from certain things that can create the problem.**

**But farming and completing his schooling as an honours student is only part of his prided accomplishments, next to meeting the love of his life, the woman he's married to named Ginger, who is also always working by his side, while working together in serving food to the needy at the Red Deer Mustard SEED in Red Deer, Alberta. He has also worked briefly as a book keeper and most of his life had a very successful**



career in the automotive industry in Red Deer, where he's been living since he first arrived in the city in 1980.

He's taken on multiple tasks at farming, while even at one time during his thirties, by helping out a friend at his farm near the village of Delburne, Alberta.

For anyone interested in trying their hand at farming for career starters, he'll simply tell you that the road to this success isn't going to be that easy and be prepared for some challenging homework if you intend in on making this your career choice. Martens said, "Do your homework. It's not easy. It's very expensive for those getting into it, because it's not passed down. Though, you really have to know your numbers, there's lots of education through Olds or Vermillion College. There are lots of farming programs."

In addition to career success, he's been blessed by God with a lovely supportive wife and wonderful family and at one time in his life even though it all seemed like it was coming down really hard on him when it was confirmed by doctors that he was officially diagnosed for Hodgkins

Lymphoma. He lived with this disease for a period of one year at age 24. The essential treatments of Chemo and radiation helped this fighter bounce back to life on the road to recovery.

His second passion, besides his wife and family, is volunteering in the Red Deer community. He explains who influenced that preference in extending a helping hand. Martens said, "I have volunteered through our high school and through our 4 H-Club, because my parents did. If you want your community to prosper, you've got to volunteer to keep it going."

His passion in helping others includes an extensive list of places he has helped to make that difference in - the Canadian Cancer Society, various fundraising events and now The Red Deer Mustard SEED, where he and his wife, Ginger, serve food to the shelter's many clients, Martens said, "It just makes my heart swell, cause a lot of them come up to say, thank you. They thank the servers. Some of them thank me, personally, but I just like to be lumped in with the other volunteers, cause that's all I can do as a volunteer. I don't work at

the SEED. I'm just a volunteer."

Martens started volunteering in 2016, when the Mustard SEED took over from Loaves and Fishes that once occupied this space.

He has also heard stories from shelter clients that could bring a tear to anyone's eye, Martens said, "People have fallen on hard times. You know some of them have overcome, but they have facilities for people here to help them. That's when someone comes by and says, 'They've got their own place to live in.' That's a huge relief for them. They're off the streets. Then they find work. It was the last three years with COVID-19 that really mucked up the country, because you know the jobs ran out."

Finally when ASN asked Martens what advice he could give even to shelter clients, who'd like to walk in his shoes serving as volunteers, Marten said, "When you wake up in the morning, get out of bed and put on your pants, socks and shoes. Go to work and go do something. You know, try to be productive. It's as simple as that."

## My mother

By Angelique Branston

*My mother taught me to love nature  
To respect the land·  
We would walk for miles along the forest floor  
Sometimes she would encourage questions  
Her eyes shining happily as she answered... the names of the many  
different plants and trees and fungi  
Other times she would encourage me to be quiet, and see what I could see·  
For it was in the peace that the little animals and birds could be seen·  
Their melodies so beautiful fill the air  
And reach towards heaven·  
I learned how to forage  
So if needed, I could survive until help could come·  
My mother is someone I am proud of  
She is understated  
With a strong sense of ethics·  
She has no fake side for the world  
No one is perfect,  
If she is angry with you, you know, you don't have to wonder  
(it is refreshing in a world where the norm seems to be plastic)·  
Nature is both loving and cruel·  
My mother, who is beautiful both inside and out· I hope you know you are very loved·  
How many people's lives you have touched·*

# I had the worst family

By Bradley Fruling

It was the worst family ever as far back as I can remember, nothing but abuse, disparity and humiliation, a place of dishonesty, manipulation and division. We were never taught values, encouraged or taught integrity. Our dignity came from all our deceptions and the burden of our lies was the only task to protect. As a child I could never figure it out. They say one thing and then do something else. In the cupboards items would always be in different places. Company would be coming over so it was this big wash to clean up except you were the only one cleaning. My mom would say "Go check on your dad." And he would be sitting on the couch watching T.V. with the vacuum running. She went "Don't say a word."

I got to go to the park one time with my Dad and that was because Grandpa bought me a bat and glove for my birthday. He was watching from the kitchen window

There was torment and trauma since the beginning of my life – my earliest memory was being abandoned on a dirty road with a box of toys watching my dad drive off. Before my mom went to the hospital, I tried discussing this child abuse but was immediately shut down. You can't remember that..." Well I do and I will always remember that I do.

Just as in the 70s, when the school board came around to the house. I guess I scored high on the HP pencil test but my dad was having none of it repeating, "We are raising a family here and haven't any money for that." It was another time I'm not supposed to remember. It was always money, money, money because those are the values we were taught – all for the love of a dollar bill. They always had money to enroll Grant and Mitch in school programs but always had a reason not to enroll me.

I remember writing and drawing. I drew this picture and showed my dad. He pointed and laughed ridiculing my attempt even to the point where he got my brothers to laugh and mock what I had done. I could never understand that...

Yeah, it was never a safe place for children. I always remember coming home from school and getting in trouble because my brother, Grant, would be telling on me. We were never encouraged to build

each other up – oh no to the contrary. We were encouraged to be the worst examples of human beings to one another. Just like the last Christmas when my brother Mitchell died. Grant came over first thing and started insulting me and threatened to beat me up if I said anything in front of my children with Clare sitting there nodding his head. I was just another show Christmas like the one when he beat his cousin up on so I sat downstairs like I did something wrong. What a terrible place!

Christmas, Thanksgiving and other family get-togethers were always toxic interactions, with people projecting false family values, shameless and thankless people only criticizing and condemning one another. When I was young I could never figure out why they acted differently when neighbours, teachers, Grandpa or other family members would come and visit. But as soon as they were gone it would be hell to pay for everything and anything. They were two faced people living a two faced life. "Don't say nothing." And it was always my fault. The degradation, denigration and demeaning belittlement was without measure.

I spent half my life in prison doing drugs, repeating the same behaviours because that's all I knew. I have a blood disorder because of all the beatings I endured. The stress and never ending lies sent my brother Mitchell over the edge. Under developed children don't even have the capacity or understanding to realize the travesty palpitated against them. They just repeat what they see.

But it sickens my heart to see what they did to my brother Mitchell. He was a product of that house and he was a mess but no one wants to talk about that specially since Grant testified against him in court bearing false witness. He got convicted for contempt of court. Who does that to his own brother? Poor Mitchell never recovered from that. He didn't have the capacity. All he was doing was trying to keep the children from doing newspapers. Yah, they got custody of my children and proceeded to make them deliver newspapers for the next 17 years. As f---d up as he was at least he knew right from wrong. Too bad my brother Grant doesn't. They were just more children to manipulate and molest because his lies and untruths far outweigh any truth he could muster. But, like I learned a long time ago, never expect more from somebody, who expects less from themselves. Just be a good person and

always try your best and if you think there is something else your brain damaged because you have been maligned. Isn't it sad that this is what we do to our children?

It's kinda like this pride thing. "Pride." It is for people who have nothing to be proud of. Immorality and sexual immorality run hand in hand. I cleaned up on November 11 seven years ago. I had had enough. I had been back in 2007 when my dad broke his ankle helping my mom deliver newspapers but as usual pleasantries were short lived. The relationship digressed quickly. It was time to go.

In 2011 I started sending money home - \$15000 from December 2011 to August 2013. I have bank statements. That was after the flood as my mom wasn't healthy. She needed help. Knowing how my dad was I id sure, so I came home and started cleaning and fixing stuff – a new back step, a new front step, a new back fence, soffits and roof repairs. I just cleaned the place up. It had turned into a dump. Antonio was working at the Saddle Dome and Alexis was working doing landscaping and snow removal. I was looking for work and in November my brother, Grant, asked me to start grinding on the St. Patrick Island Bridge. I started every day until I caught up to the welders. Then we agreed I would come down Monday, Wednesday and Friday until the bridge was done and he would teach me how to weld. On my first pay day I took my mom and dad to dinner. On my second pay day it was agreed I would give my mom \$500.00 a month to help her out, and so it was. In the summer time I painted his garage and house green with white trim, did soffit repairs and gutters. He paid me \$2500. What a slap. Then, when he returned from vacation, we were at the hospital and he says "When are you gonna paint my fence?"

I responded "When are you gonna teach me to weld?"

He said "Never." And that was the end of the pleasantries like I did something wrong again. Poor narcissitic, broken people. Every contact after that was just toxic because when people are in the wrong they don't accept responsibility for it – a lifetime of false promises. In the fall Olive was visiting. We were all having dinner. Grant goes and mutters "Yeah, you know Alexis gets your inheritance." Just to stir things up. What an improper thing to say! But then again we were never a morally disciplined family. We were devoid of ethical substance. People only know what

**Continued from page 14** they see. And if they don't learn it how can they teach it? Once they figured out that I had changed, I was no longer subject to the pettiness. Honesty was my way. True to thine own self. I am born again. Thy will not my will be done." They had to change their game plan. What kind of people do that? Then when I saw my mom and dad, Grant and Stacey are back colluding again. They called my children forth informing them that they were receiving my share of my inheritance. Just as Mitchel was coming around he was mess and needed help so you do what a brother should do. I helped him move, get a new place and was always going over and helping him clean, mowing his lawn and fixing anything that was broken. I reset new doors, installed drywall and a new toilet, fixed cabinets replaced the threshold, re anchored the front door and just helped him out.

I was visiting him and going to his place until he gave the van away to my daughter. He passed away at Christmas of a broken heart, then ten days later my brother Grant served me with a letter of demand for the sum of \$2000. What a disgrace. I am ashamed for them. Start where you are, use what you have and do what you can.

I got my business license equity endeavours and I started furniture repair. We agreed that I would repair some long overdo repairs like the foundation of the house, laying tile along the side, boarded the garage, put in new door and windows and new trees. On my own I am grateful for the opportunity to do for people what they could not do for themselves but they were always ready

## Time healed my wound after E.P.O. expired

By John Zapantis

Time sure can heal the wounds. I was feeling like a fugitive after having been pulled into a heated argument with a female relative, whom I will not name to protect her identity. She currently has power of attorney over my 92 year old mother. After that argument, I was told by my mother to leave and get my own place.

While leaving the house, after that intense argument, I headed to Calgary in March during the first week of that month, by E-Bus, for that first time I found myself living in three homeless shelters that included, the Calgary Drop-In Centre, Salvation Army and the Mustard SEED, from roughly the end of the first week of March to the last week of November 2022.

A week after arriving to Cowtown, I decided to take another E-Bus and later drove by to visit the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) Northeast Branch, where I encountered a friendly EPS police constable, Michael Chernyk. I told him about the heated arguments my female relative and I had been having, ever since I moved back

to condemn for the slightest fault.

Narcissism is a disease of the brain where people believe they are better than others because of what they have and the only out pouring is dishonesty and deception. I know full well that the more you do for some people the less they do for themselves.

One day I was with my son Antonio. He **was renewing his license but owed \$560 in** was renewing his license but owed \$560 in fines so we agreed I would help him out and he would pay me back the next Wednesday. So on Wednesday I tried calling him but no answer, so on Friday I went to his house early to find out what's going on. Needless to say there was a big row about paying me back so he called my brother Grant to figure out what to do and my brother told him to call the police on me instead of teaching him to be a man and honour what you say – nope be a creep and cheap out. Real quality teaching but it was always like that when I got my drivers' license he even went and gave the Honda van to my daughter after I had earned it. Then in July after numerous times, I called the police. Grant took Mitch's bike and locked me out of the garage. The last things I had left after my brother's passing were some jerseys and a bike – no memories. I am not happy with that. They went and got EPO order and I was removed by the police and have been homeless since.

Oh that's right. "It is what it is!" May God have mercy on your soul. The saddest awareness I have ever had is my fake father and dishonest brother are abominations of humans.

to help my parents as a caregiver back in August of 2010. I then continued on with my concerns regarding the removal from my mother's house. I mentioned to the officer that my relative said something insulting about me that I felt was an act of provocation that made me lose my self-control. I grabbed her and told her to stop the abuse.

Because this is a personal family matter, I won't go into the finer details about what led to this uncalled for event, but the personal information revealed to this officer was substantiated in the end. He then advised me to get a family court lawyer to make out a reverse order, where I'd have to be accompanied by a police officer, who would supervise the removal of some my valued possessions from my mother's place.

The officer reached out to his front desk computer to see if I had any court appearances to attend because I told him after I had grabbed my relative and shook her erratically for yelling at me, my mother told me she was going to charge me, while telling me to leave her house and find a place for accommodation.

After searching the computer for about an hour or so, the constable found a record of a court session that I was supposed to attend previously that mentioned my female relative implementing an Emergency Protection Order (EPO), stipulating

that I was supposed to stay essentially 200 meters away from my mother's place. The other conditions included not to have any direct or indirect contact with her and my mother. I was scheduled to appear in court that day, but never knew about this document being served to me, because I was too preoccupied with quickly leaving the house right after that commotion with my relative.

The officer told me I was going to have a hard time getting my personal belongings out of there because of how my relative made out the EPO.

He said, "It seems that she knows what she's doing." He then advised that I appoint a lawyer about getting the EPO reversed so that I could get my personal belongings out of there.

I thanked him for his support in pointing me in the right direction and then left the station.

On several occasions over the months, while staying at various shelters in Calgary, I was given permission by my relative to have a friend pick up my personal mail on my behalf, where he would meet me later at a Wendy's Restaurant located at North Town Mall in Edmonton's Northmount neighborhood.

My female relative was at least considerate in allowing me access to my personal mail, which at the time was addressed

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# Time healed wound

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was addressed to my mother's house.

Now after a year of living homeless, I later moved to the City of Red Deer, where I've been residing at the Mustard SEED Shelter.

Recently, I made a breakthrough in finding out more about my legal rights with where I stand with this issue concerning the personal belongings that I need to remove from my parent's home.

I was then forced to consult with a criminal lawyer. I paid him \$5,000 dollars. Despite the high rate charged for his legal services, he never showed me a legal policy of what he commonly charges for legal advice or representation. The minute I brought him the money, he just jumped at the opportunity and said, "I see you brought me some money."

Despite having high expectations of this lawyer in thinking he was going to help resolve my long term pending legal battle with this relative of mine, I happened to do most of the legal research myself, because the lawyer kept prolonging his many appointments with me. He didn't even know if there was a charge filed by my relative, when he could have made an effort to check to see if there was a record of it in the criminal division of the Provincial Court of Alberta. I had to do all the work myself that I expected from my lawyer. I also phoned the court house and found out that the Emergency Protection Order (EPO) made out by my relative had expired on March 17th 2023, on St Patrick's

Day. Talk about the luck of the Irish!

A court coordinator out of the Provincial Court of Alberta, recently confirmed to me that now that the EPO has expired, I'm free to pick up my personal belongings at any time without the supervision of a police officer, whose responsibility is to keep the peace between both my relative and me. But just to assure my relative, when the time comes, I'll take extra precautions by paying someone to come along to help me move my personal items out of that house.

When I had finally accomplished the task of finding out where I stood with everything, I then asked my lawyer to reimburse me the \$5,000 dollars paid out to him for the anticipated legal services. He said, he didn't need my money, but because he had cooperated, without an argument, I told him he could keep a thousand dollars for at least his time and effort in listening to my account of what happened and return the remaining balance of \$4,000 dollars, which he did.

I've got to thank a number of informative sources that showed their moral support for me, when I was experiencing some tough times regarding this EPO that was presented to me that at times had me feeling that my world was suddenly all turned upside down.

A big thank you to my Alberta Street News colleague and great friend Rodney Graham, who was the one who advised me to call a court coordinator who'd professionally advise me on the proper procedures on how to get my belongings out from my mother's place, without any problems. I called the phone number he had given me, when he had given me that

number over my answering machine, a week after our discussion.

A week later a social worker named Sidney, representing the Provincial Court of Alberta, phoned me personally telling me that after the Emergency Protection Order expired on March 17th of this year, I'd be able to get my clothes and that my relative wouldn't have the right to influence others, than to open the front door entrance of the house, allowing me the right to get my belongings finally out of there.

My uncle, Nickiforos Zapantis, in a previous conversation, advised me on exactly what the social worker told me, when I'd be free to get my belongings on my own, without a police escort.

Well, not only is this a cause for a celebration, there's also some people here I'd like to extend my sincere gratitude to for supporting and legally consulting with me on what needed to be done in the distant future, once I walk through those doors to claim my belongings.

The following supporters are, my Uncle Nickiforos Zapantis, Edmonton Police Service Constable Michael Chernyk, Alberta Street News Writer Rodney Graham, Provincial Court of Alberta Social Worker Sidney and Alberta Street News Founder and Editor Linda Dumont, who kept telling me to keep my head above the water and for assuring me that this long-term battle with my relative implementing that EPO would inevitably see its end road, allowing me to get my personal belongings along with the assured agreement that I first assure my family that I'd find my own place, prior to being allowed easy access through those doors that would eventually put an end to my homelessness.

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