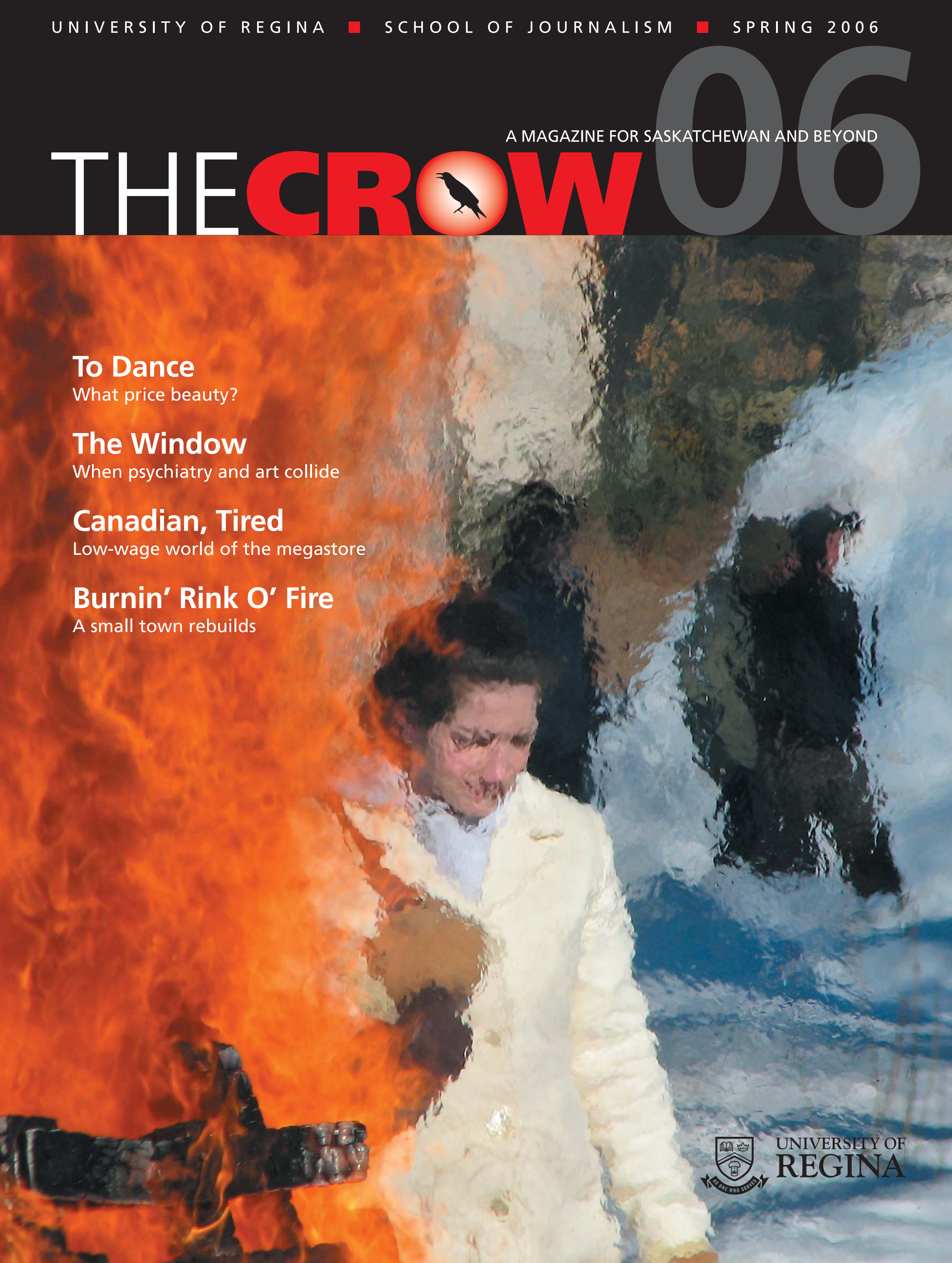
UNIVERSITY OF REGINA ■ SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM ■ SPRING 2006
A MAGAZINE FOR SASKATCHEWAN AND BEYOND
THE CROW 06
To Dance
What price beauty?
The Window
When psychiatry and art collide
Canadian, Tired
Low-wage world of the megastore
Burnin' Rink O' Fire
A small town rebuilds
UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

# QUESTION AUTHORITY

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University of Regina, School of Journalism, Spring 2006

# THE CROW

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WELCOME

# Welcome to The Crow/2006

Patricia W. Elliott, Editor

## Facts are scattershot, truth is an arrow

In the 1950s, Sri Lankan journalist Tarzie Vittachi set out to practice a kind of journalism that transcended mere reportage. Before committing ink to paper, he first stepped back and considered his universe. His critical eye took in the lingering influence of colonial vestiges, as well as the foibles of his own compatriots.

When he finally hunched over his typewriter, his reports unfurled as more than quotes and facts strung together to fill a specified number of column inches. He wrote stories that sought the truth of things and contributed to social change. He challenged and changed the dominant view of the developing world and sagely concluded: "Information without transformation is just gossip."

In today's information and image-saturated world, these words remain a fine benchmark for emerging journalists. We are surrounded by gossip, noise, sensation and data devoid of context. More than ever, we need to explore the truth of things.

At the School of Journalism, we believe the journalist's most essential tool is the long, thoughtful pause. We also encourage students to turn their gaze toward their immediate surroundings. Odds are the person standing right next to them has a story more than equal in relevance and transformative power to anything occupying today's front pages. As Vittachi and so many other great journalists have discovered, the stories of greatest impact lie close to hand.

If transformation is the benchmark, this year's Crow line-up should serve you well. You'll never admire a ballerina's grace with the same eyes. Nor will you look at depression the same way, or art. A news report on a missing woman will take on new meaning. A rundown hotel will seem less threatening, a small town hockey rink more vital to the grand scheme of life. The madness of the crowd will gain context. Age and grief will become more familiar friends. Winning will lose importance, and store clerks will annoy you less. You will see landscapes through the eyes of others, and appreciate things you missed. And, trust me, you'll never, ever say "just browsing" again, without pausing first to reflect on your aimless, thoughtless ways.

Sounds mysterious? It's not, really. The storyteller's task remains the same through the centuries: absorb human experience and give it voice. Crafting a story to reveal its higher meaning is the difference between scattershot and honed arrows, between gossip and journalism. Read on, and prepare to be changed.

## Tattoo

PHOTO BY ANGELA HILL

# After the Gulag

Carle Steel

When I worked there in the late Nineties, Regina's T.C. Douglas building housed an odd grouping of government and arts institutions, including the Department of Health, Communicable Diseases, the MacKenzie Art Gallery, Vital Statistics and the Saskatchewan Arts Board. Except for the bronze cows on the lawn, it looked like any other government building, hidden from view by trees. Seen from the back, it sat like an abandoned spaceship in a clearing, partly because of its architecture, but also because no one ever seemed to use the lawn.

Inside, though, the building teemed with life. The light from the plate glass roof encouraged the growth of the giant philodendrons, birds of paradise, calla lillies and Norfolk Island pine trees below. Presumably for exercise, women who worked for the Department of Health, all decked out in business costumes and running shoes, stomped in circles around the lobby, or in compulsive figure eights through the plants. Herds of school children were bused in to see the exhibits at the MacKenzie Art Gallery, or to trace with crayons the fossils embedded in the stone walls, or to play among the concrete human statues in the lobby. Their keepers would gather the children at the mouth of the building. When I went up to my office on the top floor, they would stand incredulous as I was whisked up to the ceiling in the glass elevators, as if abducted by aliens.

To many of my friends, I had been. I worked at the Saskatchewan Arts Board. When I arrived there in 1998, the Arts Board was nearly fifty years old, and feeling its age. All its parts seemed to be ailing. It was exhausted and starving from years of underfunding by an unsupportive government, and suffered from internal blockages like union rules, a complex bureaucracy and a half-century of unpurged files. Staff members were barely on speaking terms, and the arts community was in a constant, angry huff. Occasionally the Arts Board couldn't resist snapping at the hand that fed it, which made everything even worse.

The space we worked in was beautiful though, with windows on the northeast side of the building's cantilevered Tyndall stone façade, facing Albert Street and overlooking the bronze cows. Its walls provided an elegant backdrop to the Board's display of works from its permanent collection of Saskatchewan art. Though we had just one plant (which died under my watch) and only the occasional child visitor, the fauna in our part of the building was just as strange and irrepressible as the plants in the lobby. Each spring, hundreds of plump black flies would emerge from beneath the window of the Executive Director's office and begin their long walk down the hallway. No one knew where they came from or why they couldn't fly. Other than the giant moths I used to capture and set free, the only creature I saw actually fly had beautiful striped wings. It perched for a moment on my desk like a fairy, looked at me, and flew away. Sow bugs paced the hallways with their many legs, seemingly unbothered by the brightness of our office and its lack of water. The colour of the spiders was a soft, filing-cabinet gray.

The basement too had its own life forms. Employees in the building, mostly from the Department of Health, huddled in a corner of the parkade to smoke. Their area was corralled off by discarded cubicle dividers, and furnished with milk crates, broken government-issue executive chairs and tomato juice cans for ashtrays. The basement people would glance up when newcomers entered their nest, casually, like rats feeding, then turn back to their chit-chat and the hand to mouth business of smoking and drinking coffee.

I preferred to smoke outside.

From the back of the TC Douglas building, the world seemed empty, devoid of human habitation. I sat alone on the steps, smoking, tracing my fingers around the patterns of the snails and algae and other strange creatures fossilized in the Tyndall stone. I contemplated the expanse of lawn, the moonscape of winter.

During these brief escapes from the gulag of my job, I thought about art and culture, about how if left on their own, all human institutions — cities, universities, governments, even art forms and intellectual movements — evolve into organisms in their own right. They are like animals, with their predictable behaviours, their vulnerable bellies and complex internal structures, their mysterious ways of propagating themselves. Cities bloom on the edges of land, beautiful as coral as they trail along the

LIFE IS SHORT.

ART IS LONG.

I breathe in this one moment
This very first moment of sweet serenity
There has never been a time
such as this
I open my eyes to greet the beginning of
another day
And the endless sky above me becomes one
with the crashing tide.
I bow before these waters
Letting ashes of the past slip through my
fingers and sink down to an infinite void
My soul engulfs this new stillness
and I kneel
tearing the fears from my heart
The breeze is merciful
Its sympathy carries everything away
Now stripped of the world
Here I am
Without any hesitation
At the edge of my consciousness
In this one time
This very first moment

— Nikhat Ahmed

coastline, then invade the interior by water, like zebra mussels or blue-green algea. As anyone who has seen the infection of human habitation from an airplane can attest, however strange the world must have been in prehistoric times, it didn't have a patch on the present.

Inevitably, I would begin to imagine the earth without us.

I fantasized about what the building would look like after three hundred years of abandonment. I imagined the plants overgrown, hitting the ceiling, bursting through the windows. In my mind's eye, the whole structure became a shelter for cows, the descendants of those few who were smart enough to escape the feedlots when the meals stopped coming. In the spring, they bedded down in the offices of Vital Statistics, and had their own babies among the records of our passing. The statues and plaques became rubbing posts, something to lean on as they stood ruminating beneath the shelter of the remaining roof, contemplating the rain.

My smoking time became a kind of worship, a prayer for the earth, for the end of human occupation of the land.

Looking back now on how I imagined things, it strikes me funny that I thought only of cows, not the rabbits and gophers and deer that I knew would thrive after we were gone. Perhaps the whole thing was born of ancestral guilt over the Indians and the buffalo. Or maybe, like any other dissatisfied government worker, I simply couldn't see past my own office building.

Life is short, art is long.

For me, art was getting very long. The quiet of the office had been broken by new management. For me the only thing the Arts Board had going for it at that point was the feeling that, if the ship were sinking, at least we were all in it together. Even that was gone now. The Arts Board decided to move. I applied for a leave of absence to write. Packing up my life there mirrored the packing up of the office, the detritus of failure. I knew I wasn't coming back, everyone did.

I didn't write, of course, that was just a cover. I took my work in the arts home, where I worked independently towards the creation of a permanent endowment for the arts, a project abandoned by Arts Board when the new director took over.

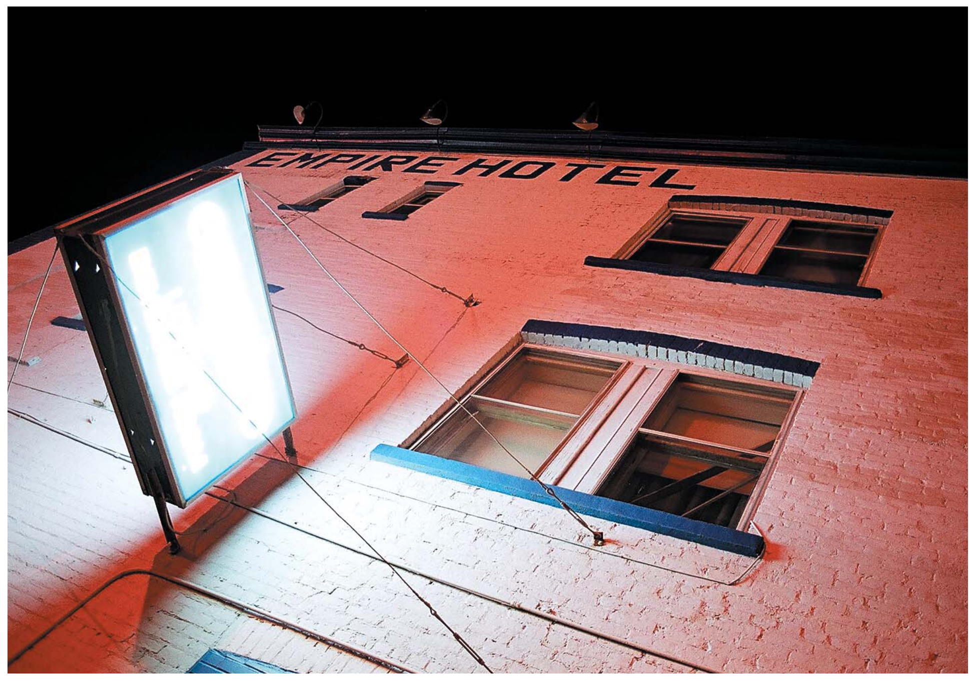
Home is another architectural oddity, a modernist work of art by the architect and innovator Clifford Wiens, and another building that will continue to flourish when our time has passed. My home, too, is on Albert Street, set back from the street and nearly unnoticeable. Made entirely of steel and concrete, a spine of pipes suspends the rolled culvert of the roof. Forty years of city dust have provided nutrients for the thistles, foxtails and saplings that have taken root in the upturned curve of its roof. I suppose if our end came, the roof would last at least until the rust claimed it. In the meantime, it gives shelter to pigeons and other small creatures that nest among its pipes.

I don't smoke anymore. I think less often about the end of the world — maybe it was just the government job. Still, I am comforted by the thought that a new world is just itching to take over from the one I know we'll someday leave behind.

Some days I stay in bed, staring at the round belly of the ceiling, listening to the sound of the tiny feet of the animals fooling around on the roof, calling to each other, knocking debris off the pipes and down the building's slopes. Their sounds are mysterious, playful, amplified by the metal of the roof. I can't imagine what they are up to, and have resisted the urge to go up there and look. I am untroubled by my compulsion to ensure the future of the arts, at the same time that I pray fervently for its demise: if humans didn't have that weird capacity to believe two things at once, there wouldn't be any art in the first place. At night I sleep knowing that the alley behind my building becomes magic with urban hares. Above me, the row of poplar trees on my roof has reached ten feet tall.

# Empire, *Hotel*

**You'd think being Regina's oldest continually operating hotel would garner some respect. Instead, the Queen City treats the Empire like an embarrassing family secret. *Michael Bell* takes a closer look.**




It surprises me, as I sit here in room 126, how quickly I'm getting to know the Empire Hotel. When others found out about my interest in the place, especially folks from Regina, they cautioned me to be careful. That's a good place to get hurt, they warned. Or beaten. Or shot. I took these cautions lightly, even arrogantly. I'd just come back from two years living in Colombia, and no wimpy hotel from Regina was going to scare me. So on a cool September evening I decided to walk down to Saskatchewan Drive and McIntyre Street, order a beer from the bar, and see if I'd meet anyone with a story to tell.

The bar, it turns out, was closed, or so a man sitting on the Empire's steps informed me. I noticed he had an open case of Pilsner beer beside him, but wasn't drinking any of it. When I sat down he offered me a bottle, which I accepted and opened, and we started to chat. Beside the entrance, a woman sat shyly on a bench. The two didn't seem to know one another.

In a few minutes, another man stumbled around the corner, walked straight up to me and said: "You're flirting with my woman." I smiled warmly, surprised at his drunken accusation. I was just sitting, I said. It was true: I hadn't even said hello to her. This seemed to satisfy him. So he tried to sell me some pirated compact discs. I looked them over, but none of them interested me and I told him so.

He then very abruptly put his foot up on the step between my feet. I felt

# of Friendliness

**He walked straight up to me and said: "You're flirting with my woman."**

PHOTOS BY MICHAEL BELL

alarmed at this sudden invasion of my personal space. Slowly pulling up his pant leg, he told me I wasn't taking him very seriously, and if I wanted, he would show me how serious this could get. His hand reached toward his sock cuff.

My sense of survival took over and screamed what I needed to do: appease the Alpha Male!

"Whoa!" I said, putting my hands up and waving them submissively. I was *indeed* taking him very seriously, I was *just sitting here* drinking a beer, and that I wasn't looking for *any* trouble. The woman tried to shout some sense into him too. Case-of-Pilsner-Man just sat, looking on.

Suddenly, like a scene from a play, yet another man burst on to the already crowded stage, shouting obscenities.

"Get the fuck out of here, or I'll call the cops on you fuckers!"

It was the night manager of the Empire. Later I found out his name was Ernie, and that he'd worked at the Empire for the last nineteen years. But tonight he was just an employee chasing away the riff-raff. He stormed up the steps, cursing us with practiced ease and disappeared inside, presumably to make good on his threat. Alpha Male and "his woman" got on their bikes and rode away. Pilsner just sat there, smiling.

And that was it. I finished my beer, thanked him and, trembling slightly from the adrenaline high, walked home.

That's why I'm surprised to find myself, three months later, staying in room 126 in the Empire Hotel.

About every seven years, something happens in or near the Empire. It usually sounds bad and it usually sounds like it's the hotel's fault.

In February 1990, Kenneth Piper was working as a bouncer at the Empire's bar when a man pulled a loaded rifle out of his coat and began pointing it around the room. Piper tackled the gunman and no one got hurt. Piper was named a hero and awarded the Saskatchewan Certificate of Commendation. The Empire was named a villain and was awarded a lot of bad press.

In February 1997, the following headline appeared: "Empire backs down on stripper plan." The Regina Leader-Post reported the Empire's owner, Larry Krulak, was considering bringing strippers into the bar, after the province eased a law

banning liquor and exotic dancing in the same room. Later Krulak had to back-pedal on the plan because the possibility of violating a Regina city bylaw was still too high. Whether or not other city bars considered bringing in strippers, it was the Empire that wore the public shame.

In July 2004, Moses Alli, a promising Saskatchewan boxer, was beaten in the parking lot of the Empire's off-sale beer store. The Leader-Post reported his injuries ended his boxing career. Then in 2005, Alli sued the Empire, alleging that the owner was negligent and responsible for the incident. Once again, the Empire suffered a beating.

And that's just the press from the last fifteen years.

There's a rumour: Jason Plumb used to live in the Empire Hotel. Plumb, now a solo musician, was the lead singer of the Regina-based band The Waltons. He wrote the songs on the group's 1998 album *Empire Hotel*. He tells me over the phone the story is half true: in the winter of 1997-1998 he rented a room for a few months and used it as a work space, a place to escape the daily distractions of home life and focus on his songwriting. Most times he'd go home after a day's writing, although he admits there were a few nights after being in the bar that he stayed the night in his room.

"I was drawn to the fact that it was a central hotel, and that it was old, (and) I could come and go and no one would give a shit."

His friends and family questioned his decision to work out of the Empire. Plumb says they didn't think the idea of writing songs in a hotel room was strange, but they thought there were "better" places to work.

**"I just needed a room with a window to look out of and an ashtray."**

PHOTO BY MICHAEL BELL

"But better in what way? I just needed a room with a window to look out of and an ashtray so I could get my work done. That's all I really wanted. There is this preconceived notion of what that place is all about. Yet I don't know anybody who's ever gone in there … to hang out at the Empire."

According to Plumb, "It's more a hotel of permanent residents, older gentlemen mostly, who get up in the morning and go down and have their beer at noon, and that's their home. It's kind of an old-age home for guys that don't want to go to old-age homes. Guys without families, who have fallen hard on their times."

As far as danger goes, he never had any trouble. In fact, Plumb thinks the Empire's character is more like "an old and weathered street-wise person that's seen a lot."

"If buildings could accumulate all of their experiences into knowledge, I think that that building has a real wealth of experience in there." I can hear the respect in his voice as he says this.

The Empire Hotel was constructed in 1912. One might think this alone would garner respect. Yet if official historical records are any measure, the Queen City has treated the Empire like a shamed relative or an embarrassing family secret. A Regina heritage book, *Cornerstones*, features beautifully rendered illustrations of the Wascana, the Clayton, the Alexandra, King's, Champ's and of course the high and mighty Hotel Saskatchewan. Yet the Empire does not appear, despite 1940s Empire letterhead that reveals a hotel of equal relevance, beauty and design. It even had a distinctive corner entrance that none of those other hotels possessed. Also forgotten is the hotel's distinctive Forties slogan: "Empire: The Hotel of Friendliness."

In the early Eighties, Heritage Regina produced walking tour pamphlets, with maps showing where to see historical buildings. The Empire does not appear on the brochure's suggested downtown tour.

Only a 1995 heritage book austerely reports: "This is the oldest continuously operating hotel in Regina. It was built in 1912 for proprietors Samuel and Albert Cook, at an estimated cost of $20,000."

In ninety-four years, the Empire's had just four owners. Albert G. Cook was the first owner until 1935, when he sold it to Stanley Kraft. Kraft sold it to Lloyd Minovitch in 1949. Larry Krulak bought it from Minovitch in 1986.

"Well, if you're thinking of printing up a bunch of dirt on us, then you can go find yourself another story," Krulak tells me over the phone.

Given the bad press the hotel has received since Krulak took over, it's not surprising he's defensive. I assure him I'm digging for history, not dirt, and he agrees to meet.

Krulak says that back in Minovitch's time, the bar's regulars were mainly blue collar workers from the post office and Silverwood's Dairy Creamery across the street. Silverwood's closed in 1975 and, according to Krulak, the clientele of the bar began to change for the worse. By the time he took over in '86, the bar had been overrun by drug-dealers and criminals, and the reputation of the hotel was in bad shape.

Over the years, Krulak has cleaned the place up and tried to re-establish a regular group of patrons. But despite his efforts, every once in a while something will happen in the off-sale parking lot that reinforces the negative view Regina residents have of the Empire, even though most people haven't even been inside or know anything about it. They see it as dirty and dangerous, yet he keeps it clean and well ordered.

"My bar is dead. It's been like this for six or seven years. It's not the bad-ass place people think," he says, showing me the tavern on a Wednesday night. I see about six patrons quietly chatting and sipping beer in a vast tavern that could easily seat twenty times that. Soothing blues tunes fill the air.

**"It's not the bad-ass place people think."**

PHOTO BY MICHAEL BELL

"It's always like this," he sighs.

If Ernie remembers me from the September night he chased me off the Empire's steps, he doesn't let on. I pay twenty five-dollars; he gives me the key and says sternly: "Up the stairs, on the left. Bathrooms at the end of the hall. No parties, and the bar is already closed for the night. No visitors after nine. If you go out, you have to leave the key at the desk."

Room 126 is simple: one single bed, a small chair, a radiator, a sink, a trash can, a dresser, a night stand, a coat rack, a tiny hotel soap bar, a drinking glass, two clean white towels and a window. I lie down on 126's aged brown carpet and without stretching I can touch one wall with my feet and the other with my hands. The window faces McIntyre Street. I can see the railway tracks to the north and when a train creeps up the track, the floor rumbles slightly. Once in a while, I hear someone shuffle down the hall, or hear the murmur of a brief conversation through the walls.

Down the hall I find, literally, a *bath*room: a room with a big bathtub and a sink. The next two doors down are the men and women's toilets. Everything is clean, just as Krulak said.

The hallway is totally quiet as I walk back to my room.

The Empire Hotel is to Regina what a convicted person is to a community: suspicious, despite efforts at reform. Since few community members know the convicted person, most everyone believes the gossip about them. And if something bad happens near the convicted person, they are guilty by proximity. The Empire has fallen: "The Hotel of Friendliness" is today a pariah.

## Flying

PHOTO BY LINDSAY JEAN

## Aftermath

PHOTO BY JOLIE TOEWS

## Recruit

PHOTO BY RYAN ELLIS

## Vacation, for some

PHOTO BY DONNA RAE MUNROE

## Emergency

PHOTO BY JOLIE TOEWS

## Drag King

PHOTO BY ERIN BROWN

## Forgetting

PHOTO BY LINDSAY JEAN

# Valley of Tears

TEARS

Tamara Cherry

PHOTO BY TAMARA CHERRY

It's rainy season in Israel. I find myself atop Mt. Bental in the northern Golan Heights, four thousand feet above sea level. My hood is up and I stand in front of my sister's camera, striking a world-is-my-oyster pose, fist tucked under chin, hand triumphantly on hip. The camera clicks as I gaze over the steep ridge.

From my perch in northeastern Israel, my eyes drink in a panoramic view of Lebanon to the left and Syria straight ahead. There are dozens of tourists around me, but the brisk air is calming. I want to sigh; instead, a lump forms in my throat. I turn around and am reminded of where I am.

I hop over a shallow dugout and find my group listening to our tour guide, twenty-six-year-old Noga Hoening. One of Israel's toughest wars was fought here, she says. I know she's referring to the Yom Kippur War of October 1973 — but could that peaceful-looking gap of land between Syria and the Golan border, the view I'd nearly sighed over moments ago, really be the infamous Valley of Tears?

The peace I felt earlier fades as I take another look around the historic hilltop, which I now recognize as an abandoned Israeli bunker. Layers of barbed wire lie on the ground, as if carelessly tossed aside after the battle; teenage tourists laugh as they swivel around in a rusting blockhouse, peering through the gun turret; underground, right below my feet, wind a series of claustrophobic concrete tunnels lined with sandbags.

Just thirty-three years ago, Syria and Egypt crossed the borders in a surprise attack on Israel. It was October 6, the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, the day of Yom Kippur, 1973. They brought with them three divisions of over eight hundred tanks with artillery support; on the Golan Heights, about 180 Israeli tanks faced an onslaught of 1,400 Syrian tanks. Israel put on an impressive defense in the Valley of Tears, home to one of the bloodiest battles of the eighteen-day war. By October 24, Israel had lost 2,500 lives, less than a quarter of the deaths suffered by their enemies. Years later, this battle rests proud in the hearts of many Israelis. Yet the lump in my throat only grows.

Noga's words trail off. The past couple of days have seemed so beautiful, so happy until this point.

In the past forty-eight hours …

I rediscovered familiarity in my guesthouse by the Sea of Galilee, watching Hebrew-subtitled *Sex and the City* with my two Ontario roommates.

I've taken pictures of children with curly sidelocks playing atop their school in the mystical city of Tzfat, only to find out later that their seemingly light-hearted, friendly shouts to us were in fact cries of: "Don't take my picture, stupid!"

I've passed a road sign to Nazareth while driving through a village where Israeli flags drape over balconies like drying laundry, and I've hiked through the unbelievably picturesque Golan Heights, where clear streams and waterfalls made it easy to forget the gunshot holes we saw in old Syrian forts at the beginning of the hike.

But as my imagination blankets the tranquil, green land around me with bloody remains and twisted shrapnel, the feeling of looking death in the face puts a twist on my trip to Israel. Can I call this place beautiful? Against a backdrop of barbed wire and a Valley of Tears, it seems like an oxymoron.

Noga finishes speaking and I walk over to the blockhouse with my sister, Sarah, and friend, Ethan. We crouch inside, shoulder to shoulder. From outside, our friend Eva can only see our faces through a small square window. As she prepares to take our picture, we make guns with our fingers in front of our faces and I am overcome with the feeling that I am doing something I shouldn't — like a little kid laughing at a funeral. I feel uncomfortable, crawl out of the blockhouse and walk through the trenches with Ethan and Sarah.

As I think about the bloodshed, the passion and, in turn, the incessant fight-for-the-map that brought war to where I am standing, I am suddenly reminded of what a friend told me after visiting Auschwitz in Germany: they take you on a tour through the empty camp and it doesn't seem like much. Then they lead you into a room and show you a video of what actually happened there.

# THE Prospector

**Each game still gets the adrenalin rushing, like lacing up skates for the first time. Pro hockey has sustained Lorne Davis for sixty years. How could the NHL's oldest scout ever give it up?**

***Trent Warner***

A half hour before a junior hockey battle between the Moose Jaw Warriors and Prince Albert Raiders, cars already litter the Moose Jaw Civic Centre's parking lot.

Inside, rusty lights dangle low over a freshly cleaned ice surface. Ushers hurry to gather the last bit of trash from the aisles as the first fans file in.

A fatherly, grey-haired figure moves through the turnstile. Circling the arena, Lorne Davis says hello to his friends — ushers, concession workers, arena staff — he knows most by name. They ask him how he's been and how long he'll be in town.

Davis meanders to a room below the stands, where a dozen men in business suits stand in odd contrast to the peeling paint and decrepit benches of the old dressing room. He sits down at a table and says hello to his friend Peter. Most of the faces in the room are old, the faces of grandpas who swap stories of their families, of the travel they've done — nothing out of the ordinary. But their hands reveal more: a bulbous flash of diamonds, the encircling word 'Champions' etched in gold. You wonder, with so many rings in the room, if thoughts wander to days on the ice, holding the Stanley Cup overhead in front of thousands of screaming fans.

Not likely.

Tonight is about business. For every player who leaves the game, someone else must replace him. Like horse race handicappers, each man clutches tonight's lineup sheet. Players are divided first by line combination, then by birthday. Those born in 1988 are given special attention. They're the youngest eligible for this year's NHL entry draft. Each man has his own system. Scratches are dealt with first. A slash goes over the name of Raider's scoring leader Kyle Chipchura, out with a shoulder injury. It's a moot point for the men in the room. He's a 1986 birthday — already been drafted. Some make a few notes on paper; others stab at

Edmonton GARDENS
LORNE DAVIS
1954-55 SEASON
WESTERN HOCKEY LEAGUE
FLYERS
LINEUPS • COMMENTS • NEWS
25¢
OFFICIAL PROGRAM

BlackBerry keys. A man on the end highlights players by order of importance; another circles his targets.

Suddenly, a siren sounds. The men glance at their watches, gather their papers and head upstairs. It's time to go to work. From a perch in the corner of the stands, Davis leans forward, a big smile drawn across his face — he's home.

This life began after a junior hockey game in Regina, when a scout from New York shook the hand of a wide-eyed Saskatchewan boy. It was 1946. Lorne Davis, minor hockey prodigy, signed a contract for a hundred dollars. It wasn't a lot of money at the time, but it symbolized more. The man from New York had bought the young boy's life. Sixty years later, Davis is still in the game, the oldest scout in the league. At seventy-five, retirement looms, but tonight he peers over the boards with the same boyish wonder as the first day he laced his skates.

Skating the frozen sloughs of Lumsden in the Qu'Appelle Valley, Davis spent long hours playing pick-up games with friends. Organized hockey came soon after in nearby Regina. The game was primitive back then. Outdoor rinks were the norm and players wore toques and mitts under their hockey equipment as protection against the harsh prairie winters. Davis didn't care. He just loved to play, and seemed to have a knack for the game from the very beginning. At fourteen, the young Regina Pat was already attracting the attention of professional scouts. It was an exciting time, fueled by dreams of skating alongside Doug Harvey and Maurice Richard. Two years later he signed his first professional contract with the New York Rangers.

Over the next fifteen years, Davis would play for fifteen different teams across eight different leagues. His career was a series of transactions: traded, then traded again. The only certainty was that he was going to be on one of the forward lines. An occasional taste of success was enough to keep him on the ice: a 1953 Stanley Cup with the NHL's Canadiens, a 1958 Calder Cup with the American League's Hershey Bears.

With each trade Davis would simply pack his bags and move on. It didn't matter where. He just wanted to play. There were times when he was moving so often, he didn't even have time to find a place to live before starting with his new team. In the back of his mind, hope always lingered that he would stick with one of the NHL clubs he frequented. But with only six teams in the league, spaces were tight.

PHOTO BY LEIF ENGBERG

*Davis in 1966, wearing the captain's C.*

**"How'd you like to scout for us?" Bowman asked.**

By the late 1950s, Davis had a wife and two school-aged children to care for. He took a job in Regina as a contractor's superintendent and tried to make hockey just a hobby. But whenever winter rolled around, there was always a team out there that needed an experienced player. Finally in 1966, while playing overseas for the Canadian Olympic team, the aging pro was offered a deal that would change his life. The NHL had just undergone a six-team expansion, including a new team in St. Louis. Blues general manager Lynn Patrick and head coach Scotty Bowman approached Davis.

"How would you like to coach?" Bowman asked.

Coach? After spending a year as an International Hockey League player-coach in Muskegon, Michigan, Davis knew he was not a coach.

"I don't think so," he answered.

"Then how would you like to scout for us?"

This time there was no hesitation: "Yeah, I'd like that"

His playing career over, Davis had finally "stuck" in the NHL.

In the first season with St. Louis, he covered Canada coast to coast, watching countless junior games. The month-long road trips made him wonder if he'd made the right decision. By the end of each trip his mind was numb with names and statistics. But it got easier.

Scouting is about careful observation. Fans watch games, scouts watch players.

After the game, if a friend asked Davis who'd won, sometimes he didn't know — he was too busy doing his job. He would often see glimpses of himself in the players he watched. The way they acted, the youthful vitality, there was something about them that reminded him of the limitless hope and possibility he once possessed. And like a hockey dad, he found himself resting his own dreams in the players he watched. He wanted them to succeed.

Twice a year, all the Blues scouts gathered to create a draft list. In the stifling confines of a hotel conference room, eight men would spend hours mulling over the task of ranking hundreds of draft-eligible players.

There were times when Davis broke up fights. In retrospect, the arguments seemed petty. One scout would say a player was a great skater and another would say he wasn't. Sometimes that's all it took. Still, there was solidarity among the group — there had to be. If a major pick didn't work out, the whole scouting staff shared blame.

The Blues' entry into the NHL was rocky. After a few losing seasons, a new owner took over the team and cleaned house. Davis was out of a job. But, like he had always done, he simply moved on, first to New York and then, in 1980, to Edmonton.

Led by a prodigy named Wayne Gretzky, the Oilers were a youthful team new to the NHL. Expectations were high. By now Davis had developed a rhythm. He no longer took notes at games. Afterwards, sitting down to write his reports, a player's every move unfolded in his mind.

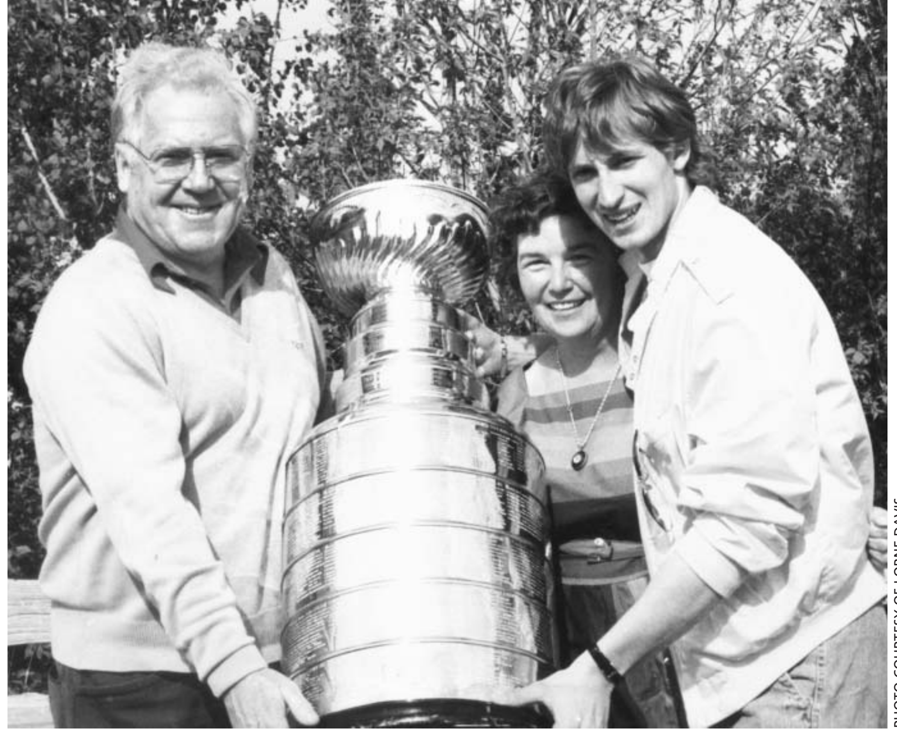


PHOTO COURTESY OF LORNE DAVIS

*Davis and a young Wayne Gretzky: like any hockey dad, he wanted the kids to succeed.*

There was a certain formula to finding a pro hockey player and Davis knew it well. First and foremost, he must be an excellent skater — both side-to-side and north and south. Skating is often the difference between average and great. You can tell in his hips what kind of strider he is — short and choppy or long and powerful. A player needs a sense of the game, too: where to be to find the puck, and where to go when he doesn't have it. Then there's character. You tell a lot about a player by how hard he skates to and from the bench.

Over the next five years Davis would be responsible for drafting key players, including a trio who would become Hall-of-Famers: right winger Glen Anderson, goaltender Grant Fuhr and defenseman Paul Coffey. By 1984 the Oilers were a powerhouse. Davis watched from the stands as Gretzky accepted the Stanley Cup at centre ice. Four more championships would come in the 1980s, as the Oilers etched their place as one of the greatest pro sports dynasties. But Davis' work was far from done.

More than twenty years on, he's still hanging over the boards, keeping an eye on future prospects for the Oilers. Tonight, there won't be much to report. It was a slow game devoid of draft-quality talent. The fans are happy, though, when the final buzzer pegs a 4-1 victory for Moose Jaw.

In his car in the Civic Centre parking lot, Davis tunes in the post game show on the radio and chats with fellow scout and travel companion, Bryan Raymond. Travel gives a man a lot of time to think and get to know his colleagues.

**He tires a little faster than he remembers.**

Turning onto the highway, the open road awaits as always. Still, a new reality is setting in. Truth be told, he can't walk quite as quickly as he used to and he tires a little faster than he remembers. The travel, too, the travel can be a killer. And yet every time he contemplates stepping away from the game, he's drawn back in like an addict. For as long as he can remember he's lived at the rink. His home is in Regina, but not his life. When he wants to see his friends, he goes to the arena. In his darkest times hockey has been there, even in 1992 when he lost his wife to cancer. Davis took several months off to care for her at home until she passed away. Then, to deal with his grief, he did the only thing he knew would make him feel better — he went on a road trip.

All it takes is a single step through the turnstile to set it off: a rush of adrenalin that starts at the fingertips and shoots through his body. It never fails; it's what sustains him. How could he ever give that up?

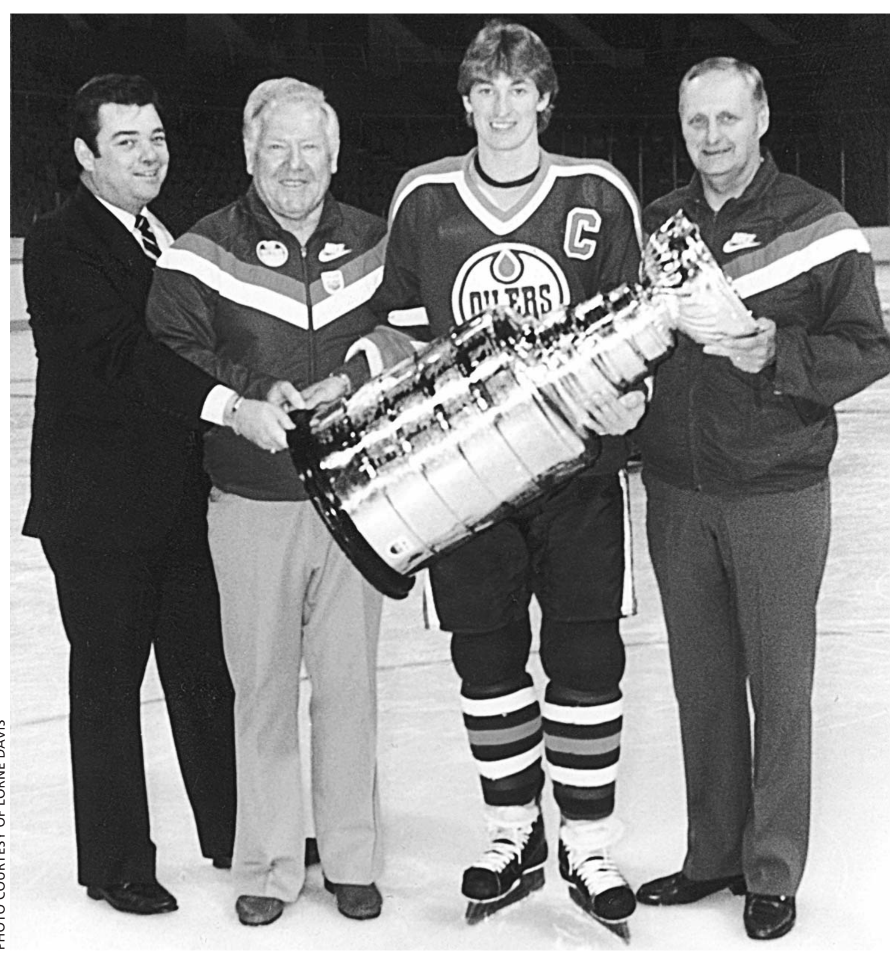



PHOTO COURTESY OF LORNE DAVIS

*Davis, second from left, scouted some solid backup for the Oilers' superstar.*

# La difference

**Stephane Bonneville**

**You might wonder what keeps some of Canada's best francophone musicians living and playing in Saskatchewan.**

Instrument cases rattle against each other in the back of a van as it cruises down a Saskatchewan highway. Outside, the July air is thick and oppressive; the wind swirls dust through tangled weeds and fence posts along the roadside. As the tires skip across the pothole-scarred road, axles creak and there is a persistent crackling sound of grasshoppers bouncing off the van's exterior. Inside the vehicle it feels sweaty and hot despite narrow blasts of cold air hissing from the air conditioner. A singer on the radio drifts in and out of the static. One of the passengers fiddles with the dial. "C'est pas mieux," his companions say. "It's not any better."

Their French carries an accent peculiar to les Fransaskois, francophones who have been settled in Saskatchewan for over a hundred years. The passengers are headed for a show at a small town community hall, a venue most Fransaskois musicians are familiar with. The driving distance is long and the paycheque is likely to be small, but no matter — they enjoy it. At a certain point, however, some musicians find it becomes difficult to keep turning off the Trans-Canada Highway onto dusty roads leading to distant towns. Some just decide to keep going and end up in places like Winnipeg, Vancouver, and Montreal. Saskatchewan is their home but the big cities are where opportunities for fame and wider recognition await.

Given that reality, you might wonder what keeps some of Canada's best francophone musicians in Saskatchewan — people like Regina's Annette Campagne. Her career as a singer-songwriter began in her hometown of Willowbunch, a largely francophone town about 150 kilometres southwest of Regina. Willowbunch sits alone amid hills and fields that stretch as far as the eye can see, one of the small islands of francophone culture in Saskatchewan's anglophone sea. "French is my first language, and English is just something I learned to speak because everyone else did," Campagne recalls. "As an artist you have to express who you are, and I am Fransaskois."

Campagne came from a musical family. In the 1980s she and her brothers and sisters formed the folk group Folle Avoine. It was a modest beginning to her career. After a few members left, the group re-emerged with a more contemporary rock sound and a new name: Hart Rouge.

*Recording artist Annette Campagne.*

PHOTO BY STEPHANE BONNEVILLE

Although many anglophones might not recognize it, Hart Rouge soon became a household name for French Canadians across the country.

But as Hart Rouge's popularity grew, the reality of being based in Saskatchewan set in. "We had done about as much as you can do in the Fransaskois community — there's a limit to how much you can do here," Campagne says. She doesn't mean this in a demeaning way. Hart Rouge simply came up against the fact that Saskatchewan isn't an easy place for musicians to find commercial success. That is true for both English and Francophone musicians, but those who sing only in French face double the difficulty.

The largest Fransaskois communities in Saskatchewan are in Regina and Saskatoon; the rest are scattered across the province's rural southern and central regions. Driving to small towns on a regular basis is costly on a musician's budget, when you have to pay fifty or a hundred dollars for gas every time you play a show. And, as one might expect, there are no French record companies in Saskatchewan, a province where only about 1.5 per cent of the population is bilingual.

Campagne says it was tough to make it when she started, and is probably even tougher today. "(Record companies) see the market as limited and they don't quite know how to market French bands," she explains. "I think record companies in general only take chances on proven groups; it's not like it used to be."

When Hart Rouge's members decided to give up their day jobs and become full time professional musicians, they first relocated to Winnipeg. Meanwhile, their Quebec fan base continued to grow. This led to a deal with a Quebec record label and the opportunity to play several shows in la belle province.

"The head of the record company said that if we really wanted to make a go of it, we should move over there," she says. The group jumped at the opportunity, leaving the windswept prairie for the skyscrapers and boulevards of Montreal.

Hart Rouge was the first Fransaskois band to truly 'make it' in Quebec, but things weren't always easy. Arriving in Montreal, Campagne and her bandmates joined a different kind of minority: francophones from outside Quebec. Although Hart Rouge had the benefit of a pre-existing fanbase, they learned it can be difficult for Fransaskois to be accepted because of differences in language and culture.

As well, their particular brand of western folk-rock wasn't a huge hit in Montreal, a somewhat fickle music scene tending to gravitate toward glossier fare. But while Hart Rouge's rural sensibilities may have had a lukewarm reception in the big city, it helped win over fans in smaller towns. "We did very well outside Montreal, maybe because we were less cosmopolitan and our music was more down to earth — so we did a lot of touring across Quebec," Campagne says. Because of Hart Rouge's three-part harmonies, their music became popular with the province's choirs; they did one tour where the show was split between themselves and a choir performing their songs.

Hart Rouge rode their success for a decade before disbanding in 1998. Campagne stayed in Quebec for a while afterward, but things just weren't the same. Her first solo record wasn't as successful as she'd hoped, and she felt the music scene in general had stagnated a little. She'd also grown to miss some things about Saskatchewan. "I missed the simplicity of life — things are less complicated and more open," she says. "People are open, the land is open, and I missed the connection I got with people. In the big city no one looks you in the eye or says 'hi'." While some of her former bandmates chose to stay in Quebec, she ultimately decided to return to Saskatchewan. She saw it as a welcome change of pace rather than a defeat.

Back in Saskatchewan, Campagne has released another solo album and performed at a variety of places, including the 2005 Canada Summer Games opening ceremony in Regina. "Ironically, since I've come back here I've had more work as an artist than I ever could have in Montreal," she says. Campagne is also enjoying a position as an artist in residence for the Saskatchewan Arts Board. She travels around the province giving workshops to young Fransaskois musicians. The residency also allows her time to write her own material. This work is important at a time when the community needs leaders in the arts to help Fransaskois culture survive tough times. Many of the small towns where Francophone communities are based are in decline, as is the number of bilingual people in the province. The population whose mother tongue is French has fallen from 36,815 in 1951 to 19,901 in 1996, and Saskatchewan's francophone community has shrunk by more than 1,800 in the past five years. But, however small, a vibrant culture remains. Campagne is helping ensure that, even in these hard times, there will be a new wave of Fransaskois musicians like her, ready to express themselves whether they stay in Saskatchewan or venture beyond.

# Out from the SHADOWS

SHADOWS

**Perched like a bird at the kitchen window, I would spy on my dad as he worked in his shop. I wondered if he ever cried out there, all alone. He had to cry sometime, didn't he? Wouldn't everybody, if they knew it was only a matter of months before they died?**

***Jolie Toews***

Sometimes I used to hallucinate when I had a high fever. Sometimes the walls looked as if they were pulsating, and it was only a matter of time before the room caved in on me as I lay in my parents' bed. And sometimes I used to think people were walking too fast, which would really irritate me.

Such was the case one Halloween night.

Too ill to dress up, I spent the night lying in bed while Mom took my brother and sisters trick-or-treating. My room was just off the bathroom, so I could see my dad pass by every time he went to visit it. I remember yelling at him to stop walking so fast, but he insisted he was walking as slow as he could. Many years would go by before I understood how frustrating it was dealing with someone who saw things that weren't there.

Pumped full of morphine, my dad drifted in and out of consciousness in his hospital bed in the spring of 1999, muttering about things he thought he saw. So I sat at his bedside and held his hand while he dreamed through the night. If he had been able to speak well enough, I would've asked him to tell me about his dreams, just like he used to ask me whenever he found me crouched at his bedside in the middle of the night. He made me feel so safe. I sure miss that.

*How much longer will it be?*

Perched like a bird at the kitchen window, I would spy on my dad as he worked in his shop. I was curious about what could possibly be going through his mind at a time like this. And I wondered if he ever cried out there, all alone. My dad wasn't the type to get all teary-eyed in front of people. He had to cry sometime, didn't he? Wouldn't everybody, if they knew it was only a matter of months before they died? I just wanted to know if he was hurting — any kind of sign that he needed us. But he just kept working away on his machinery like any other day, showing no signs of pain. The four of us kids knew better than to bug him too much with such requests as, "Can we go swimming in the dug-out?" or "Can we ride the four-wheeler?" When he was working, he didn't like to be bothered. "Buzz off. Can't you see I'm busy?" was his usual reply.

It's funny, though, when I think back to those days. I never realized it at the time, but when he wasn't busy in the fields or fixing machinery, he

**He used to keep that comb wedged in the back pocket of his Levi jeans, always on hand to tame stubborn flyaways.**

was usually making things for us — a merry-go-round, a swing set, go-carts, a floating dock with a diving board. It was his way of showing love.

Now, the nights seemed to stretch longer than the days. It was only a matter of time before the cancer would kill him. The hospital became a second home to my family. Visiting hours didn't apply to us. Whenever I was there, I couldn't help but feel like a VIP guest. My dad had the nicest-looking room in the entire place, furnished with a bed, night-stand, couch, a few chairs, a TV and a VCR. A big window overlooked a grassy area with a tree and a bird-house, which hung on a budding branch and swayed in the warm breeze.

I'm thankful it was spring when my dad died, that winter had long passed. But I'm not sure how much he was able to appreciate the view. After a while, his eyes glazed over and stared blankly at a spot on the ceiling.

*Can you still see me? Or has it already been the last time?*

The odd occasion when I wasn't in dad's room, I was either playing cards with my cousins in the hallway or sleeping on the couches in the waiting area. There was a TV in the waiting room. I remember watching bits and pieces of the coverage of the Columbine High School shootings. I didn't pay a whole lot of attention to the tragedy. I had other things on my mind.

PHOTO BY JOLIE TOEWS

As I stared down at my father, I couldn't believe this was the same man I knew as a little girl. His appearance had changed so much since he got sick. Unlike the rest of his body, the skin on his face and fore-arms used to be dark brown — what some people would call a farmer's tan. The name was appropriate, him being a farmer and all. But after all those hours the sun had put in to change his skin colour, now it was like someone had come along with a pin and poked a hole to drain it all out.

Working on broken-down farm machinery so many summer days had turned his hands tough, making them feel like sandpaper. But it had been a while since he had done any repair work, so they'd lost their tex-ture. His back was full of screws and pins, put in a few months earlier to

stabilize his fragile spine — the same back I remember sitting on as we swam around the pool at the hotel in Grand Forks, North Dakota every November.

His skinny arms fell limp to his sides. Many winters ago, those arms used to swing me around the town skating rink so fast it made me scream.

The skin sagged off the bones in his legs. I remember those legs once had enough muscle to beat me, his fastest kid, in a race.

No, he sure didn't look the same.

To keep him as comfortable as I could, I wet his lips with a sponge to keep them from drying out. A small ball of pink sponge was attached to the end of a stick, making it look like a lollipop. I rolled it back and forth across his thick lips. I kept his curly black hair slicked back with his favourite little black comb to keep the sweat from dripping into his eyes. He used to keep that comb wedged in the back pocket of his Levi jeans, always on hand to tame stubborn flyaways.

It became torturous listening to him breath. Draped over the chair beside his bed, I stared up at the ceiling and listened to him barely live. A slow breath in, then a pause … and finally a long exhale. And it would start all over again. It got so bad that I had to plug my ears.

*Just die already!*

Eventually, he started grabbing at the oxygen mask to pull it off his face. I took the elastic bands off his ears and held the mask over his mouth myself, in case it was making him feel trapped. One time, he even tried to get up from the bed. I was standing in the doorway talking with relatives when I saw it happen. He kept his eyes on me as he tried to reach for the metal triangle hanging above his bed. I'll never forget those eyes. They almost looked possessed. It must have been the morphine. But still, it really frightened me. What a thing it is, watching someone die.

Before, I'd always found my dad intimidating. His voice boomed, so it seemed like he was always yelling. Most of the time, he probably was. Despite his temper, he was usually a funny guy. His sarcastic humour was a nervous trait, my mom always said. Kids seemed to like him. He could be a real goofball.

**… unlike anything I'd heard before.**

But all I ever saw was an old grouch who worried too much about money. "Everybody's making it big but me," I often heard him say. I think he felt sorry for himself but didn't want anyone else feeling sorry for him.

Farming was a stressful job. He would work so hard putting in his crops, only to sit idly by and watch days and days of rain almost completely wipe them out.

*I never liked you on those days. You could be really mean, you know?*

If he ever needed help with anything, he was often too proud to ask for it. Our neighbours and family came over anyway to help him in the fields when he got too weak.

The sound was unlike anything I'd heard before. It was a loud wailing noise coming from my mom. I knew something had happened so I ran into dad's room. His eyes didn't blink and his mouth was gaping open. He looked like a dead fish. I wish I hadn't seen that, because the image still burns in my mind. I had never seen anyone just after they'd died before. The sun was shining bright that morning, April 25.

There are too many nights to count I've bawled myself to sleep in the years following his death. I was able to do it in such a way that nobody would hear me. I didn't want them to be scared of me because I was sad. I wanted to be the Jolie they knew — always cracking jokes and having fun. So I cried in private, mostly because I felt sorry for my dad. I was so angry that the disease forced him to expose his real thoughts and emotions. The strong and stubborn man I had always known had turned into this weak and vulnerable person. When it became obvious death was near, he began to turn into someone I'd never seen before. His voice grew softer and he no longer lost his temper. He even apologized for being a bad father. When it was no longer possible for him to show affection through building us things, he started to speak it. As hard as it must have been, he told me he loved me. But I couldn't say the same. Oh, I wanted to. No one knows that more than me. But I just couldn't do it. He had raised me in his shadow — stubborn and guarded. How could he expect anything else of me?

*It's not fair, Dad! That wasn't you.*

It feels so nice falling asleep after a good cry. It wipes me out so I don't have to worry about getting scared of lying there in the dark alone with my thoughts. I just close my eyes and drift off with ease. But it gets hard living this way — pissed off at something I can't change and hiding my grief. I've been thinking lately that maybe I've been feeling sorry for myself instead of dad. I mean, is it such a terrible thing that my dad had to change? Would it be so terrible if I did, too?

# To Dance

PHOTO BY ANGELA HILL

**We were so thin, so sick, so screwed up. But every fall, thousands of little girls tiptoe into dance studios wanting to be just like us.**

***Erin Morrison***

PHOTO BY ANGELA HILL

If there's a mistake, she won't eat for days. She'll cry herself to sleep. She'll lose more weight.

Standing on the carpet in the green room, April Roy and I, dressed like twins, grasp the back of an ornate green velour couch in place of a *barre.* Our competitors circle us, stretching on the floor or marking their routines with headphones on. We lock stares and she shows me her dazzling toothy smile. She doesn't blink. In the studio she'd warmed up with her head down, but in the green room, pulling a pointed toe above her head, her jaw is defiant. This is the tiger cage, between the rehearsal hall and the stage, where we all try to stay warm and intimidate each other. My eyes wander to the other duets, but April is all inside her head.

*Don't look. Don't look at them. Oh my goodness, just focus. Just stay warm and focus.*

On stage we stand back-to-back, our arms stretched out and her palms on top of mine. Her long, thin alien fingers are frozen on mine under the hot lights, and I feel her take a deep breath. She's thinking about the judges at the back of the audience, she's thinking about the choreographers in the front row. *Oh my goodness.* She's a white stripe on the vast, hot, black stage. "We can do this," she whispers — to herself, not me.

Each of her vertebrae is pushing against her paper-thin skin, pushing into the grooves of my spine. The heavy red velvet curtain separating us from the audience is a threadbare security blanket. Waiting, she second-guesses the placement of her pointed toe, her fingers and her chin. She shifts and contracts her stomach muscles, conscious of how her gaunt profile will look in silhouette.

*I can't mess this up. Can't mess this up. Can't.*

If there's a mistake, she won't eat for days. She'll cry herself to sleep. She'll be in the studio by seven tomorrow morning. She'll stretch. She'll lose more weight.

Eight years later, she'll say she was in a weird frame of mind back then. She'll say she was screwed up, and she was emotionally fragile. She'll say she was sick. She and I were sick and we were so thin, and we had our priorities screwed up. She'll say that she couldn't do those competitions and performances unless she was completely empty. Eight years later she'll say she couldn't believe she ever thought like that.

*If I mess this up, it's all over.*

The hem of velvet heaves from the floor, and a spotlight crawls up our legs and hits the sides of our faces. Then we hear the whisper of the five seconds of empty

tape before the music cuts in. I'm familiar with it, this five-second free fall, but the moment lasts years for April. She was raised as a rhythmic gymnast, where there are no lights, and no giant theatre house stretching into the black. He sinewy muscles shudder against mine. She knows the audience can't hear the brief blur of white noise, but she's sure they see her cheeks turn red under the heavy makeup and she still feels like it'll break her — that when the music starts, she just might not move.

April took a bite of toast while her sisters scurried around her. One bite of toast, chewed deliberately. She was hungry but by the time she was eighteen she'd grown accustomed to the comfort of an empty stomach. When she swallowed, it was thorns all the way down her raw throat. She faced a two-hour morning bus ride to the other side of town, but didn't mind. At her old high school she didn't have any friends. The more her body melted away, the more she melted into the background, the more she avoided everyone. It was a relief to transfer to Winnipeg's Westwood Collegiate, a school with a performing arts diploma programme, a place where people understood her.

Every fall, little girls in their first pink ballet slippers tiptoe nervously into dance studios around the world, dreaming of being just like April. Most will take one or two classes a week, no more. But a few will be encouraged to get serious about their careers and take their exams, beginning at five years old.

The Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing reports 250,000 students are examined by judges each year worldwide; the Royal Academy of Dance grades another nearly 191,000 annually. Only the top fraction of graduates will win jobs as professional ballerinas. Anything short of the highest grade is failure. For the first half of the dance season — before the horrific and elating rush of competing and performing, exams consume a dancer's mind.

At Westwood the morning was filled with regular classes. During the lessons, April would float away, dreaming about the perfect performance, the perfect stretch, the perfect body. Afternoons were spent in the school's dance studio, staring at herself in the mirrors, trying to make herself look like the *Dance Magazine* cutouts she had pasted all over her notebooks. By three o'clock acid was gnawing at her stomach lining, but she couldn't eat. More classes awaited at the private dance studio where I would see her every day. So after school she dragged herself onto another bus, toes blistered, hamstring strained, a backpack full of tights and tattered

PHOTO BY ANGELA HILL

**She feels like it'll break her — that when the music starts, she just might not move.**

dance shoes slung over her shoulder. Slumping into a seat, her spine sat awkwardly on top of her hips, and she felt bolts of pain with each bump in the road.

For kids like April and me, the pain made us feel better about ourselves.

Years later, Dr. Kim Dorsch, a University of Regina kinesiologist, offered an explanation. "It's the whole notion that you're tough if you play through the pain," she told me. Dancers, like athletes, are constantly reevaluating how much pain or injury is acceptable. As success becomes more important, the level of pain they're willing to accept grows.

Her words rang true. I thought back to how a bleeding toe or a stabbing clamp of hunger made us proud. Eventually, the pain, the control over food, and the drive for perfection become an obsession. "Ultimately what happens with eating disorders is that it's not about food anymore, it's about taking control of one aspect of your life," Dorsch said. "Can that border on pathological? Yes."

A quick tug, like ripping off a bandage, and a purple toenail peeled off my littlest toe. I flicked at some of the caked blood with my fingernail and glanced at the five other girls hunched over their own feet, taping over blisters and cramming lamb's wool from pastel pink boxes into the toes of their pointe shoes.

We'd been given a brief break to change shoes. Sinking to the studio floor in deep exhaustion, you could see how pulled apart our muscles had become. Like a rag doll, April's knees fell open and hit the floor on either side of her. Julie held one foot up to her face to examine a raw toe. I twisted from my waist until I heard a loud gasp; a whooshing crack as air escaped from between two unnaturally rounded vertebrae. The fractured bones of my spine had become worn down and spaced out by then, so the pop, like cracking knuckles, had become uniquely pronounced.

Twisting the other way, I could see that outside the picture window, on benches in the gallery, an audience had gathered. By now, we were the instructors who taught their daughters. We were the rail-thin women their girls wanted to be.

I tugged at the shoulder straps on my bodice, suddenly aware of my slumped posture. We were the prodigies, and everyone wanted to see what The Big Girls were preparing — what sequined-and-tulled masterpiece they would watch in one of the huge theatres in Winnipeg, while leaning over to whisper: *I watched them rehearse this part. That one on the right teaches my daughter on Mondays.*

I whipped back towards the mirrored walls and refocused my attention on peeling my sweat-soaked tights away from my toes. Beside me, I could see April reaching two hesitant fingers into the toe of a well-worn shoe to pull out what looked like melted cotton candy, crystallized into a sticky, sinewy clump. Lamb's wool, saturated with blood. Her toes were totally fucked. The baby toe curled right underneath her foot.

I grabbed my white hockey tape and began to rip off long strips with my teeth. Wrapping a strip around my big toe, I jerked from a bullet of pain. Opaque white puss oozed through the tape, begging for the Baby Anbesol — normally used for teething babies but recommended by our choreographer to dull throbbing blisters and infected toes.

The hockey tape bound whatever was broken, bloodied, raw or weak, so I could force the whole mess into pale peach Bloch Serenade satin pointe shoes, size 4-E. The box around the toe was getting soft and beginning to melt into the redwood layers that ran along the sole.

When exam day came, it was just April and I standing before the examiner they'd flown in from England. We'd been paired for exams since grade three. Years later, April told me the 1998 exam was the worst. If she couldn't score in the highest category, she might just *die*. Marks were kept private, enveloped away from our jealous best friends, our daily competitors. Somehow she saw mine that year, and her 'Commended' was nothing compared to my 'Highly Commended'.

**"It's the whole notion that you're tough if you play through the pain. Can that border on pathological? Yes."**

She locked herself in the bathroom and collapsed. Outside, she could hear packs of young dancers shuffling off to class. She banged her head against the floor. Hot pain melted into the tears pooling on her face. She needed that pain to overpower her thoughts. She crawled over to the sink and threw her skull

against it until the skin on her forehead opened up.

Until then our parents had been concerned but still able to tell themselves not to worry. Their girls *should* be thin. Naturally you'd have no breasts at eighteen, if you were slight of build and working out eight hours a day. We weren't home for meals, so nobody knew we didn't eat, and we all had doctors who understood dancers, who would tell our parents we were healthy enough, even as they wrapped the same knee three times in a month and pushed syringes of anti-inflammatory cortisone into ankle tendons to keep the swelling down. But the wound on April's head couldn't be ignored.

She was sent for counseling. Her therapist told her to keep a diary. Rather than helping, the notebook became a place for festering fear.

*I want to die*, she began her entry on April 21, 1998. *I swear I don't care anymore. All I cared about was dancing and it's gone. I went through my solo today. The costume makes me look fat, my body is all wrong and I completely fell apart in front of everyone. If I go to the festival and get anything less than a gold honours I will seriously go insane. Either that or kill myself.*

We hadn't spoken in six years when I tracked her down in Toronto. On the phone, she sounded better. Happier. She said she always knew her knees weren't perfectly shaped enough to be an elite ballerina and, one day, she just accepted it. She moved to Texas to dance with a small company, then joined a show on a cruise ship. Eventually she landed in Toronto, where she stopped dancing for a while. She gained weight. She lost weight. She got to know a woman who wasn't just April the Skinny Dancer.

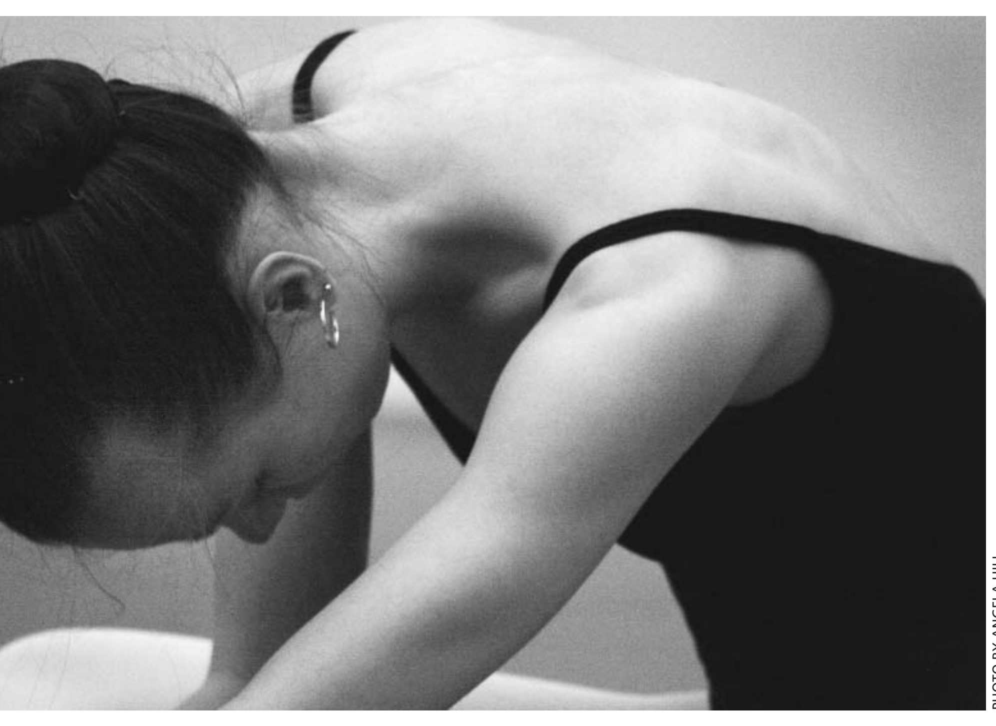


PHOTO BY ANGELA HILL

I thought about what kinesiologist Dorsch had told me. Between the ages of twelve and thirteen, about seventy per cent of young people drop out of any activity they take seriously. Dancers who make it past fourteen do so because they've made a commitment not just to dance but to *be* a dancer. The Dancer becomes their identity. Their bodies become equipment to help them succeed, no different from a hockey stick or a helmet. "There's a disconnect. Even the fact that you're not going to be able to walk when you're forty isn't important," Dorsch said.

Thinking back to the day April and I performed our duo in the darkened performance hall, I understood this even then. Seeing her face, yellowed and bleary, I knew every rehearsal made her life two hours long, that every time her knees hit the bathroom floor it made her life two minutes long and that, when the music finally began, her life was only as long as that one song.

Today April can't rise up on the ball of one foot. I limp from broken metatarsals in my feet that never set properly. The acid from April's own stomach eroded her teeth. My twisted spine pinches the blood vessel to my brain. But that's nothing — we'd heard some professionals needed three hours of pain therapy just to get through a single day.

We got away lucky. We can talk about it now. After that first call, April and I sent emails back and forth and talked more on the phone. In one email, she transcribed some old diary entries and wrote: "Oh, my goodness, Erin, wow, when I look back, I see how far I have come."

April says she still thinks about everything she eats but is more easygoing. She's taking recreational dance classes, like the girls who go once a week, for fun. Once in a while she'll pass a store that sells ballet shoes, see a little girl inside holding her mommy's hand, and feel a pang of loss. But she reminds herself she didn't give up. She grew up. Then she walks on.

PHOTO BY JOY BROWN

# Burnin' Rink o' Fire

*Brad Brown*

The smell of smoke hadn't yet traveled the two blocks to my house when, just past five a.m., the phone rang, piercing my sleep with the news that our tiny Saskatchewan town's cornerstone — the Arcola Memorial Arena — was burning. I quickly dressed and headed out, following clouds of thick black smoke to Main Street. It was September 26, 2001, a warm fall morning made warmer by the heat of the fire. When I arrived, flames were already jumping off a rugged mass of lumber that, like many small town arenas, looked more like a barn than a shrine for the greatest game on Earth.

A handful of the town's five hundred denizens had gathered across from the rink, with more arriving by the minute. I spied Gene Hollingshead, former minor hockey coach and long-serving announcer for our senior team, the Arcola-Kisbey Combines. Beside him stood Bud Askin, who was on the rink's building crew. He helped raise the rafters just after the war, in 1947. The arena had a skating rink and curling sheets, and it sparked Bud's romance with Marj — one day, after public skating hours ended, he walked her home. They've been married sixty years.

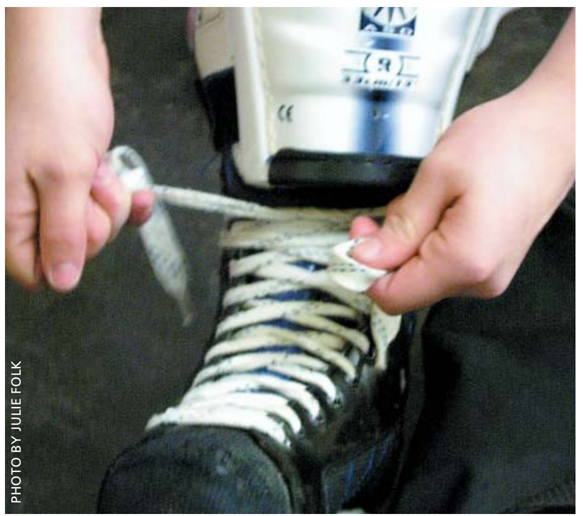


PHOTO BY JULIE FOLK

No one spoke. There was no need. We were all thinking the same thing: this couldn't be for real. We watched as the recently renovated curling rink collapsed and the fire spread to the trophy case, then the concession stand. It was like seeing a bad car accident in progress. As the crowd swelled and more volunteers arrived to fight the blaze, it seemed the entire town was united in the ridiculous hope that somehow, some way, some portion of the rink could be saved. But the heat only intensified as the fire leapt across the rink into the main lobby.

Darcy Singleton, one of the volunteer fire fighters, told me later it was a losing battle from the start. "In that old wooden building it just spread so fast," he said. But we onlookers couldn't grasp the inevitable. The fire taunted us, briefly receding inside the charred walls. This would trigger a few gasps of hope — the blaze was finally under control. Then the inferno would rise up again, higher than before. Within two hours the flames were rushing towards the bathrooms and skating surface.

Had it been a heap of broken pallets set alight for a party in the valley, or a mound of cow chips burning in a field just off the highway, the fire might have been something to admire. It was almost beautiful the way the red and yellow flames flickered against the still dark sky while black smoke poured from what used to be the roof. But no one was smiling or admiring as the fire lurched forward, finally taking down the dressing rooms and south wall.

When the wall went down, Singleton knew the place was gone. "I just remember standing there in awe, thinking: where do we go from here? That was the biggest thing, wondering what the hell do we do now?"

We did what every town does. We rebuilt. We had to. "Who's going to move to town if we don't have a rink? You look at every town and village from here to Regina and every little place has a rink," Bud Askin argued in the rebuild-or-not debate that followed the fire.

Four years later, while home for a Christmas visit, I took a turn on the new ice. Maybe I'm rushing to judgement, but I felt let down. The old championship banners were gone, but even if they had survived, there were no old wooden rafters to hang them from. Despite nearly four seasons of hockey, the boards lacked puck marks and the floors were still unscuffed. In a way, it didn't even look like an arena. It was more like a tin box with some ice in the middle. It's a problem only time can fix. But at least, as I discovered after my skate, the dressing rooms were starting to stink again.

# BROWSERS AND HUNTERS

**Sarcastic and bombastic, a former football star lurks among towering bookshelves, ready to rile his customers into reading.**

***Jamie Komarnicki***

The bookstore's door is old and weathered, and Wayne Shaw gives it a good push as he turns the key to open shop for the day. It's only ten o'clock; he'd promised himself he'd try waiting till eleven on Saturday mornings. But he'd been up since six, read the paper and eaten breakfast. There was no point sitting at home drumming his fingers.

Books are piled every which way on his desk, on the floor, encased in bookshelves behind and beside him and blocking most of the sunlight straining to filter through the storefront window. When he first opened the place fifteen years ago, he had a goal to keep it neat and tidy but in this business for every book sold, a box to sell comes in.

PHOTO BY JAMIE KORMARNICKI

His glasses sit low on his nose as he peers at the computer screen and pecks at the keyboard, scanning the Internet for books; at other times he sorts through the overflowing boxes, flips through the Books section of the Globe and Mail, or reads, glancing up at the customers tramping past his swivel chair perch by the door.

All it takes is five seconds for him to find out if a customer is a fellow booklover.

"Can I help you?" he asks, baring his teeth in a grin, pushing his glasses into his silver-grey hair so that it sticks up in two little tufts like horns. If the customer says "just browsing", he scoffs. It would take three days to browse the books. If people would just come up with a subject, he thinks, he'd be happy to point them in the right direction.

He tries to say this out loud as friendly as he can, but after saying it twenty-nine times in a row it's hard. If they can't at least suggest a topic of interest, he can only conclude they're bored and boring idiots.

And in his book, that's the worst sin.

Life was simple back on the farm between Bladworth and Davidson in the 1950s. Every meal, Shaw and his four brothers gathered round the table as their father read jokes and interesting tidbits from the Reader's Digest. Shaw himself devoured Zane Grey westerns; cowboy adventures didn't seem so far removed from life on the farm. In Grade Twelve, Shaw left his country school for Saskatchewan's Notre Dame College — and its football team. He was quickly recognized as a sturdy linebacker who could take a hit as well as he gave one; he played strong and hard with an eye for a spot on the Hilltops, Saskatoon's junior football team. The young athlete also rose academically to the top of his class under the guidance of Father Athol Murray.

The Catholic priest introduced the Protestant boy to Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Aquinas. Shaw grew to love the old books. There was always something new, exciting, thought-provoking, adventurous to be learned.

After high school, he was snatched up by scouts, first with the Hilltops, later with the Saskatchewan Roughriders. A chunky 1966 Grey Cup ring glitters on the fourth finger of his right hand, a token of twelve years with the team. He never forgot about reading, though. Before every road trip he stashed a couple of books in his suitcase. He didn't mind the ribbing from his teammates and spent as much spare time scouring the streets for bookstores as he did in the bars.

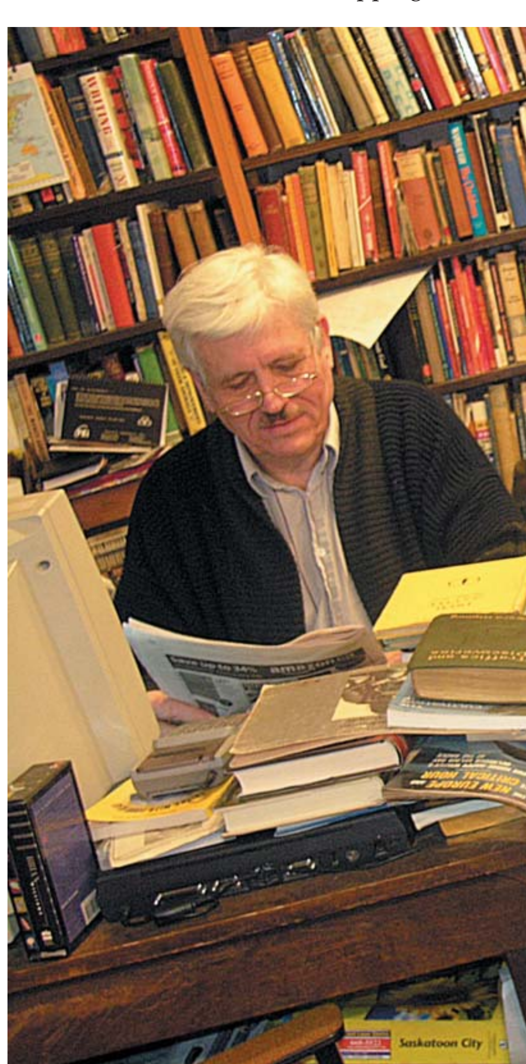
Football was glamorous: parties and new suits, flashy cars and big houses. But after four Grey Cups, a dozen years and countless concussions, life outside football beckoned. On the job hunt, he never really found anything he liked. Working a sales or business job was okay for the first year or two, until he got to know everything. Then it was boring.

After a failed car rental business ("interest rates went up") and a failed marriage ("a modern yuppie — she was giving away my good old books — though I wasn't a perfect guy"), he bought a half section of land north of Winnipeg in the early Eighties. He wanted to be a hermit on a hobby farm with nothing but time to read the thousands of books he'd collected over the years.

He found he missed people, though. Books were good companions to a point, but the real satisfaction lay in talking to others about them. So he bought an old house in downtown Winnipeg, hung out a bookseller's shingle and over ten years filled it with books from the basement to the third floor. He never really made any money but he didn't care. Money never brought him happiness. When he had money, he watched his friends get fat and stupid and die. Selling books, he was doing what he loved.

He moved to Saskatoon in 1991 to be nearer his daughter and grandsons. There he set up shop on Main Street, taking in boxes of books, selling a few, running the cash register out of his wallet, and occasionally chasing away customers with his sweeping condemnation of readerkind. He was never bored.

Even though I'd lived in Saskatoon eight months, I'd never been inside the small bookstore. Shopping



in the city's Broadway area, I was on my way into an antique store when I noticed the sign next door: A Book Hunter. I hesitated — there were only a few minutes on my parking meter. Still, the store drew me in.

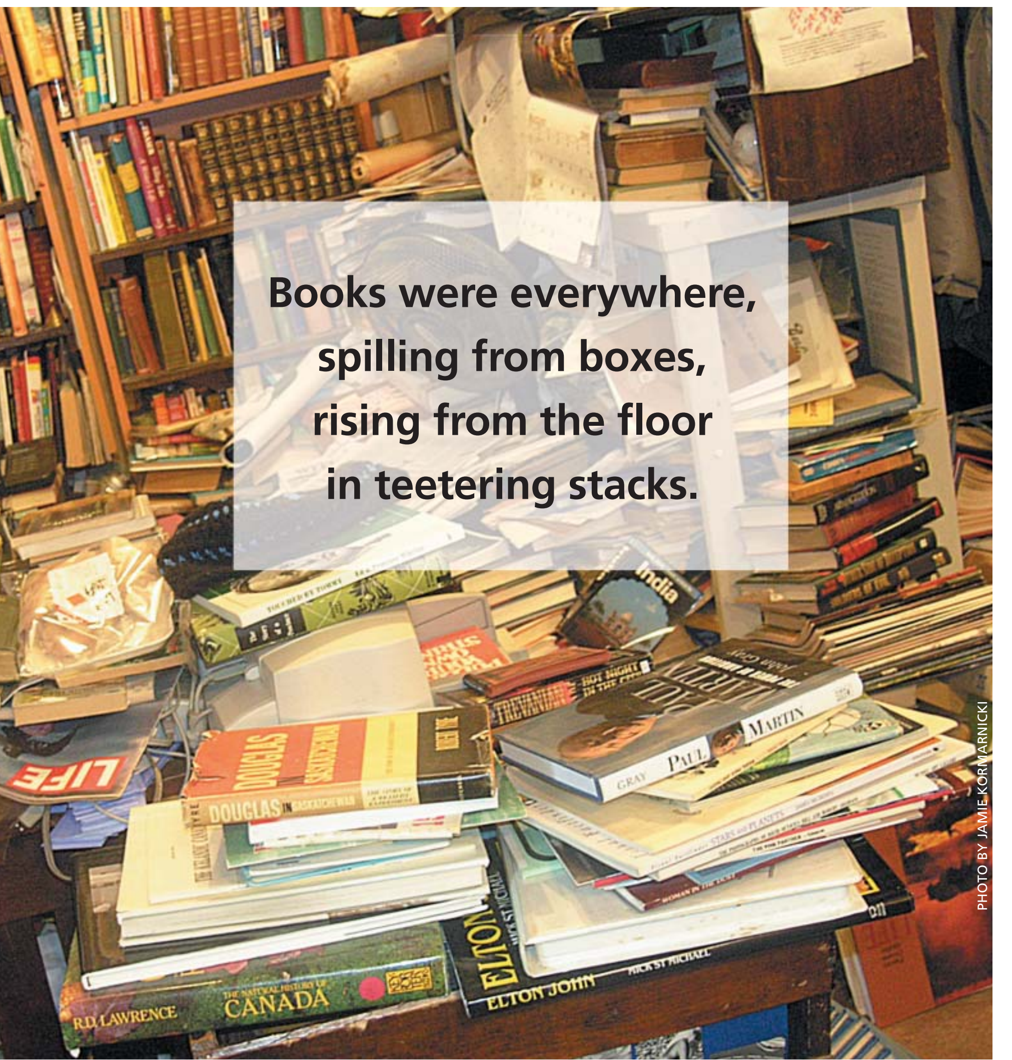
Except for a fleeting moment in Grade One when I was terrified of a story called *The Satin Shoes* ("Satan Shoes!" I thought), I'd always loved to read. As a child I spent late nights under covers with a flashlight, pouring over *Nancy Drew, Encyclopedia Brown, The Prisoner of Zenda, The Scarlet Pimpernel*. I'd worn out more than one library card since, though lately with the juggle of university, work, family and friends, I'd found I was taking less time to pick up a good book.

It was dark inside, and stifling with the heavy air of a hundred thousand pages thumbed by countless readers. And books were everywhere. Not in neat, ordered, carefully arranged rows, either, but a terrifying clutter, crammed into bulging bookshelves, spilling out of brown cardboard boxes, rising from the floor in teetering stacks.

My hand trailed along the covers, fingering the bindings as my eyes darted over the titles, looking for an Elizabeth Peters to add to my collection. No luck. With a glance at my watch, I stole towards the door empty-handed.

"What subject are you looking for?"

I gave the owner the brief sheepish smile of the customer who knows she'll make no purchase. "Just browsing, thanks." A bit of a fib, but I didn't have time to excavate that jumbled store for just one book and I didn't feel like launching into an explanation with a stranger.




**Books were everywhere, spilling from boxes, rising from the floor in teetering stacks.**

PHOTO BY JAMIE KORMARNICKI

That was my first experience with Wayne Shaw's verbal barrage.

Ninety-five per cent of university grads never open a book outside their expertise, he bellowed; people just don't reeeeead. Or worse yet, they only want Stephen King novels and Harlequin Romances. His eyes bulged, his face turned red, and his tufted hair seemed to stand on end. Nineteen out of twenty people come in "just to browse" — heavy disdain in his voice — and if you don't have a subject, well, you're not going to find a book.

Reading culture is in decay, he continued; the good stuff, the classics, are forgotten. The modern garbage passed off as good literature these days, well …

Flustered, I grabbed the nearest book at hand — *Madame Bovary* — dug a few dollars from my pocket and left, closing the door on his righteous howls.

Months passed. I moved to Regina. But in the rare moments I had time to read for pleasure, Shaw's lecture still floated through my mind. Sure I'd grown up according to the gospel of *Sweet Valley High*, but I'd also put in my time with Shakespeare, Steinbeck and the Bronte sisters. If he really wanted people to read, why did he drive them out of his store, I mused, my vanity slightly bruised.

So early one morning I found myself sucking back caffeine as I drove Highway 11 to Saskatoon under a pale winter sky.

He looked different than I'd pictured in my fuzzy memory, with healthy red cheeks and a thin, neatly trimmed mustache. He wore cords and blue sneakers, a navy cardigan flecked with little pieces of paper and lint. My eyes caught on the sweater's open button, second from

the bottom and I briefly smiled as I pictured it popping open during one of his vehement speeches.

When I identified myself as the student who'd called, he sprang up from his chair and wound his way towards me around a sliding avalanche of books on the desk and floor, a dizzying stream of conversation flowing from his mouth as he opened the secretary desk and ushered me towards a green chair, then pulled a string that turned on a bare light bulb, stepped on a stool to pull on another light, and finally settled back behind his desk.

Ah yes, you're the student. Come in, you can sit down right over here but watch the chair though, it's kind of tippy … what was your name? Jamie, right. At my age I don't remember everything …

Other than a few affirmative murmurs, I hadn't gotten beyond words of introduction. I took a seat. Yes, the chair was slightly wobbly.

Want some coffee?

Please.

I stood up and wandered down the bookstore's hallway. His voice disappeared behind me.

The store's façade was deceptively small; inside it was like Mary Poppin's bottomless bag, one small doorway leading one to another, rooms upon rooms of towering shelves. It was … impossible, the idea of reading all these books, mind-boggling, overwhelming.

I sat down at the secretary desk, pushing Pepys, Sam Johnson, and Carlos Fuentes out of the way so I had room to write — and listen.

The mayor is illiterate, Chretien is illiterate, Don Cherry's an idiot, the government is the new mafia, I learned. As for retirement, well, he sure as hell doesn't want to go to coffee shops and be bored by old rich white guys. They'd be better off reading to their grandkids and talking to them. He's disgusted with parents who want to ban Harry Potter considering the fact that witches and wizards teach children about good and evil.

He never really finishes a thought before he's hopped to the next. Too much information in his head, he says.

**"Jack Kerouac? They were crazy, those guys."**

The day stretches on and Shaw and I settle into a comfortable routine. I ask him about some authors. Gertrude Stein? She comes, she goes. Jack Kerouac? They were crazy, those guys.

Shaw makes soup for lunch, pouring water from a grubby white kettle into a powdered mix in a Styrofoam cup, which we sip companionably as he tells me the story of how a little old lady once got locked in, tucked away in a quiet nook. If it weren't for a gut feeling that brought him back to check after closing, he'd have found her bones the next morning, he says, hooting.

I explore the shop's dark corners, consulting a book list I'd compiled in advance. Scanning yellowed pages, I wonder who last saw these words. What did this book mean to them? Why did they box it up and ship it off to a second hand bookseller? There's a story to the ripped pages, broken spines and dusty covers. I gather up an armful and make my way back to the front of the store.

A young girl in a bright pink peacoat steps inside, a university student.

"Can I help you?"

"Just browsing. I need something where I don't have to use my brain. That's what textbooks are for," she says with a quick smile before disappearing into the stores depths. I sneak a knowing glance at Shaw.

Browsers, bah.

He knows some people think he's nothing more than a grouchy old man. And why not? He's sarcastic, he's insulting, and he doesn't think it's his job to educate empty-headed idiots proud of their ignorance. But then again, he always asks them if he can help, and when he can't, he actually feels sorry for them, he says. What's wrong with society, when people can't think of books they'd like to read?

Every once in a while he thinks, ah, that's it, time to quit.

But all it takes is a three-day weekend. He sits at home, watches some football or hockey and reads books, and by the time the weekend's over, he's happy to go back to his store, even if to face the empty-minded shoppers winding in and out. He doesn't feel comfortable sitting at home all day every day; it's almost like he's afraid he'll become one of those white haired white guys he feels sorry for.

And the thing is, he's happy here.

Everyone who walks into the store has the chance to find the book they think they're looking for; and if they don't find it, Shaw says, his voice dropping to a conspiratorial whisper, quite often they'll discover some other book, an unexpected find buried deep in the store.

It's a battle, I think, an entertaining game riling up customers to see if they truly are interested in books. Sometimes he wins, sometimes he loses.

And he's never bored.

# THE WINDOW

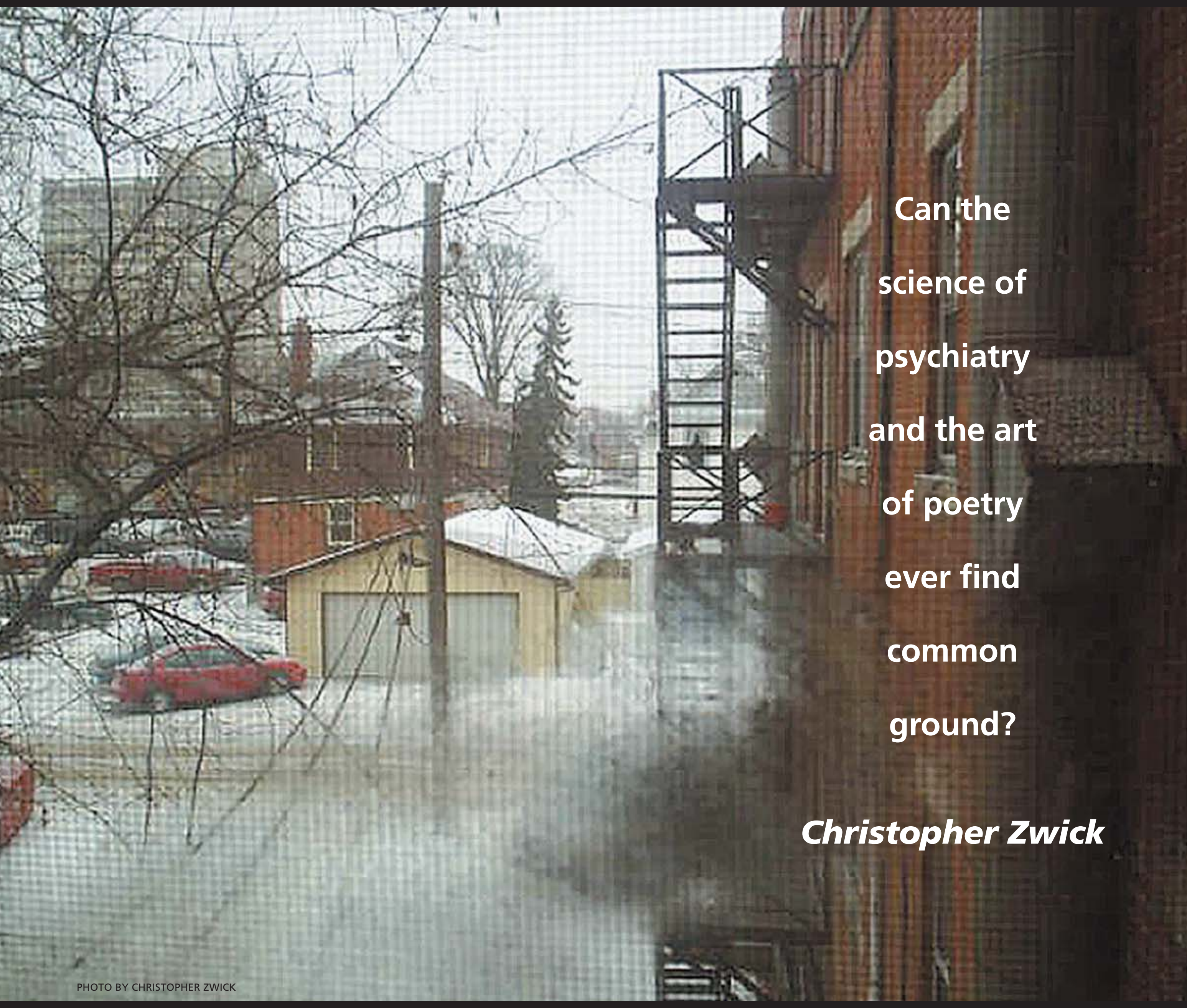



PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER ZWICK

**If a man comes to the door of poetry untouched by the madness of muses, believing that technique alone will make him a good poet, he and his sane compositions never reach perfection.**
**– Socrates, from Phaedrus**

It was the first Monday morning of the year and I woke up beside her, as I had many mornings in the past. We had so many mornings, but not nearly enough. The sun was shining for the first time in five days. She was going home today, and I probably wouldn't see her for a few weeks. That was the routine.

I felt her stir, and turned to her. "Good morning, beautiful," I said as I did every morning I woke beside her. One cup of coffee, two cups of coffee later, she stood up. "Oh my god, I'm going to break your heart."

I have not seen her since.

That was the trigger, the catalyst that started a chain of events revealing a much larger problem. This story is not about the woman I love, but it is about a broken heart, and why mine is the biggest broken heart ever. My situation is not unique by any means. Clichéd hearts are broken every day. But my situation is complicated by the fact I have a mood disorder: severe depression at best, bipolar disorder at worst. It is further complicated by the suspicion I may be a poet.

Health Canada reports eight per cent of adults will be affected by a mood disorder sometime during their lives, but only a percentage of them will be treated. Nobody knows exactly where these disorders come from. Genetics are thought to play a large role along with social and personal circumstances. Sufferers are more likely to commit suicide, and many suicides are related to some kind of untreated mood disorder.

Symptoms of depression include a growing storm manifesting itself in your psyche, creeping and rumbling slowly up the back of your skull. It's a storm that is persistent, always waiting to pour despair. You can feel the electricity. It disturbs sleep. It disturbs life, all aspects of life. It finds darkness in all things good. It is the burden of Sisyphus, constantly rolling the boulder out of the pit, only to have it roll back down.

My mood had been in slow decline for months before that sunny Monday morning. I felt it as a mild numbness. But on that day, I collapsed, body, mind, and soul. This time I knew it was bad. I needed help. I couldn't do it by myself. So I went to the emergency room.

*… your nebulous woman's ways would make me so mad / i would fill arms with wine bottles / retreat to tall pines / choose one / imagine it to be you breaking / among sounds of shattering glass & slavic gypsy curses … /* ***godammit! / why can't we be more loving?***

— Andrew Suknaski, from *"Note 1"*
in *Suicide Notes, Book One*

It is difficult to articulate exactly how it feels. I have tried for many years to grasp what it is that distresses me. Crumpled stacks of horribly depressed poetry date back to my adolescent years, and similar stacks seem to appear wherever I settle down. I often wonder if the words are a product of the depression, or vice-versa.

That question has occupied great minds for many thousands of years, but it must be noted depression does not afflict all poets, and anyone can suffer from a mood disorder. There are many wonderful poets who would be

PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER ZWICK

quite offended by the insinuation they have a mental illness. However, it speaks to the romantic ideal of what a poet is. It's a special sensitivity, I think, more than a mental illness, but sometimes it manifests itself through the illness. Others have described it differently, but there is a general agreement about something indescribable that compels the poet and all creative people. I asked one Regina poet and journalist to define what a poet was.

"It's funny," he said.

"No one would ever ask such a question about a brick-layer, say, or a neurosurgeon or a journalist. Those are all people who work at a certain calling. People don't speak about someone having the soul of a brick-layer or the smouldering eyes of a neurosurgeon." It's true, and no one talks about being drunk as a fireman on payday either. Some people are just not able to cope. Some people just feel too deeply, and that makes them susceptible.

I think about the poets who appealed to me in high school. Edgar Allan Poe was a drug-addicted manic-depressive who attempted suicide at least once. T.S. Eliot spent time in what was then called an "insane asylum," and had a history of mental illness in his family. Charles Bukowski was a raging alcoholic. Jim Morrison was another drug addict and, yes, a poet, who had a long history of depression. Then I look at the poets I've discovered in recent years. Pablo Neruda was a textbook example of bipolar disorder. He survived until he died of cancer. John Berryman spent a relatively large part of his life institutionalized. He was an alcoholic who attempted suicide several times before he jumped from a bridge in Minnesota. Vladimir Mayakovsky shot himself in the head after putting on a clean shirt in accordance with Russian superstition. These are my influences, the people who have spoken to me through their writing. How could I not be depressed?

*Let us go then, you and I / When the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table*

— T.S. Eliot, from *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

As I asked to see a psychiatrist that day, my stomach started to sweat, and then freeze. I could feel the ice forming. The room was empty but for three old ladies in kerchiefs and wheelchairs. I watched muted emergency room television and read a women's magazine before a nurse baited me to follow her into the labyrinth. By the time I was actually able to see a head-doctor I had been lost in that maze for nearly four hours — a lot of time to regret going to the hospital.

**I was walking very fast. I knew they would come after me. The hunt was on.**

He poked his half-bald head into the room, introduced himself and very quickly proceeded to tear away the layers. I thought I'd be able to outsmart him. But now, I knew I was fucked. Defeated. He said he was going to certify me under the Mental Health Act, and left to arrange for a bed in the Wing. I was grasping for cogent logic, for any vine that grew too close. I was out of options.

I'm sure he wasn't surprised when he came back and found I wasn't there. I was probably two blocks away from the hospital by then. I was raving, percolating, but was lucid. I was walking very fast. I knew they would come after me. The hunt was on, but not for long. A friendly policeman escorted me back to the maze from which I had come.

Two security guards blocked the exits and eventually accompanied me, one in the back and one in the front, through a long hallway that ended at a secured door. I entered and became absolutely dependent on the state for the first time ever.

After the necessary pleasantries that go along with hospital visits, a nurse led me to my room.

"The doctor has asked that you wear hospital attire: the robe, the slippers. So I'm going to have to take your clothes," she said, as she had a million times before.

I'd never had to stay in a hospital before. The smock confused me. It was demeaning and disheartening.

"It's backwards," the nurse said. "Do you want some help?"

## ECT "is always an option for people who are resistant to medication."

My first night in the Wing was very relaxing, very medicated, lots of Ativan. That was the only night I actually slept well.

My room was located nearest to the nurse's night post. Doors must be open a crack at all times during the night so they can shine their flashlights in your eyes. You can hear them cackle as they entertain each other during the long night shift. The phone rings at all hours. Patients far worse off then myself wander the halls, sometimes with backwards smocks, or no smocks at all. The Angry Guy screams and unintentionally pleads to be restrained. When his voice fills the halls in the night, the security guards are summoned with a button. Then they expect you up for breakfast at eight o'clock.

By the second day, they gave me back my clothes, and that made me hopeful to leave, but after speaking with another psychiatrist, I was sentenced to a minimum of seventy-two hours. They told me they could hold me for as long as three weeks, but I had an opportunity to appeal the decision. It had become a legal matter. I was imprisoned. It's not an ordinary prison though; smiles, nice paintings and soothing colours attempt to hide the underlying principles of concealment and removal from society. They take away your rights "for your own good."

Everyone chats but anonymity is important, and most people don't know your name. As I start mingling, everyone gets christened: The Angry Guy, Forgetful Blanche, Freemason Frank, the Schizophrenic Demon, Wilf the Wizard, Ill Billy, and Senile Betty. There are also any number of nameless manics, eccentrics and very old people that someone forgot. When patients meet in the halls, so to do their afflictions. Ill Billy meets Freemason Frank, and they converse. Forgetful Blanche and Senile Betty pass and have the same conversation every day. It's all poetry.

I met Forgetful Blanche in the smoking area. She was an old native lady, who had been in and out of the Wing for years. Her twenty-year-old wheel chair creaked every time she grabbed at her pockets to find a lighter. The nurses got angry with her whenever she brought her oxygen tank outside.

She said I had a nice aura, and that I reminded her of roses. I asked if anyone had ever reminded her of roses before. She said she didn't think so. Then she said I reminded her of Elvis, and having picked up a little Cree in my travels, I sang a couple of lines of "All Shook Up" in Cree. She laughed so hard her oxygen tube flew out of her nose. That made me happy.

Then I did it all again the next day, and that made me sad.

I was released from the hospital after only seven days, which I have since learned is a rarity. I managed to weasel my way out by telling them what they wanted to hear. I don't know what would have happened if I was forced to stay for three weeks. It has to be the most depressing place on Earth. Everyone paces like lions in zoos. I wonder if they all know why they are there. Do they question their nature like I do? How do they express themselves? Do they have stacks of bad poetry? Have they ever created a masterpiece? Have they ever destroyed it?

Mood disorders can be hard to diagnose. Manic depression, or bipolar disorder, is especially tricky because a manic episode can be hard to recognize, and in some cases they don't happen very often. At this point, the psychiatrist is reluctant to say I have bipolar disorder, because he has not seen a manic episode, and I guess that's a good thing, but anyone who has known me for a significant period of time would say otherwise.

A manic episode makes you feel invincible; a spell of energy comes over you. An energy that provides clarity and sharpness to the world that wasn't there before. It's like waking up with the sun in your eyes, it's refreshing but irritating. Money is no object and no goal is unattainable. Then, everything starts moving too fast, and thoughts start to blend together. Voices start speaking all at once, the agitation becomes unbearable. And then everything goes awry.

Some people are resistant to medications, and are left with only one option: electro-convulsive therapy, or

ECT. I was appalled to learn that ECT is actually quite common. It's among the safest of anti-depressants, the psychiatrist told me, but somehow I wasn't comforted.

"It is always an option for people who are resistant to medication. Up to this point in time, we don't know exactly how it works, but all the studies show it works. It corrects the imbalance."

So, after the panoply of prescriptions, and the possibility of future shock therapy, where does that leave me? When my syrup and tonic are balanced and my neurotransmitters have been tweaked, am I going to be a different person? Will I still be able to feel? Will I still be able to write? I sought the advice of doctors, priests, counselors, and friends. They had no satisfactory answers. So I spoke to the poets. There was one name that kept coming up: "The Wood Mountain Poet," "a geo-poet," "a lone wolf," "the real deal," Andrew Suknaski.

*The coyote surrounded / hounded / by too many civilizations / hunted / haunted / snarls and gouges a lair / in the hardened land / none of us has yet to find*

— Gary Hyland, from *Coyote*
for Suknaski

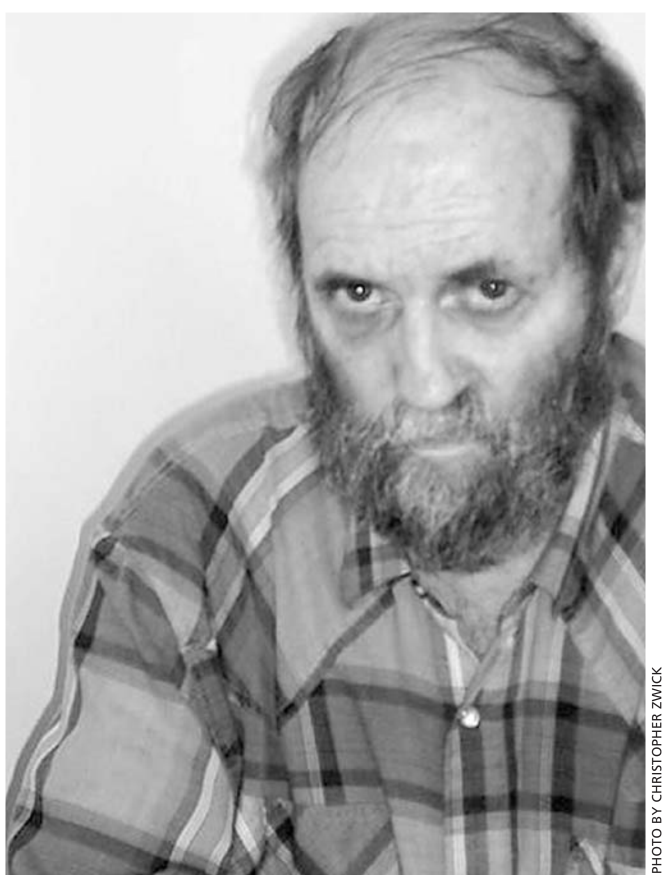


PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER ZWICK

*The Wood Mountain poet, Andrew Suknaski, today.*

Suknaski was raised on a homestead near Wood Mountain, a small prairie town dense with history on the edge of the Wood Mountain Hills in southern Saskatchewan. In the early Sixties, he left home to study art at the Kootenay School of Art in Nelson, B.C. and then the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts' School of Art and Design. His visual creations have appeared in international exhibitions. He worked as a night watchman, a farmhand, an editor, and a researcher for the National Film Board of Canada. Earlier works, including *The Zen Pilgrimage*, *Yth Evolution in Ruenz*, *Octomi*, *Suicide Notes Book One*, and *Wood Mountain Poems*, were all printed in limited edition by small prairie presses in the 1970s.

Suknaski was writer-in-residence at the University of Manitoba when he won the Canadian Authors Association Poetry Award in 1979 for *The Ghosts Call You Poor*. He traveled the world but always maintained a connection to his "spiritual home-base", Wood Mountain. From Saskatchewan's second-highest hill, Suknaski was able to look across the flatlands into the past and his own present to capture the people, cultures and turmoil of life on the prairies. He lived the life of a poet, and he experienced the storm.

I found Suknaski, now sixty-four, in a small one-bedroom apartment in Moose Jaw. It was neat and didn't look like it had been lived in for long. There was a couch, a table and two wooden chairs. The walls were bare except for two of his visual creations hung on opposing walls. One of the chairs was being used as a coffee table; upon it was a tissue, some eyeglasses and an old historical novel, opened to save its place.

He wedged himself in between the table, the refrigerator, and the wall, and sat with his hands on the table, waiting for my first question. I couldn't tell if he was nervous or irritated. I was nervous. I didn't want to seem pretentious, but I probably did. One of the first things I learned was that he no longer wrote, and rarely spoke of why. He told me he hadn't spoken to anyone about

**"That used to be a feeling for me, but it's no longer there, since I stopped writing."**

writing or himself since he had gone to the psych ward in the early Nineties.

I could feel him begin to withdraw. His voice became barely audible. He was obviously uncomfortable talking about the hospital, so I changed the subject. We talked about his interest in aboriginal cultures, his longing for home, influences, journeys around the world and the process behind writing poetry.

"Where do the words come from?" I asked.

"There has to be some kind of initiating experience, something that motivates and moves you, spiritually, or emotionally, an energy, a female element, an angel of death, something distinct, an image, or a happening of some kind," he told me.

I knew exactly what he was talking about: the muse. The muse never wants to be caged, but Suknaski's muse has been caged, and it's very troubling to him. He is a writer who does not write.

I had heard that treatments for depression often lead to permanent writer's block. I had always half-believed it was a myth, but knowing how dependent on mood and temperament my own writing is, I asked how he deals with it.

"I wouldn't worry about it until it happens. Keep writing, keep writing, keep writing. But if it should happen, it's not the end of the world either, you'll just have to live an ordinary life."

"But isn't it nice to feel extraordinary?" I asked.

"Yeah, it was nice to be extraordinary and to be a poet. That used to be a feeling for me, but it's no longer there, since I stopped writing."

He was talking very slowly. I thought he was pondering his words before speaking, but it turned out he was still thinking about his time in the hospital, and the loss of his muse.

"As far as the psych ward experience goes, electricity is what put my demons and angels to rest, put my craft away … forever. That's how I feel having had shock treatments. It's pretty medieval."

There was a longer than comfortable pause. I didn't know how to respond. I felt bad having asked this sad, old man to talk about one of the most traumatic experiences of his life. I turned him into some sad-poet-guru as a way to start my own healing.

I only talked to Suknaski for a little more than half an hour, but the conversation had impact. He was sad, but was healing or at least accepted that he needed to heal. I constructed this whole story quest as a way of healing, as a way of reaching out, as a way of accepting that I was sick, as a way to stop missing her. It's part of the depression, reaching out, but so is feeling misunderstood. These are two contradictory notions that can't possibly coexist. It's lonely.

I asked for help, but that was only the beginning. Ahead of me lies a highway of failed medications, relapses, and missed appointments, second opinions and likely more time in the hospital. As I weigh the pros and cons, I wonder if it's worth it to try. Some days I think it is, and I hope for sunshine. Other days I think I'm a walking cliché. It's hard not to be with a broken heart the size of mine.

Thinking back, I can't remember if I was depressed the first time I ever wrote a poem, and I can't remember if I started coping before I knew I was depressed. During my formative years, I grew accustomed to the peaks and valleys, and with a gross amount of self-medication I was able to function quite normally. My youth was a little bit of Poe and Bukowski mixed in with a whole lot of Morrison. I was a rugged individual, the tortured poet, and that was just fine.

Now, in my mid-twenties, I'm still rugged and I'm still tortured. Whether I'm a poet or not is debatable but I do have a lot more in common with T.S. Eliot than ever before.

# Without Him

**Losing a parent just as you yourself are becoming an adult can have serious consequences.**

***Katie Murphy***

PHOTO BY KATIE MURPHY

I knew I was going to be miserable as soon as I stepped out of the air-conditioned car. It was August on the Alberta prairie and although only mid-morning, the wind was hot and blowing my hair around, sticking strands to my already sweaty face. I shouldn't have worn black, if I'd wanted to be comfortable. Fine dust stirred from the bone-dry clay fields around my little hometown, caking everything in sight and making me feel not only hot but dirty.

I remember the walk up the steps of the community hall. The green, wooden stoop was sagging and decrepit, and I wished — not for the first time, nor the last — that another site had been chosen for the service. But it was either the broken-down hall or the hockey arena: more than five hundred people were expected and no other place in town was large enough to hold them all. I checked my supply of Kleenex (ample) and pushed open the aged, peeled-paint metal door.

It occurred to me as I stood and surveyed the large room that I'd never been in the hall during daylight hours. On previous visits, darkness had softened everything, hiding the drab walls and scarred wooden dance floor, the worn carpet of the dining area and the stained, dusty ceiling. The smell of coffee brewing, and the sharp aroma of egg salad sandwiches hit me, and I noticed a number of middle-aged women bustling around the kitchen area. I remembered that in the flurry of last-minute preparations we had asked the North Berry Creek Ladies Club to provide refreshments for the reception that would immediately follow the service. It was reassuring, somehow. The food would be simple, but good.

It was cooler in the hall, at least. I noticed that the guest registry was out already, although no one else had arrived yet. Should I sign it? Was I a guest or an organizer?

That simple contemplation was enough to break my control and I started to cry. Weep, actually.

I turned with tear-blurred eyes and walked the rows of empty chairs to inspect the flower arrangements. They no doubt smelled sweet, but I couldn't tell. My nose was plugged. Among the flowers was a photo of my father, smiling and relaxed in front of a cruise ship. The picture was taken only nine weeks earlier, less than a week before we found out we would lose him. The cruise was to Alaska, to celebrate a quarter century of marriage. There was no casket. What remained of the man in the picture was two hundred kilometres away, at the crematorium.

People started to arrive. I'm sure I greeted many of them, but I don't remember.

As the reverend — the same man who'd married my parents twenty-five years ago — took his place at the front of the room, I took my seat. I assume I was in the front row, but I don't remember that, either.

I remember my mom, though, sitting beside me, tears flowing,

black mascara (I told her not to wear any) streaking her cheeks like runny paint. I tried to stop my own tears, tried to listen to the reverend's words, but couldn't. As the crumpled, wet ball of Kleenex in my left hand grew, I stopped caring who saw me, who heard me, crying. I was supposed to be saying goodbye to my father but it was like I wasn't even there.

I was twenty-one and I felt nothing was going to be all right ever again.

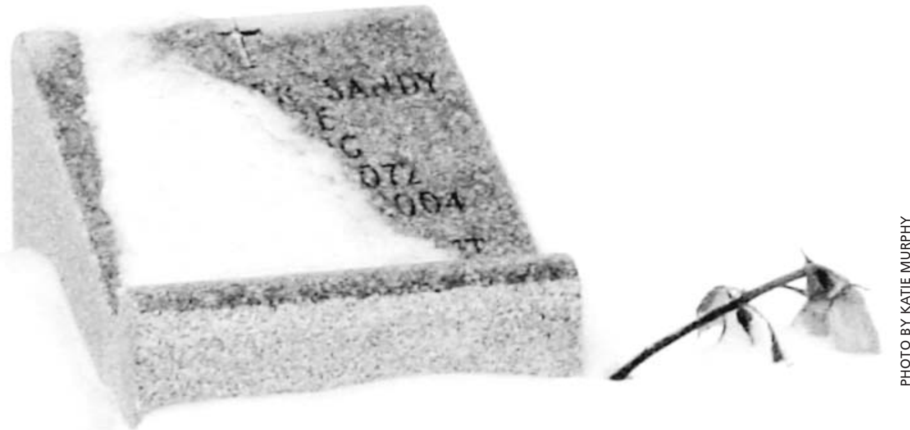


PHOTO BY KATIE MURPHY

**"You are given only three days to grieve."**

I've always been very logical, so after the funeral I set out to research grief. The problem was, everything I read didn't quite fit. For example, a lot of the information suggested I should be getting closer to my mother and more dependent on her — but that didn't apply to me. I'd always been "daddy's little girl".

I see this as if I were watching from across the room: a bullish man with square thick hands holding a pink and blue book about a badger trying to get a good deal on a new tea set, a tiny girl nestled in his arms. I still have the book. My father lives in my memory like a loose collection of snapshots, vivid yet disconnected from any sense of the passage of time. There was the bright red carpenter's toolbox he made for my fifth birthday, with my name stenciled on the side in lemon yellow paint. The time we were visiting his friend Butch and I decided it would be a good idea to "pet the piggie"; my toddler brain didn't see a problem with trespassing on a cranky old sow that had about 1200 pounds on me. Dad hauled me out by my hair and yelled at me like the world was coming to an end.

When I was nine years old, dad decided to quit his well paying job in the computer industry and follow his dream of being a broke farmer. He didn't like the rat race because, he said, "Even if you win, you're still a rat". I didn't want to move away from my friends, my school, my life — and I gather mom took some convincing as well. In the end, though, we moved to a cattle ranch. After I got over pouting about being uprooted, I spent most of my time with dad. We spent hours driving around the ranch, looking for wildlife and checking fences. I learned how to tell if a cow was close to giving birth and how to help her if she ran into trouble. I learned how to grease up a tractor and how to operate a drill press. Mostly, I learned to love the land as much as he did.

When I became an obnoxious teenager, Dad just said: "Don't do anything stupid. And call if you need a ride home." He gave me the space I needed. Mom, on the other hand, would fuss and fret and push all my teenage buttons. Even after four years away from home, to be honest my relationship with mom was still shaky. We just didn't see eye to eye, and I wasn't very comfortable talking to her about personal things. That included talking about dad and how much we both missed him.

My friends reacted with clear discomfort when I demonstrated any grief or sadness, so I avoided talking to them, too. But it didn't matter — I hadn't time to dwell on the subject, anyway.

My father passed away in early August, and I took only five days off from my job at an Edmonton answering service. I felt guilty even taking that much time. Come September I was back at university with a heavy class load (five classes, four labs) in addition to working thirty-two hours a week. There wasn't room in my day for grief.

This isn't unusual, says Martha Ottenbreit, a social worker in private practice in Regina. Ottenbreit is known in the counseling community for her work with grieving patients. I recently spoke with her, more than twelve years after my father's death, to gain some perspective on my experience.

Ottenbreit believes our culture rarely allows people the time and space they need to grieve naturally, which often forces people to deny — or at least delay — their feelings in order to keep functioning in their many roles. "Especially in the workplace," she said, "you are given only three days to grieve. One day to travel to the funeral, one day to have the funeral, and one day after, that's it. Which is absolutely ludicrous.

It's really a denial of who we are as human beings. It's a denial of our humanity."

That certainly meshed with my experience.

On the day I learned my father was going to die, I was up to my elbows in lasagna, making dinner for twenty. We were having a bunch of neighbours over to help with the branding as soon as my parents got back from their anniversary cruise, and I had come home from Edmonton to get ready. It was the first time I'd made lasagna, and I was carefully following Mom's instructions, layering cooked noodles, meat sauce and cheeses with a precision I rarely applied to any task.

I fancy I had a premonition of doom when the phone rang, but that could just be a construct of memory. I wiped my hands on a tea towel, and answered. It was my mom, and she was crying. Could I come to Calgary right away?

I hung up the phone and turned to start putting away the partially constructed lasagnas. I made it all the way to the sink before my legs gave out and I collapsed on the floor, weeping because I didn't believe mom when she said everything was going to be okay. One year away from graduating with a bachelor's degree in cell biology, I was too familiar with the ways of cancer for comfort.

It was there, on the floor of our ranch house kitchen, that I started to reject my feelings. I had things to do, dogs and cats to feed, food to put away, clothes to pack. I didn't have time to sob on the linoleum. I found that I could put my fear and grief away, ignore it, and get on with doing what needed to be done. Unfortunately, using denial as a coping strategy didn't turn out to be a very good idea.

But I didn't have much else to go on, then or later. My careful research dug up little about losing a parent at twenty-one. Instead I found an abundance of literature about losing a parent in middle age, and the mixture of guilt and relief that comes with the death of someone who is very elderly. My situation was so different. I was just starting to relate to my parents as fellow adults for the first time. I felt cheated out of a new adult-to-adult connection. At the same time, I desperately wanted to return home and have mom take care of me, despite the emotional distance between us. At a crucial turning point in my life everything froze in place. I felt I could move neither forward not backward.

**"At that age, there's a double separation."**

Ottenbreit says that people at different stages of life react to loss differently because each stage comes with unique psychological tasks. In the case of someone just entering adulthood, as I was, "you are trying to establish some independence from your parents."

"And you are separating," she said. "So when a parent dies at that age, there's a double separation … and a person might be affected in the way they respond to that."

When I told Ottenbreit I felt guilty about not supporting mom more, she was unsurprised. Because my connection to Dad was so strong, it was normal for me to feel distant from my mother, and equally normal to torture myself about feeling that way, she said.

I wish I'd understood all this back then. Instead, I walked around like a zombie, pushing down grief and guilt with every step. Everything was grey, grey, grey, and blurred together.

I'm not even sure how old I was when it all fell apart. I only remember I was in graduate school, working on my master's degree. Suddenly I was a mess. I couldn't stop crying, couldn't concentrate, and couldn't sleep. I spent two weeks in bed, lying awake and numb, getting up only to feed my cats (and only when they got loud about it). Thankfully I recognized I wasn't capable of coping without some help, and I went to a doctor. I ended up in therapy and on medication, which saved my life.

Dad was a great giver of gifts, even in death. Today I'm a lot stronger emotionally, more centered, and wiser than I would've been without the experience of losing him, and everything that led from that. My mom and I struggled for a while but now we're very close; she's one of my best friends. I feel fortunate to have known such a remarkable man, even if he didn't stick around long enough to suit me.

I still feel my dad's absence every day. I have a mental checklist of things he's missed: three university convocations, five apartments, two cats, one major career change, twelve Christmases, one love of my life. Meanwhile, after three years of individual therapy and nine months of group therapy, I've managed to get a start on undoing the damage of denying my grief. It's a task you never really finish; I'm still working on it. I realize now it's a task I shouldn't have put off.

PHOTO BY KEITH BORKOWSKY

# TANKS for PLAYING

Their long, black snouts shaking in anticipation, the German tanks raced towards Moscow, gears clanking and grinding, tank treads clattering over the hard-packed earth, raising a cloud of brown dust that drifted toward the defenseless city, as if intent on gobbling it up. Dust-covered infantry followed behind, cleaning up any resistance. Soviet tanks burned on the battlefield, flames licking up from the insides of the now dead behemoths. After many months of fighting, the impossible had occurred, the unthinkable was reality: Moscow was under the Nazi jackboot.

From somewhere in the distance, a jubilant cry rang out.

I raised my arms in victory and leaned back in my armchair, my stiff back complaining in protest, and watched as my friend removed his remaining figures from the territory on the game board. It had taken me all night to capture this key city. And the game wasn't over yet. Lowering my arms, I looked around my friend's basement, at the mess we'd created. The area at our feet and on the coffee table looked as if we'd been there for seven and a half hours.

Probably because we had been.

Empty Cokes were stacked two and three cans high. Crumbs of trail mix littered the brown carpet, crunching and crackling every time we moved our feet. Two empty Old Dutch chip bags were stuffed under the coffee table, polished off when hunger pains set in two hours into the game. Under the crumpled bags lay empty chip dip containers, their insides scooped out. Led Zeppelin was quietly coming from the speakers behind us, *Communication Breakdown* ending and *Stairway to Heaven* slowly starting up.

Stretching, I could feel my joints pop. I'd been sitting in the same position for the last few hours, intently peering down at the board. In the cramped quarters of a fifteen by twenty foot basement room, there wasn't much space to move around. We'd set up two couches and a chair to form a horseshoe around the coffee table, where the game board sat. The board was just a map of the world, each country divided into smaller territories that had to be captured if you wanted to amass money, build troops and win.

Removing my glasses, I rubbed the grit from my eyes and looked at my watch: 1:30 a.m. I groaned, feeling the onset of a headache, most likely from all the Coke. The bright lights beating down from above didn't help. *Was this game ever going to end*? Someone should have won by now.

We were playing Axis & Allies, a strategy game. I'd gotten it for Christmas and, after gathering up a couple friends, started playing. Our first game took eight hours, our second and third games, seven. This was our fourth game and even though we were getting better at it, it was still taking a while. With five countries to get through each round, and decisions to make on what to buy and where to attack, one person's turn could potentially last an hour. Once, one of my friends took twenty minutes just to decide on moving one battleship and two submarines into the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

**Chaos and insanity rages on in the Barents Sea. Moscow is under the Nazi jackboot. Strategy, don't fail us now!**

***Jason Antonio***

PHOTO BY KEITH BORKOWSKY

Like, really, who has that much trouble making such a small decision?

But if you want to win — and who doesn't? — you do whatever it takes to gain the advantage. If it means staring at a map of the world for an hour thinking hard, so be it.

I knew the first time I played I was hooked. This game was like a drug, addictive and desirable. When I went to bed, I thought about it. When I was in school, I thought about it. Attempting to do homework, I was still thinking about it.

Yawning loudly, Jared stood up and grabbed his winter coat from the back of the couch. "I gotta go — work tomorrow."

"Ah, come on. Stay just a little longer," I whined, wondering if I had to work tomorrow as well.

My friend shook his head and climbed the stairs. "Thanks for the game, guys. See ya later."

And then there were four of us. We were still able to finish the game, but it wasn't as much fun. There was one less person to socialize with, one less strategy to banter over. That got me thinking, after the game had been packed up and I was in the car heading home. Not everyone likes to spend this much time playing a board game, or likes to play board games at all. Sure, some of my friends are willing to give up a day to play, but not all were. Maybe I would have to go out and find others to bring along the next time we played. But where would I look for players? The more I thought about it, the more I wondered if such games were even popular anymore, what with the Internet, X-Box and Playstation. Board games seemed kind of quaint in comparison.

A few days later, the bell chimed as I pushed open the door to Tramp's Books, a downtown Regina geek's paradise of books, games and collectables. Climbing the stairs to the second floor, passing cardboard cutouts of Han Solo and Boba Fett, I wandered into the board-gaming section and smiled. To explain here would take days: suffice to say almost every strategic board game ever made was before me. Exploring the aisles, I realized I'd have to win the lottery before I could buy half the stuff I wanted. Satisfied that I'd come to the right place, I walked up to the counter and waited in line behind a couple of wannabes dressed like Neo from *The Matrix*. When it was my turn, I introduced myself to Brad, the mustachioed man behind the till. Could he tell me if anyone out there still plays board games?

"There's this one game called Settlers of Catan, which has had its popularity double in the past few years," Brad said, running a hand through his shaggy brown hair. "There's even a lot more interest in table-top games, role playing, that kind of thing."

"What about Axis and Allies? There's gotta be an interest in that, what with four, five different versions out there," I asked expectantly.

Brad nodded. "Oh definitely, definitely. A&A has increased in popularity and playability, especially since the miniatures have been created. With the minis, you can now outflank the other guy's men and have actual troop positions."

"But the board games themselves are still popular and played a lot, right?" I asked, attempting to get back on topic. Miniatures sounded interesting, but I was still a noob to the strategy board game world. Minis could wait. I was looking for people to play with.

"They most certainly are," Brad replied. "A lot are played at the Strategy Saturdays we hold every month. People get together for a few hours, bring whatever games they like, play against friends and strangers. Would you be interested in coming out?"

The church basement was spacious, with six eight-foot diameter tables placed throughout the room. People were starting to arrive for Strategy Saturday, some carrying game boxes.

I managed to pull in a couple of people to play A&A, including the event organizer, Michael. We decided who would be what country and started the game. I was the United States, which meant I was last — a good thing for the Allies but a bad thing for the Axis.

The Russian player rubbed his chin, then placed all the units he'd bought on a couple of territories. I looked at him in confusion. He hadn't even made any combat moves. Was he stupid or did he not know how to play?

"I couldn't make any moves because I wasn't in a position to do so," he explained. "I don't have enough units."

My jaw dropped. *He wasn't in a position to* do *so*? *He didn't have enough units?* He could have taken at least two territories away from Germany. I sighed in dismay. Well, we had three more hours to play — something interesting might happen, although obviously this guy hadn't played much.

Boy was I wrong. Two hours later, the game was over and I was sunk. Dejectedly packing the game up, I looked around the room. One table caught my attention; I wandered over and pulled up a seat. Five university students were rolling dice and trading cards. Taking a deep breath, I introduced myself and asked what game they were playing and how it was played. Handing a card to the person on his right, Paul Clark succinctly explained Settlers of Catan, before accepting another card from a player on the left. Peeking at the card, he picked up a tiny house-shaped block and set it down on the game board, enlarging a growing town.

Later, I asked him why he played. Strategy games "give you a rush," he said. "They make you think. Then there's the satisfaction in the end where you prove victorious."

"So is life a game to you?"

He nodded. "Yes, but you can't play it like one unfortunately. It's kind of complicated, I guess."

"So, you're saying you can't employ strategies in life?" I asked in confusion.

"Well, yes, you can, but a game is experimenting and doing things that would be more of a risk than in real life because there's not really a consequence to it. Games, generally, you can do things you normally wouldn't do. In life, there's always consequences, but in a game in the end, it's not going to hurt you."

"Okay, so what about winning? Does winning mean anything to you?"

**"Winning is just the end of the game, basically, or losing, which is kind of depressing."**

“Not as much, really, no. No, not at all. I don’t know why. I suppose it’s kind of cool if you do win, but it’s more about what you do during the game. The decisions you make, if your strategies work, how you’re going to prove it, that kind of thing. Winning is just the end of the game, basically, or losing, which is kind of depressing.”

I raised an eyebrow. “The end is depressing?”

“Yeah.”

I tapped my chin, curious. “What makes a good gamer? Their characteristics, I mean.”

“As long as they can carry on a good conversation, an intelligent conversation very quickly, that’s good. There’s no room for pauses. They have to be fast, fast, that’s essential,” he said, leaning forward, eyes glinting. “They have to be fast in everything they do. Like, employing the strategy, talking during the game, or coming to a conclusion or reasoning. General logic. Speed is important because if you don’t catch on, sooner or later you’ll be destroyed. If you don’t catch on very quick you’re dead.”

“And if you’re slow, you’re going to be a pain in the ass. We don’t want to read the rules to you or explain this or that to you. If you don’t know what’s going on on the board, you’re going to be a hindrance for somebody else. If you’re slow, don’t bother playing.”

It’s true: reading instructions and babying a greenhorn along is no fun. But I was surprised to hear him say winning didn’t mean much. Having grown up playing sports, winning was *the* end goal for every game. Hitting the triple or home run was sweet, but victory was the ultimate aim. To go into a game with the mind-set of not wanting to win but just employing different strategies blew my mind. As for me, it was never easy to accept defeat — ever — especially after working my tail off and wracking my brain to shreds.

The deck shook beneath the sailors’ feet as the battleship’s 16-inch guns unleashed another salvo of shells at the remaining Japanese battleship, almost 1,100 metres away. Chaos and insanity raged on in the Barents Sea. Overhead, Japanese and American warplanes battled for the skies. Cutting a steep angle, a green bi-plane dove to attack a yellow Japanese sub, unleashing a red torpedo from its belly before pulling up and flying away.

“NO!” Shawn cried out in disbelief, removing his last ship from the board and tossing it into the box. “As if! How did that just happen?!”

Shrugging, I smiled sheepishly, almost arrogantly.

My friend looked like he was going to cry.

I chuckled. I had lost only one submarine and a plane. In the process, I’d annihilated the entire Japanese fleet, all twelve ships. Now nothing could stand in the way of my invading Japan. Nothing.

I had something else to look forward to, beyond conquering Japan. In a couple of weeks there was going to be a Strategy Saturday devoted just to Axis & Allies. That delighted me immensely. I would get to play against some of the city’s better players. Hopefully I’d be able to win while showing off my new strategies. On the other hand, it might turn out to be my chance to learn first hand that winning doesn’t matter. And when winning’s hardwired into your being, losing gracefully can be a challenge on its own.

PHOTO BY KEITH BORKOWSKY

# Dark hair...

**Sixteen Saskatchewan aboriginal women have disappeared without a trace. Gwenda Yuzicappi's daughter Amber is one of them.**

***Donna-Rae Munroe***

Her eyes look black in the photograph. Her brown hair is hastily tied back from her face; pieces are falling out. No makeup, slim in a t-shirt and jeans, she leans over the kitchen table, hands buried in a batch of bannock. There's flour on her cheek and the look on her face is strange. Staring straight ahead, Amber Redman is expressionless, as if she knows strangers will be looking at this photograph months after it was taken.

Gwenda Yuzicappi was surprised to find this moment preserved on a roll of film, four months after the day her nineteen-year-old daughter disappeared. She vanished July 15, 2005. Today the picture is kept safe in a small pink album.

When Amber was a young girl, Gwenda wanted to see her dance powwow. The day came, and Amber overwhelmed her mother. In the twisting and jumping young girl, Gwenda saw a special joy. Others saw it, too. Eight years ago, Amber was named Junior Princess of Standing Buffalo. When she was crowned, her family walked behind her in proud procession.

"She just looked so beautiful. They were singing her honour song and we were out there dancing. It was very happy."

In Gwenda's house on Standing Buffalo Indian Reserve there's a photo on the dining room wall of a young girl in a pageant banner. With a toothy grin, she looks happy and beautiful, dressed for powwow in bright yellow and red, braids in her hair.

Years later, in the school gymnasium, Amber and her classmates posed for photos in a swirl of disbelief and excitement. Her hair hung loose and curled, and a powder blue gown floated around her ankles. When her grandmothers gathered around the young graduate, Gwenda brimmed with pride and love. Seeing that photo now — Amber surrounded by three grandmothers — Gwenda can't help but smile. It was such a happy day. Gwenda points out each person in the picture, connecting four generations of Dakota women.

Flipping through the album at her kitchen table, she can still see Amber sitting in the dining room, sleeping in her mother's bed and caring for her younger brother. She filled every room in the house. Now, Amber's absence fills every moment of every day.

Even as Gwenda relaxes at home, she wears a t-shirt with Amber's face emblazoned on the front. Honouring her daughter has become a mission but, as strong as she tries to be, she can't help wondering what happened to her little girl. And that makes her cry.

"I miss her so much. The relationship between a mother and a daughter is so special, the bond is so close, and when I know that she's not here, it worries me. Everything goes through my head. I think about if she's being harmed, if she's cold, if she's being fed."

She looks down at a second album, thick and purple. In this album Gwenda has saved all the newspaper articles published about her daughter. They tell the story of a young woman who disappeared without a trace. She had long brown hair and brown eyes and was dressed in blue jeans and a blue jean top on the night she went missing. Everyone wants to know what happened to her.

Descending into the Qu'Appelle Valley on Highway 10, just outside the historic town of Fort Qu'Appelle, the first building you see is the Country Squire Inn with its attached bar, Trapper's. Sitting next to the highway and backed by a towering hill, the lounge's green neon lights undulate in the darkness, flooding the night. From the rear parking lot,

# brown eyes

the entire barroom can be seen through wide windows: bar stools, pool tables, waitresses, everything. It's quiet back there; the only movement is from the endless traffic in and out of the liquor off-sale and the occasional patron stepping out for a cigarette.

On July 15, 2005 Amber was there. She left her purse inside her cousin's car and walked across the dark parking lot to the bar. Inside, a waitress served her just two beers, but thought she acted very drunk. She fell down three times. She hit her head. When the waitress told this story to Gwenda, the worried mother was grateful for a tiny piece of information, but frightened by what it might mean. Gwenda wonders if Amber could have been drugged, but doesn't know because no one has seen her daughter since.

Now the countryside around Standing Buffalo and Fort Qu' Appelle is covered in the footprints of Amber's family and friends and the boot prints of RCMP. As the searches scoured fields, highways and ditches, Gwenda remained at home, comforted by those close to her as she waited for news of her daughter.

None came and police say they can only wait for new information.

Before her daughter went missing, Gwenda was unaware of the pain of other families in Canada who've lost women. Now, tucked inside her purple album is a heavy poster. Written white on glossy dark paper are the names of five hundred women who have gone missing or been brutally murdered. What they share in common with Amber is their race. They are all aboriginal.

In the bush surrounding Clearwater Lake, Manitoba, Helen Betty Osborne's body was found. She was naked, except for her boots, her face

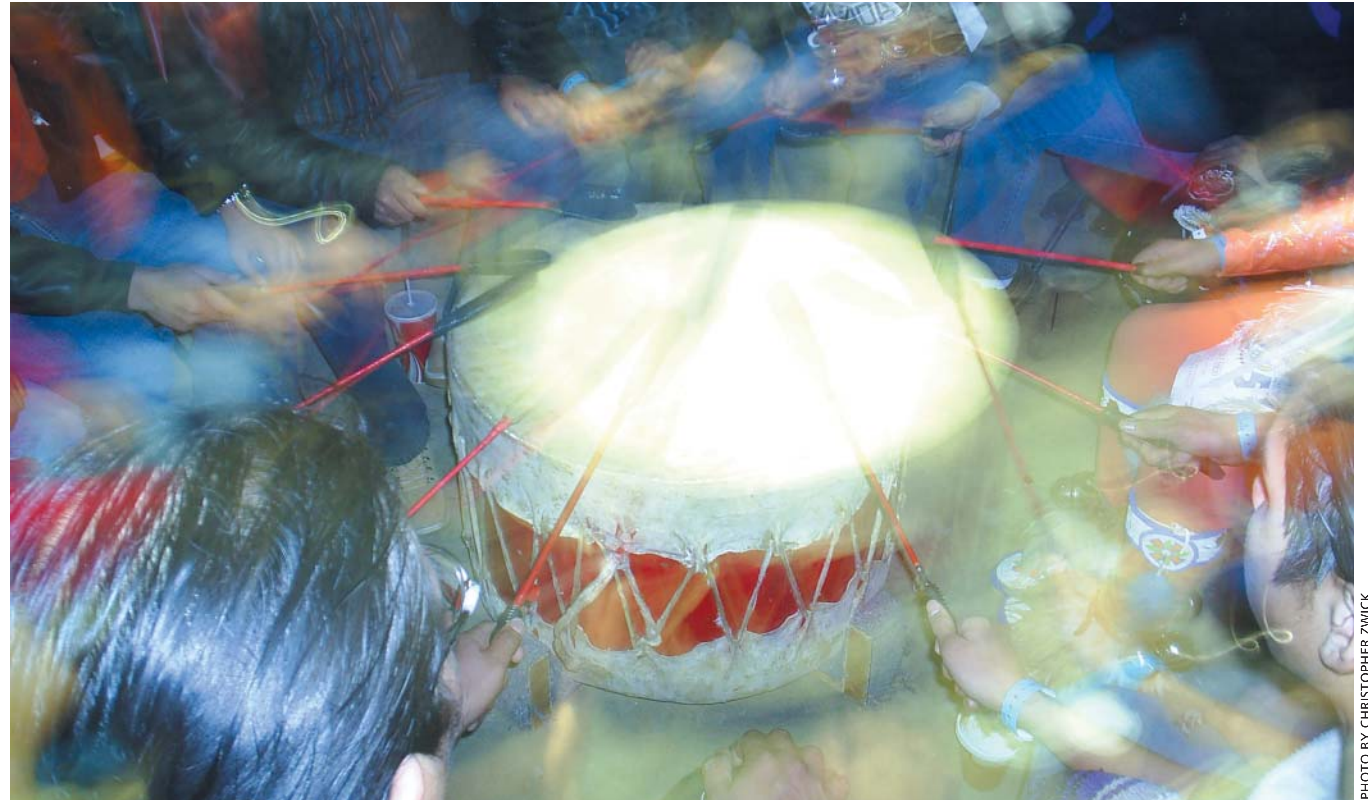


PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER ZWICK

# Dark hair...

Melanie Dawn Geddes

Daleen Muskego

Alishia Germaine

Helen Betty Osborne

viciously beaten. Her skull, cheekbones and palate were broken. Over fifty stabbings damaged her lungs. One kidney was torn. Investigators believe her killer used a screwdriver and another blunt instrument to mutilate her. She was murdered on November 13, 1971.

Decades later, her name stands among five hundred others compiled by the Native Women's Association of Canada, as part of the Sisters in Spirit campaign, a movement to stop violence against aboriginal women. Her murder is also featured in Amnesty International's 2004 report *Stolen Sisters: A Human Rights Response to Discrimination and Violence Against Indigenous Women in Canada*. The report contains not only Helen's story, but also the story of her younger cousin, Felicia Solomon, also murdered; the murders of Roxanna Thiara and Alishia Germaine in Prince George, B.C.; the murder of Ramona Wilson in Smithers, B.C.; the missing and murdered women of Vancouver's downtown eastside; John Martin Crawford's Saskatoon victims; and eighteen murdered women in Edmonton.

"Missing person cases are very, very challenging for police agencies to work on and try to resolve. Throughout the whole thing, the fact that there are people patiently waiting for answers is what helps drive the investigators," says Corporal Brian Jones, the RCMP's media officer in Saskatchewan.

But journalist and author Warren Goulding is skeptical. Sitting at his desk in Victoria, B.C., he's not impressed with words, nor is he surprised to hear about violence against aboriginal women, especially in Saskatchewan.

Working as the crime and court reporter for the Saskatoon Star Phoenix in the 1990s, Goulding was assigned to cover the discovery of three bodies near the outskirts of Saskatoon. When the bodies were identified as three aboriginal women, Goulding became more involved in the case. Pen and paper in hand, he followed the story and was dismayed by how little interest Saskatoon residents paid the deaths of three women from their community. He was shocked to discover police were investigating John Martin Crawford, the man eventually convicted of the killings, even as they denied having a suspect. During the time the police were watching him, Crawford reportedly assaulted another Saskatoon woman, who escaped with her life.

Goulding was moved to write a book about the killings, *Just Another Indian: A Serial Killer and Canada's Indifference*. The book candidly details the murders committed by Crawford, the investigation, his trial and the mistakes made by the media and investigators.

When Goulding became involved, a list of five hundred missing or murdered aboriginal women didn't exist; the scope of the problem was buried from public view. Today, despite increased public awareness, he remains frustrated by police forces' inability to put an end to the attacks. And although he sits far away in Victoria, the situation in Saskatchewan is on his mind.

He compares the case of alleged serial killer Robert Pickton, charged with the deaths of twenty-seven women from Vancouver's downtown eastside. Meanwhile in Edmonton, police have identified the possibility of a serial killer following the discovery of thirteen female sex trade workers' bodies since 1997, and up to five others dating back to 1988.

"The Saskatchewan disappearances are really different, aren't they? It's not like these are girls that are working the street or even living in a high risk area or anything," he says. He wonders if this is part of a pattern the police won't speak about.

Indeed, police are careful not to draw links. "We, the police agencies, haven't identified a trend," says Jones. "To me, a trend implies that there's a connection between those (cases). There is a similarity in that they are aboriginal and that they are female."

Yet it is undeniable. Something is happening to aboriginal women that doesn't affect non-aboriginals in the same way. The numbers make it clear: although the province's 66,895 aboriginal women comprise only about twelve per cent of Saskatchewan's approximately 555,000

brown eyes

Ramona Wilson

Roxanna Thiara

Amber Redman

Felicia Solomon

women, the number of missing aboriginal women stands at sixteen, four more than non-aboriginal missing women, who number twelve. But race, says Jones, doesn't affect how the RCMP or any police agency investigates a missing persons report.

Amnesty International disagrees strongly with this approach. In *Stolen Sisters* the group insists that to prevent racially motivated violence, police *do* need to recognize aboriginal victims as being aboriginal.

As local newspapers reported on Amber's disappearance and news reached Gwenda of the missing and dead aboriginal women across Canada, she began to understand her daughter's disappearance in a new way, as part of a greater problem affecting aboriginal women.

In the months following Amber's disappearance, she honoured her daughter at a walk for missing aboriginal women held in Regina. At a quiet Regina church service, she spoke to a United Church congregation about the issue. She attended a retreat for family members of missing women and held a ceremony to feed Amber's Indian name, Red Star Woman. She also reached out to two other mothers with missing daughters: Valorie Smokeyday and Pauline Muskego.

Smokeyday's daughter, Melanie Dawn Geddes — seen in her missing persons posters as a pretty, vibrant-looking young woman — went missing on April 13, 2005, less than a month after Amber. She was gone for five months before her remains were found near the town of Southey, fifty-eight kilometres north of Regina, by a group of horseback riders enjoying a bright and warm winter day.

Smokeyday's voice is quiet and she speaks slowly, trying to fend off the pain and emotion. She is firmly dedicated to finding her daughter's killer but careful not to reveal too much, fearful of harming the police investigation.

"I'm not giving up until we find out whatever happened to Melanie, or anybody, as a matter of fact, because it's hard. Every day you wake up. Every day you go to bed. Every day that way. Even though we buried her, it's still hard, not knowing how she died and not knowing who did it."

Connecting with other mothers of the missing helps, but life is still painful. "I talk with them, but it's not any easier. It's not any easier when you bury your child, you know? Especially in this situation, the way she went."

Muskego, who lives in Onion Lake, fears something terrible has happened to her daughter as well, but will continue to believe Daleen is alive until she learns otherwise. She insists people speak in the present tense when talking about her daughter.

On May 18, 2004 Daleen, the mother of a five-year-old daughter, left her Saskatoon home to meet some friends and never returned. Police recovered her vehicle shortly after. Everything inside, the floor mats, seat covers, steering wheel cover and contents of the glove box and trunk were missing.

"Why does this happen? I don't know," Muskego says in desperation.

In November, as the snow falls for the first time since Amber disappeared, Gwenda is depressed and disheartened. Standing out on the high hill behind her house, she gazes on the bison in the valley below. Their brown heads stand out against the winter snow on the hillside behind. The sharp air fills their nostrils and their black eyes glisten, wide and watery, from cold air under a fat sun. One puts a hoof forward and then another, her weight leaving deep prints in the hard snow. She presses her nose against its iciness, muzzling it until she finds a piece of grass, dry and crunchy in the chill and wanders farther forward, marking her path in the snow.

Gwenda looks on, her lungs filled with air from the valley, dark eyes glistening with tears. She steps forward in the snow and marks a path that she did not want, but must make anyway. Watching the buffalo make its way through the world, she knows she must put one foot in front of the other until her daughter is found.

# When Good Fans Go Bad

**For the young place-kicker from Vancouver, Regina seemed like a great place to raise a family. Then he missed a crucial field goal.**

*Daniel Jungwirth*

PHOTO BY JERAMI PERGEL

November 14, 2004, was an ideal day for football. On the prairies, Regina reached a high of seven Celsius, unusually warm for late autumn. But the air still carried a chill. It was a game day — the Saskatchewan Roughriders were about to face the B.C. Lions in the Canadian Football League western final. The winner would go on to battle for the Grey Cup, Canada's national football prize. With the game at Vancouver's B.C. Place stadium, Rider fans back home gathered in their TV dens and local sports bars, eyes glued to the big screens. This would be their year, they told themselves. Already they'd endured so much: missing the big show last season, losing the Grey Cup in '97, and living through a long streak of missed playoff bids. Waiting for the Cup had become the norm — fourteen years of 'maybe next year.'

Patience, they said. It will come.

From the opening kick-off, people sat on the edge of their

seats, clenching their beer glasses. Cheers and jeers fell upon the deaf ears of the television screen. Only a minute and a half into the game, B.C. scored. A collective groan rose across Saskatchewan. It would be the first of a series of emotional crests and valleys as the two teams matched points.

By the time the seconds ticked off the clock in the final quarter, though, quiet triumph glowed on the faces of the watching fans. Saskatchewan was ahead 24-21. That is, until B.C. place-kicker Duncan O'Mahony booted a 47-yard field goal through the uprights, sending the game into overtime. The audience drained their beer glasses, victory forestalled.

On the TV screen, Saskatchewan kicker Paul McCallum lined up the 'gimme', a short can't-miss kick just eighteen yards from the uprights to end the game in glory. The fans chanted religiously: 'Go, Riders, Go.' Some closed their eyes. When they opened them, McCallum was lying desolately on the green turf, hands covering his face.

The mild day turned utterly cold and bleak.

Another season gone. People left bars in a defeated and hunched death march. Patience, most said. Next year. But others simmered, patience spent. Trouble brewed. Too many hopes over too many years had ridden on this moment.

A Roughriders game is a carnival of costumes, makeup and props, a green and white masquerade unmasking the crowd's creative genius. With capes made of Saskatchewan flags and slogans stenciled on bare chests and beer bellies, people fall into a fantasy world where men in coconut bras feel no shame in the anonymity of like-minded patriots. Every game is an adventure, an unpredictable journey. Fans file into the stands with religious fervour. Standing, sitting, call and response, the game is sacrosanct: good versus evil, them against us.

There is a feast of nachos and hamburgers, a heart attack away from heaven. Mouths are whetted with guzzled beer. Rider flags on hockey sticks are unfurled and watermelon helmets — odd headgear popularized by a marketing campaign — are donned while bugles blow. Fans slop their beer and begin to stagger. By the time the players take the field, the inner beast is stirring. Foul mouths loosen. Chants and hexes spill into profanities. Opposing fans, opposing players and even home team players become targets.

And there's safety in numbers. When you're a Rider fan, anywhere in the country, you're never alone. One person starts something, everyone joins in. One minute minifootballs and beach balls are flying gaily through stands. The next minute, empty beer cups and snowballs are pelting the backs of the Edmonton Eskimos. It's okay, though, because everyone is doing it. People are having fun.

People like Doug Grimstad. He never wore make-up or costumes when he went to a Rider game. He just had fun. In his late forties, he enjoyed the game with a few buddies while having a couple of beer. He was one of the guys. But on that fateful November evening, he was one of the guys who took fandom too far, something he regrets to this day.

Grimstad says he had no desire to watch football before he moved to Regina. It wasn't until 1995, when he bought his first season ticket, that he was overcome with Rider pride. A province hyped on a team is infectious. A Rider fan, he says, is someone who shows pride in the community and history of the team.

Rider pride wasn't always green and white. The team colours were purple and gold when the Regina Rugby Club was born at a meeting at city hall on September 6, 1910. That year, the team lost its first game to Moose Jaw, 16-6. It would lose the two subsequent rematches as well, leaving the club winless in its first year. Thus a tradition began.

Ninety-six years later, the Riders have won only two Grey Cup championships despite spending many seasons at the top of the league. The first Cup was in 1966, the second not until 1989. That year, Dave Ridgway won the championship with The Kick, a legendary 35-yard field goal at the end of the game. The Riders won 43-40.

It was a tough act to follow for a young Paul McCallum.

McCallum hadn't even played football until he was twenty. Growing up in Vancouver, his first love was soccer. But, after returning from a soccer stint in Europe, he fell into a new career by chance. The Surrey Rams football team was missing a kicker, and McCallum had the foot to lead him to all-Canadian status in his first year.

In 1994 McCallum moved to Regina and became a Rider, kicking beside Ridgway, who would retire at the end of the season. He found the city's people friendly and easygoing. He liked the lifestyle. It seemed like a good place to raise a family.

He and his family made Regina their home year round. From May until November, McCallum was fully involved in football. In the offseason he worked at as a communications manager at SaskEnergy. He became a prominent spokesperson for KidSport, raising money so

disadvantaged children could play sports.

McCallum had found his place in the community. Still, Regina could sometimes feel like a fishbowl.

The five-foot-eleven McCallum had a face easily recognizable in a modest metropolis of 180,000. People often approached him to talk football and lend their opinions. "I'd be walking with (my dad) when he'd come and visit. People would say 'Hi Paul' to me, first-name basis. He said, 'Do you know that guy?' and I'd say, 'Nope.'" Sometimes the attention grew tiring, but it was all part of the job. Even after twelve years, he didn't mind.

On game day, McCallum would arrive at Taylor Field two and a half hours before kickoff, already stocked up on pasta and chicken from his favourite local restaurant. There he would stretch out, get a massage and, finally, dress. In the dressing room, he'd ponder his three pairs of kicking shoes and make a selection. He had a routine, but he wasn't superstitious. He didn't get all wound up with the rest of the team, either. "I should be more focused and relaxed than getting excited and all hyped up and getting my blood pressure going," he said.

Standing on the field, he could feel the electricity of the home crowd. Ninety percent of the game was mental. The fans expected a winning performance. "They're paying their money to come see us put a good product on the field and do our jobs properly. It's a sport — sometimes the ball falls in your favour, sometimes it doesn't."

He knew there were people who liked him and people who didn't — it didn't bother him. Yet.

McCallum's address and phone number were unlisted — but Regina was a small town and word got around. His wife Crescent was home with their two daughters on the night of the missed kick.

**"Don't go near my family."**

Crescent called the police around six o'clock saying there was more traffic than usual passing the northwest Regina residence. Moments later, eggs began raining on the front windows.

Then Doug Grimstad — the man who'd only been a fan since he'd purchased a season ticket in 1995 — arrived with a truckload of manure. He and friend Kelly Garchinski mistakenly dumped it on the neighbour's driveway, but the note attached was for McCallum. Another car drove by. Crescent heard someone yelling from the open window, threatening to burn down the house. Incredibly, it was their neighbour. The car pulled to a stop in front of the home of Mark Lehmond.

Crescent was mad, scared and shocked. But, wanting to see Lehmond's face, she marched up and confronted him. According to Crescent's victim impact statement, Lehmond repeatedly screamed his threat, standing two feet from her face. In capital letters she wrote:

"DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO HAVE A CRAZED GROWN 31 YEAR OLD MAN SCREAMING IN YOUR FACE THAT HE IS GOING TO BURN YOUR CHILDREN TO DEATH!"

Concerned for their safety, Crescent hustled her children to another neighbour's house. Her quiet, friendly neigbourhood had turned into a "bad dream".

"I DON'T WANT AN APOLOGY FROM YOU. I JUST WANT YOU TO NEVER COME NEAR MY CHILDREN OR OUR FAMILY OR OUR HOUSE EVER."

Meanwhile, McCallum understood he was responsible for the missed field goal. After the game he waited in the trainer's room, unable to face his teammates. Later, at his parents' Vancouver home, he heard about what had happened back home. Until then, McCallum was crushed, expecting to be run out of Regina because of the botched kick. But the attacks on the McCallum household turned the tide. He wanted to get home right away. His mom wanted to go with him.

"Be pissed at me. Go ahead. Call me a bum. Call me a loser. Call me washed up. Do whatever you want. You're entitled to your opinion. Come tell me. Come to the stadium. Do whatever you want. But don't go near my family," McCallum said later in an interview with the Regina Leader-Post.

Crescent didn't go to work the next day and McCallum's daughters didn't go to school. The incidents made headlines across Canada and the United States, including USA Today, the Washington Post and the Detroit Free Press.

Shane Chapman is a Rider fan who admits it was probably a good thing he didn't have a pick-up truck and manure after the game. "I think every fan who is that diehard about their team has a point where they're not thinking rationally. It's just those guys who decided to act on it."

Dr. Ian MacAusland-Berg, a psychology professor at Regina's Luther College, says such transgressions begin with an affiliation with the

team. But he doubts it's the actual team that stirs a fan's emotions of pride, loyalty and passion. Most Riders are African-Americans from large southern U.S. cities, while their fans are largely white and from rural areas or small cities. What's their connection?

Location.

MacAusland-Berg explains sports teams come to represent a population by geography, which translates psychologically. "(The Roughriders) play here, they're a professional football team, we associate with them in terms of they represent us, represent our hopes, our aspirations. When they succeed, we succeed." People don't necessarily see sport as entertainment, he says, but as an extension of themselves and their nationality.

The attacks on the McCallum family took the affiliation too far, though. Without knowing the people, MacAusland-Berg speculates the offenders' perceptions were distorted that night. "What I would guess is their affiliation with the team is so strong that they experienced the loss as crushing themselves and took it out on McCallum because they saw McCallum as disappointing them directly."

It wasn't the first time. Glen Suitor, who played for the Roughriders for eleven seasons ending in 1995, received death threats after he was called for pass interference on September 30, 1989, in another game against the B.C. Lions. The Roughriders went on to win the Grey Cup that year, though.

In the wake of the McCallum incident, the mayor, the media and fellow football players all denounced the actions and conveyed their sympathy, and the McCallums received many cards and a petition of signatures from supportive fans. Those guys weren't true Rider fans, people said.

**"They represent our hopes."**

The response doesn't surprise MacAusland-Berg. In a social group, there are expected rules of conduct policed from within, he explains. People had to defend their affiliation by stating the small minority didn't represent them.

A year and a half later, Roughrider spokesperson Ryan Whippler says bad fan behaviour will not be tolerated by the club. The club has already banned the three men from attending any Roughrider games at Taylor Field, he points out. "If that's going to be your behaviour, you can stay at home. We don't want their money, we don't want anything to do with them."

While Grimstad, Garchinski and Lehmond sit at home, banned, every summer thousands more Rider fans return to Taylor Field for another season. Beer in hand, they chant and hex, a united, flag-waving horde. Going to games is tradition. It's fun.

Mark Lehmond is no longer McCallum's neighbour. After the incident, he lost his job at Quality Tire and moved. The police charged him with threatening to damage property. In a written statement to the Leader-Post, he expressed deep regret: "What I did do was make a stupid remark as I passed by the McCallum house on my regular trip home and said something twice I wish I could take back. If I'd known at the time what the McCallum family was experiencing I would never have uttered a word. There was never any harm intended." On January 19, 2005 he received a suspended sentence with eighteen months probation for creating an "atmosphere of terror." He was also ordered to perform one hundred hours of community service.

Grimstad and Garchinski were charged with mischief under $5,000 for dumping the manure. Instead of criminal records, though, the two men were referred to the Regina Alternative Measures Program (RAMP) for mediation. When approached for an interview, Grimstad provided a few background comments but said on behalf of himself and Garchinski they'd like to "leave a sleeping dog lie."

McCallum wants to forget, too.

"That's the one thing about playing here, is people keep talking about things that have happened in the past," says McCallum. "Just keep going — you're not going to get any further ahead if you're looking backwards."

Although McCallum is a little more guarded these days, he's putting the memory behind him. In January 2005, he sold his shoes and helmet from the game on eBay, along with an autographed photo of past Rider greats Roger Aldag and Bob Poley. The sale raised $3,050 for KidSport and Asian tsunami relief.

In the end, it's a team sport, McCallum says. You can't dwell on your own mistakes, or the aftermath. "If I was to sit there and worry about missing a kick and somebody doing something, I wouldn't be playing."

So he will continue to play — ironically, for the B.C. Lions. He signed as free agent February 22, 2006, after the Riders offered a thirty percent pay cut.

Paul McCallum has left the fishbowl.

## Contemplation

PHOTO BY CASSIE HAWRYSH

## Celebration

PHOTO BY JULIE FOLK

# Canadian, tired.

TIRED

It doesn't take long for the waxed, white tile floor of Canadian Tire to become filthy. Wandering shoppers track mud from an unseasonably warm Regina winter through the retail giant's five departments — Automotive, Hardware, Housewares, Sporting Goods and Seasonal — each section offering products designed to address the domestic woes of the average Canuck. On a Saturday afternoon, they arrive by the dozen, stuffing their loonies and their children into squeaky-wheeled carts. Armed with a weekly store flyer, they are on a mission. Objective: procure the cheap products that tickled their fancy as they browsed through the aforementioned leaflet over morning coffee.

Customers soon learn, however, that megastore shopping is like an Easter egg hunt — the object of desire is seldom in sight.

Nevertheless, something stands out in the aisles. Young people, some only sixteen, wear bright red golf shirts, unlucky beacons for time-pressed shopaholics with little patience for the naïve demeanor of pubescent store-minders. Teenage apathy and middle-aged insistence can be a volatile mix.

A screaming customer is just one of many annoying sounds at the Tire. There's also the early-Nineties country mix that has played on the P.A. system for at least five years, interrupted only by booming messages for shoppers and employees. Mobile store phones carried by employees ring incessently. Each cashier's till makes a perky beeping noise whenever a product is scanned and a profit is made. The handles of gallon pails rattle in the paint shaker at the hardware counter. A nearby machine squeals as it cuts a fresh key. The store even has the nerve to play its grating TV commercials, right next to the product being shilled on-screen.

High above the sales floor is a black two-way mirror. It's impossible to tell if the owner is ominously watching the employees as they work, hiding like the Wizard of Oz. The workers, who frequently chat amongst themselves and sometimes engage in horseplay on the retail floor, seem unaffected by the scrutiny of managerial eyes, whether it's through the two-way mirror or a hidden surveillance camera.

Rebels without a cause? Hardly. More likely, a sign of inexperience — keeping training apace with staff turnover is tough. Yet such organizational dilemmas are mere symptoms of a fundamental problem: the employees are being paid next to nothing for work that is spiritually numbing.

I know because I'm one of them.

After spending a few months in early 2004 working as night watchman at a crop chemical plant, I decided to apply for a job at Canadian Tire. The store manager said he was impressed by my walking speed; he'd never seen anyone approach his office so quickly. Late nights spent briskly patrolling the chemical plant in sub-zero temperatures had perhaps paid off. It appeared being a University of Regina student also carried weight in the retail industry. I started my warehouse job at the 'special wage' of seven dollars an hour, rather than the $6.65 minimum wage.

The work was simple, albeit backbreaking and banal. Stock arrived twice weekly on a semi-trailer unit. We unloaded and sorted products in a monotonous assembly line, then put them on dusty shelves in the vast warehouse of the store. Each item was shelved using a seven-digit product number, with the first two digits designating a product class — for example, lawnmowers — and the last four numbers designating the actual product.

Once I got to know the place, I realized I, too, was just another number. All the employees were given product numbers, just like the merchandise, through which they were identified in store's computer system. The storeowner only knew employees by name if they were troublemakers, or in upper management.

A year later, I was offered a promotion (in position, not pay, of course) to the hardware department of the retail floor. I naively assumed I would be trained to answer questions about the products I was selling. However, just as my name seemed of little importance to my employer, so too, it seemed, was my actual expertise. Nearly anyone who shops regularly at the store will tell you knowledgeable staffers are few and far between. But why should a corporation care? No matter how much

**Why do people with jobs live in poverty? *Ken Gousseau* plunges into the low wage world of the megastore.**

PHOTO BY JERAMI PERGEL

customers complain, they always come back. This expertise deficit was of grave concern to me, though, as I quickly grew tired of being yelled at.

The hardware department was where I met Luke. He didn't look like he should be working at Canadian Tire for a pittance. He spoke eloquently, wore thick-rimmed glasses and was majoring in political science. I was surprised when he told me he'd been working at the store for six years. He said he appreciated the flexible hours, especially around exam time. However, the miniscule wage was another matter. "It's tough to get up at eight in the morning when it's forty below, and go to work for eight dollars an hour. It doesn't seem worth it most days," he said. "If I bust my ass and we sell a couple hundred bucks more stuff, it doesn't affect me at all. I don't see any of that (profit). I'm still making a dollar above minimum wage, so that's not a lot of incentive." Not surprisingly, Luke still lived with his parents; he'd had trouble paying off his student loans. He also owned a car and gas was expensive. "If I had to pay for rent and all the bills every month, I don't think there's any way my salary could support me," he told me.

As months passed, my product knowledge increased much faster than my pay, now a meager $7.50. I imagined the owner driving a brand new Yukon Denali to an opulent home where he dined on lobster and caviar. Meanwhile I could barely afford my rusted-out Honda Civic, or the tiny one-bedroom apartment where I feasted on Kraft Dinner.

Today as I labour through my six hundredth box of gooey orange noodles in my closet-like abode I stop, mid-chew, and wonder.

Why am I living like this when I have a job?

On a blustery February afternoon I approach the downtown Knox-Metropolitan United Church and ring the buzzer marked Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry. Inside, social activist Peter Gilmer tells me the majority of minimum wage earners are "vulnerable workers" living in poverty. He estimates there are roughly 18,000 low-income workers below the poverty line in Regina, including people working just above the minimum wage, like Luke and I. The provincial government's response — a minimum wage increase to $7.55 per hour on March 1, 2006 — hasn't gone far enough to address the problem, Gilmer says.

I leave with a better grasp of the situation in Regina but I still don't fully understand why I'm working for nothing. At the office of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, president Larry Hubich says the minimum wage should be at least eight or nine dollars an hour to boost me above the poverty line. But, in fairness to provincial legislators, the government is facing mounting pressure from the business community to keep wages low, Hubich tells me. "All you need to do is pick up any newspaper when there's even the slightest hint that the Minimum Wage Board is going to examine whether or not the minimum wage should be raised, and the chorus of 'boo' comes from all corners of the business crowd," he says, adding it's no secret Saskatchewan businesses spend millions each year lobbying politicians at all levels to keep wages down.

Still unsatisfied, I phone Canadian Tire's head office in Toronto. Lisa Gibson, media and public relations manager, says I have to talk to the management at my store, as they are the ones who set wage policy — not head office. At that moment I realize I'll never know for certain why I make so little money for such hard work. I can't risk asking my boss that question. I've come full circle. Now I know the meaning of "vulnerable worker".

But not for long.

Graduating with a journalism degree, I swear I'll never work for near-minimum wage again. I walk slowly now as I navigate the aisles, the weight of this place having crushed my soul long ago, and with it the walking speed that impressed my employer. Nevertheless, I can't help but smile when I look at the sun shimmering off the large glass exit doors. I have found a way out. The moment of escape will undoubtedly be bittersweet, though, as I'll be thinking of the thousands of low-income workers in Regina who aren't so lucky.

**After years of wandering, Croatian-born photographer and naturalist Branimir Gjetvaj finally found roots in Saskatchewan's wide-open spaces — only to learn his adopted landscape is under threat. Can a lone man with a camera turn the tide?**

***Kacie Andrews***

# Seeking the Light

It was an hour after midnight but the full moon lit the southwestern Saskatchewan plains of the Great Sand Hills, making it seem just before dawn. Overhead, stars displayed elaborate constellations in a late summer sky. On the savannah-like prairie, elusive deer snorted faintly, puzzled by a camera-toting stranger crossing their terrain long after the sun had called it quits. Three hours past sunset, Branimir Gjetvaj was still seeking the right light, driven by the knowledge that the landscape before him lay under the threat of increased natural gas development. He needed to show people the area's natural beauty and convince them it was worth protecting. He'd taken dozens of pictures already but still needed the perfect one that would say it all.

Gjetvaj (pronounced *jet-vaa-y*) developed his love for the outdoors while hiking and playing in the forests of his childhood. Born in 1960, he grew up in Zagreb, capital of Croatia. His backyard was a gateway to the foothills of the nearby Medvednica — or 'Bear' — Mountain. In forests where bears roamed centuries earlier, Gjetvaj played Tarzan and caught frogs in the streams. Photography hadn't entered his mind yet. That would come later. Back then, the natural world was his singular passion. There was no question what he would study when it came time for university, despite his mother's misgivings. "Mom tried to convince me not to go into biology. She was afraid I wouldn't be able to find a job," recalls Gjetvaj.

It turned out she had some foresight, but for now her worries did little to dissuade him. At the University of Zagreb, southeastern Europe's largest and oldest university, Gjetvaj thrived in the hustle and bustle of campus life. He joined all the out-

PHOTO BY STEPHANE BONNEVILLE

door nature groups on campus, going on countless fieldtrips to survey plants, birds and other animals. Camping out in the wilderness, he was in his element. He discovered he loved being around people, too, almost as much as he loved being outside.

One day, renowned Croatian nature photographer Vladimir Pfeifer visited campus. Gjetvaj went to his presentation and admired how Pfeifer wove the art of photography with the wonders of nature to create beautiful lasting images. It was like a door opening: the young science student's love affair with light and landscapes was born. After the presentation, Gjetvaj took pictures almost every weekend. He brought his camera along when trekking through the mountains with the hiking club, and on nature excursions with his classmates.

Four years later Gjetvaj completed his undergrad degree and enrolled in post-graduate studies, but was soon disappointed: the Zagreb program was small and the classes didn't appeal to him. One day, a professor told him about Nova Scotia, Canada. The professor had finished his masters at Dalhousie University in Halifax. "It's a nice place, why don't you go?" he asked Gjetvaj. It was exactly the push Gjetvaj needed. He had never been to Canada. It would be someplace new and different. There was even a scholarship available — all he had to do was apply.

"What the heck," he said to himself. "I'll go!"

In April 1987 Gjetvaj got his first glimpse of Canada. He left behind a country that had been bursting with greenery and life since the beginning of March. Stepping off the plane in Halifax, he was taken aback to find a city still in the depressingly cold clutches of a snowy Canadian winter. A few days after he arrived, Halifax harbour had to be shut down because sea-ice had blown in from the frigid North Atlantic. For a person raised near the balmy Adriatic Sea, it was shocking that the ocean could get cold enough to freeze.

Gjetvaj missed his family and felt dreadfully out of place. The winter seemed to go on forever. But he soon discovered he wasn't alone — Dalhousie had many international students in the same boat. It wasn't long before he started meeting people and making new friends. After a while, he found himself surrounded by people who shared his interests. When he wasn't hard at work at university, he went on trips with his new troupe, exploring Canada's east coast and taking pictures of everything.

His original intent was to finish his degree and return to Croatia, but the more he saw of North America, the more he wanted to stay and explore. He calculated he'd need ten more years to see every place on his list. Another reason to stay: it was easier to get funding and research grants than back home. In 1990, aided by another scholarship, Gjetvaj packed his belongings, mostly camera gear, and moved west to Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario to begin a PhD in genetics — and to explore a new piece of Canada.

Once again, Gjetvaj was alone in a new place. This time, though, making friends wasn't so easy. The majority of Queen's students were locals. Instead of exploring, they went home for the weekends. Lonely, he turned to photography, signing up for courses in colour, black and white and portraiture.

**"What the heck. I'll go!" Gjetvaj said, when he heard about Canada.**

Obtaining a PhD was a long and arduous process. Gjetvaj needed work to pay the bills, but jobs were hard to come by. Short on money, he moved back to Nova Scotia and found employment as a lab technician. It was then that he first started thinking seriously of photography as a real job. Before it was just a hobby, a creative outlet to keep busy. Now Gjetvaj pored through the books at the local small business centre, teaching himself the business side of photography. He started selling framed prints and magazine photos. At the same time he kept chipping away at his PhD, finally finishing it in 1993.

It was time to move on, he realized. The sense of community and companionship at Dalhousie wasn't the same as before, when he was a student. Tired of the isolation and poor job prospects, Gjetvaj headed to the United States. He started out as a technician in West Virginia and from there traveled everywhere: Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, South Dakota. He found new places and kept taking pictures — but he never rediscovered the kinship he'd enjoyed in those first years at Dalhousie. He had visions of ending up alone. "What if I end up like the photographer in Croatia?" he thought to himself. Vladimir Pfiefer, the man who'd been his inspiration, had never married and now lived alone in a home filled with boxes of camera gear and camping supplies. Gjetvaj's own living room was looking more like that every day.

Gjetvaj drifted back to Nova Scotia, where he worked odd jobs. Then a promising prospect opened up at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon. It wasn't just another lab tech position, but a research opportunity with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, studying canola. When Gjetvaj got word at the end of 1997 that the position was his if he wanted it, he packed his things again and headed west.

Gjetvaj had never been to the Canadian prairies before. He was struck by how different the landscape was compared to all the other places he'd been. There was nothing like the flat open grasslands of southern and central Saskatchewan back home in Croatia. But what really impressed him was the diversity of ecosystems. Gjetvaj discovered the hilly ridges of the Qu'Appelle Valley, the northern boreal forest and lakes of Prince Albert National Park, the unspoiled prairie of Grasslands National Park, and even sand dunes in the Great Sand Hills in southwest Saskatchewan. Everywhere he turned, there was another gorgeous landscape to photograph.

Not only did Gjetvaj fall in love with the province's natural spaces, he found a community there, too. When he wasn't working, Gjetvaj was out getting acquainted with the local environmentalist and nature groups. The place brimmed with people who shared his ideals and passion for nature. Enjoying a good, secure job and an active, invigourating environmental community, Gjetvaj found himself in his element, right in the thick of things, surrounded by people.

The more he learned about the land, the more he learned about the changes affecting the people who had lived on it for generations, like increased logging and diminishing habitat. His photography became progressively more about igniting people's interest in conservation. Number one on his list was the push by developers to increase oil and natural gas exploration in some of Great Sand Hills' most sensitive areas. He needed a way to get the word out to the public and politicians.

PHOTO BY STEPHANE BONNEVILLE

A presentation at the World Wilderness Congress in 2005 held the answer Gjetvaj was looking for: conservation photography. The example of Ansel Adams — whose work helped American wilderness areas gain national park designation — demonstrated how photographic books could ultimately sway government opinion. Gjetvaj came home with a new sense of purpose. He had never created a book before — it would be a new challenge. He knew he didn't want it to be preachy; Gjetvaj was actually in favor of some development, as long as it was sustainable and left the most sensitive areas untouched. The most important thing would be to show that everything on the land's surface was just as valuable, if not more so, than the fossil fuel underneath.

After years of drifting, he had found a home and a mission for his photography. Bent over his camera in the moonlit landscape of the Great Sand Hills, he hoped he'd have the book finished before the major oil development decisions were made. But even if governments listened more to business than to one lone man with a camera, it wouldn't be in vain. These pictures might be all some people would ever get to see of pristine prairie mixed with desert-like sand dunes. He trained his lens on an old cattle chute that created an interesting shape against the faint-lit rolling hills. The Big Dipper hung in the upper corner of the frame. Not a bad shot, considering it had only taken him three hours to find it. It was the image he needed; now he could pack up for the night. He needed some rest, if he was going to be up at dawn to shoot the sunrise.

## Mother and daughter

PHOTO BY ANGELA HILL

## Friends

PHOTO BY JOLIE TOEWS

## The city

PHOTO BY STEPHANE BONNEVILLE

PHOTO BY TRENT WARNER

PHOTO BY PAMELA CRADOCK