

THE

Winter 2010

CROW



Got Lactose?

The dairy industry's PR woes

Into the Dark

A missing son, a family's anguish

The Great Battle of Moose Jaw

Oh discord, thy name is Multiplex

Burned Straight

A hair-raising tale

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Journalism matters. And this book proves it.

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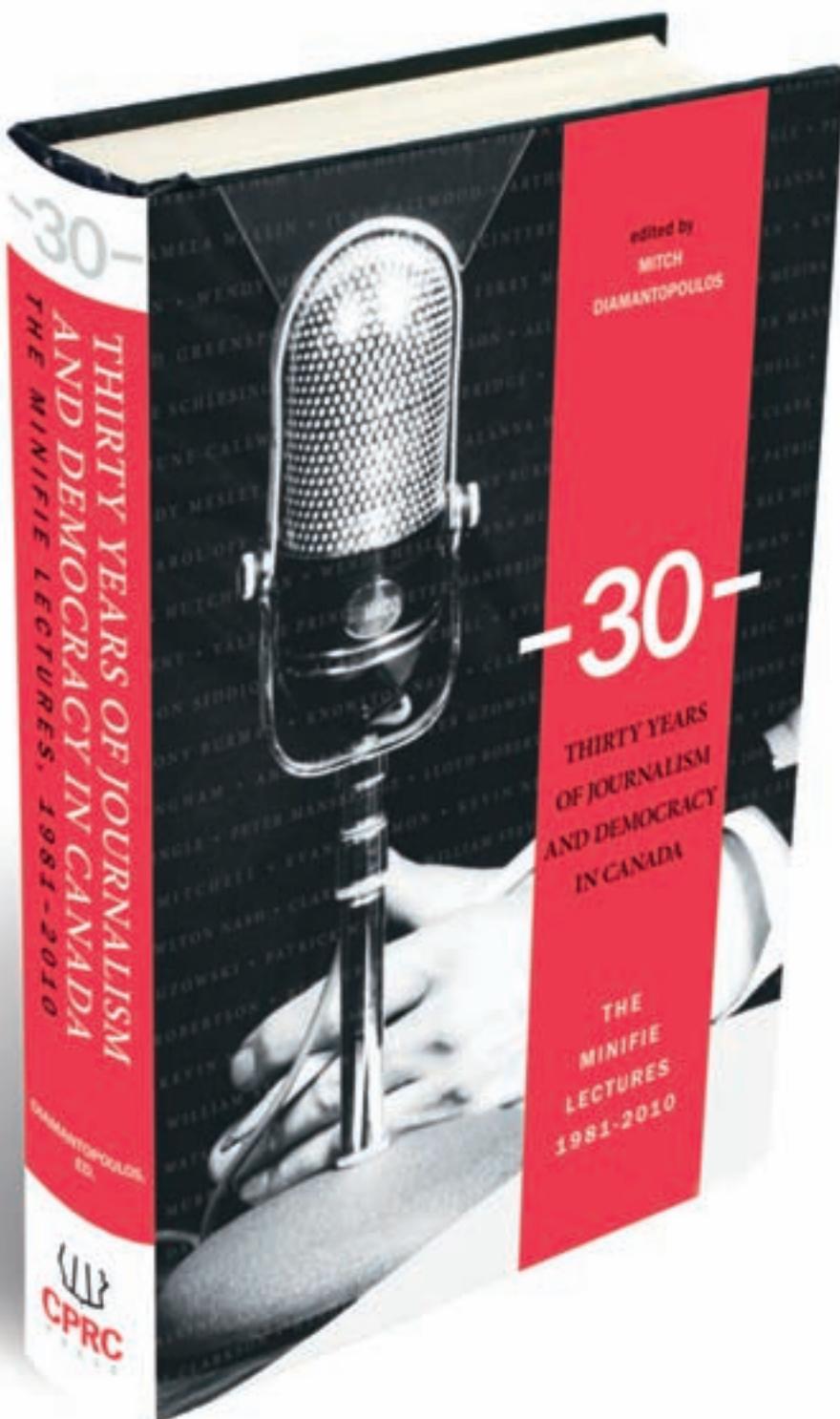
brings together thirty years of the Minifie Lecture series at the University of Regina's School of Journalism.

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-30- THIRTY YEARS OF JOURNALISM
AND DEMOCRACY IN CANADA,
THE MINIFIE LECTURES, 1981-2010
EDITED BY MITCH DIAMANTOPOULOS

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Inside

The Crow is the annual student publication of the School of Journalism, Faculty of Arts, University of Regina.

We gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of Transcontinental, Inc.

Editor: Patricia W. Elliott

Photo Director: Robin Lawless

Contributors:

Adrian Alleyne
Noel Busse
Mitch Diamantopoulos
Bryony Fortune
Greg Girard
Braden Husdal
Éva Larouche
Casey MacLeod
Derek Putz
Jay Teneycke

Additional Photography

Colleen Fraser
Jodi Gillich
Robin Lawless
Danielle Mario
Sean Lerat-Stetner

School of Journalism

AdHum 105
University of Regina
3737 Wascana Parkway
Regina, Saskatchewan, S4S 0A2

ph: 306-585-4420
fx: 306-585-4867
em: journalism@uregina.ca

- 04 Welcome
- 07 Outside the Pack
- 10 The Great Battle of Moose Jaw
- 16 Got Lactose?
- 20 Homefield Advantage
- 24 Casey's Gift
- 28 Into The Dark
- 36 Educating the Machine
- 42 Burned Straight
- 48 Place of Rescue
- 52 A Human Workplace



Cover: "Shooting for a story on lactose, I used the Annie Leibovitz photo of Whoopi Goldberg in a bathtub of milk for inspiration... I was impressed with my being able to talk my girlfriend into getting into a bathtub with seventy gallons of powdered milk."

photo by Jay Teneycke

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Editor's Nest



This issue of *The Crow* coincides with the thirtieth annual Minifie Lecture, and the School of Journalism's thirtieth birthday. It also coincides with some highly challenging times for the Canadian news media, as long-held models of ownership and news delivery struggle through an economic downturn. It's guaranteed: owners come and go, business models rise and fall, and technological platforms change, then change again. But if we look back 3,500 years, to when a citizen of the Mesopotamian town of Nugu carved details of the mayor's corruption into a stone tablet, it's clear the work itself doesn't change much over the years. As Mitch Diamantopoulos notes in his introductory article, journalism endures as the eyes, ears and voice of democratic society—and lately it's found a pretty good home on the Saskatchewan prairie.

When our students fret over future prospects, we tell them this: if you want to be a journalist, you will be a journalist. It won't be easy—but it wasn't easy for James M. Minifie, either, to find his way from a Saskatchewan village to the battlefields of Europe with a typewriter under his arm. Great journalism doesn't rise up from comfort zones. It's a struggle, and it starts at the bottom with that first incredible story that has you knocking down editors' doors (and, one day, has them knocking down your door). Our school focuses on producing self-starters, innovators and critical thinkers who thrive in any weather. So far, our grads haven't proven this strategy wrong.

As faculty, we're also aware that journalism education changes how people see the world. The questions get bigger, the answers more complex. That's what happened when student Noel Busse returned to his home town. In 'The Great Battle of Moose Jaw,' an argument over where to put a hockey rink becomes tied to a city's history, dreams and social divisions. Likewise, our cover story, 'Got Lactose?' by Jay Teneycke, links a seemingly mundane grocery-aisle choice to the future of an industry. The quest for essential context is why Derek Putz's 'Homefield Advantage' is more than a sports story. In a province where football matters, the tale of how local

players were shut out of the home team, and how they fought their way back in, matters.

Indeed, overcoming obstacles is a key theme in many Crow stories. In 'Casey's Gift' by Adrian Alleyne, we read about a mother's struggle to find services for her autistic son, and her determination to help others in the same boat. It's the key lesson of long form documentary journalism: you arrive on the scene looking for the victims—but the longer you stick around, the more you learn about

people, and the more their strength shines through. Anyone who has seen the missing posters for Dylan Koshman, for example, can well imagine a family shattered by despair. Yet the time Casey MacLeod spent with the Koshman family while researching 'Into the Dark' yielded a surprising abundance of faith and hope.

Another quality of thinking journalists—they have this thing about sacred cows. They don't like them. In 'Educating the Machine,' Greg Girard zeroes in on our comfortable assumptions about higher education, and asks the all-important question: who really benefits? In 'Burned Straight,' Bryony Fortune turns a trip to the hairdresser into a consideration of why we embrace the straight jacket of dominant cultural conventions, and at what cost. But sometimes people break out of step: in 'Place of Rescue,' a pastor's widow pauses in the middle of waxing a floor, hit by the realization that her skills as wife and mother are no longer needed. Braden Husdel picks up on the compelling story of a woman who, late in life, begins a journey to find her own purpose in the world. It's a common theme in this year's Crow: ordinary people doing extraordinary things. Éva Larouche's 'What Makes a Workplace Human?' ends the issue with eight hundred acres of crops in the bin and a new appreciation for life.

Throughout, our photojournalism students punctuate the collection with what acclaimed photographer James Nachtwey calls the most elemental and essential act of journalism: bearing witness to the human condition.

— Patricia W. Elliott, Editor

In the Crow...the questions get bigger, the answers more complex.



The Healer

Lee Donison gazes through the screen door of his south Regina home waiting for his next visitor. For over fifty years, Donison—without any training—has been mysteriously easing the pain of seemingly hopeless injuries with his healing hands.

DANIELLE MARIO



Fight

Tensions rise outside a downtown Regina pub.

COLLEEN FRASER



By Mitch Diamantopoulos

photo: robin lawless

Journalism outside the pack

Thirty years ago, a School of Journalism was born in 'the middle of nowhere.' If you wanted to incubate journalism that was stubbornly inquisitive, committed to social criticism in the public interest, and passionate about the written word, Saskatchewan was the place to be. Still is.

Named for Queen Victoria, the city of Regina, Saskatchewan, is situated on the ancestral homelands of the Plains Cree, ceded with Treaty Four. It is the bloody terminal point for both the Riel Rebellion in 1885 and the On-to-Ottawa Trek of the unemployed in the Thirties. The legendary home of agrarian socialism and Medicare, Regina is the only city I know of to have both a Riot and a Manifesto as its namesakes.

Into this crucible, one of the world's leading communications theorists arrived at the University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, in 1963. Dallas Smythe was recruited by Graham Spry, legendary leader of the Canadian Radio League and the father, thereby, of Canadian public broadcasting. Smythe had made his mark in the U.S. as a pioneer of broadcast regulation and founder of educational television. He also taught the first-ever class in the political economy of communications. But Saskatchewan was his home, and he found himself drawn back by the open, progressive spirit of social innovation that defined the province in the Sixties. Here, he could be a pioneer again. During the next ten years, Smythe championed the university's famous Regina Beach Statement—a manifesto for the liberal arts—and threw himself into the highly contentious debates on the New World Information and Communications Order at UNESCO.

By 1980, a new journalism school would

sink its roots into the fertile soil of what had become a vibrant and critical campus, now called the University of Regina.

Although Smythe had retired seven years earlier, his imprint on the university's institutional culture and his path-breaking communications studies left important legacies. They created the intellectual conditions for

Robbins rowed against the relentless current of vocational thinking—that training for journalism could be reduced to a set of technical skills.

a different kind of journalism school, one firmly grounded in the liberal arts and a critical conception of communications. This implied an independent and critical approach to journalism, rather than simply being captive to industry interests or conventional wisdom.

Compared to formal instruction in mathematics or philosophy or astronomy—which go back thousands of years—journalism education is a relatively young field. To establish this School in 1980 was, therefore, no small achievement.

This courageous enterprise was led by the School's first director, Ron Robbins. As the CBC's coordinator of staff training, Robbins rowed against the relentless current of vocational thinking—that training for journalism could be reduced to a set of technical skills. Now, as director of the Canadian West's first journalism school, he faced an industry that doubted the relevance of anything other than on-the-job apprenticeship. He met resistance, too, from working journalists. Not without reason, they distrusted the corrosive influence of middle class professionals on their democratic mission to 'afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted,' as A. J. Liebling once put it. Undaunted, Robbins' school did not even consider applicants to the two year program without a degree already in hand, or at least two years of pre-journalism liberal arts courses. Robbins ensured a generation of journalists would graduate with a solid grounding in the social sciences, humanities and critical thinking. This was no small service to the public interest at the time. An increasingly complex, rapidly changing world—and an increasingly well-educated public—demanded more depth, context and rigour from the press corps.

At the same time, Robbins—who had been a working journalist for the U.K.'s Press Association, the BBC and the Canadian Press—did not lose sight of the need for practical, hands-on instruction and mentorship in the field. In fact, his school



photo: robin lawless

After travelling the world, James M. Minifie's typewriter—and his legacy—came to rest at the University of Regina.

established the strongest internship program in the country. Spanning a full thirteen weeks, this paid internship remains the envy of journalism schools across the country. It moved the School well beyond the bi-polar disorders of a narrow vocationalism, on the one hand, and a disconnected academicism, on the other. Robbins' school emphasized the full sweep of academic, professional and democratic rigours and responsibilities. As the School's graduates fanned out, they played an important, vanguard role in redefining the best in modern journalism across the Canadian West and well beyond.

The program quickly became well known and respected as one of the leading schools in the country. It succeeded despite early doubts that such an ambitious program could be launched 'in the middle of nowhere.' The School sank deep roots in the region and cultivated its own distinctive and intensive approach to journalism education, accepting no more than twenty-six students per year. It also overcame the hinterland churn of central Canadian journalism graduates documenting the 'Rest of Canada.' Creating an innovative centre of gravity outside the regional and doctrinal mainstream was perhaps the greatest contribution of the new school on the prairies. Certainly, Robbins believed in that vision to his dying breath, leaving his entire estate to endow a student scholar-

ship in perpetuity at the journalism school he founded. Named for his wife Kay, it was a final act of affection and democratic conviction.

*The state of journalism
...is very much the
people's business.*

This year we mark the School's remarkable founding with the publication of the Minifie Lectures, named in honour of James M. Minifie, a crusading journalist who journeyed from Vanguard, Saskatchewan to cover the Franco dictatorship and popular resistance in Spain. At one point Minifie was captured by Franco's forces. Later, he lost an eye to the shattered glass from the blast of a German bomb while watching an air raid in London. Like his contemporaries, George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway, Minifie cleared a written path through the trauma and rubble of a world that had been blown asunder by greed, hatred, and empire. In his name, the Minifie family ensured a financial legacy to support the education of young journalists, an act that helped make the School's founding possible and invigorated public discussion and debate through a free public lecture

series. Every year, Minifie's well-traveled typewriter shares the stage with a leading Canadian journalist. Whether Joe Schlesinger, June Callwood, Arthur Kent, Peter Gzowski, Haroon Siddiqui or any other of the thirty lecturers, including this year's Tony Burman, each speaker has represented the essence of what Minifie's legacy represents: the importance of Canadian journalism to democratic society.

Indeed, in this age of consumerism, fast food culture, and celebrity journalism, we are too apt to forget the formative and defining relationship between democracy and journalism. We forget that the emergence of a modern 'public' depended crucially on the rise of journalism as its eyes, ears and voice. Without journalism, the struggle for hearts and minds would be conducted in dark silence and democracy would surely be lost. That's why the state of journalism is not simply a concern for media owners, or even journalists. It is very much the peoples' business—and this school remains centrally committed to the democratic mission of illuminating the public interest. 🐦

Mitch Diamantopoulos is department head of the School of Journalism, Faculty of Arts, University of Regina, and the editor of -30-: *Thirty Years of Democracy and Journalism in Canada, The Minifie Lectures 1981-2010.*



Waiting

Braedon Woods of Regina's acclaimed Do It With Class Young People's Theatre awaits his cue at the first matinée performance of Willie Wonka Junior.

DANIELLE MARIO

The great battle OF

Marcil Motors will be closing permanently on Wednesday, December 24, 2008 at 12:00 noon.

Just like Mary & Joseph on Christmas Eve, there is no room at the Inn due to the construction of the proposed multiplex.

We would like to thank all our valued customers who have supported us through out our years in business and especially during these last few months.



archival photos (inset from left: Saskatchewan Archives Board (R-A6842, R-B11601, R-B11601-31)); other original photos: noel busse

In the 1920s, Moose Jaw's River Street was a glaring symbol for everything wrong and right with Prohibition-era Saskatchewan. The concept of sobriety got a hard kicking here on a nightly basis, and River Street became infamous for the bars, bootleggers and brothels that settled in this small southern prairie city at the confluence of Moose Jaw River and Thunder Creek. By 2009 the last bar on the strip, Jake's Saloon, was slated for closure. With the neighbouring Royal and Brunswick Hotels, it formed the holy trinity of Moose Jaw nightlife well into the

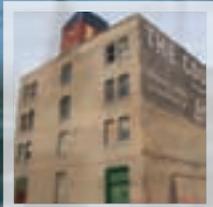
new millennium: short, thuggish sentinels armed with music and liquor, the last outposts of this small prairie city's commercial downtown. River Street beyond is stereotypical urban decay, smattered with derelict buildings, junk-filled lots and the occasional business.

The Royal was demolished in 2008 and the Brunswick closed soon after, to make way for a hotel-shopping complex designed to imitate a historic streetscape. In March 2009, Moose Jaw's city council voted to strip the Brunswick of its heritage building designation, opening the door to demoli-

tion. A controversial issue in its own right, the building's fate pales when seen against the seething political backdrop of the industrial no-man's land to the west of downtown.

This land is slated to be the future site of the Moose Jaw Multiplex, which supporters say will simultaneously replace the Civic Centre and the curling rink, keep the WHL Warriors hockey team from leaving town, and revitalize the derelict River Street. On October 25, 2006, in a special plebiscite, citizens voted seventy-one per cent in favour of investing \$15 million in

Moose Jaw



A new hockey rink seemed like a good idea to some.

Then all hell broke loose.

By Noel Busse

the \$36 million project, contingent on federal, provincial and private investments to make up the remainder. But within a few weeks voters learned what city councillors had apparently already known: the cost was now estimated in the \$61 million range, raising the city's stake to \$34 million. In the ensuing years of petitions and law suits, the Multiplex became mired in what seemed a perpetual standstill. Divisions that had existed since the city's founding re-emerged, creating a portrait of a community at war with itself.

Oh discord, thy name is Multiplex.

If you head east down River Street and turn left on Main Street, you'll find yourself driving north past a melange of antique buildings and modern development: an old apartment block on the right, a Rogers Video on the left. Keep going north and you'll eventually climb a hill that reaches its apex at the Town and Country Mall and the Moose Jaw Civic Centre.

The aging Civic Centre is one of the most unique buildings in southern Saskatchewan. It's a curious-looking thing, a baby blue concrete building with a prominent steel roof that looks like a ski hill half-

pipe. If you talk to some of the more boastful twenty-somethings in town, they might even tell you that they or someone they know actually took a *skateboard* up there once.

One of the oldest large-scale arenas in Saskatchewan, the building has a storied past. Jazzman Louis Armstrong drew a crowd of 4,100 here when its doors first opened on September 19, 1959.

In 1984, the Winnipeg Warriors became the Moose Jaw Warriors and claimed the Civic Centre as home ice. A source of pride for the longtime teamless city, the Civic

Centre and the mall, located just a parking lot away, formed an economic hotspot. Gazing at the McDonald's 'M' arches and the plastic Burger King obelisk across the street is enough to tell the casual onlooker that this is where money is made. There were grumblings that the area's success came at the expense of the city's historic downtown.

Ten years ago, the idea of replacing the Civic Centre was nothing more than a twinkle in the eyes of local hockey fans. It wasn't until a group of local businessmen assembled and, dubbing themselves the Multiplex Steering Committee, contracted Nustadia Recreation, Inc. to look at just how feasible their vision would be.

Where it should be built, why it should or shouldn't be built, and who's going to benefit were all questions asked in the city's coffee shops, at its dinner tables,

The Moose Jaw Times Herald reported that it had received an anonymous phone call threatening the lives of Mayor Dale McBain and five city councillors.

and over the counters of its convenience stores. Even today, ask a stranger on the street, "What do you think of the Multiplex?" and you risk an eyeful of suspicion and an earful of silence. You might as well ask for his ATM number, or which brick the spare key to his house is hidden under.

The city's controversy parallels its fea-

tures. Split in half by a web of railroad and trains, Moose Jaw's north and south are tenuously connected by just two heavily travelled concrete bridges and an underpass. With the Multiplex on everyone's mind, the city's collective consciousness now matches the severity of the train-yard that rumbles against its crossings.

Moose Jaw was, for a brief time in 1906, the biggest city in Saskatchewan, bigger even than the provincial capital, Regina, just seventy-one kilometres down the road. The city's growth would gradually be outpaced by Regina, Saskatoon and, just recently, Prince Albert. Today the population is just over 32,000, making it Saskatchewan's fourth-largest city.

As prairie historian William Brennan tells it, Moose Jaw faces three challenges to its self image: its proximity to the larger city centre of Regina, its demotion from third



Saskatchewan Archives Board (R-A6842)

Looking south past the intersection of Main and High Streets in this undated Moose Jaw photo. By 1906 it had become Saskatchewan's largest city. It was a city in its prime, an economic hub for the region that retained a dash of the *wild west* and promised nothing less than the height of modernity. The CPR rail station anchors the southern end of Main Street, with a full range of shops, offices, hotels and banks extending north along either side.

to fourth-largest city in the province and, finally, the sense that there hasn't been any tangible economic development since the 1950's.

"The lifeblood of Moose Jaw's economy throughout its history was the Canadian Pacific Railway," says Brennan. As a divisional point on the CPR main line, the railway employed workers in its freight yards and maintenance shops. The introduction of less maintenance-heavy diesel trains during the Sixties and Seventies hit the city hard. Repair shops haemorrhaged employees, leading to the closure of many of Moose Jaw's key industries.

The decline of rail yard work is connected to many of the economic issues in the city. Meanwhile, the rail yard's physical presence continues to divide the city between its traditionally working class south and more entrepreneurial north, reflected

in both average income and voting behaviour. The labour-friendly NDP, represented by MLA Deb Higgins, holds the southern constituency of Wakamow Valley, while Warren Michelson and the business-oriented Saskatchewan Party hold court in Moose Jaw North.

In a town geographically and socially divided, it's not surprising that nearly every major project Moose Jaw has undertaken in the last half century has been mired in controversy. The Civic Centre, the Wakamow Library expansion, and the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa have all seen their share of bickering.

On an unusually temperate February afternoon in 2009, the city was reaching the apex of the Multiplex debate: a second vote to be held February 25. By now city councillor Brian Swanson had

become the man that the Multiplex-passionate viewed as either a champion of reason or an arch-demon of delays. His plain two-storey house with its closed-in porch, chipped cement walkway and modest front yard, gave none of this drama away. And it really didn't need to. Just ask Swanson about the Multiplex and his feelings were clear.

As one of just two people on Moose Jaw's seven-member city council that year to question the Multiplex—Dawn Luhnig was the other—Swanson had breathed and slept the city's most contentious issue for four years. Eyes widening, he invited me inside to talk. It quickly became apparent that there was not a waking moment he didn't spend thinking about the Multiplex. Facts and figures poured out of his mouth in torrents. "I have a stack of papers this big about this," he said, using his hands to



Saskatchewan Archives Board (R-A7647)

Moose Jaw hockey passion captured in this undated (c 1910), unlikely and yet so poignant photo. An assemblage of hockey players, visitors and townsfolk pose on Main Street in front of the Maple Leaf Hotel, facing the CPR station. The team has just returned from a Saskatchewan-Alberta tournament. In the centre is the world heavyweight champion boxer Jack Johnson and his companion Hattie McClay. Known faces in this photo (L-R): Percy Shand (with beaver collar), CPR conductor, Sam Delmedge (defence), unknown (printer), Jack Johnston, Ed Kern (right wing), Harry Miller (team manager), Hattie McClay, Bud Bissell (centre)(CPR mail clerk), J. (Chesty) Kain (goal), Jim Law (left wing), W.J. Stubbing (rover), and Mr. Dowsell (defence).



carve a length of about a foot and a half out of the air. He frequently ran upstairs to search this stack for documents to back up his facts.

For much of the city's population, Swanson remained the proverbial naysayer. He admitted to me that he saw Moose Jaw as a city with "several problems," and had often pointed these out as city councillor: jobs were disappearing, the hospital needed to be repaired, the city was too close to Regina, and the population was shrinking. Such words made him the subject of ire among the city's optimists. His opponents said he was standing in the way of progress and prosperity. Swanson said he was a realist, compared to the "delusionists" who thought the Multiplex would turn Moose Jaw around.

Talking to Swanson that February day revealed this had become more than just a matter for city council. It was now personal. He bitterly recounted what he saw as personal attacks on his character, including claims that he stood in the way of the development of the Temple Gardens Mineral Spa, Moose Jaw's pride.

"From 1986 to 2006 the population of Moose Jaw declined (by) three thousand, and some people would have you believe that's all (my) fault," said Swanson. "I was the chairman of the spa committee! I voted to drill the (geothermal) well!"

Yet for Moose Jaw's pro-Multiplex population, Swanson was the ultimate thorn in the side. Just as everyone had an opinion on the Multiplex so, too, did they have one on Swanson.

"Swanson=Joke," read a post on discover-moosejaw.com, a frequent battleground for the issue. "This grandstanding fool has been the champion of the vocal minority for too long."

A reply read: "If we didn't have Mr. Swanson standing up for the people of this community, who would?"

In early November of 2008, the Moose Jaw Times Herald reported that it had received an anonymous phone call threatening the lives of then-Mayor Dale McBain and five city councillors. While McBain laughs it off now, city councillors were escorted to council meetings by police in the weeks that followed.

Despite the threat, McBain remained calm and jovial. In an interview before the referendum, he sat contently, hands folded in his lap, going over the details of the Multiplex project with just a hint of pride in his voice. He seemed certain the dollars would fall into place.

"Look at just about any project we've done in this city; each one of them seemed to be horrendous in terms of cost. The City of Moose Jaw continued to chug along... and the Multiplex is the same kind of thing."

"In this instance, the city is going to spend \$34 million out of a \$60 million project," he said, alluding to provincial funding that Multiplex supporters said was waiting in the wings for the city's go-ahead. While the question for Swanson and the no-plexers was, "How can we afford to go ahead with this?" the question for the pro-plexers was, "How can we afford *not* to go through with this?" Saying no to the Multiplex would be like saying no to a \$23 million gift from the province, and saying good-

bye to the Warriors to boot, according to McBain.

McBain wavered just once during the interview. When asked what would happen if the February 25 referendum returned a nay vote, his shoulders slumped. "I don't have an answer to that."

As the debate deepened, rumours flew about who would benefit from the ensuing property negotiations, although no one came forward to say exactly who and how. Darin Chow was one of a growing number of citizens who found the rising conflict distasteful. As a Moose Jaw city councillor, Warriors president, and president of the Saskatchewan Trial Lawyers Association, Chow was what some Moose Jaw citizens might refer to as 'a mover and a shaker,' and he didn't like the "innuendo and misunderstanding" that had taken over his town. As referendum day approached, he complained: "There's been far too much emphasis in this community put on the personalities involved in the project, and not nearly enough emphasis put on the project itself." He described the controversy as a blame game that caused both sides to start looking for villains.

"It embarrasses this community, quite frankly."

Like many, he was looking forward to a conclusion.

He wasn't the only one. When February 25 finally dawned, lifelong Moose Javian



photo: noel busse

Trent Barnett joined the weary citizens who made their way to the voting booths. Although Barnett had some misgivings, he voted in favour of the project. "It stretched out so long that people were honestly fed up with it," he explained later. "It was no longer a topic that people wanted to discuss...it was more, 'What's the weather like today?' rather than 'What do you think of the Multiplex?'"

That night, a confident but anxious McBain joined city councillors in the council room at City Hall as the votes rolled in. Brian Swanson was noticeably absent. Dawn Luhnig, the other 'naysayer,' was also nowhere to be seen. The results began coming

in at twenty minutes after eight. By nine o'clock, it was an unofficial win for the Multiplex. But it's doubtful the debate ended at the same moment. With sixty per cent in favour and forty per cent against, it was far from a landslide victory, and showed that considerably fewer people were in favour of the project than when it originally won by seventy-one per cent in 2006.

For someone looking in from the outside, the furor surrounding the Multiplex might have looked ridiculous, even laughable. But for the staunch advocates and detractors of the Multiplex, the stakes were nothing less than the future prosperity of their small, struggling city.

The morning after the vote, the Times Herald's front page headline read 'Moose Javians say yes,' making it an official victory for the pro-plexers. A supplemental story, 'Swanson in disbelief over outcome,' ran on page three. The paper quoted the councillor as saying, "Oh, well, Moose Jaw wanted it, they're going to get it now."

As for McBain, after hearing the tally he went and had a glass of wine at the home of a fellow councillor, watched the late night news, and then went home to bed. When the election call for mayor came that October, he didn't answer. 🐉

Got lactose?

Milk—once the mother of all foods—has become controversial.

By Jay Teneycke

She quickly gulps down the last of her breakfast and gingerly places her dish in the sink. Looking out her kitchen window, Shannon Hoffman starts to think about the day to come. She will be in and out of the office all day, and has a staff meeting at three o'clock. After work, there is just enough time to stop at the grocery store to pick up a few things for dinner.

"Maybe we'll have spaghetti tonight," she thinks.

After dinner it's off to the gym. She is training to compete in her first half marathon this summer. Her goal is two and a half hours.

Raising a glass of milk to her lips she drinks, letting the cool, smooth contents swish around her mouth before swallowing. An athlete for her entire life, she contemplates the empty glass in her hand. As a kinesiology student she learned milk was vital for athletes to develop and an important part of a person's diet. The calcium found in milk is important for the growth and development of muscle and bone, plus it's good for your skin and teeth. She recalls memorizing the Canada Food Guide's suggestion of at least two servings of milk every day, more for children and anyone over fifty. She knew that osteoporosis runs in her family and that the calcium from milk would help keep her bones strong as she aged.

Oh shoot, it's 7:30! Her mind snaps back to the day ahead. She grabs her car keys and heads out the door.

As Hoffman pulls out of the driveway, her body is alive with billions of processes happening every second. Now fully awake, her digestive system is in full swing, a furnace that begins breaking down her breakfast to give her the energy she needs for the rest of the day. The milk she drank earlier has traveled past her lips, tongue and

down the twenty-five centimetres of esophagus into her waiting stomach.

A rubbery elastic-like bag, the stomach is where digestion begins. It gets to work, unleashing a myriad of digestive enzymes and acids that quickly break down food so that nutrients can then be absorbed into the body.

One of the main components of the milk Hoffman drank is a carbohydrate, or sugar, called lactose, which the body uses as a source of energy. When she was a child her

*Sitting in traffic,
Shannon begins to
feel slightly nauseous.*

body naturally produced an enzyme called lactase, which is needed to break down, digest and absorb lactose. But as Shannon grew older her body slowly stopped producing the enzyme. Now her DNA has turned the switch off permanently. Thousands of years ago her hunting and gathering ancestors' bodies stopped producing lactase in adulthood because there was no need. Animals like cattle and goats had yet to be domesticated, so no one consumed milk once they were weaned from their mothers.

As the glass of milk Shannon drank just minutes ago moves from her stomach to her small intestine, a serious problem begins to develop. Since her body stopped producing the necessary enzyme years ago, she cannot properly digest the carbohydrate lactose.

Within her small intestine the lactose molecules from her glass of milk begin to ferment, rather than being digested and absorbed into her body with the rest of her

breakfast. The lactose attracts a host of microscopic organisms that begin to feast on the unwanted molecules. Because she cannot digest lactose, the molecules sit in her intestines getting heavier and heavier. Eventually the body realizes something is wrong and begins to fill her intestinal tract with water to flush away the irritant.

Sitting in traffic, Shannon begins to feel slightly nauseous. She is congested, bloated and has serious stomach pains. She glances at her watch. It's only eight in the morning and already her day is ruined.

We live in a world that revolves around milk. Canada's 1.5 million dairy cows produce 4.5 trillion litres of milk a year. The dairy industry contributes an estimated three billion dollars annually to the economy, and employs 160,000 workers. Milk is a dietary staple and an icon of good health, promoted by our medical system as well as the Canadian government.

But it wasn't always this way.

Although it's often assumed North Americans have a long tradition of drinking milk, fresh milk wasn't a major American beverage until the mid-nineteenth century, according to Melanie DuPuis, a University of California sociologist. Before then, dairy products mainly consisted of butter and cheese, which had a longer shelf life. Few people drank milk by the glass.

Cow's milk was initially developed as a replacement for breast milk during the baby booms that followed successive waves of nineteenth century urbanization, DuPuis writes in *Nature's Perfect Food*. When the population boomed, food shortages became a problem. An early solution was to build cattle yards directly beside breweries. The cattle were fed the leftovers from the brewing process, a mix of grains called 'brewer's swill.' The result was a kind of economic recycling that

made milk plentiful and cheap.

The quality wasn't very good, though. In fact, many people believed it was dangerous. Yet it provided needed nutrition, and brought milk into the fabric of North American life.

Due to an evolutionary mutation, lactose intolerance wasn't a major issue in the early days of milk-drinking. Back then, most North Americans were of northern European ancestry. According to Harvard's School of Public Health, only about fifteen per cent of people of northern European descent are lactose intolerant, compared to ninety per cent of Asians, seventy per cent of Africans and Native Americans, and fifty per cent of Hispanics. It was only when the population began to diversify that the controversial side of milk began to emerge.

Were humans meant to drink cow's milk? A quick Internet search reveals clearly drawn battle lines. Milk has become contested territory.

On the one side is a group dedicated to eradicating milk and dairy from our collective diets, citing everything from animal cruelty to possible steroids and harmful hormones found in milk. On the other hand, milk advocates promote milk drinking as something essential to good health.

One of the main points of contention is over the issue of lactose intolerance. The idea that something like milk, so fundamental to our dietary habits, might cause pain and discomfort can be difficult to understand for someone who doesn't suffer from the condition.

Thinking about milk has clearly changed. The last twenty years have witnessed a sharp downturn in consumption. In 1980, Canadians drank some 430 glasses of milk annually. By 1999 that number had dropped to 370.

Part of the reason has to do with a new generation of fruit juices and sport and energy drinks that are directed at children and teens. But a dramatic rise in lactose intolerance awareness has also played its part. After all, most of the earth's population is to some extent lactose intolerant. Only a small few are not.

As a result, today's milk promoters find themselves facing an uphill battle. Yet for



photo: Jay Teneyckle



photo: jay teneycke

people who can properly digest and absorb milk, the drink still has a lot to offer. It's a great source of calcium and protein, as well as vitamins A, B and C. Phosphorus strengthens bones and generates energy. Milk also contains niacin, which, perhaps ironically, the body uses to make other digestive enzymes work more efficiently.

So should a person drink milk?

The decision really comes down to the individual, who should also consult with his or her family doctor, according to Melanie Rozwadowski, assistant professor of nutrition and dietetics at the University of Saskatchewan.

Ultimately, proper nutrition is like a puzzle. Milk is just one piece of a much larger picture. If you take a piece out, it will no longer be complete until you replace it with something that fits just right.

Thankfully there are now many alternatives for people who want to limit the amount of dairy they consume in their diet. Dairy digestive aids that are in pill form and contain the enzyme lactase can now be purchased over the counter in pharmacies and grocery stores across the country.

Where once milk and dairy alternatives

could only be found in specialty and health food stores, most grocers now carry a wide variety of soy beverages, as well as rice, almond and hemp milk. Even traditional cow's milk is now sold with the lactose removed to avoid painful stomach aches.

Thinking about milk has clearly changed. The last twenty years have witnessed a sharp downturn in consumption.

But Rozwadowski cautions consumers to be aware that, while traditional milk is fortified with many nutrients, including vitamin D, not all milk alternatives are. It's also very rare to find cheese that has been fortified.

Vitamin D has a special relationship with the drink's naturally occurring calcium, helping the body absorb greater amounts

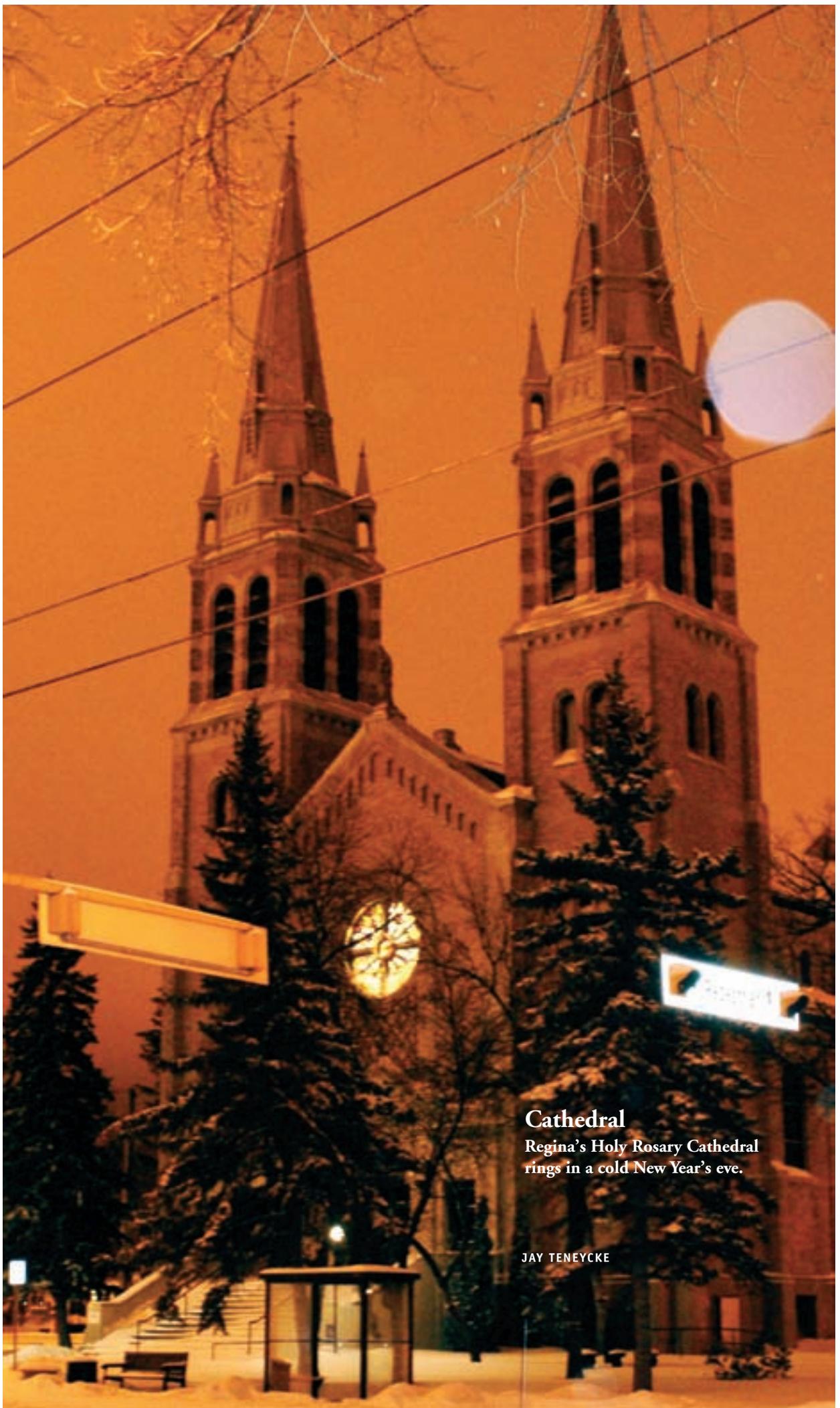
of calcium into the body. While some foods such as broccoli, spinach or almonds might have more calcium than traditional milk, the vitamin D found in milk makes it easier for the body to absorb the calcium.

The lesson: check labels when making any dietary changes.

Pushing the wobbly shopping cart past shelves of cereal boxes, Hoffman finds her way to the dairy section. The pale white florescent lights and the slight chill from the refrigeration units cause her to pause. She sees a bewildering variety of flavored soy beverages, rice and almond milk. There's even a hemp product that looks a bit too exotic for its own good. Added to this is a wide selection of milk products that announce in bold lettering that they are now lactose free.

"There are just so many choices," she thinks.

Where her choice was once limited to a simple decision like one percent milk or two, the arrival of lactose intolerance as a dietary issue has brought with it a cornucopia of alternatives. She picks up a carton in each hand and begins to read the label. 🐦



Cathedral

Regina's Holy Rosary Cathedral rings in a cold New Year's eve.

JAY TENEYCKE



Home field

By Derek Putz

A band of boys make their way down the streets of Regina, Saskatchewan, dressed in green and white. The letter 'S' ripples on a flag carried by the boy in the back. Twelve-year-old Stu Foord leads the charge. But at this moment he isn't Stu Foord. In his imagination he's Number 80, Don Narcisse, running a post pattern past the hot dog stand and around the man selling the programs. Stu looks back at his friends and grins. There is no other place to be on game day. The music from the stadium grows louder. Passing by the practice field, Stu stops to breathe in the smell of the grass. It reminds him of his last game playing on this same field, as a member of the Regina Minor Football League's Steelers. Finally they arrive at the entrance to the east stands, what everyone calls 'the sunny side.' Too young for jobs, Stu and his friends have resorted to sneaking into a

few games. Selling peanuts during the first quarter of the last game was the only way that Stu could get into the stadium. For this game, though, they have tickets in hand. Once inside, Stu almost feels like he is on the field himself. He closes his eyes and breathes in the atmosphere of Taylor Field, home of the Canadian Football League's Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Twelve years later, Stu Foord slides open the wooden dresser drawer in his old room at his parents' house, marveling at the stockpile of Roughrider game day ticket stubs. Ever since the day he fell in love with football, he rarely missed a Rider game. When the Riders were playing, his family knew never to bother him. "It was just natural for me to be at the games, and it was great because every single kid on the block wanted to do the same thing," Foord says. Being a Rider fan was a prerequisite for growing up in Saskatchewan.

But becoming a Rider player was a different story. When Foord was growing up, local kids rarely made the team.

It wasn't that way in the beginning. When the team was born in 1910 as the Regina Rugby Club, the team fielded mostly hometown players. Back then the rules of the game were closer to rugby. The forward pass wasn't introduced until 1929. 'The land of the living skies' continued to produce pigskin talent when the team became the Saskatchewan Roughriders in 1946, and for the next fifteen years, no fewer than fifty-four players graduated from high schools or junior teams in Regina to play for the hometown squad. The best years were between the Roughriders' 1966 Grey Cup victory and their run of Western Conference titles through the mid-Seventies. Saskatchewan all-stars Wayne Shaw, Lorne Richardson, Bill Baker, Ken McEachern, Ted Urness, Ted



In football-mad Saskatchewan,
hometown kids rarely made the team.
Players like Stu Foord are changing that.

advantage

photo: derek putz

Dushinski, and Roger Aldag proved to the league that players from Saskatchewan could excel in the CFL. Many of these players spent ten or more years in the green and white, and defined tough Rider football on the prairies.

The number of Saskatchewan-born players stayed in double digits every year from 1966 to 1984. Once 1985 hit, however, Saskatchewan-born players began to dwindle. Alex Smith, a Riders' coach since 1997, watched the field change through the late 1980s and 1990s. CFL teams began to rely more heavily on American-born players, who seemed dramatically better at skill positions than Canadians. The U.S. also had far larger pools to pick from. Increasingly, the scouts cast their eyes south. By 1998, Mike Maurer was the only Regina-born player on the team, and only one of three Saskatchewan players.

The following year, local talent Jason

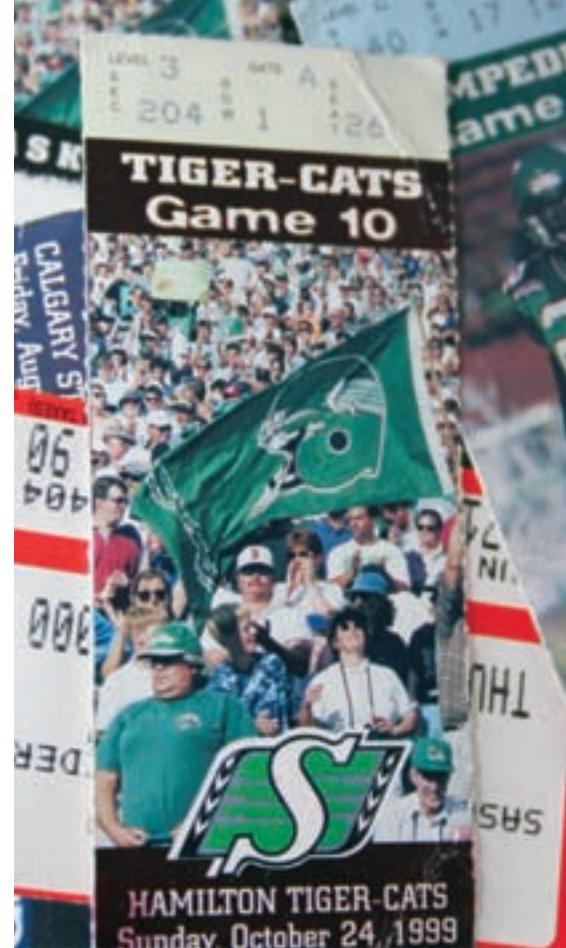
Clermont tried out for the team but was sent back to the Regina Rams. A product of the times, Clermont says that he and fellow Regina receivers couldn't crack the lineup because Regina-born players just weren't getting the opportunities. Yet football was in his blood.

Walking home from school when he was eight, Clermont was stopped by a minor league coach. The coach was short a player and asked him if he wanted to play. "I went home and begged my parents to let me play football and I've been playing ever since," he recalls.

After high school, Clermont joined the University of Regina Rams. He was selected by the British Columbia Lions in the 2002 Canadian Draft. But it would be another seven years before 2007's Most Outstanding Canadian would find himself in his hometown uniform.

Around the same time that local products like Clermont couldn't find spots on the team, young Stu Foord was starting to take football seriously. One day the young Foord was invited to his minor league football coach's house. The butterflies started to poke at his stomach when he saw his favourite player, American-born running back Mike Saunders, and fellow Rider Kevin Mason sitting at the kitchen table. Saunders walked over and shook Foord's hand. After a few minutes of talking, however, Foord's butterflies disappeared. He realized that these big, intimidating people were just regular guys. "It opened up my eyes, and I realized that if you just work at it, you can have a life like that," Foord recalls.

From Regina Minor Football, Foord went on to play intercollegiate football with the Thom Trojans and developed a new outlook thanks to his coaches, Gerry Thompson and



photos: derek putz

Stu Foord's expansive pile of Rider game-day ticket stubs collected over the years (top). Foord looking at his former high school in Regina, Thom Collegiate (bottom).



Chuck Toth. They taught Foord that hard work pays off, no matter where you're from. "They really let you know what it was going to take to make it to the next level, and even how to be successful in life alone," says Foord.

After high school, Foord joined the newly formed Regina Prairie Thunder junior football team, and was the star there for five years. He could have taken the more traditional route of playing university ball, but he relished the opportunity to be a starter right away. Then, before the 2008 CFL season, Thunder coach Erwin Klempner managed to get Foord a tryout with the Riders. The rest was history. "The main thing was that I had the desire to make the team and that's ultimately what happened," Foord says.

Things had finally started to change in the province. Foord was one of three Regina-born players to join the squad in 2008, which had five Saskatchewan players overall.

Chris Getzlaf, one of Foord's teammates, was traded to the team during the 2007 season. Like Foord, Getzlaf grew up in Regina, a city where professional hockey—not football—was the career path for many young athletes. He could have followed his younger brother Ryan into the NHL, but Chris found his passion in football. After high school, he played on the Thunder, made the jump to university football, and then was drafted by the Hamilton Tiger-Cats in 2007.

Arriving at his first training camp in Steeltown, Getzlaf knew he would be competing with receivers who had NFL experience. He assumed that they had to be far better. But after the first day of tryouts, he realized that his own skill level wasn't that far off.

Getzlaf wasn't the only one who noticed that Canadians were holding their own. Riders' linebacker coach Alex Smith, who scouts twenty-seven universities for the Canadian draft, could see Canadian players improving. In particular, Smith began seeing more quality players coming out of the prairies. He chalked up the resurgence to better coaching, nutrition and fitness. As well, the art of using film to study play had

vastly improved. "The film from the States has always been really good," Smith explains. "But in Canada, even in the last five years, the film is dramatically better than it was before (and) the level of coaching has really improved not only in the province of Saskatchewan but across Canada."

The Roughriders had nine Saskatchewan players on the roster, including five from Regina—the highest number in eighteen years.

Through hard work, Canadian players were breaking the stigma that they were lesser players than Americans. Just ten years ago, for example, Foord and fellow Regina running back Neal Hughes might have been relegated to special teams. "(A Canadian) running back was very rare," Getzlaf notes. The assumption was that American halfbacks were superior.

But Stu Foord says he always felt that Canadian players had better knowledge of the Canadian game and its rules, and he used that to his advantage. And while American players will always come and go, he says, it's the Canadians, like Ray Elgaard and Aldag who stick around for their whole careers.

There could be even more local heroes in the future. Len Antonini, vice president of Regina Minor Football, says enrollment in the league more than doubled from 602 kids and 25 teams in 2004 to some 1,500 kids and 52 teams in 2009. With role models like Foord to look up to, football is once more becoming a tangible dream in Saskatchewan.

Foord remembers well the night before his first start with the Roughriders. Before he fell asleep, a vision played in his mind.

It was more tangible than his childhood daydreams. This time, he wasn't Don Narcisse. He was himself. He saw himself running for the goal line and scoring a touchdown. The next night, stepping on the field under the lights, he felt right at home. After all, Taylor Field was the place where he played high school and junior football for nine years of his life. It was also the place where he spent his childhood watching his favourite team. He contemplated those who played on this field before him: Ray Elgaard, Don Narcisse, Curtis Mayfield and Mike Saunders, all his favourites. He remembered back to when he was a boy, and a player tossed his gloves to him after a game. Foord wore the gloves for his entire minor league season that year. He made a mental note to do the same after the game, a game in which he would score two touchdowns, including one on his first carry.

Those touchdowns were the beginning of a historic run for the team. Over a five-game stretch, Regina boys Foord, Getzaf and Neal Hughes accounted for seven of the eight offensive touchdowns scored.

Heading into the 2009 football campaign, the Roughriders had nine Saskatchewan players on the roster, including five from Regina—the highest number in eighteen years. Not since 1979 had the Riders fielded more Regina-born players. Most importantly, these Regina athletes could soon become some of the best local players to ever play on Taylor Field turf. The penultimate moment came during the 2009 Western Final in Regina, when all of the Roughriders' touchdowns were scored by Canadian players. One week later at the Grey Cup, the team lost to the Montreal Alouettes in agonizing fashion. Still, fans could look back on their season with pride, knowing that football was once again a homegrown game in Saskatchewan.

Back home, Foord places the old ticket stubs back in the dresser drawer. He smiles. The game of football is just as fun for Foord as it's always been. Some guys play for money; Foord doesn't even have an agent. He gives his all for football because it's part of the place where he grew up, and he proclaims that while he'll only be a

Year	Players		Positional Breakdown					
	Regina	Sask Total	Western All-Star	OL/DL	WR/SB	HB/FB	LB/DB	Other
2009	5	9	3	5	2	2	-	-
2008	3	5	2	2	1	2	-	-
2007	4	6	2	2	2	1	1	-
2006	4	6	2	2	1	1	2	-
2005	4	6	2	2	1	1	2	-
2004	2	4	2	2	-	1	1	-
2003	1	3	2	2	-	-	1	-
2002	1	4	2	3	-	-	1	-
2001	1	5	2	3	1	-	1	-
2000	2	5	1	2	2	1	1	-
1999	2	5	1	2	1	1	1	-
1998	1	3	1	1	1	1	-	-
1997	2	4	1	1	1	1	1	-
1996	2	5	1	1	1	-	3	-
1995	2	5	2	2	1	-	2	-
1994	3	7	2	4	1	-	2	-
1993	3	5	2	2	2	-	1	-
1992	3	8	2	3	3	-	1	1
1991	4	9	2	4	3	-	1	1
1990	3	6	2	3	1	-	1	1
1989	4	8	2	5	2	-	1	-
1988	3	6	2	5	1	-	-	-
1987	3	8	2	6	1	1	-	-
1986	2	7	2	6	1	-	-	-
1985	3	9	2	6	1	-	2	-
1984	3	12	3	7	2	-	2	1
1983	2	10	1	5	2	1	1	1
1982	2	13	2	8	2	1	2	-
1981	1	10	2	6	2	-	2	-
1980	5	13	2	7	4	-	2	-
1979	7	13	2	5	4	-	3	1
1978	7	14	3	6	4	1	3	-
1977	5	10	3	5	3	1	1	-
1976	6	11	3	5	3	1	2	-
1975	5	10	3	3	2	2	3	-
1974	5	13	3	5	3	2	3	-
1973	5	14	3	6	3	3	2	-
1972	3	12	3	6	2	2	2	-
1971	2	12	3	6	2	2	2	-
1970	3	15	4	6	3	2	4	-
1969	3	15	4	6	3	2	4	-
1968	3	14	6	6	2	1	5	-
1967	3	12	5	4	2	1	5	-
1966	2	10	5	2	2	1	5	-
1965	2	9	5	2	2	1	4	-
1964	3	9	5	3	1	2	3	-
1963	2	9	5	4	-	1	4	-
1962	3	8	5	3	-	1	4	-
1961	4	9	4	4	-	1	4	-
1960	3	10	2	5	-	1	3	1

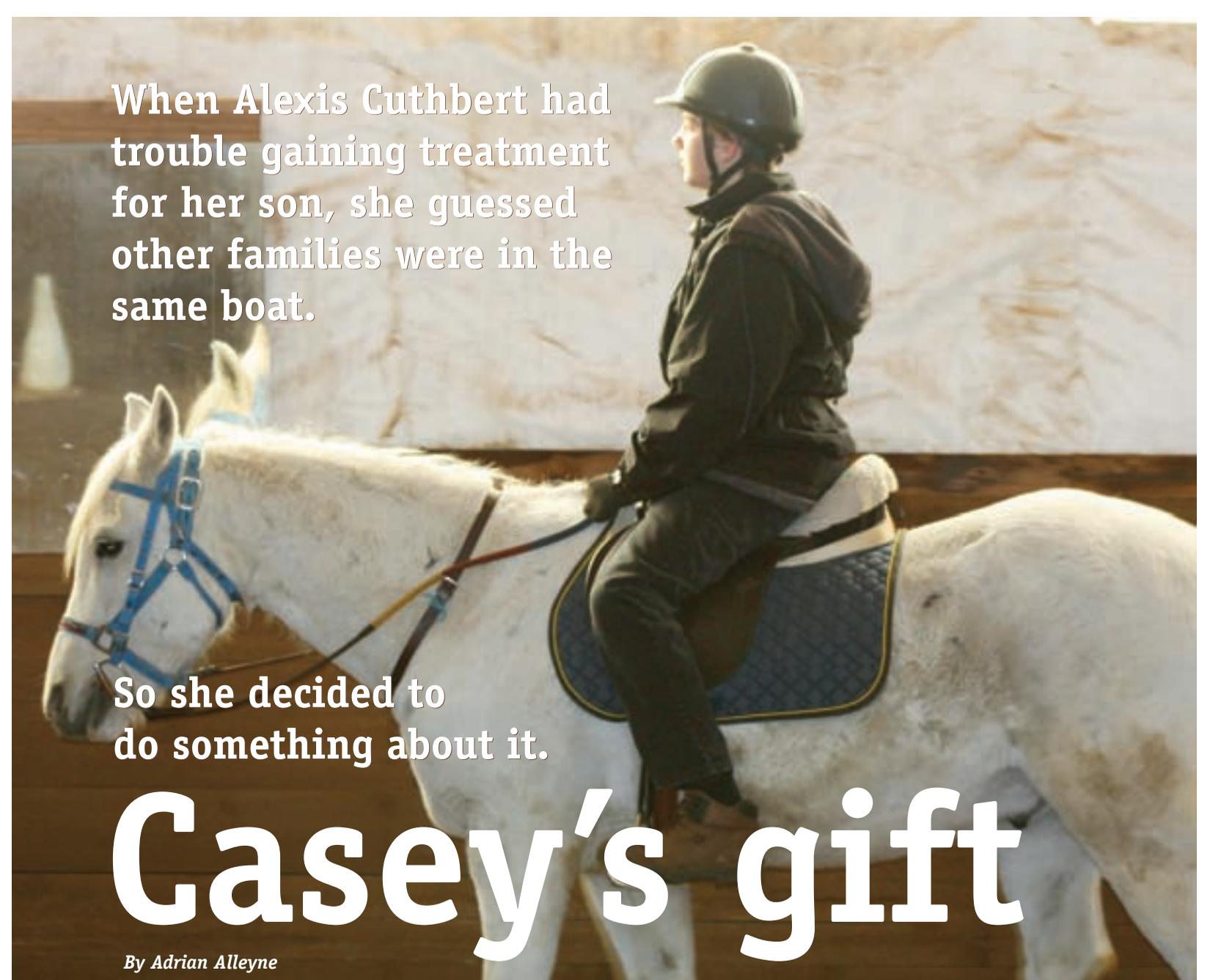
Table notes: The Regina and Sask Total columns only take into consideration players who played in at least one game during the season noted. Players must also be born in or have lived in Saskatchewan or Regina for most of their life to be counted. The Western All-Star column includes the number of Sask/Regina players who were on the roster who had received at least one West All-Star nomination in their career. Statistics prior to 1960 were unavailable. These numbers are compiled through Curt Phillip's Player Reference 1960-1996; 92 Years of Roughrider Football, compiled and edited by Edward Yuen; as well as CFL Facts, Figures and Records (1997-2008). table: derek putz

Rider player for a portion of his life, he will always remain a Rider fan.

When the 2010 season opens, a boy and his buddies will run towards the sound and smells of the stadium. One of the boys may

toss a long bomb to the other, who has the Number 22 and 'Foord' stitched on his shirt.

It's game day in Regina, and the boy knows he can pretend to be anyone he wants to be. 🏈

A photograph of a person wearing a dark riding helmet and jacket, sitting on a white horse. The horse is wearing a blue halter and a blue saddle pad. They are in a stable with a wooden wall and a white wall in the background.

When Alexis Cuthbert had trouble gaining treatment for her son, she guessed other families were in the same boat.

So she decided to do something about it.

Casey's gift

By Adrian Alleyne

photo: adrian alleyne

Music fills the room as mother and son play a duet. The mother plays the flute and her son the trombone. Their faces beam with joy, an expression that shows how close their journey has brought them.

Alexis Cuthbert first suspected that there may be something wrong with her son Casey when he was two. He started to speak, but his communication wasn't developing. He didn't play with toys in a usual manner, and wasn't interested in playing with other kids. As he got older he became more withdrawn and more obsessive. He was comfortable with his mother but when he was in a social situation he would remove himself and play alone. He was very

sensitive to sound and his mother couldn't figure out why he reacted the way he did to certain things.

Doctors were reluctant to give any type of diagnosis before the age of three. Kids could be late developers and boys talked later, they said. But then Cuthbert's parents saw someone on TV talking about their child's experience. It sounded like they were talking about Casey.

Cuthbert didn't want to believe it at first. She had experience working as a registered psychiatric nurse, and had witnessed the most extreme cases.

It was time to take him to the family doctor in Regina to get some answers. She told the doctor what she suspected. The

doctor looked at her son across the room. "If you think that's what it is, I'll give you that diagnosis," he said. It wasn't the answer she was looking for. She asked for a referral to a pediatrician, who conducted a series of tests. "Well, you know I'm not really qualified to tell you...but it could be, it's looking like that," he said.

Next stop, a child psychologist. But they'd have to wait until January or February for an appointment. She looked around for another city in Saskatchewan to take him. Waiting lists elsewhere were even longer. Saskatoon had a wait of eighteen months. So she started looking outside Saskatchewan.

Three months later, she sat in the doc-

tor's office in Medicine Hat, Alberta with her son by her side. She thought about how frustrating the last few months had been, how much time was wasted. To help Casey she needed just one word, a name for his symptoms.

In the end it was very simple. The child psychiatrist asked her a series of questions about her son and his behaviour. She observed him in the room, and then confirmed what Alexis had already suspected. Casey was diagnosed with high functioning autism.

High functioning autism is one of a number of developmental disorders that fall under the category of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs), among the most common developmental disabilities affecting Canadian children. In Saskatchewan, about one in 165 children born will have an ASD; autism is four times more common in boys than girls and is more prevalent than cancer, diabetes, spina bifida and Down syndrome.

Life isn't easy for people with autism or for those caring for them. Kids with autism express emotions in unexpected ways. If they are irritated, they may respond with rage. When merely content, they can appear uncontrollably jubilant. Other times it may seem they're uncaring because they fail to express emotion. Not being able to communicate adds to their stress, affecting day-to-day activities like learning, communicating, and physical health.

After the Medicine Hat trip, Cuthbert began reading everything she could about autism. She learned that the medical community had advanced its diagnostic techniques since her early nursing days. Today's diagnosis falls across a range of disability levels, recognizing that no two people with autism are the same. Doctors look for four characteristics: difficulty with social relationships; difficulty with verbal and non-verbal communication; resistance to change in routine; and difficulty with the development of play and imagination. One person may display all four characteristics, while another may show signs of two.

Although there are helpful medications, they don't treat the core features of the

disorder itself. "Medications aim at symptom control in order to improve function," explains Dr. Susan Petryk, a developmental pediatrician at Regina's Wascana Rehabilitation Centre. This might include medication for hyperactivity, sleep disorder and other related problems.

There's no quick 'cure' for autism. Instead, children and their families are

"People kept on saying... 'You need help, you need help,' and I kept thinking, 'Yeah, but who's going to help me?'"

— Alexis Cuthbert

assisted to set up a routine, keeping expectations and tasks clear, straightforward and on schedule. Treatments include speech and language therapy, sensory integration and motor skills therapy, as well as social and play-related activities. Children with severe autism usually require structured education and behavioural programs. This includes one-on-one teacher to student lessons, or lessons in small groups. Treatments can be offered in schools, in the home or at an agency.

From her hours of reading, Cuthbert learned the earlier a child is diagnosed, the earlier an intervention can take place, which can improve the chances of a child making gains. But unfortunately for children in Saskatchewan, early intervention isn't always possible. Dr. Petryk acknowledges the system is bottlenecked. "The situation is becoming worse because the kids need intervention as soon as autism is even suspected but can't get into programs until there has been at least some assessment," she says.

The value of therapy is abundantly clear when Casey bursts into the riding stable for his weekly session with the Regina Therapeutic Riding Association. Meeting

Casey for the first time is a humbling experience. He's only twelve but he's personable, energetic, smart and ready to get to work.

He arrives with a little jump to his step. "Hi Catherine, hi Catherine," he calls out to his riding instructor, Catherine Sneath. He even takes the time to introduce himself to the stranger his mom told him would be there to watch him ride.

With a little help from his mom, Casey gets his boots on and runs off to gather the rest of his gear: the saddle, reins, and other equipment that most people don't know how to use. For Casey, it's no problem. This is a routine, this is comfortable. It's the reason he was so excited when he came through the door.

Blue, an Arabian-Quarter Horse cross, has been helping Casey with his development for the past five years. Blue is twenty-nine years old. None of the other horses in the stable have his experience and patience. He's a calming influence for Casey if the boy comes to a lesson over-excited. With Casey on his back, the horse slowly makes his way around the riding ring like a grandfather walking with his grandchild. It's easy to see why Casey is so comfortable with him. Casey calmly guides Blue into a slow trot and then a gallop, taking directions from Sneath. Passing one of the mirrors mounted on the wall, he slows ever so slightly and steals a glance. He looks as experienced as any other rider.

As she watches from a nearby room, Cuthbert explains how far Casey has come. At first, he just slumped down on the horse, with four volunteers walking carefully by his side. Now he sits up straight and rides all by himself.

Sneath has been working with Casey since he began riding five years ago. "When you see someone reach their success, like Casey, who now is able to ride independently, it's wonderful," she says. It's testament to what much-needed therapy can accomplish for autistic children.

But it wasn't easy to get this far. As soon as she received the diagnosis, Cuthbert began looking for services that could help Casey. She soon discovered that



photos: adrian alleyne

Instructor Sneath and Casey with Blue, a 29-year-old Arabian-Quarter Horse cross.

they were either inaccessible because of long waiting lists or extremely expensive. A single mom at the time, she knew something needed to be done for Casey, but wasn't sure what that was.

"I felt like every day that I stuck my head in the sand and felt sorry for myself was one less day that he could get whatever care he needed...It frustrated and aggravated me at the time because people kept on saying, 'You need help, you need help,' and I kept thinking, 'Yeah, but who's going to help me?'" she recalls.

The few services that were available in Regina were mostly managed through a struggling, underfunded, non-profit organization, the Autism Resource Centre. Since 1977 the centre has worked hard to provide families with functional assessments

and consultations, individual planned programs, social skills groups, family support work program, summer camps, a resource library and a website.

It's a lot to deliver and there's never enough funding and resources to go around, according to Theresa Savaria, executive director of the centre. Saskatchewan is the only province that doesn't have an intensive early intervention program, she notes. "What is difficult about working at Autism Resource Centre is knowing we could help more families, but we are hindered by the lack of funding and resources."

Cuthbert knew she wasn't alone. She also guessed that if she was having difficulties, then other families couldn't be doing much better. So in 2005, five years after Casey was diagnosed, Alexis decided to launch her own service for children with autism.

The Casey Foundation is a non-profit organization that exists to enrich the lives of children while providing awareness and funding to help families access treatment. Cuthbert explains that she wanted to create a place where people feel they can come for help. Anyone caring for a child who falls under the umbrella of autism spectrum disorder can apply for funding from the foundation. The only other criterion is funding must directly help the child, whether it's quality running shoes or swimming lessons.

In the past four years the foundation has

helped more than 150 Saskatchewan children, distributing some \$38,000 to families. Each year it has continued to grow. Last year's funding limit was \$500 per child, but the foundation is hoping to raise the ceiling this year. As well, there are bursaries for summer camps, such as those offered by the Autism Resource Centre.

Joy-ell Salmueller's son Isaac has autism. The Casey Foundation helped cover the cost of speech therapy and other programs. "There's a special summer program that the Autism Resource Centre runs and the Casey Foundation has helped us with Isaac attending some weeks in the program during the summer," says Salmueller. "He needs a one-on-one worker and he needs special programming, so that's a big help for us."

Cuthbert's goal is to assist as many people as possible, but she wishes there was no need to begin with.

Autism advocates may take hope in the fact that autism has finally appeared on the provincial government's radar. In 2008, the province announced \$3 million in annual funding for autism resources, which will go to staff and services in every health district in the province. As well, a provincial autism advisory committee was formed to provide the Ministry of Health with up-to-date information on ASD support and services. According to Savaria, it was an important commitment for the province to make, raising hope that an early intervention program can now be implemented.

Back at the riding stable, the lesson ends and Casey runs to a cupboard stocked with horse food and brushes. He laughs as Blue nibbles treats out of a dish. Then he gently begins to groom the old horse. That's the way riders thank their horses, his mom explains.

Like so many Saskatchewan children diagnosed with autism, Casey's journey has been long and frustrating, but not without promise.

Cuthbert says she never wants to give anyone false hope, but for her and Casey life got better over time. "For me the best thing I guess I could say to parents is there are people who understand, and to try and get some sort of help." 🐾





Big screen, small crowd

Unlike other stories from Regina on inauguration day, this photo shows a sparse scene of few people watching the show in a large university theatre. The face of U.S. President Barack Obama and empty seats were a contrasting scene to the celebrations next door in the Lazy Owl student pub.

DANIELLE MARIO



Into the dark

What would you do if your child fell off the face of the earth?

By Casey MacLeod

If you were to walk through the door of the Alix house in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, up five stairs and across the sun-warmed hardwood floors into the dining room, you would find yourself face-to-face with a large photo of a good-looking, smiling young man, with hazel eyes and a scar above his left eyebrow. The picture tells you a story of a happy, vibrant, kind young man with an obvious love of his family. You may even turn around, look for him, hope to see him standing in the kitchen doorway or hear him coming

down the hallway so you can meet him. But that won't happen. The young man is Dylan Koshman, and no one has seen or heard from him since October 11, 2008.

Two days before Dylan disappeared he talked to his mother, Melanie Alix, on MSN about his plans for Thanksgiving. While Dylan would phone a family member whenever he could, Melanie says she talked to him every second day on MSN.

On the eleventh, Melanie saw Dylan online and sent him a message: "Happy Thanksgiving. I love you. Call us." But

Dylan—who often lectured his older siblings about staying in touch—never called. Shortly after two o'clock that morning, after getting into an argument with his cousins, he walked out the door of their southwest Edmonton home into the dark, wearing nothing but a t-shirt and jeans.

On the fifteenth, Dylan's twenty-five-year-old brother Derek called Melanie. Dylan's girlfriend hadn't been able to reach him for a few days, he said. Melanie knew something wasn't right.

"I think Melanie knew from the start,"



photo: casey macleod

says close friend Alexis North. “She phoned and I came over that day and I brought her a sandwich. She had Dylan’s pictures all over. She knew something wasn’t (right). It had already been four days, so you know something’s really wrong when you don’t hear from your kid.”

Two days later, Melanie and her husband Denis, who she married in 1995, were on their way to Edmonton.

The two arrived in Edmonton, six days after Dylan was last seen. By now, the police had launched a full-scale search.

Constable Sean Jenkinson of the Edmonton Police Service’s Missing Persons Unit was on Dylan’s case since the beginning. “There was the initial search done around the residence and then I did a secondary large-scale search based on some information we received,” he recalls. The larger search enlisted about thirty civilians, three dog teams and search managers.

While the police began to conduct their

investigation, Melanie and Denis refused to sit idly by, waiting for the phone to ring. Armed with pictures and missing person posters, and wearing shirts with Dylan’s picture on it, they hit the streets. Melanie visibly pales as she recalls handing out posters in the West Edmonton Mall for the first time. As she and Denis left the mall, they were surrounded by swirling discarded leaflets, each one bearing Dylan’s face. After that, Melanie pleaded with anyone she handed a poster to: “Please put this up somewhere, don’t throw it away.”

The couple’s friends and family began to show up in Edmonton. Together they began conducting their own foot searches. “It was hard to sit there and wait for orders from headquarters,” explains long-time friend Cheryl Styles, who travelled to Edmonton to join the search. “You’d sit there and you’d eat and you’d wait, and it was the waiting—we had to get out and do something or we would have gone crazy.”

The experience was extremely frustrating.

The group had no idea where to start, and the fact that Edmonton is the second most wooded city in Canada didn’t make things any easier. They kept waiting for someone to step in and point them in the right direction, but no one did. Undaunted, they pressed on. Using Dylan’s house as a headquarters, they sent out groups to hospitals, clinics, shelters and fast food places in the area, and coordinated ground searches of areas as wide as seven miles.

Time passed, with still no clues. Eventually Melanie and Denis had to return to Moose Jaw without Dylan.

Back home in Moose Jaw, Melanie pulls out what appears to be an average city map of Edmonton. But when she spreads it out on the coffee table, you can see the coloured stickers: red for where posters were handed out, blue for areas of trees and bushes that they’ve searched and green for areas Dylan frequented.

Constable Jenkins is thankful for the careful groundwork. “They’re the type of



photos: casey macleod

Melanie and Denis refused to sit waiting for the phone to ring.

family that you hope to deal with," he says. "We don't find anyone just on our own. It's not some magic that we do here—it's with help from the public and the families." Dylan's case has received extensive media coverage, something Jenkinson credits to the continued efforts of the family. But the mystery remains.

Of the 6,664 missing persons files in Alberta from 2008, ninety-six per cent were resolved. Of the approximately 1,500 missing person reports that were filed in Edmonton that year, 160 were exclusively handled by Jenkinson and fellow officer Constable Jim Gurney; of those 160 files, three were carried forward into 2009, two of which the unit was "fairly certain of the outcome." The third case was Dylan's. One year later, Dylan's picture still smiles out

from the force's missing person's website. It's hard on the officers, too, when a case remains unsolved.

"Some of the challenges are, in fact, illustrated in Dylan's case—the files that there isn't a clear answer—as a lot of our files we're able to resolve," says Jenkinson. "The ones that linger on, that's a challenge definitely. And also there's the toll it can take on families we deal with. We like to finish things, so having no end is tough."

Jenkinson and Gurney agree that the length of time that Dylan has been missing is the most frustrating aspect of the case. On Dylan's twenty-second birthday, April 11, 2009, he had been missing for six months. According to Alberta Missing Persons, nearly all cases are solved within six months to a year; anything that runs longer is unusual and tends to raise alarm bells.

Gurney says it's cases like Dylan's that really stick with him. "It's just kind of the nature of policing, you just after a while learn how to deal with it. You don't take it personally as much as you can, but at the same time you do get personally involved in some of the files because that's what helps you to really do a better job.

"But you have to be able to turn it off at the end of the day. For the most part we can, but of course there's always that little bit in the back of your mind."

While the Edmonton police have three binders of information on Dylan's case, they have no definitive answers. The last activity on his cell phone came an hour after he left his cousin's house, and his wallet was found in a neighbouring yard. Knowing Dylan had consumed alcohol before he left his house, police have raised

the possibility that he may simply have lain down somewhere, fallen asleep and died of hypothermia. But Jenkinson is quick to point out that that is just one possibility.

"Truly, the only person that knows what happened to Dylan, is Dylan right now."

Being back in Moose Jaw among family and friends is a great help to Melanie and Denis, but they are still going through their own "personal hell," jumping every time the phone rings, and trying to maintain some sense of normalcy for the rest of their children. Dylan's older sister Tara lives in Red Deer and has travelled to Edmonton to help with the searches, and has created a Facebook group about Dylan's disappearance. Meanwhile brother Derek is taking Dylan's disappearance very hard, Melanie says. The two were three years apart and more like best friends than brothers.

"He has a sense of guilt, too: 'It should've been me, not him.' We all wonder what could we have done different to have this not happen, and really there's nothing."

Her two youngest sons, Tanner and Logan, are having a hard time as well. When Logan heard that Dylan's pictures were going to be broadcast again he became distressed. Twelve years old at the time, he knew the kids at school would start staring and asking questions again. Tanner, two years older than Logan, has had a rough go of it as well. He found out that Dylan was missing when he overheard Melanie panicking on the phone.

"I was working nights and all of a sudden the phone rings, and it's Tanner," remembers Denis. "And I can't even understand a word he's saying, he's balling and talking to me at the same time...I couldn't understand what he was saying."

Dylan's disappearance has also been extremely hard on Melanie's mother Helen—with whom Dylan was very close—and her ex-husband Daniel Koshman, as well as some close family friends.

"It's survivor's guilt, being here and being okay and knowing that he's not. I know I've struggled with that," says Cheryl Styles, the friend who joined them in

Edmonton. Talking about Dylan, she's unable to hold back her tears.

"We still have the hope that he is alive, but we want to have closure, we want to find him no matter what, we want this to end, not go on forever," says Melanie, holding a Kleenex to her eye. "Because there's no closure, it is like living in a nightmare constantly, waking up every morning and realizing that this is not a bad nightmare it's something we're going through."

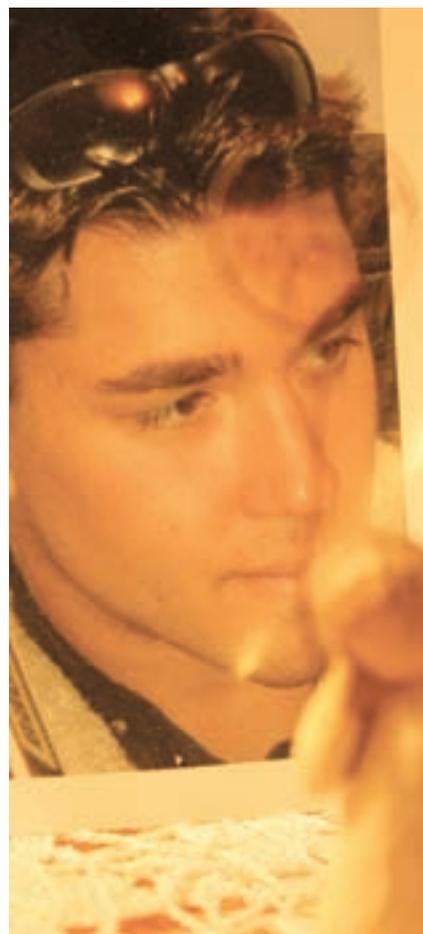
But they refuse to give up, drawing on each other, family, friends, and, in some cases, complete strangers for the strength to press forward.

During the first three weeks after Dylan went missing, family and friends made the trek to Edmonton to do whatever they could to help, including bringing food. With no deep freeze at Dylan's house, that soon became too much of a good thing. Not wanting the food to go to waste, Melanie thought of the many homeless people they had seen during their searches and her heart went out to them. So down to a homeless shelter went Denis with a box full of baking.

Once the couple returned to Moose Jaw, local organizations and restaurants began holding fundraisers for the family so they could afford to continue their search. Back in Edmonton, an anonymous donor offered a \$5,000 reward. In January, the Pattison Group donated six weeks' worth of billboard space in Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon and Winnipeg.

Through it all, Melanie says it has been her faith that has given her the most strength. A practicing Catholic, she says that despite everything she has never questioned her faith.

"I've questioned, 'Why me? Why is this happening to me? What did I do so wrong? Why am I and my family suffering so much?'" she admits. "But I've never been angry with God. Millions of people suffer and have had things happen to them that don't seem fair either, so I can't be angry with Him. God is a loving god. He's not here to punish us. He's here to help us through this."



"I've never been angry with God."

Melanie's friend Alexis North feels that Dylan's case highlights a real gap in the system; if a child goes missing there are plenty of resources and national organizations, but when someone over eighteen disappears there is major lack of resources. This is something that RCMP superintendent Michael Sekela of the Alberta Missing Persons Initiative hopes to rectify. The initiative runs out of Project KARE and includes all police services in Alberta. The database contains files on all missing persons and unidentified human remains from Alberta, British Columbia, the Yukon, the North West Territories and Nunavut, and allows officers to search and cross-reference information.

They've had some breakthroughs. "For example, in 1996, a fellow went missing

“Even though there’s a lot of darkness we know that there’s light...I can’t give up...I’d never give up.”

from St. Albert, Alberta. Just last year they found a human skull in Abbotsford, British Columbia. There appeared to be a hole in the skull, so we queried ‘shunt’ and we got a hit from that file in Alberta and it was confirmed through DNA that that was one and the same person,” explains Sekela.

In Alberta there are 343 ongoing missing persons cases dating back to the early 1960s. Saskatchewan’s numbers are much smaller, standing at ninety-six, dating all the way back to 1935. But that number is still too high in Sekela’s mind. He hopes to soon add Saskatchewan and Manitoba files

into the data base, and to eventually include all of Canada.

Meanwhile, Melanie, Denis, Tara, Derek and a couple of friends returned to Edmonton for the fourth time at the end of March, 2009. While handing out posters in downtown Edmonton, a man approached them and said that he had seen Dylan on the Light Rail Transit on the afternoon of March 23. So far the police investigation into the sighting has not turned up anything, but family and friends remain hopeful.

“Even though there’s a lot of darkness we know that there’s light,” says Melanie. “I

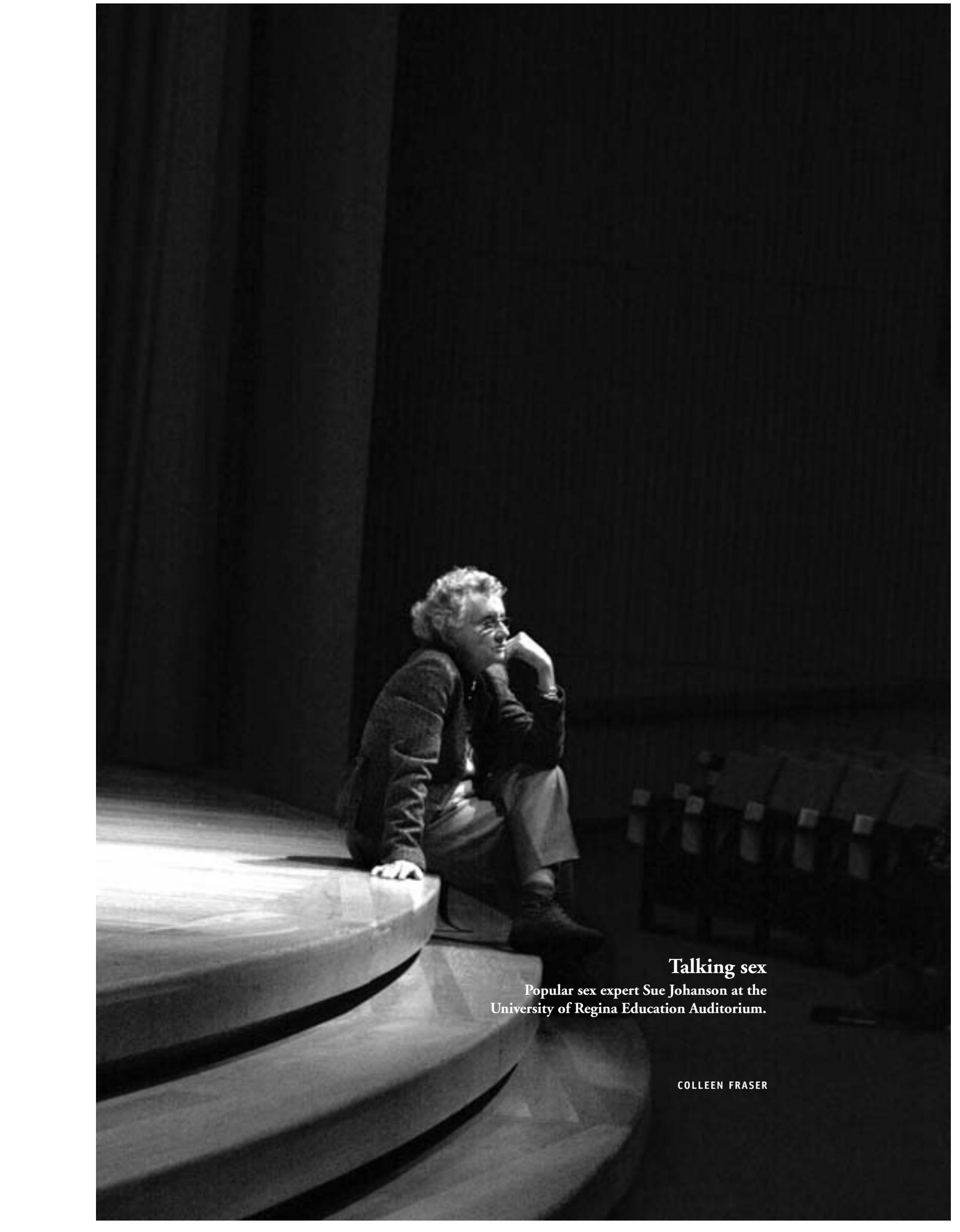
can’t give up. I’d never give up on any of my children.”

2009 has blended into 2010. The answer to Dylan’s disappearance is still out there, somewhere. Until the case is resolved, Melanie will continue to spend time at her prayer table, holding onto the wooden cross that hangs around her neck next to a sterling chain that once hung around the neck of her missing son, gazing at a wall of pictures, posters, letters of support, and inspirational sayings. Behind a lit candle stands a ceramic angel holding four letters: HOPE. 🐦



photo: casey macleod

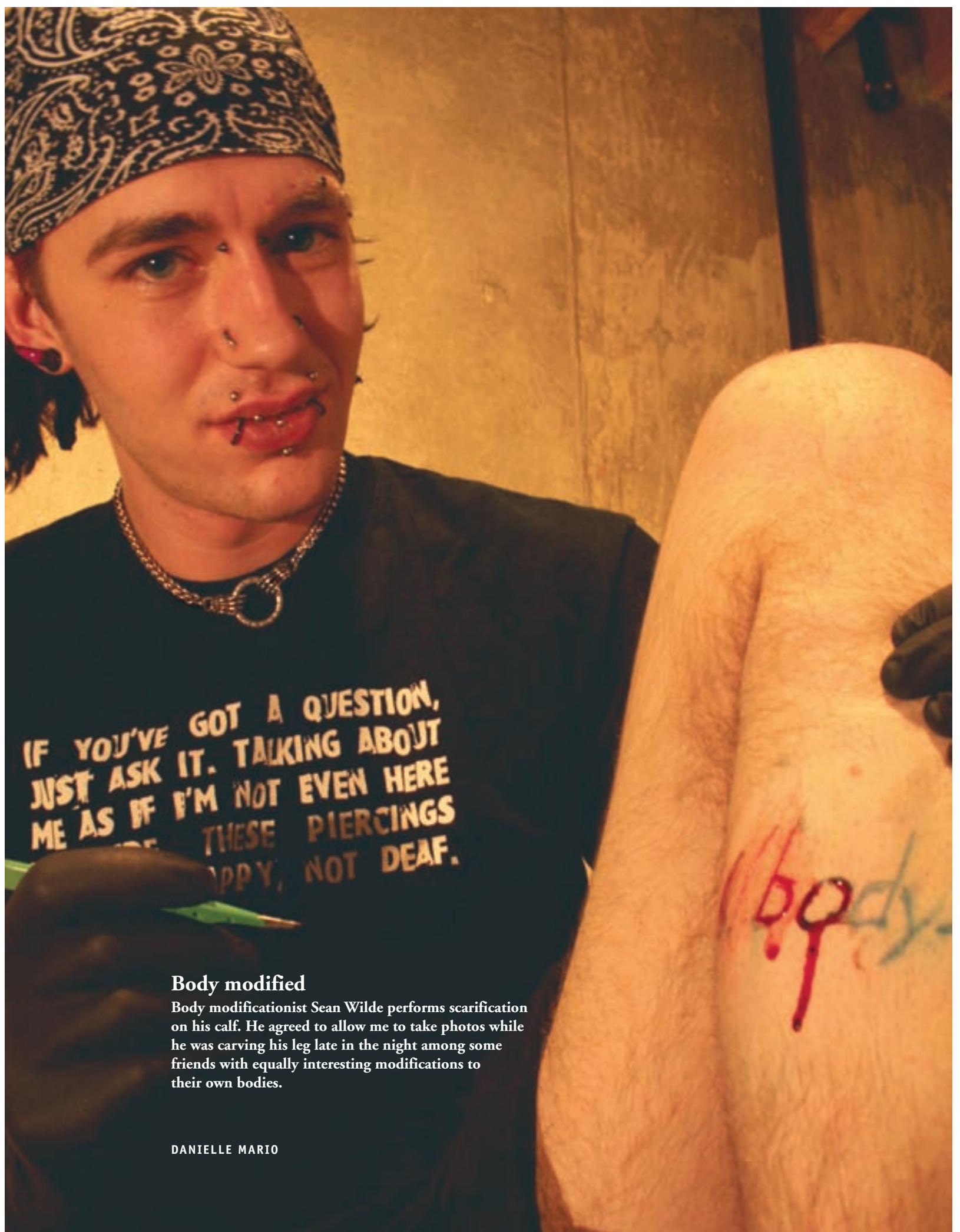
If anyone has information regarding the disappearance of Dylan, they are asked to please contact the Edmonton Police Service (1-780-423-4567) or CRIMESTOPPERS (1-800-222-TIPS).



Talking sex

Popular sex expert Sue Johanson at the University of Regina Education Auditorium.

COLLEEN FRASER



Body modified

Body modificationist Sean Wilde performs scarification on his calf. He agreed to allow me to take photos while he was carving his leg late in the night among some friends with equally interesting modifications to their own bodies.

DANIELLE MARIO



DJ

Regina's DJ Kracka Jack
with some of his ammo.

SEAN LERAT-STETNER

essay

Educating the machine

By Greg Girard

They say formal education can make you a living, but self-education can make you a fortune. So how did universities come to garner so much acclaim for bringing social and financial success—as if they were a foolproof path to prosperity? From a very young age children are taught that education is important, but not necessarily why. Most people seem to inherently understand the disadvantages of ignorance, but opinions regarding the importance—indeed the purpose—of a formal education vary.

University of Regina president Vianne Timmons believes university prepares people for a profession and is “a natural path to a career.” When the president of a university says that post-secondary education is a natural path into a career, it’s no surprise why so many people think university is the way to success. That said, there is more than one perspective on post-secondary academic institutions. “In a way, it’s off-loading costs onto the individual,” says Roger Petry, a U of R philosophy professor. “It ends up being the student that has to pay for his or her own training—even though it’s the market and the business community who benefit.”

Petry’s insight echoes the sentiment of prominent Internet marketer Perry Marshall. “Only a fool would think that the true, altruistic intent of your local school system is to teach your child to be an autonomous, critically thinking, discerning voter, citizen, scientist or entrepreneur who lives an intellectually rich life and likewise

teaches his children and grandchildren how to be independent and to keep his government officials in check,” Perry writes in an article on his website, titled ‘Escape from the Institutional Straightjacket.’

“If you got out of school having...expanded your mind and your horizons, that was a happy accident,” he concludes. “Precious little of that was actually designed into the process.”

“If you got out of school having...expanded your mind and your horizons, that was a happy accident.”

— Perry Marshall

If Petry and Marshall are both right, then the purpose of the system they describe is not to expand the minds and horizons of individuals or to teach them to be autonomous, critical thinking citizens, but to train them, at their own expense, to integrate into jobs that fuel the economy.

“I’m not sure I would agree with that,” responds president Timmons. “I would like to think that our job as educators is to educate individuals to challenge the system, as well as to fit into the system...we develop good citizens who think critically.”

Yet a link has undoubtedly been forged

between North America’s business and education worlds. Between 1896 and 1920, over the course of twenty years, a small group of entrepreneurs and investors began subsidizing university education in the U.S., investing more money than the government itself. Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller were among this elite group.

“In our dreams...people yield themselves with perfect docility to our molding hands,” reads the first mission statement of Rockefeller’s General Education Board, penned in 1906 under the title ‘Occasional Letter Number One.’ The letter goes on to declare that the board’s purpose is not to “embryo” great artists, musicians, lawyers and statesmen “of whom we have ample supply.” Instead, “The task we set before ourselves is very simple...We will organize children...and teach them to do in a perfect way the things their fathers and mothers are doing in an imperfect way.”

Think about it. The whole school day, right from the outset of the elementary years, is structured exactly the same as a workday. You get to school at eight-thirty in the morning, you’re in class for two hours, then there is a fifteen minute break or “recess,” after which you come back to class for a few more hours before a lunch break – and it’s the same thing in the afternoon. Every day is the same and, just like the workweek, stretches from Monday to Friday.

Here’s the catch: students only get about an hour of instruction in any one area, or class, each day. So even if you’re

“We want one class to have a liberal education. We want another class, a very much larger class of necessity, to forgo the privilege of a liberal education and fit themselves to perform specific difficult manual tasks.”

— Woodrow Wilson



photo: greg girard

lucky enough to actually be interested in whatever subject matter has been approved for the general curriculum, the system is structured such that just when you start to become curious about it, the bell rings and it's time for the next class. Students aren't given the opportunity to explore any subjects long enough to become passionately interested in any one field. Instead they are forced to ration and allocate time and energy for each different class and, of course, the homework that each class requires—all completely oblivious to where individual strengths and interests lie. It helps to condition people to be 'well-rounded' (or shallow and disinterested) individuals. Somehow, though, eight hours of school each day still isn't enough time for students to become sufficiently well-rounded; homework is also necessary to ensure that students don't waste too much time exploring the world when they aren't in class. The funny thing about homework is that it manages to combine the private sphere of home with the public sphere of work.

Meanwhile life within school is structured to be boring, such that only con-

sumption guarantees relief. Fast food and brand name fashion become what life is really about. This is what school implicitly teaches, accomplished by presenting students with material and class work that is

“In our dreams...people yield themselves with perfect docility to our molding hands.”

— John D. Rockefeller, 1906

not relevant to the experiences and questions they have about life right now. “The net effect of making all schoolwork external to individual longings, experiences, questions, and problems, is to render the victim listless,” writes John Taylor Gatto in his book *The Underground History of American Education*.

Chris Rempel is someone who has never

been rendered listless. At age nineteen he launched a skateboard manufacturing company. Within a year, he figured out that it was the networks you make—not the products—that really matter in business. So he began selling his network-creating abilities, helping companies find each other and form useful partnerships. In a sense, he created his own line of work, relying on life experience as his teacher. Rempel believes the way schools grade students is a natural barrier against these kinds of creative leaps. If you receive an A+ on an assignment, chances are it's because you did the same thing as other students, but did it a little better. “What that subconsciously teaches you is that you have to just follow suit, and do your best, and hope that you come out on top—or at least in the top end of the pile,” Rempel says.

As well, formal education isn't set up for diving into an interest with the kind of all-consuming obsession that guarantees excellence. Rempel's experience reflects the words of Gatto: “Growth and mastery come only to those who vigorously self-direct. Initiating, creating, doing, reflecting, freely associating, enjoying privacy—these are



photos: greg girard

precisely what the structures of schooling are set up to prevent.”

This is of particular importance to recent university grads who so often emerge from the halls of academia with copious amounts of debt and a desperate need to make money. For a twenty-five-year-old carrying \$50,000 in student loans, how long will it take just to break even again? Remember, one is not even guaranteed employment upon the completion of a degree.

Matt Florek went to university to certify himself as a professional, earning a degree in education. Three-and-a-half years after graduating, Florek has \$35,000 in outstanding student loans and has yet to find permanent employment. He lives in his parents’ basement, waiting for a call from the school board to fill in for another teacher for the day.

“You expect to come away with something for all the time and money you put into it,” Florek says. “It’s something you’ve been told through family, school, you see friends and siblings go through and have success, so it’s kind of embedded in the mind.”

How many university graduates with no

job and a mountain of debt are likely to take time off to travel the world or find themselves? Probably not many. Their fate is to become “indebted, subservient, well-trained worker bees,” according to Marshall.

“Your bureaucracy is a mill that grinds up human beings and turns them into fertilizer for a planned economy.”

— John Taylor Gatto

John Taylor Gatto, the education critic quoted earlier in this article, was named teacher of the year in New York City in 1991. In his acceptance speech (which was also his resignation speech) Gatto claimed the only reason he won the award was because he didn’t follow standard procedure. Instead he taught unauthorized mate-

rial and took students on unauthorized field-trips, all the while telling administrators what they wanted to hear so as not to raise any suspicion. “Your bureaucracy is a mill that grinds up human beings and turns them into fertilizer for a planned economy,” he said. It was a fairly damning speech to say the least, however, it seems to have failed in affecting any real change in the way the schools are structured and run.

So what other choices are there?

Basically there is nothing stopping people from learning—and becoming—whatever they want, beyond the tendency to submit to the ‘norms’ and follow what everybody else does. “Is there any wonder why no one really gets ahead?” Rempel asks. “It’s because they’re all doing the same thing!” Education and success aren’t necessarily about training yourself just to become good at something for the sake of earning a living—it’s about finding out who you are and what you are already good at so you can contribute positively to the community as a whole. In the words of Rempel: “Successful people aren’t doing stuff that’s harder; they’re just doing stuff that’s different.” 🐦





Sweet Job

Andrea Boychuk of Dessart Sweets spends her days surrounded by Coca-Cola jawbreakers, Lucky Elephant popcorn and other treats.

JAY TENEYCKE



Smoking Man

Lawrence Moss enjoys a cigarette on an unusually warm winter night outside Moose Jaw's Valley View Centre. Lawrence was brought to the centre when he was twelve years old, and has lived there since.

NOEL BUSSE

Burned straight

*My reflection seems to glare back at me:
a short skinny West Indian girl sporting hair like a Brillo pad.*

By Bryony Fortune

Standing in front of the full length mirror in my bedroom carefully contemplating my reflection, I once again feel a slight twinge of disappointment. I had just washed and conditioned my hair and, even after years of routinely doing so, I'm still a touch bewildered. There is no gloss or bounce to my hair, no flowing locks. Instead I'm looking at my reflection which seems to glare back at me: a short skinny West Indian girl of twelve sporting a full head of tightly gathered wool like a Brillo pad, where hair should be. Pulling at a string of hair, I resolve myself to what I am about to endure.

My sister is sitting on the side of the bed with a pillow placed at her feet. I fling myself down onto the pillow with my back turned towards her. I'm at her mercy. Laid

out neatly at my sister's side are the tools of my imminent and unavoidable torture, one fine-toothed comb to make a path through my hair, one wide-toothed to actually comb my hair, one hard bristle brush to help detangle knots and one container of hair grease.

Gripping my hair she tugs my head from side to side, again and again, a familiar gesture. As she announces her decision to start from the back of my head and work her way forward, I automatically assume the position. Still sitting on the pillow, I swing my body around to face her, each leg folded unto the other, my head tucked between her knees. Satisfied that I'm positioned properly, she is ready to begin.

My body tenses. As the comb touches the back of my neck, I don't even have to look to know that it's the fine-toothed comb

that touches me, the one sister uses to make pathways along my scalp. Painstakingly, she forges a trail through my mass of hair, repeatedly making odd starts and stops every few inches as the comb gets tangled. Finally when there is an inch-wide section of my hair running horizontally along the base of my neck, she applies the hair grease to my scalp; this helps to both soften my hair and prevent dry scalp. Grabbing the wide-toothed comb, she starts combing out the knots and tangles. Each swipe of the comb pulls at my head and my scalp tingles, not in a pleasant way;

it's as if a tug-of-war has broken out with my comb-wielding sister on one side and my abused scalp on the other.

My eyes prickle with tears, but I don't complain. My sister is doing me a favor. So instead of voicing any irritability I close my eyes, quietly flinch and brace myself for the duration. Once, twice, a dozen times the comb passes through my hair. With each successive swipe, the journey is more fluid, until finally the comb cuts through the inch-wide section of my hair like a hot knife through butter. Satisfied, my sister grabs three pieces of hair and starts to very tightly weave them into a single cornrow against my scalp. I sigh in relief, even though I know the whole process will be repeated over a hundred more times. I can't help but think, "One down..."

Finally at the end of four hours, interspersed with two bathroom breaks and several knuckle raps, my sister taps me on my head and announces, "I'm done." Like a blind man reading Braille, I touch my hair. My body aches, my head throbs dully, but I can just tell it's been worth it. It's always worth it. The cornrows are tightly pulled against my scalp and feel a bit uncomfortable; it's a feeling that I know from experience will last a few days. Slowly I make my way over to the mirror. My hair is stitched to my head so tightly that I now have a slightly Asian look around the eyes. But who cares? My hair looks amazing. A series of intricately woven braids separated by irregular roadways come together in the centre of my head to form a braided pony tail. Angling my head left to right, I couldn't be happier, if a bit sore. I once asked my sister what she saw just before she prepares to braid someone's hair and her answer was simple. "Nothing," she said. "I



photos: colleen fraser

never have a style in mind, I see what happens.” Like an artist she sits before a blank canvas and lets inspiration guide her.

It’s happened before or at least some version of it. They practically salivate over the phone during the initial interview. They want you. Walking into the room, the suit crisp, clean and well-fitted, your confidence is at an all-time high. Your prospective employers look up, smiles at the ready. Then there is a telling silence and smiles sag. They’ve gotten their first look at your hair. Dreadlocks. Furtively looking at each other they begin the interview, all the while sneaking glances at your head. You immediately know it’s over, you’re not going to get the new job or promotion.

Your hair isn’t Caucasian enough.

Traditionally black women have embraced European standards of beauty. Imagine tilling the soil under the beam of the mid-day sun. You wipe the sweat from your brow, glance at the big house and spy her—tall, with long cascading hair, her skin almost as light as the mistress.’ Stepping forward she pours the mistress a glass of lemonade and slips back inside the house. Scratching your own ‘woollen’ head, skin gleaming black from sweat, you go back to tilling and dreaming of one day being a house-slave like ‘Millie’. As black women, many of us have often imagined this scenario. Where would we be if we were still slaves? Many of us know which category we would fall into: field-slave. It

is undeniable, therefore, that black women’s quest for straight hair is linked with our desire for social status.

As early as the nineteenth century black women have been using hot metal combs to temporarily straighten out kinks. But it was only when Madame C.J. Walker developed and popularized the hair straightening method called the ‘Press and Curl’ that black women were able to come closer to the European standard of beauty.

Though most black women today relax their hair, there have been brief periods where African traditions have won out. During the Sixties there was the Afro, which owed its popularity to Black Power, a movement meant to instill black pride and autonomy. Black men and women allowed

Black women’s quest for straight hair is linked with our desire for social status.



their hair to naturally grow into big balls of cotton. In the Eighties there was the rise of the highly processed Jheri Curl, a curly moist-looking Afro named after its inventor, Jheri Redding. In the Nineties, there was a return to tradition. Some of the most popular hair styles were: braiding, cornrows (hair braided to the scalp) and dreadlocks (heavily matted coils of hair that grow naturally). Though all of these styles live on today, the debate among black women between straight or natural hair still rages on.

Unsure of where I stand when it comes to hair, I decided to submit my case to a professional. Not immediately obvious, hidden behind a Regina Tim Hortons and nestled between an eyewear store and a Better Business Bureau, lies Genesis. Inside its walls is the first line of defense in every woman's arsenal to looking and feeling her best, a jewel that, when found, is jealously hoarded. A rare commodity to any woman, a good hairdresser has the ability to transform. And it is this ability that has made Halima Alli one of Genesis' busiest hairstylists.

Walk into Genesis and it's easy to spot Halima against the shop's freshly painted bright red backdrop. She has silkily smooth

skin the color of dark mocha and a sunny disposition that shines through her snow-bright smile, offering a kind of sheltering warmth. It is a warmth that has endured, despite her family's punishing trek across the Sudanese desert that began her journey to Canada. And though she was forced to flee her native Sudan as a nine-year-old, it is there, whether acknowledged or not, where her interest in hair first took root.

Growing up in a culture where it is a woman's duty to take care of the household, Halima was taught how to cook and braid hair by her mother by the time she was eight years old. These were important skills to know for a girl to avoid being branded a useless wife and sent back to her mother's household. Though Halima developed her skills with a comb early, talk to her mother for a few minutes and you're easily convinced that Halima is in the wrong profession. Listen to her mother extol Halima's talents as a cook, and you're left longing for a taste of her cooking. Mention this to Halima and she scoffs, rolling her eyes. She offhandedly admits to being a good cook, a fact that is punctuated by the womanly swell of her hips and not the narrowness of her waist. But it is clear that being a chef was never in the cards.

While most are forced to work in toil, day after day at jobs that offer nothing but a pay cheque, she is one of the few who truly loves her job. She is blessed with an opportunity to infuse women with a boost of confidence and courage, both of which she desperately needed when she first moved to Canada.

Halima remembers what it was like being one of only two or three black families in her school. To this day, she still squirms with discomfort as she recalls her schoolmates' fascination with her hair and its coarse 'nappy' texture that begged to be touched. It's easy to imagine her days trekking down the school's hallway,

a black dot among a rippling tide of white hands reaching out curiously like a group of pre-schoolers at a petting zoo, eager to touch.

With taunts about her hair being volleyed from the sidelines, battering her confidence and no doubt magnifying feelings of isolation, Halima straightened her hair for the first time a mere eight months after moving to Canada. And though it has been sixteen years, she still remembers what it felt like looking in the mirror for the first time. "I loved it. My hair was nice, long and straight. It was easy to manage." It's easy to spot the same sort of satisfaction on her client's face, while Halima's nimble hands seemingly dance through her hair, plaiting in small extensions.

Halima's passion for working on African/Caribbean hair is not surprising, with the lack of hair salons catering to this niche. At her training school there were no black mannequins for her to practice with. Her only option was to bring in live specimens, her relatives, to work on. This gap in her training program stoked her passion to one day own a hair salon and beauty school that teaches students how to work with all hair types and textures.

These days Halima is not as concerned with having straight hair as she was during her younger days. She's much more comfortable in her skin and places less priority on what others think. However, after a handful of personal horror stories as a client, which include a chemical burn, a trim that morphed into a haircut and, most recently, a botched weave sewn too tightly to the scalp, causing her hair to break, she is now her own hairdresser. Today she sports a short bob with red highlights. Taking a break from the chemical and dyes to restore her hair's health has become her priority.

Halima seems confident, sensible. The next thing I know, I'm sitting in her chair.

What if something goes wrong? Oh God, what if she butchers me? I'm going to end up bald, I just know it. What shape is my head anyway, may I cou--- STOP! Nothing is going to go wrong; you're not going to be bald. But what if my ha---? What if nothing!!



I squirm, gripping the armrests. Realizing my foot has been tapping out an uneven rhythm I close my eyes and take deep breaths, focusing on the soft murmur of the TV in the background. The first touch tingles along my scalp sending a shiver up my spine and after several delicious seconds my back melts into the chair. Slowing I open my eyes to a reflection of Halima standing behind me undoing my plaits. Our eyes meet and she sends me a smile meant to reassure, but I'm acutely aware that this is our first time together.

Maybe this just might work out, or maybe it will be horribly painful.

Running one hand through my hair Halima asks me some questions as she passes off the container of relaxer crème to another hairdresser to mix. "Do you burn easily? Where do you usually burn?" As I answer her questions she divides my hair into four quarters then carefully applies Vaseline to my scalp to protect it, followed by a pre-relaxer treatment for moisture. Across the salon I watch the hairdresser stir the liquid activator into the relaxer cream.

My leg taps nervously once again. I had almost forgotten that my scalp almost always burns. Sketching out a plan to prevent this, Halima decides to process my hair in two sections, the back half first then the front. Slipping on her plastic gloves she warns, "Make sure and tell me if it burns." Unease prickles. Sectioning off an inch of hair at the nape of my neck, Halima dips a paintbrush-like wand into the relaxer and paints the first coat onto my hair from root to tip, repeating until the back half of my head is frosted with relaxer crème. "I'm going to leave it for about ten minutes. Tell me as soon as anything starts happening," Halima warns again as she wanders off to another client. I simply nod.

Before the ten minutes are up I feel a distinct tingling in my scalp and I know what's around the corner. If the relaxer stays in much longer I WILL get a chemical burn. Halima glances my way with questioning eyes. I shake my head. No, it's not burning. This is a lie. Two more minutes



photos: colleen fraser

*My eyes prickle with tears but I don't complain.
...I'd forgotten my scalp almost always burns.*

and my eyes are stinging; it's really burning. But I have to make it to ten minutes or my hair won't be straight. I need it to be straight! So I grin and bear it. Finally Halima motions me over to the sink and it's time to wash it out.

The back half of my hair is now wet but straight, all but hanging to my shoulder blades. I feel a moment of pleased satisfaction. My hair is long. But the front half tells a different story. The hair is coarse with little movement. Inch by inch Halima coats the relaxer crème into the top half of my hair. This time, though, my scalp starts to burn even as she's applying the crème.

I squeeze my eyes shut and say nothing.

Five, six minutes later, I can take it no more. "It's burning now," I say. I flinch slightly as Halima washes my hair. Noticing, she asks me if the water is too hot. I quickly agree, too embarrassed to admit

the truth that straight hair mattered more to me than any pain I had to endure.

Chair facing the mirror I watch as Halima blow dries my hair and then flat irons it. With each swipe of the flat iron my hair gets straighter and straighter, until it is hanging between my shoulder blades. But I know it won't stay that long. My dead ends need to be trimmed. But can I trust her? Will a trim turn into a cut? As Halima picks up the scissors I close my eyes, heart pounding. I hear the first swipe of the scissors; it echoes. After a few minutes I take a peek and relax. She's trimming, not cutting. Later, I see no evidence of the mild burns I had suffered. My hair is straight, glossy, full of shine and bounce. It even passes my shoulders. Though I have given in and conformed to the European ideal of beauty, I'm pleased. Smiling widely I thank my new hairdresser. I've paid the price. 🐦



Inside

Alcohol can help you not like what you see in the mirror.
Conversely, it can help you forget how you feel.

LINDSAY THORIMBERT



Man with coffee cup

Coffee and cigarettes offer a break to writer Jeremy Putz.

COLLEEN FRASER

Place of rescue

By Braden Husdal

Sitting at a dining room table in Canada just seems wrong for Marie Ens. She looks relaxed but behind her eyes you can see ideas, dreams and prayers all being processed in an instant. The tanned seventy-four-year-old woman clearly belongs somewhere else. Indeed, she's only in Canada for a short time, fundraising for Place of Rescue, the Cambodian shelter she helps run. Moving around her son's Regina home, she seems incredibly young for her age. There are wrinkles around her eyes and mouth, but they're wrinkles from smiling, not worry. She has the optimistic personality of someone who accomplishes goals because she doesn't know any other way. In Cambodia, the country she now calls home, Ens is a teacher, consultant and guide, helping those who are often unable to help themselves. In Canada she's a promoter and a lobbyist, enlightening the privileged about poverty-stricken and desperate children. In both countries she's continually called on



for opinions and ideas, but only in Cambodia do her decisions mean the difference between life and death.

Ens wasn't always the one people looked to for leadership. It was her husband, Norman, who took charge of people's needs when the couple first arrived in Cambodia in 1961. Working with the Christian Missionary Alliance, they spent a year studying the Khmer language in the capital, Phnom Penh, before heading into the countryside to establish a church. Norm preached while Marie took care of the home front. She scrubbed floors, cooked and cared for their two small children, Dave and Shelley, and their new baby Doug, born in a Phnom Penh hospital in 1962. Caring for her growing family was no small challenge in a politically volatile country on the edge of an escalating war in Vietnam. In 1964, bombs fell on the Cambodian side of the border, and the Ens family was evacuated for the first time to Thailand. Marie was three weeks away from giving birth to their youngest child, Rod. The following year they returned to Cambodia. But after a brief trip back to Thailand they found themselves stuck at the border, refused re-entry into the country that was now their home. The couple stood accused of helping a Cambodian citizen depart the country to work as a radio journalist for Voice of America.

The family waited out the next four years in Thailand, eventually returning to Canada. Still, Marie and Norman refused to give up. In 1971 they found their way back to Cambodia. By now the country was engulfed in war and evacuations were a regular occurrence. In 1975, after their sixth and final evacuation, this time on a special embassy flight, they finally decided the risks of raising a family in Asia were too great. When the kids finished their school year in Bangkok, the Ens family moved back to

Canada, where Norm became pastor of a tiny church in Rosthern, Saskatchewan.

For two years the Ens family lived there, basking in the relative ease of a stable government and economy. Although Marie and Norman still yearned to continue their missionary work, they found happiness living in comfortable harmony with their neighbours. But a 1977 trip to France changed all that.

In France, the couple met refugees driven from Cambodia by a murderous political regime and escalating skirmishes with Vietnam. As a Khmer-speaking minister, Norman was an obvious asset to the nearly 80,000 Cambodians who had resettled in France. He and Marie felt they were being called once again to serve God. It was time to return to overseas missionary work.

They made a brief return to Canada to gather up their two youngest children and pack their bags for France. Splitting up the family was a difficult decision, but by now the eldest children had their own lives in Canada. In Europe, the younger children attended a boarding school for missionaries' children in Germany while their parents worked in Paris. This was life for the next thirteen years, until all the children were grown up and on their own.

Then in 1991 Marie En's life was shattered in an instant. That year, she and Norman travelled to Ivory Coast to visit their daughter Shelley, now a missionary in her own right. While there, Norman suffered a sudden fatal heart attack. Marie had been married to Norman her entire adult life. She had been with him every step of the way in their overseas missionary work. While he preached God's word to people around the world, she worked behind the scenes, taking care of their children and the home and making sure he could always count on her for moral support.

In the blink of an eye, Marie no longer knew what purpose she had in life.

*Marie Ens had always been the pastor's wife.
Now that he was gone, what would she do with her life?
...It wasn't long before the answer found her.*

Through all these years, the suffering in Cambodia had continued unabated. On April 17, 1975, six weeks after Marie and Norman were evacuated for the last time, the Khmer Rouge, a communist rebel group, seized power from Prime Minister Lon Nol. Led by Pol Pot, a ruthless dictator, the Khmer Rouge forced civilians into work projects aimed at rebuilding the country's agriculture on an eleventh century model. Anything considered to have Western origins was destroyed. Doctors, lawyers and teachers were executed en masse in the infamous Killing Fields. In three short years, an estimated 1.6 million people died from overwork, sickness and political executions.

The Killing Fields finally came to an end after a series of border raids by the Khmer Rouge prompted a 1978 Vietnamese invasion. Pol Pot's forces scattered, but violence between the Khmer Rouge remnants and a new Vietnamese-backed government continued throughout the 1980s. It wasn't until 1991, the same year Norman died, that the

warring factions finally signed a peace settlement, enforced by the United Nations. The Khmer Rouge disbanded and a democratic constitution was created in 1993, but

Caring for her growing family was no small challenge in a politically volatile country on the edge of an escalating war in Vietnam.

recovery remained a long road ahead for a nation battered by war and poverty.

Meanwhile, Marie Ens faced her own difficult recovery. After Norman died, she travelled to Canada to be with her children. She

moved in with her son's family, pondering what to do next. Three months later, she was back in France. She cleaned and scrubbed the Paris apartment every day, as she had always done, but it seemed pointless now. Supporting her husband's work was all she'd ever done in life. She had trouble finding a new role. Between the grieving and the housework, she was getting a few things done for the refugees, but she couldn't fill her husband's shoes. One day, in the middle of waxing the floor, it occurred to her that her work for the Alliance wasn't worth the upkeep of the apartment. She headed back to Canada.

"I knew that I still had something to give and I didn't feel very old," Ens recalls today. "There was always that voice that said I should keep on helping others."

Unsure what to do with her life, Ens prayed, talked with family members, and prayed some more. Then, in 1994, she made the decision to return to Cambodia, this time on her own.



photos courtesy: marie ens

When Alleshia Ens came to Cambodia to visit her grandmother there for the first time, it was this first experience that would become the one she'd always remember. From the airport in Phnom Penh, it was a forty-five minute drive to the village of Bak Chan, where her grandmother had settled. In North America, this would be nothing spectacular, simply a paved obstacle that offers resistance only in the forms of sensible drivers and traffic lights. But in Cambodia, traffic lights only existed in the heart of the capital city. Along the roadside, farmers hawked their meagre crops to the passing traffic. The busy road to Bak Chan was single lane and devoid of pavement. A red dirt road played the part of highway for rural dwellers on their way to and from the bustling hub of the city.

Turning into the village, Alleshia saw for the first time the growing compound called Place of Rescue. Her grandmother's house was the first building to come into view.

When Marie Ens landed back in Cambodia in 1994, she started out at the military hospital in the capital, working side by side with other members of the Christian Missionary Alliance. It was in that hospital that she saw the devastation HIV-AIDS was wreaking on the people of Cambodia. Because poverty and child prostitution were rampant, women were constantly coming to the hospital in dire need of help, often with small children in tow. After receiving minimal amounts of medication, the women were then discharged and left to their own means to die in the streets. The inhumanity battered at Marie's heart.

When Ens turned sixty-five, she became an Alliance pensioner. But she wasn't ready to stop working, and she hadn't forgotten the AIDS victims. She and another missionary couple raised funds from churches across Canada, enough to buy a plot of land in Bak Chan and begin construction on a few houses. When the houses were ready in 2000, Ens and a few other hired workers began to bring in women they knew to be terminally ill. Many were referred to them by the military hospital and others were brought to them by Cambodian strangers who had found the women in the street or countryside. They called their new home

Place of Rescue. In the beginning, the mortality rate of the women was equal to what it had been at the military hospital because of the unavailability of HIV-AIDS medication. Today, thanks to Rescue's awareness and fundraising work, medication is provided free of charge and infected women are able to keep the disease at bay.

Located just outside the gated complex and rising two storeys high on flood pillars, Ens' house has a bird's eye view of all the comings and goings of the orphanage and

From Alberta to Ontario and back to British Columbia, she criss-crosses the country, reaching out to as many people as she possibly can.

the surrounding area. Inside the gates, the houses are laid out to the right, with the AIDS buildings first and the children's dwellings just beyond them. To the left of the gate is a fishing pond and straight ahead is a large garden. Mixed in among the children's houses are a school, church and various recreation facilities. It is a compact, bustling space. On that first visit, Alleshia discovered it took just twenty minutes to walk around the entire complex.

Children make up a large part of the population. In 2004, Ens began building houses specifically for orphaned and abandoned children. Today, more than 180 children live at Rescue, with room for approximately sixty more. They live ten to a house with an employed care-giving mother in charge of each unit. The children in the houses range in age from four to eighteen with the oldest helping care for the youngest, teaching them how to live and grow among so many other bodies. What all the children have in common is that they no longer have a family outside the orphanage.

For some, their parents died when they were young. For others, they were abandoned when a parent remarried, and they were rejected by their new step-mother or step-father. The people the children now look up to are their house mothers and their communal grandmother, Marie Ens, who has welcomed them all into her ever-expanding family.

Twice a year Ens makes the long journey back to Canada. While the trips give her the chance to visit her children and grandchildren, they also are business trips. Rescue relies on the donations of organizations and individuals from around the world to feed, shelter and nurture the orphans in the compound. In Canada, Ens has a responsibility to try and secure those donations. Daily, she meets with various church groups throughout the country. From Alberta to Ontario and back to British Columbia, she criss-crosses the country, reaching out to as many people as she possibly can. Fundraisers, such as a Paul Brandt concert held in September 2008, have given Rescue a major financial boost. Plans are now in the works for a proposed Rescue takeover of another Cambodian orphanage in financial need. While the compound in Bak Chan can no longer expand because of space restrictions, the new orphanage would allow Rescue to help children in another part of the country.

With so much taking place at Rescue in such a short period of time, Ens has her hands full guiding the many shelter's staff members toward her vision. She would like to play a role in ending the problem of child prostitution in the country and she is determined to help as many children there as possible. She sees no end in sight for her work in Cambodia and hopes to be an effective missionary for another twenty years at least.

Looking back on her life, she counts six evacuations from Cambodia. "The seventh time will be an evacuation to heaven, I hope," she says. "I don't plan to leave again." 🐦



photo courtesy: marie ens

What makes a workplace human?

By Éva Larouche

It was a beautiful spring evening in May 2008, and after a long day, Greg Sundquist of Watrous, Saskatchewan was driving to his fields in a three-ton truck loaded with ten tons of fertilizer.

It was dark. He was tired, but proud of his day. Seeding was about twenty-five per cent complete.

With his mind on the success of the day, he wasn't paying attention to the road he used almost every day and he never saw the train coming at a hundred kilometres per hour. The impact was so violent that he doesn't remember anything.

Jo-Anne, his wife, was following him in their half-ton to the field. She saw everything. She remembers everything. After the initial impact, the truck disappeared to the other side of the train. Before she could go look for him, she had to wait painful moments until the train came to a stop.

Because Greg wasn't wearing a seatbelt, Jo-Anne found him ten feet away from the wreck of his truck. Hurt badly, Greg was amazingly still alive and conscious. Staying as calm as possible, Jo-Anne called a friend who was an EMT for the area. Twenty minutes after the call, the ambulance was on scene and heading to Watrous first, then to Saskatoon.

Although seriously injuring his head, arms, hips, knees and legs, Greg survived the accident. After several surgeries and physiotherapy sessions during the summer, he was back on his feet. Fortunately, the seeds were in the ground before the accident. By summer, the barley and the wheat were high and a nice golden colour. The fragrant coriander was growing well and the canola was at maturity.

Farming was in Greg Sundquist's blood. He was born and raised in the small community of Watrous where he ran a crop and cattle operation with six thousand acres of land and 150 cattle. At the same time, he worked for Farm Credit Canada for twenty years as an appraiser at the Humboldt office. Used to being independent, he would soon learn the value of belonging to a wider workplace family.

At the end of October, Greg still had eight hundred acres to combine. It was coming off at eighty acres a day, so it was unlikely he would be able to finish the job before the snow fell.

After visiting him in September at his farm, his FCC co-workers realized that he was in serious trouble. One morning in the Humboldt office coffee room, they put a plan together to help.

"It was obvious, Greg needed help and we wanted to do what we could for him," remembers co-worker Kendra Miller. "Greg is not only a co-worker but a good friend as well. We have only six employees here, but we knew that many others would come to the table if we asked."

A few emails to some FCC employees and other friends in Saskatchewan made things happen. Word spread throughout the province. FCC employees, spouses and even retired employees from Humboldt, Saskatoon, Yorkton, Regina and Tisdale, descended on the Sundquist farm.

The team of twenty-five people brought four combines, trailers, highway tractor trucks, food and lots of determination. Some of the combines came from sixty kilometres away, a long distance for the gigantic, slow-moving machines. John Deere and

New Holland dealers also helped the team by providing the complimentary use of two combines.

"It was fantastic to see the number of people coming forward to help," recalls Greg Sundquist. "I will never forget this."

One of the cultural practices at FCC is the employee commitment to the success of others—the success of their peers and their customers. There is clear evidence this commitment makes a difference. In 2009, FCC ranked eighth in a "best employer" survey of 145 Canadian organizations, carried out by the human resources consulting firm Hewitt Associates. But FCC didn't always enjoy such a high ranking in the annual Hewitt survey, which has been measuring workplace satisfaction since 1999.

To be ranked among the fifty best employers, a company must meet several criteria, including benefits, work processes, managers, employee attraction, turnover, retention and absenteeism, pay, financial results and customer retention, just to name a few. And it's employees who fill out the survey. Some 115,000 employees participated in the 2009 survey.

What makes a good workplace?

According to Hewitt Associates, the most important measure is employee engagement. Engaged employees are productive, innovative and take ownership of results.

The Conference Board of Canada adds: "There is a clear link between culture and performance."

While a cultural transformation takes time and effort to implement and also has to be maintained, there are many returns

"It was obvious, Greg needed help and we wanted to do what we could for him...[he] is not only a co-worker but a good friend as well."

When a car accident sidelined Greg Sundquist, his workmates were there for him. And that was no accident.

on investment that can be realized. And one of the most important returns is that a company is retaining its great employees. The next generation entering the workforce will be looking for a comfortable and flexible work environment.

Looking at the website of the top employer in Canada, EllisDon Corporation, you can see and feel the importance of culture and its employees. The values are up front in the corporate video and the CEO talks only about his employees.

This approach is a shared factor among the top ten best employers. For example, the engineering firm Cima+ ranked fifth in Canada and first in Quebec in the latest survey. "We moved from the sixteenth rank to the fifth after having implemented several new steps that really benefited our employees," explains Louis Farley, vice-president at Cima+.

"Our product is the knowledge and the talent of our engineers and that's why we take care of them," he adds. He believes a program to facilitate engineers who have families is a major contributor to the company's success in retaining employees.

The first time FCC took part in the survey in 2000, the company did not make the best employer list. John Ryan, CEO at the time, realized that the employees didn't really work as one team and that people were working to protect their own turf instead of taking ownership for the overall company success. For him, the corporation was successful but FCC could even be more successful if the employees worked together

Clearly, FCC had a challenge to meet.

Ryan hired consultants and set about

building a new culture. Ten clear and actionable cultural practices were implemented, linked to two themes: accountability and "committed partnerships," or teamwork.

"In the past, it was the culture by default," says Joy Serne, FCC's senior director of culture.

The cultural practices implemented allow employees to better communicate with each other and to actively participate in the success of their peers, she explains.

It worked. Within five years of concentrating on building successful relationships with co-workers, managers, customers, and even within the family, the company shot up to eighth place, and remained there in 2009.

Today FCC has the reputation of a strong culture that attracts employees and customers from all over the country. Doubling its lending portfolio since the changes were implemented, FCC has become both a better place to work and to do business.

On the Sundquist farm, the work started on a Thursday morning and was complete by Friday at midnight. Some eight hundred acres of crops were in the bin and about 14,000 bushels of barley had not only been combined, but delivered to the elevator.

The Sundquists were blown away by the outpouring of support and generosity from FCC staff and others in their community. But FCC's current CEO, Greg Stewart, wasn't surprised.

"This is just one of the many reasons I wouldn't trade you guys in for anyone else. You care about each other, our customers

and FCC and it's exactly what our culture teaches us."

The atmosphere of the workplace and the relationships with his co-workers are what Greg Sundquist will never forget.

"It was a unique moment in my life. The support was unbelievable," he says.

He says there are six more things that he'll never forget about his ordeal. He wrote it in an e-mail that he sent to friends:

*I am married to an angel
Crying is not a bad thing
Benefits and insurance at work
and outside work are very important
Healing takes a long time
Life can change very quickly
My co-workers are real friends*

Greg sold his animals last November, not being able to do the hard work anymore.

However, the doctors are very optimistic about his recovery and gave him the all-clear to go back to work in July to rejoin his FCC family. 🦋



photo courtesy: Farm Credit Canada

*Within five years of concentrating on building successful relationships ...
the company shot up to eighth place, and remained there in 2009.*



Witness

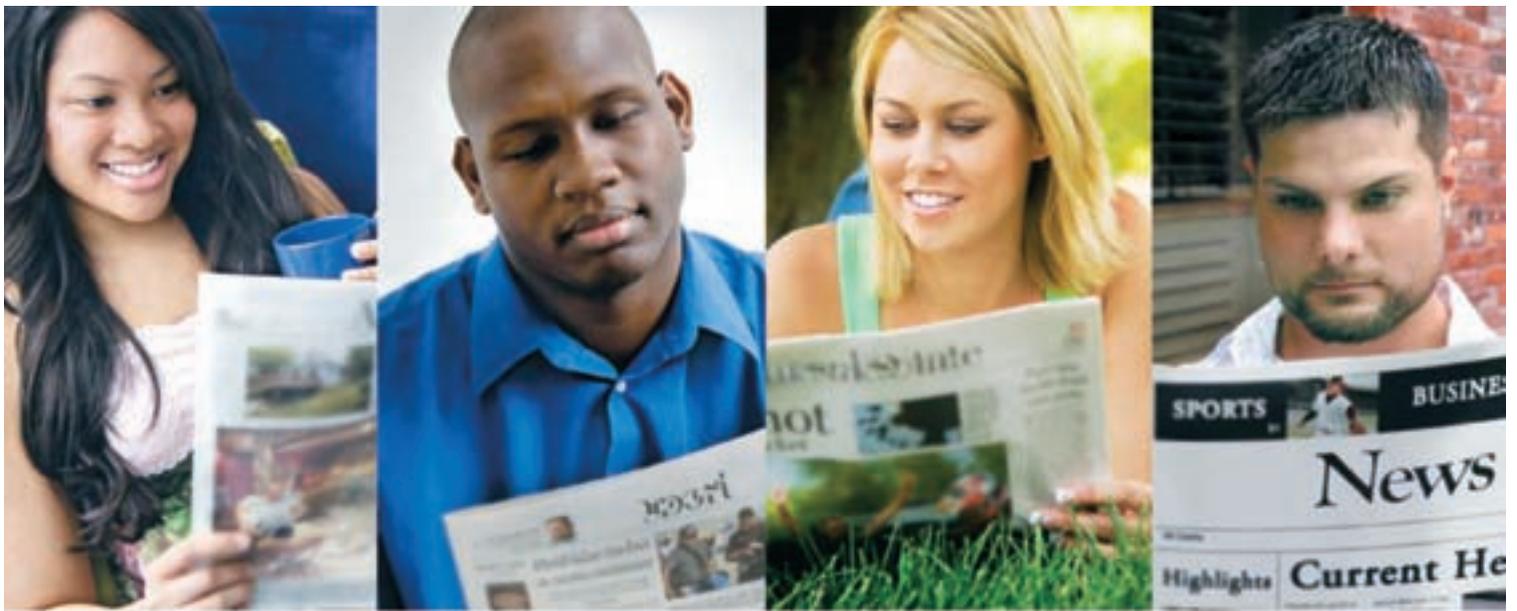
Excuse me, could you take my picture?” I heard a voice ask. As I turned to face the man in this picture, he explained that he wanted a picture for his obituary. He said that he was suicidal and knew he would be dead soon. Afterwards he said, “Actually, how about you just keep that picture for yourself.” He told me he had been beaten up by a gang the night before because they wanted his necklace, and he had slept in the street. His face was covered in scratches and cuts.

The university bus arrived and he used the money I had given him for food to get on the bus with me. He asked, “Does my face really look so bad?” after the bus driver looked twice at him. I told him it didn’t. He continued telling me about his life until he got off the bus near the social assistance office, where hopefully some help awaited.

This picture to me shows a person who has reached rock bottom. I wanted to make it black and white to give it the definition and poignancy that its colour equivalent lacked. I also wanted to make the cuts on his face less visible, as he was so self-conscious about them. It is hard for me to look at this picture, but I know that it’s very important. This man reminds me how much people can suffer and how it needs to stop. 🐦

JODI GILLICH

page 54
the CROW



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