

# **Reflections**

**Della Desroches Danko**

# Contents

<b>“You Are What You Were When”</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Growing up in the village of Laurier Manitoba.</b>	
<b>The Thompson Years</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Life in a remote, newly developed, mining town.</b>	
<b>Copper Cliff and 41 Dow Drive</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Changes in latitudes, changes in attitudes.</b>	
<b>2261 Muriel Crescent - July.1976</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Our home in Sudbury.</b>	
<b>Retirement</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Freedom to follow our whims.</b>	
<b>Our Florida Sojourns</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Snow-birding, not snow-boarding!</b>	
<b>The Church of Ste. Frances Cabrini</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>A special place in Springhill, Florida.</b>	
<b>2008 Christmas Tree</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Remembering.</b>	
<b>Appendix</b>	
<b>“Oranges at the Roadside”</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>by Dan Leskiw</b>	
<b>“So Many Restaurants, So little Time”</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>by Dan Leskiw</b>	
<b>THE BASIC RULES FOR CLOTHESLINES</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Anonymous</b>	

## Reflections

### **“You Are What You Were When”**

Several years ago INCO presented a training program based on the book and film: “You Are What You Were When”. The film explained that your experiences, especially in childhood, shaped your future life. I’ve forgotten how we came to see this, or exactly when after we moved to Copper Cliff, but the film resonated in me and still does to this day. Few people having experienced the effects of the stock market crash of 1929 or the depression of 1930s were left unscathed. Being ‘what you were when’ makes it easy for me to see why saving everything, be it clothes, dishes, paper, string, boxes, ribbons, bows, buttons, just comes naturally to people who lived through the depression. This may be an explanation for the closets full of clothes, books, boxes, and papers in our home.

My birth in 1933, the sixth child of a family of pioneers in the Manitoba village of Laurier, was an at home affair, as were most births in that area at that time. When a woman’s labour started, her young children were sent to the neighbours and stayed with them until after the delivery. The mid-wife was called. In Laurier, this was Mrs. Lavoie, who lived in a log house on the main road into the village. Everyone helped the family until mother could resume activities. Dauphin hospital was the nearest to us, with Ste. Rose du Lac hospital still in the dreaming stage. Being taken to a hospital was very serious.

It was a time of no electricity, no running water, (sometimes in summer, no water period) except for one town well near Trottier/Verley store, where people went to fill up pails and cans to carry home. There were no indoor toilets, even at school; no telephones, no radio, no basement, just a dug-out with a trap door in the kitchen floor. Heating in winter was by wood stove, and in our home we had what was called a “box stove” in the living room. It was connected to the chimney by a long series of stovepipes, hung from the ceiling by an intricate web of “stove pipe wire” and eye hooks in the ceiling. Others had a drum shaped Quebec heater, which took larger pieces of wood and in the railway station coal was used. Large buildings, such as churches, some stores and schools had large furnaces, taking four foot lengths of cord wood, some belching out heat through a floor grill in the centre of the main floor. This required a caretaker to stoke the furnace and empty the ashes.

Wood for the stoves was purchased in the fall and delivered, either as cord wood or in tree length lots. This then had to be sawn into sixteen inch pieces and split with the axe into pieces of a size for the stove. These were

## Reflections

then piled into neat rows, with adequate space for good drying. Dry wood would produce much better heat than green wood. When needed, the pieces were then carried to the wood-box, either pulled there on a sled, or by arm load, by whoever was available to do the job. Even children five or six years of age were sent out for a few sticks of wood, when needed, and one childhood chore was to fill the wood box.

Our house was very small and unlined, that is, the wood cladding on the outside also formed the inside walls with the wood stud frame showing. The floors were of wood. Since electricity wasn't available, lighting was by coal oil (kerosene) lamps. Two tiny bedrooms had as many beds as could be crammed into them, but these were covered, with many hand-made quilts, and thick comforters made from raw wool, (the pioneers' duvets). The wool was gathered, cleaned, carded combed with special comb/paddles, and used to stuff the comforters, or the wool was spun and knit into warm socks, mitts, and sweaters. Some of the wool was dyed into lovely colours and hand-hooked into rugs, as in those rugs mother produced for the Assailly family in the big brick house across the tracks from our place.

Nothing was ever wasted. Fat was collected and made into lye soap, using wood ash. Clothing was recycled, from adults to children, to quilts, to dishcloths, and to the rag bag to be hooked into mats. This, too, was not an easy task, since the rags had to be dyed in vats on the wood stove, dried, and torn or cut into narrow strips and rolled in preparation for hooking through gunny sacking material rescued from feed bags. This was a task that produced a lot of lint dust, but those mats felt warm when stepping out on the cold floors in winter. They were also long wearing. A couple of mother's hooked rugs are still in our garage many years after their making. Used wool clothing was gathered and when a number of pounds of material had been collected, it was baled and sent to the Fairfield Woollen Mills in Winnipeg, to be used in the making of wool blankets. These were prized as being long wearing, and indeed, I still have one in my possession.

Eaton's and Simpson's, now Sears, catalogues had many uses. First there was the dreaming over illustrated articles, which included furniture, stoves, tools, clothing, yard goods, thread, needles, hats, coats, jewellery, and many, many items. Old catalogues were used to keep youngsters entertained, making paper dolls, finding styles, designing new clothes, etc, before finally being relegated to the outhouse for use there. Brown paper bags were treasured as drawing and figuring material and were used as book covers. It didn't occur to us that we were poor. So many others in the village were in worse circumstances. My older siblings have memories of



## Reflections

hard times. Gertie, in particular, received the same toy “sad-iron” three years in succession. It was cleaned up, and may have been repainted, before being re-gifted to her again. (Christmas 2008 she received the same gift once again, after her wonderful family found the antique item in storage.) Christmas gifts were not exchanged as they are now, and whatever appeared was usually clothing, or useful household object, that had been secretly worked on for many hours. Embroidered items such as pillowcases, aprons, tea towels, tablecloths, were presented not so much for Christmas, as for New Years. Fancy blouses or girls dresses, and men and boys shirts, socks, gloves and mittens were popular, and men crafted wooden items or toys with the utmost precision.

During the summer, rain water was collected from the house roof by rain troughs, and stored in a metal tank, later to be used for laundry and household cleaning. In winter, snow was melted in laundry tubs that we called boilers, and heated on the stove until melted. This was used for laundry, but also for watering the cow that provided us with milk, cream and butter. Forage was poor in the area, and I can remember mother saying that our cow gave blue milk...not much cream there. Winter also saw the installation of a smaller tank in the house for water storage.

Laundry especially must have been a Herculean task. Large ‘boilers’ were filled with water or snow to be heated on the wood stove. The hot water was then transferred to the wash tub or hand operated washing machine, if one were lucky enough to own one. First the white clothes were scrubbed either on the wash board or by the agitator in the washing machine. These were then passed through the wringer that squeezed, or “wrung out” the water from the washing. The wringer was a pair of closely spaced, spring mounted rubber rollers activated by a hand crank. The washing was then dumped into cool rinse water and wrung out again before being hung out on the clothesline to dry. In hanging out the laundry one had to follow a very set system of display so that the neighbours could admire one’s efforts. Meanwhile, the light colours were being washed in the precious water, and then the dark clothes. Lastly the work clothes went through the same process. Finally, the wash water was used either to scrub the floors, or water outside areas needing attention. All bed linens and baby clothes were white and there was pride in hanging out a sparkling white wash as early as possible on wash day, mainly Mondays. It had to dry and be folded into the clothes basket ready for ironing on Tuesday when once again, the wood stove was the star, heating the sad irons used on all the washed items...sheets and shirts being the hardest items but also dresses, towels, underwear and all. Those precious wool socks were stretched on wire forms,

## Reflections

so that their shape was retained. White shirts were sprinkled with clean water, and readied for the iron. (See **THE BASIC RULES FOR CLOTHESLINES** in the Appendix.)

Providing food for a large, or even a small family was a challenge at that time. Work for wages was hard to find so income was very limited. Whatever income that came to hand was very carefully allocated and, while prices at the general store were low due to the depression, people in rural communities relied on their own initiative to meet their needs. They were required to become self reliant. In some communities, bartering for the necessities of life was raised to a high art.

Eggs, butter, milk and cream would be bought from neighbours, and some canned goods could be purchased at one of the three stores, Molgat's, Trottier's which later became Verley's and Bouchard's. Each holds a special place in remembering old times. Mr. and Mrs. Pat Trottier were the first Laurier family. In their store across from their house, old Mr. Pat Trottier was frequently sitting in a captain's chair by the central wood stove. Stores at that time were lined with shelves, behind a long counter. The shelves bore all manner of items, from canned goods, to spices, to wood matches and other necessities. The desired items were ordered from the clerk, who chose them from the shelf, packaged all in brown paper bags or in wrapping paper tied with string, listed them on an order form called a bill, totalled the order and either wrote paid or if the order was to be charged, carefully dated this bill. The paper copy was later clipped in the folder in the office to be paid, when cash was available, or when butter, or eggs were brought in as payment.

Dad was often called on to build shelves or to do maintenance work for Molgat's store. One winter morning, when Dad looked out on arising, he was able to see an orange glow at the store. His warning and the insistent ringing of the church bell brought the help that made sure that the fire was contained and extinguished. At Christmas time, Molgat's store gave to each of their customers, a specially chosen piece of depression glass that were treasured and are still in use today, but on that particular Christmas, there was a very large box of chocolates given to him as a thank you for his help.

To provide meat for the table, two piglets were bought from a farmer, Mr. Saquet, in early spring and fattened in a pen by the barn during the summer until early winter, when they were slaughtered for the winter supply of meat. This had to be timed carefully, since in having no freezers, the meat had to be kept at freezing point in a little shed at the back door. It

## Reflections

seems to me that no parts of the pigs were wasted and all that was left was the squeal. Supplementing this pork, was a variety of wild meat, especially venison, rabbit, wild duck, and prairie chickens. I can't remember my dad ever going hunting, but my brother Joe, and his wonderful boys were very adept at finding rabbits for the stew pot.

Mother planted a large garden at the back of the house, where she grew lettuce, potatoes, cucumbers, cabbage, peas, beans, tomatoes, turnips, and rhubarb. Growing corn had mixed results in our particular garden, since the varieties were not fast maturing and the season short. We seldom had corn boil, that I can remember.

Produce was canned or processed, for winter in quart glass Mason jars, with glass tops and rubber rings, held down by zinc rings. Care had to be taken not to chip the jars or the glass tops since that would lead to improper seals, letting in air which would spoil the produce. Chipped jars weren't discarded. They were used for dill pickles, since the vinegar preserved the cucumbers safely. Sometimes, produce ripened all at once where extra large gardens had been planted. Then, the call for help went out to come shell the peas or tip the beans so that these delicate crops did not go to waste. Old and young then gathered for a BEE. There were bees also held at Bouchard's in the fall when chickens produced that spring and summer needed to be dispatched, scalded, plucked, cleaned and processed. Then, large improvised trestle tables were set up outside and in the garage and an assembly line of helpers worked at preparing the chickens for the canner.

Also canned, were wild fruit such as blueberries, saskatoons, (my Dad called them 'les petites poires'), strawberries, wild cherries, plums, and in a once a year event, case lots of peaches, pears, plums, and apricots special ordered from Molgat's store. These arrivals always kept the homemakers busy processing each variety for winter use. Thus, during the hot season, the long processing had to be done on the wood stove, first sterilizing the jars, filling them with cooked or raw fruit, and then boiling the prepared jars in the "canner" pot, all the while feeding the stove with dry wood to keep the water temperature in the canner at a boil. All of this had to be done while doing the usual housework, laundry, ironing, cooking meals, baking bread, tending the children, cleaning, for in the summertime the men were working, farming, building or whatever work was available for their many talents.

Dad was a carpenter, building homes in the area. He did it all: from

## Reflections

digging the foundations, putting in the footings, the mixing the concrete for the foundation, getting the lumber and putting up the walls and roof, the shingling, and the siding, and finally the interior finishing, including cupboards and some furniture. He would get up at 5:30 am or so to start the wood stove, and make porridge for the family and a large pot of tea, then sit quietly smoking his pipe until it was time to go to his work, wherever that was. If distance allowed, he would be back for dinner, promptly at noon. He always wanted a bowl of soup to begin with and there always seemed to be a cold roast of pork on the table. One pipe full and back to work he would go, to return for six o'clock supper: soup again and perhaps a fricassee of potatoes and leftover meat cooked in gravy. Not surprising that he was soon nodding off in the rocking chair, and off to bed before night fell.

Women and girls never wore slacks, only dresses or skirts, with lisle stockings. Hats were always worn to church, but a close, ear-covering bonnet, tied under the chin, sometimes having a small visor, or a fancier frill, was in style. Mother crocheted several of these of coloured yarn. I remember an especially pretty one in royal blue to match her blue eyes, with an edging of white marabou that Annette wore over her blonde curls. Clothing for Manitoba winter meant layers of sweaters, scarves and woollen coats and underneath it all: long underwear. When Gilles was young I can remember his wearing jodhpurs of corduroy. These and many of his clothes probably were provided by Germaine, who was working at Molgat's store in Ste. Rose. I can't remember the sort of outside jacket or toque then in style, although some boys wore mackinaws of wool or leather (the forerunner of car-coats). We usually had galoshes with three or four buckles to slip over our shoes. Girls usually buckled these up but often young boys left the buckles undone to clatter as they walked. Men appreciated thick felt liners over their wool socks. These were very warm when paired with the heavy rubber boots used as protection from damp and dirt.

I was especially fortunate having been gifted with a beaded pair of deer skin moccasin/mukluks and matching mittens with extra long cuffs, to better protect the wrists. My godmother, Gertie, sent me these items from Mafeking where she had been working as a mother's help. The mukluks were worn over several pairs of wool socks and were tied with leather thongs. They were very light, and wonderfully warm. They could not be worn in slush or damp weather, for then the leather would harden and tear.

For one to get a hint of what life was like in the 30s, it would be similar to spending a winter at a wilderness cottage, with no mechanical

## Reflections

conveniences, no electricity, etc. Several others have written their recollections, including brother-in-law, Jean Molgat, for the Ste. Rose and Laurier centennial book, and brother Gilles, for our parents 60<sup>th</sup> and 65<sup>th</sup> wedding celebrations. A book that also has stories of the 30s is: "Sunny Side Up, Fond Memories of Prairie Life in the 1930s" by Eileen Comstock

Life in Laurier village was centred on the family, the church and the school. Fathers were the bread winners, mothers were homemakers, housekeepers, child bearers and rearers, and children were helpers and were to become wage earners as soon as possible.

Our school sat in the centre of a large yard. One side was for girls, and the other for boys. On the edge at each side was a large outhouse, with about four stalls. The caretaker not only tended the furnace but also swept the building and cleaned the outhouses. The yards were subdivided into playing fields for primary, elementary and older students. When a hand bell was rung, students rushed to line up according to their class, and waited for the signal to enter the building and their classroom. Students always used the back doors. The front door was for the use of the teachers, visitors or the once a year visit from the school inspector from the Department of Education.

Les Soeurs de la Presentation de Marie did their best to teach us the required skills needed to pass from 'Baby' Grade (kindergarten) through the required programs to age 16 (or beyond for the lucky ones). To name a few: Soeur Denise was the primary teacher, Soeur Estelle taught grade 3, 4, and 5.

Several names took over the next grades. One of our favourites was Soeur Hermance, but there were many others. Soeur Theresa who had the distinction of being Louis St. Laurent's sister, taught high school with Joe, Cecile, Gertie and Germaine as some of her students. My favourite was Soeur Francoise de Rome. Sister Anatole is also well remembered. Many of these nuns were from the mother house at St. Hyacinthe, Quebec, and they must have taken a double vow of poverty to have been posted in our village. As a penance, maybe?

The nuns not only taught us school subjects, but also religion, French subjects, music, sewing, knitting and some of the arts. The church choir was practiced during the noon hour. Individual solos were a source of pride, especially for mid-night mass where Minuit Chretien was sung in the packed church. A school concert would be organized and practiced every few months and all students would be marched off, two by two to the church hall



## Reflections

for the presentation. Sometimes, parents and the priest would be invited for a concert. Their presence would frequently make shyness turn into stage fright. The culmination of the Christmas concert was the presentation of a small brown paper bag with some unshelled peanuts, ribbon candy, and a few maple buds. These were provided by the school board but were handed to us by Father Pierquin.

Once a year there would be a Festival, where chosen students from several towns would vie for their schools honour. Cecile and Germaine were in one play, and I once recited the poem "If You Meet a Fairy" from "Highroads to Reading", at a McCreary festival. Even after much preparation, I didn't bring home any prize, but I can still remember some of that poem, and parts of others that were learned in Literature. Some lines haunt the subconscious for ever: Abou Ben Adhem, The Highwayman, "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening". Robert Service, Robert Frost, William Henry Drummond, and some French authors were presented at various times.

From earliest grades, the border at the top of the black boards carried sayings to inspire us. Some of these were:

"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you".

"Waste not; Want not".

"A stitch in time saves nine".

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be".

"Anything worth doing is worth doing well".

My favourite, Soeur Francoise repeated her philosophy many times:

"Too much of a good thing is always bad."

Our teachers lived in the convent which was a separate building across the railway tracks from the school. It was situated at the end of the street where we lived, a large barn-sized building, which had a chapel in the front, opening into the parlour and music room. Large doors were opened between these rooms when morning mass was held there during the week. It was especially crowded during lent when parishioners attended each morning in preparation for Holy Week and Easter. The back of the building housed the kitchen, the Refectory with a long dining table. I don't remember there being "des pensioneres" or boarders, as was the custom of the time but the upstairs had a row of single beds with a small side table which could be curtained off from the others. Supposedly, this was where each nun had her cell. I also don't know how this building was heated or who did the tending of the furnace or of emptying the ashes. That was probably one of the tasks of the non-teaching nuns.

## Reflections

One of the stories repeated several times was one where Dad had been hired to do some work in the crawl space under the convent. After crawling in the dirt under the building, he returned home that evening, and discovered that his wallet was missing. This was a real tragedy since it contained the only money that he had saved for the family's winter. I'm sure that there was not much sleep for him that night and as soon as the sun came up, he was back to search, and find the wallet. What a relief he must have felt.

Horses pulling wagons, buggies, sleighs or cabooses were used for transportation. Living in the village, we walked to school, to the store, to church, or wherever, but children living out of town had to find transportation, or walk. Sometimes an older boy would be in charge of driving a rig pulled by a horse or a team of horses, for one or more families to the school, and to run the errands on the way home. This meant that the horses had to be tethered, sheltered, watered and fed during the school day. Most of the stores and the church had tethering rails to accommodate horses, and an unoccupied stall in any barn was spoken for early in the fall. Horses pulled open sleds or a caboose, frequently having a supply of hay for feed. The caboose was a sort of covered sleigh having a door and windows, seats around the perimeter, and a small stove complete with stove pipe, in the centre to keep the travellers warm. A largish window in the front with a hole below it for the reins to come through the wall, this allowed the driver to see where his team was going and to guide them with the reins. Bells and some brasses were attached to the harnesses and jingled softly as the teams trotted along. Inspiration for Jingle Bells, surely, and it was very pleasant music.

At the time that I can remember, Dad had a Model T that had to be cranked to start it; later he had a Model A Ford car that had a starter button on the floor. It was used in summertime to take us to visit Aunt Elise and Uncle Leon in Ste Rose on Sunday afternoon. We all seemed to be able to pile into the back seat and were quite happy to be able to visit this wonderful family. Uncle Leon was the barber in Ste. Rose and a good singer. "Where Did You Get That Hat" was a favourite of his. Aunt Elise was the most wonderful cook. She was able to feed her family and visitors, in two or more sittings, but I never knew her to sit with the other diners, preferring to eat after everyone else had been fed. Her "Pain des Anges", light-as-a-cloud dumplings called Grandperes, green tomato ketchup, tourtieres, fast fry steaks, were all wonderful, and all cooked without a single written recipe.

They too had a large family. Victor, Alfred, Rose, Gerard, Jean and

## Reflections

Marie were always ready to welcome their cousins, and Marie especially would herd us young ones to the big wooden swing in front of their ice house to sing, joke and talk away the afternoon. Uncle Leon was so well liked and when he died of a heart attack, the funeral in Ste. Rose was huge. Not having started school at the time, I was able to go to the service with Dad and Mother and still recall the many floral tributes that lined the room, and the church.

Dad was able to drive to his house- building jobs during the summer. Cars were not used in the winter. Radiators were carefully drained, and the battery removed, before the car was put up on blocks to preserve the rubber tires. Later, when fall and spring travel became possible, tire chains became mandatory, because roads were not very well maintained in those days. Rural roads were mainly mud, with a sparse sprinkling of gravel over top, put there almost as an afterthought. Words like 'washout' and 'washboard' and 'dusty' or 'rutty' were common answers to the question: "How are the roads?"

Travel to larger centres was by CNR passenger train. Freight was distributed from the rail cars on freight trains that came by several times a day or night. A horse and buggy or sleigh met the trains and unloaded the provisions for the stores, the mail, and the freight, often in the middle of the night. Two passenger trains arrived at 2 or 3 in the morning, and it seems that another came through in the late morning, heading to Winnipeg. Another, arrived at around five in the afternoon, and there was a way-freight that came later. It seemed to carry more individualized articles, and was frequently met by farmers, or village people, who expected an order of furniture, or the empty milk cans being returned from the creameries. From the freight car, items were unloaded onto a large wheeled dray wagon that was then pulled into the freight shed and unloaded for pick-up or delivery.

The railway was very efficient at that time as was the Royal Mail, which was sorted and distributed from a special mail car, manned by a post office employee. Frequently, a letter got to a destination within 24 hours and all for 2 or 3 cents postage. When the drayman brought the bag of mail to the post office, the postmistress would bang her gavel-like stamp, sort and arrange the mail in alphabetical order for personal pick-up. Miss Alexina Boisvert, who was known to all as Zinna, would do all this and meet all comers at the wicket, to send and receive their letters or parcels. She also acted as banker, since the post office offered this service as well. The post office was at the front of her home on a large lot edged with huge lilac bushes that bloomed profusely in springtime. The glassed in veranda housed



## Reflections

a collection of plants among which was a five foot lemon tree. It is amazing that with all the comings and goings at the post office, the fruit remained there visible and within reach of all.

The bad years of the depression finally started to fade with the onset of the second World War in 1939. Wartime is a time of crisis and hardship of a special kind. It is also a time of almost full employment. Young men and women enlisted with the armed forces. The rest of the population was engaged in supporting the "War Effort", working in vital services to support the forces, like farming, manufacturing, transportation, communications etc. Young ladies trained to take the jobs vacated by those in the forces. It seemed that even the weather improved. The winds stopped blowing all the topsoil away, the rains came, and crops could be produced. Rationing of foods, sugar, meat, flour, and fuel was organized and supervised by different levels of government. Ration books were issued to each person and a system of stamps, and something called tokens. These were required to be able to obtain particular foods. The effect was to make everyone very conscious of their consumption of these items. It was a minor hardship that was easily endured.

It was important to keep up to date with the news and radios became a necessity. At first, these needed wet batteries. Mr. Assailly charged these up at the windmill behind the big brick house. Later, when electric power came to Laurier in 1941-42 the battery powered radios were replaced by ones that plugged into an electric outlet on the wall. Radio reception improved and was more reliable.

Many important discoveries and inventions were made during this time, to help with different areas of the war. Antibiotics, especially penicillin, and better operating room procedures helped the wounded. Warm fabrics and especially nylon for their parachutes, helped the "Gentlemen of the Air Force". Better education and training for the forces, and improvements in transportation, communications and manufacturing were some of the positive outcomes of the war. When the war was finally over, many of the returning personnel who had been trained in trades while in the forces were able to return to the jobs they left behind or took up new careers using their new skills. Financial aid grants were available for those who chose to attend university, or to continue being trained for better jobs. Women, who had been working at jobs previously done by men, were not about to give up their positions, and many men and women did not return to their former rural communities from their jobs in the city.

## Reflections

When driving through cities such as Winnipeg or Welland, we can see many of the "wartime homes", built after the war for returning veterans and their families. They were built from only a few floor-plans, it seems. They were either bungalows or one and a half storey homes, similarly placed on the lots, at a prescribed distance from the road, each sitting on a four foot deep concrete "surface" foundation. They were heated by oil fired space heaters. Although often built as cheaply as possible, these homes have endured and are still used today. Many have had additions, or porches added to them, and all have been landscaped, but are still recognizable as "wartime homes" by their general appearance. Returning service men could also get grants to build their own homes, as in my brother. Joe's case in Laurier. He and his wife Cecile lived in that home and brought up eight wonderful boys there and, subsequently moved their house to Ste. Rose when they bought the grocery store there.

Probably the most appreciated change came after the war when the Manitoba Power Commission was able to mount an all-out effort to extend their Rural Electrification program throughout the province. There were courses for people to take to learn how to wire their homes and farms. This fit in well with Dad's building skills, and he wired several homes in the area...even ours. I can still see young Gilles climbing onto a chair by the front door to turn the switch for the first electric light at home. Having electricity meant that kitchen stoves, refrigerators, and washing machines could be used. Coal oil lamps and candles were shelved 'in case' of power failure. Then came a series of kitchen appliances, radios, steam irons, sewing machines, vacuum cleaners, toasters, mix-masters, kettles, etc. very often promoted by the Manitoba Power Commission. It is difficult to judge which appliance was most appreciated, but even the wringer washer was a delight to use by anyone who had struggled with washboards and boilers. Another great development was the delivering of large tanks of fresh water which could then be stored in a cistern or tank to supplement the barrel of rain water. Farmers appreciated the lights, milking machines, powered cream separators, water pumps, and all the power tools that made their life easier and more productive.

Appreciation of the electric radio was especially good since there was no fear of the battery dying in the middle of a program. War news was first and foremost on everyone's agenda, but many programs were tuned-in. There were the useful ones, such as the farm broadcast, but Lux Radio Theatre, Fibber McGee and Molly, Fred Allen, Amos and Andy, and the first soaps; Pepper Young's Family; Guiding Light, Ma Perkins and other afternoon programs were "brought to you" by soap companies, makers of

## Reflections

Oxydol and Rinso and Sunlight. One particular jingle sang out "Rinso white, Rinso bright, Happy little washday song". We all listened to "She's engaged. She's lovely. She uses Ponds" the ad for Ponds Cold Cream

Sweet Caporal Cigarettes brought many programs to us. As did Ivory Soap: 99 and 44/100% pure, or from Don's own childhood version of this ad "nine nine, four four, one hunner person pure". Later still, short items were read by Mr. Canada, John Fisher. His stories of different people or happenings in every part of Canada, was inspired by the great love he had for this country. In our area, the French language broadcast from Watrous, Saskatchewan was a five o'clock program. It was entitled "Un Homme et son Peche....Une autre des belles histories des pays d'en haut". This was a serial about the miser Seraphin Poudrier and his long suffering wife Donald, a northern Quebec tale written by Claude Henri Grignon. Following this was a program for youngsters called "Ivan L'Intrepid. A portion of the William Tell Overture was played in the background as the title of the show was announced. This was my first introduction to that classic, when I hear it now, I have to add that title to the music.

The big decision was to be made. What to do after finishing grade twelve? Many students have their lives planned from an early age. Others float along until some event arises to get their attention. I admire the planners, for floating seems more my destiny.

A school girl friend thought she would take a summer course to spend the following year teaching, earning and saving for future career training. The great shortage of teachers in Manitoba at this time had the department of education allowing six hundred high school graduates to temporarily enter the teaching ranks, especially for one room rural schools. I registered at the Tuxedo Normal School and subsequently taught for a year in St. Lazare, with the same order of nuns that had taught me in Laurier. The following year, I returned for the needed year's accreditation and thereafter spent two years in Ste. Agathe, two in St. Adolphe, and two and a half in St. Boniface. It is said that: "if you become a teacher, by your pupils you'll be taught". In looking back, although I thought that I was a good teacher, it is very evident that the pupils were doing the instructing.

I loved being in southern Manitoba, especially Ste. Agathe. While there and in St. Adolphe, money was saved for a summer vacation tour of Europe with my sister Delphine. We flew to New York to board the ship Queen Elizabeth I, and spent five eye-opening days on board before arriving in England. A tour of London, Eton, Hampton Court followed. There was

## Reflections

an overnight crossing to Holland, and travel through Germany, Switzerland, Italy and France, before the return by Super Constellation to Montreal and on to Manitoba. What a marvellous trip for this green horn.

While in Cologne, Germany, Delphine bought a great camera, and took many slides and photos. On returning to St. Adolphe and later, to St. Boniface, these borrowed slides were the subject of many slide shows. Lucille and Til Cantafio introduced me to Don on the guise of my showing these slides. I therefore have to thank not only Delphine for lending me the slides, but also to Lucille and Til for the match making that has resulted in our happy marriage. Lucille was especially helpful in teaching me how to budget, do laundry, plan and cook meals and prepare special recipes such as her very special Pickled Red Peppers, that Don liked so well. We can still see a published copy of her delicious 'Country Captain' and 'Coffee Cream' in one of our cook books.

Our first apartment was one on Notre Dame Ave. in St. Boniface. I was able to continue teaching at Marion School. Several events radically changed our lives at that time. I became pregnant with John, and had to give up teaching at Christmas break. Politics also caused the federal government of the time to cancel the Avro Arrow fighter plane contract. Bristol Aircraft Company, where Don was employed, was a major subcontractor of Avro Aircraft. Consequently it was severely affected along with the entire aircraft industry in Canada. The film made about this, 'Before Its Time', aircraft explains what a disaster its cancellation was for the aircraft industry in Canada.

Meanwhile, the big nickel deposit find at Mystery Lake and the development of the Thompson ore body became all important to workers searching for secure employment. By summertime 1960 we were on our way north to new adventures.

## Reflections

### **The Thompson Years**

It is particularly difficult to recollect a few parts of the twelve years that we spent in the northern Manitoba mining town. There are so many people, so many stories, so many characters, so much activity, busy-ness and daily triumphs and tragedies as well as comic episodes as to need much writing about.

Don and I, with two month old John, moved in to a rental house at 114 Juniper Drive in July 1960. We cannot claim the title of "Old-Timers" since this was reserved for people who were there in December 1959. Don had been hired to set up the machine accounting system for INCO, using IBM punched card equipment; this was well before computers were commonly available. In setting out, everyone worked full force to get everything working in every part of the mining, milling, smelting and refining processes, so the work hours were long, difficult and sometimes discouraging. The population in early years was especially transient. The employee turnover rate at INCO in the first years of production was nearly twenty per cent per month. Workers would come and go, and be replaced with other transient workers from all over the globe.

Our first neighbours had arrived two years before us on the first winter tractor-train, travelling over frozen waterways and muskeg from Sipiweesk, on CNR's Churchill line 20 miles south of the town site. It served as the marshalling point for people and construction supplies bound for Thompson.. At the peak of construction, about three thousand men worked for the mine development company, or the general contractor building the processing plants and other contractors building needed accommodation for workers and the support staff and families.

There was only one store, The Bay. It had a good supply of groceries, and several departments where everything from thread to canoes could be bought. The Royal Bank had just opened in the downtown area. Very important, of course, was the large beer parlour at the hotel, it was the primary source of recreation! Juniper School was central to the homes. A water treatment plant and a sewage disposal plant were being built. The gravel surfaced streets were named for trees in the south end of town, and rocks in the north end. The whole town development was guided and overseen by Carl Nesbitt, who called himself a benevolent dictator. Everywhere, there was mud. It was yellowish clay and stuck to everything. Moisture turned it into slurry that acted much as quicksand does. More than once, children or adults, had to be rescued from the sucking effects, and



## Reflections

numerous boots disappeared in innocent looking puddles. In the first issue of a newspaper published in 1960 or 1961, someone had placed an ad asking that anyone finding a boot in the mud between The Bay and a nearby street please contact them!

As the houses were built, some were temporarily used as the banks; hospital etc. until the commercial centre was finished. Our second home, at 206 Juniper, had housed the Royal Bank, and just down the street, opposite the school were two houses that were used as the hospital and doctors' offices.

One of the unpredicted problems of building in the north was in not knowing the effects of permafrost, and its reaction when a source of heat was applied above it. It soon became apparent that this ice within the soil, which did not thaw from one decade to the next, now melted. The houses that had served as hospital and clinic now tilted towards each other as they settled in the thawed ground. Doors did not shut, walls cracked, floors sloped at crazy angles, heating ducts were squeezed shut, etc. After the new hospital was ready, the builders found a way to remedy the situation. Of course, a number of other homes also had the same problem. The remedial method was called "mud grouting", whereby mud was injected under pressure into the ground beneath the buildings to bring them to level.

The whole atmosphere just crackled with the busy activities of construction. Huge earthmovers ran night and day to build everything from mine buildings, homes, a bridge, roads, the railway line, water and sewage plants, hotels, airfield, offices, post office, and all that is necessary in such a town. Recreational facilities were built, mainly by volunteers and donations of money and kind from businesses; the largest being INCO. Since there were three shifts of workers, at any time of the day or night there was someone going to or coming from work, or going to curling or hockey games.

During the summer, daylight extended to eleven or twelve o'clock at night and the dawn was at three o'clock or so. But in winter, the days were very short. The bane of summer were swarms of black flies and mosquitoes, while in winter, the extreme cold and snow kept us inside. Black fly bites were especially bad, and were almost toxic to some. Clouds of these tiny flies would land on one, and leave a trail of blood from each bite, especially around the eyes and hairline. To avoid their long lasting welts, everyone had to dress carefully, tucking trousers into boots, long sleeved shirts tied at the cuff, and hats covering closely cropped hair. The whole had to be sprayed

## Reflections

with repellent very frequently, and faces had to be carefully watched. The price of neglecting these precautions was not soon forgotten.

Winter brought relief from these pests, and the work activity about the site continued at an even greater pace. Because of the cold, large machinery was left idling at all times. To start diesel engines in a cold climate is very difficult, so they were kept going at all times. Roadbed construction was also easier during winter, since the ground was frozen and muskeg and permafrost could be excavated or scraped away and replaced with solid materials. Much was discovered about construction in the north. At one time, it was reported that Siberian engineers had visited to study new techniques and offer suggestions drawn from their experience. The same report also showed how, in Siberia, homes were built on stilts to prevent the permafrost from thawing and heaving the buildings.

Not only people, but also buildings and machines and cars suffered from the intense cold. Cars had to be equipped with every warming device available: block heaters, battery blankets, interior warmers, etc. Some even hung 100 watt light bulbs behind the front wheels to warm the axle grease. Even then, while the car engine would start, sometimes the wheels would not turn, or if they turned, the tire had a flat frozen spot that would bump along until the tire warmed from use.

It seems on looking back, that one event rapidly followed another. There was no road out for several years, and only nine miles of streets in town. Therefore, the cars had to be brought in by train, at the price of five passenger tickets which covered the transportation charge. Conversely, to drive out, the car had to be put on the train to The Pas. On arriving there, the car was picked up and driven south to the populated area of Manitoba, on Highway 10. The 200 mile-long Highway 391 was opened years later, about 1964. It turned out that gravelled the road was much safer to drive in winter, when the snow ploughs planed the road smooth, than it was in the mud or dust of summer. Even so, the route was patrolled twice a day, alert for travellers in distress. We were thankful for a rescue once, when our brand new station wagon had a flat tire near Snow Lake, and the spare tire did not match the wheel. The rescuer took Don and the flat tire to Snow Lake to be repaired, and drove him back to rescue our stranded family. Don had owned a beautiful red and white Oldsmobile, and when he drove away on the first trip north, I had made sure that an emergency kit was in the trunk. There were blankets, candle, matches, food, and a hatchet. Happily, none had to be used on any of our trips; although we did carry a five gallon jerry can of gas with us, 'just in case'. That was just to get from Laurier to The Pas!.

## Reflections

Our first Christmas, it was decided that we should get a live tree. There were thousands of black spruce around, poor miserable things, they. The hatchet would come in handy at last. Warmly dressed, we trudged around, looking for a suitable specimen. All looked dreadful and we decided that the best thing to do was to take down a tall tree and use the top six feet. We had seen others doing this, even using the branches from the bottom to fill in where needed. Out came the hatchet, out of its cute leather holder, and on the first swing, the tree rang out like a steel post. Similarly, the second swing also rang, and the third. There was no damage to the tree, but the edge of the hatchet had curled with each blow. We found that a hand saw was more effective on small trees, and we did that for several years. Finally, one year, we were too busy to do the Christmas tree hunt, so we were reduced to buying the last artificial tree at The Bay store that year. The box said that it was five feet tall, (maybe if it stood on tip-toe). We called it our 'toilet brush tree' and it had to be propped on a table to be of a respectable height.

We displayed the hatchet with its curled edge in our home and emphasized to newcomers that a saw was the only way to take down a frozen tree. Some time later, someone gave us a cut slice from a tree trunk about five inches in diameter. When the rings were counted, it proved to be more that seventy-five years old.

There were two large forest fires while we were there. One cut off the power lines carrying electricity to the town, so we were without power for several days. Fear of that large smoke cloud across the river caused some mothers and their children to take the first train out of the city. Most residents remained in town, cooking on barbeques or gas stoves. Once again we got the last one in the city, the barbecue that is.

Trains brought in passengers and freight, supplies for The Bay store, groceries and dry goods, and newspapers, a few days old. Everyone drove the few miles to see the train come in to the station and to pick up their orders from the south or a supply of wine and liquor ordered in from The Pas. Seeing the train come in was reassuring that we were still connected to the south.

The library service from the University of Manitoba sent us parcels of books that we chose from a catalogue-type list. After a specified time, these were bundled up and returned, and all at no cost, not even shipping costs. These books were so enjoyed, both fiction and non-fiction. What a



## Reflections

much appreciated service that proved to be.

No radio or TV broadcast carried so far north. Some radios were occasionally able to pick up the late night shortwave broadcast from Moscow. Lack of news was something of a blessing during the Cuban Crisis, when the whole world wondered if Kennedy and Khrushchev would start a nuclear conflagration. We hadn't heard a big boom. The world must still be turning.

Later still, a TV station was set up that showed programs taped in Winnipeg, and rerun in Thompson two days later, having been brought in by train. It was possible to see a football game played two days before, and know the outcome before seeing it. No betting on those results!

Large stereo sets with a lot of boom-boom power were admired for their good reproduction of pure sound from LP discs. We enjoyed many LPs by Dave Brubeck, Al Hirt, Mantovani, and some classics. Young John especially liked the Leroy Anderson album. He would sit on the big swivel rocking chair next to the stereo and using one foot spin around in time to his favourite piece of music; 'Fiddle Faddle'. Sometimes, he would tuck Kathie firmly back into the cushion and take them both for a spin, using his set of play keys for the starter, and a long scarf, poked into the grill on the stereo speaker for the gas fill up.

Our first home in Thompson, 114 Juniper was a 'slab' house, meaning, it had no basement. This was a one-storey home where a concrete pad was poured onto the cleared area, and a house was built over this 'slab'. There were several models of this no-basement house and our rented place was somewhat of an open design and quite comfortable. As you entered the house, on the left was a large living-dining room which lead to a galley kitchen that had an area for the washer and dryer. The furnace room, a central bathroom and storage room formed the core of the building. To the right of the entrance was hallway that served the three bedrooms along that side of the house; it also lead back to the kitchen and back door. The central hallway made a great concourse for John and Kathie's tricycle and foot races. Any fall was especially hard, though, being on tiled concrete.

John started walking very early, at nine months, and soon became very adept at climbing out of his crib. He would pull himself up over the rail by hooking a large toe on a metal rod and hoist himself around to the outside of the crib. Then he was able to get into all kinds of mischief.

## Reflections

He and Kathie each had a large crib in the same room, and he taught her many of his tricks, one being shaking the crib to get it walking around the room. The two of them could really Rock Around the Room. She too was taught to climb out of her crib in his special way. On various mornings we would hear "something" and find that John had been making Kool-aid and baloney breakfast, or playing with magic markers on the wall and furniture thus showing his artistic talents; or spreading (uncooked) spaghetti like hay around the house. He showed a great interest in anything electrical. This is still evident today in many of his interests and hobbies.

The episode that was especially frightening was his climbing onto the dryer to turn on the stove element nearby, and then, not being able to climb down, walking across the hot element. His foot and the foot of his Dr. Denton PJ's bore the burn marks from the element. Only the smallest whimper woke us up to the danger that early morning. Some of the adventures were funny and others decidedly dangerous. Certainly they can be cited as a reason for our white hair.

Experienced workers, carpenters, electricians, car mechanics, appliance repair people were not often available. The car, washing machine, furnace, and stereo all suffered from bad servicing. Sometimes, the work might have caused injury, such as the furnace motor being rewired backwards, thus blowing the soot and gases from the oil furnace back into the house. At the two storey house, my complaint of a bad smell from the furnace was scoffed at until the worker lit a match to test the lead-in pipe, he found a small leak when the match flared. The car suffered several botched repair jobs and bad diagnoses... We arrived at Louis and Gertie's farm on one of our annual trips south, and mentioned that the "mechanic" had advised us to have the "spider gear" replaced. to cure the noise heard when turning left. Louis did not laugh too much at our naivety, when he spotted a bent part of the fender lining rubbing against the wheel when we turned left. So much for "spider gears"... probably in the same category as left handed monkey wrenches!

The most dreadful happening took place on Granite Street, when dozer operator severed a gas line when excavating a vacant lot. The leaking gas seeped into the basement of the house next door. When the workers came in to investigate, the house blew up with an explosion felt and heard throughout the town. The house was completely destroyed. The adjacent home, (which we had once wanted to buy) was badly damaged. The casualties were the two workers from the gas company. The home owners were out, shopping downtown when this happened.

## Reflections

Thompson's growth continued at a rapid pace, with the construction of homes, hotels, businesses, stores, a mall, apartments, churches, and roads. Special interest groups met for cards, dancing, fishing, canoeing, skating, curling, music, acting, oil painting, flying and gliding, model railroading, travelling, and many other activities where anyone could share their interests. At one time there was a nineteen piece orchestra conducted by Paul Nieboer. In April of 1961, they played at a dance when the construction of the lumber yard was completed, before the materials were brought in for storage. An empty building was always the reason for a party. Don helped organize the Thompson chapter of the Jaycees. They proudly produced the first OOKPIK Carnival, also the first "Home and Travel Show", Teen Car Road-a-o and other events.

We met people from every part of the world. Many came to make a good bank roll and return to their countries to live more comfortably there. Our future trips to PEI or Vancouver, or different parts of America frequently had us meeting Thompsonites. Our son-in-law once exclaimed after a church service here in Sudbury, when a former neighbour greeted us: "Did everybody in the world live in Thompson?"

In 1970, Manitoba's Centennial, we saw the Queen and Prince Philip, Charles and Anne. We saw Terrance Cuneo, the artist who painted large oils of INCO production facilities. Although his commissions were mainly for industrial scenes, he had painted a portrait of the Queen. There were football players, there were politicians, there were artists, there were musicians, and many, many university graduates. There were those working on their post-graduate degrees, writing their theses, doing research on the population in this new town and its inhabitants. It would be interesting to read their impressions of life in Thompson. Then, again, it might be a dry as dust recitation of statistics and survey results,

Meanwhile, our family was growing. Kathie, Anne, Donna and Mark were born at the 'new' hospital. Kathie was born just a day before the train carrying INCO directors arrived for the official opening of the INCO complex, thus missing by about twelve hours the gift of a share of stock in the company, given to babies born on March 25, 1961. All measure of preparations had been taken to impress these important people, including bringing in truckloads of clean sand for around the train that served as hotel on the trip from The Pas to Thompson and back. However a heavy snowfall dumped two feet of snow on the area during the night. How the directors were transported to the mine site I don't know, for another great event

## Reflections

happened when a fire destroyed one of the H- huts where senior staff lived at the mine site. Never a dull moment!

Anne's arrival kept us very busy. She was a happy, sunny baby, who loved to tease John. He later got his revenge when he borrowed her walking doll to see if it could walk down stairs. That was shortly before the three girls decided that all of their fifteen dolls needed shampoos.

Don moved us into our second house at 206 Juniper shortly before Donna was born on October 24, 1963. Donna was very quiet, as a baby. Her fine white/blond hair was admired and she learned to swing it around in such a way that her escapades were overlooked; until the older siblings took her downstairs to cut it off. Her angelic look was gone, and her mischief noted.

Shortly after, all rental homes were offered up for sale and becoming home owners brought out the decorators and designers in us. The kitchen, bathroom and basement were especially redone. A wide island accommodated the dishwasher that Don surprised me with one day. A new product, vinyl wallpaper, decorated the remodelled bathroom and one wall of the large living room. We will long remember covering the metal kitchen cupboards with MacTac. Now that was an experience! We reupholstered chesterfields and chairs, and Don designed and built a triple bunk in the girls' room, with dressers for storage. We painted walls and hung shelves and pictures. A large deck was built just out the back door, which we found to be a great addition to the main floor. Don painted the exterior of this two-storey house, whereby he gained the experience of riding the ladder down to the ground, right over the picture window. Not a drop of paint was spilled, but the eaves were never repainted until Mark Tucker came to stay with us while he found work in Thompson. That was his first job!.

Mark's birth in 1965 completed our family. He was a pleasant baby. He took to his Grandpa at first sight as is shown in the photos around the table when Don's parents came for their yearly visit.

Pregnancy while carrying Mark had been quite uncomfortable and my whining letters home brought welcome help. Sister Annette and niece Marie came up by train and returned to Dauphin and Ste. Rose with Kathie and Anne, who were then four and three years old. Anne stayed with the Leskiws and Kathie stayed on the farm with the Tuckers. Both brought all kinds of complications to these families. Anne came down with a bad case of measles at the same time as cousin Bob and possibly John and Dan. The high fevers were enough to frighten everyone, and all this was to be kept from us in Thompson.

## Reflections

Kathie meanwhile took to the farm life, riding a horse, traipsing around with the dog Blackie, and visiting with neighbours. One day will never be forgotten by everyone in Ste. Rose, for she walked away on the prairie and could not be found. Town businesses closed down and many neighbours came to help locate her before darkness fell. Bob Desroches related how he had been unaware of this while using the tractor in a field a good ways off. He saw Blackie, the dog, who always accompanied Kathie and looked more closely to see her there, walking in the tall grass, minus a shoe. Marie says that she still has nightmares with echoes of people calling K A T H I E! On subsequent visits to the area, we were frequently asked about Kathie by people who had dropped everything and gone to search for her on that day.

When fall came, Don was to drive out to bring the girls home. The Oldsmobile was becoming unreliable and the Molnars offered him the use of their Volkswagen for this 500 mile trip. The return, with the two girls and bags of farm produce went well until....the clutch went on the borrowed car.

I firmly believe that angels rescue us in desperate times. This time the angel came in the guise of a prospector, Lou Parris, from South Porcupine, Ontario. He took in the desperate situation, hailed down a couple of sport fishermen returning home, borrowed a tow rope from them, and using one of his gum-boots as a buffer between the cars, towed the Volkswagen into Snow Lake. He saw that the girls and Don were fed and housed at the hotel, and saw to many other details to rectify this situation; including washing the tow rope and mailing it to the sportsmen in the States. Tom Raynor and Peter Timmerman drove out from Thompson that same night to pick up the stranded travellers and transport them home. The heavens must have been empty that summer, while all these angels and saints were being busy rescuing various members of our family.

There were many great things about life in Thompson. It may be obvious that it's the people who make a community, but never more so than in a small, semi-isolated town. Neighbours were called upon for companionship, advice, and help, often of the SOS kind. We were fortunate in knowing the Cormiers, Valentines, Moodys, Raynors, Niemis, Nielsens, Woods, Molnars, Nordbys, Finnens, Knudsens, Bates, Grywinskis, just to name a few. There were many difficult times, but I prefer to concentrate on the positives. Sometimes, one leads to the other, though. Kind neighbours taught me to drive. There were no buses, and not being able to drive meant that walking was the only way to get out of the house as taxicabs were not that plentiful. Taking the young ones to kindergarten was easier too,



## Reflections

especially in the cold winter days, for kindergarten was held in a church hall off Cree Road, a good walking distance from the house. There were at least ten five year olds around our street corner, so the car was full. Luckily for us, seat belts were not required then.

Our being seriously ill in 1967 brought us many kindnesses from friends, neighbours and acquaintances. When we had finally recovered, a good friend, Doug Taylor, introduced us to oil painting. Don was much more capable than I was, but was still very busy at work. I was able to join a group that met to learn from Madeleine Fregren and from each other. Later, "The Dabblers" were formed where we met to learn from each other, since we had no teacher, Madeleine having moved away. This interest in painting and the people who came together to paint brought relief from the cabin fever that took over in the long winter. Yes, cabin fever is real no matter how large the house. Sewing, knitting, crocheting, baking, cooking kept fingers busy. The admiration and sale of some of my paintings was a source of pride and accomplishment.

At the grand opening of Thompson's new City Hall, The Dabblers were asked to set up the visiting CIL collection of Canadian artists. I can therefore boast of having touched a genuine Riopelle, Christopher Pratt, Krieghoff, Jack Shadbolt, Emily Carr, Alex Colville, and a dozen other recognized canvases. Not only did we Dabblers touch them, but we also moved them, hung them or placed them on easels and admired them.

Some of the unforgettably pleasant memories include getting out of bed at three in the morning to see the multi coloured northern lights dancing across the sky. On another occasion, our friends bundled us up in borrowed snowmobile suits and piled us on machines for a night ride. With no street lights around, the stars were so close and bright it almost seemed that they could be plucked just by the stretch of a hand.

Mike and Mavis Cormier frequently asked us over for a feed of the best clam chowder, nicely flavoured with Mike's special curry. We first heard Handel's Messiah from Mike's powerful stereo set. Each year on Good Friday, Mike played the complete Messiah, thought of his Maritime home and spoke of St. FX University. Don was fortunate in being able to go fishing at Moak/Mystery Lake with Tom Raynor. He has several stories of the great catches of large pickerel. With those delicious fillets on the menu the next day, how can one argue with the evidence? Paint Lake was opened as a park and fishing area. We picnicked there with friends and family.

## Reflections

John loved being with Grandpa and Grandma in Transcona, and quite frequently spent weeks with them. Don was frequently on trips to Winnipeg or Toronto or New York City. Occasionally, John would fly out with him and get to stay with them until Don's return. Come summertime, he would beg to visit with them rather than trailer with us.

Don's parents came up on the CNR train for several visits. They too had many adventures in their travels, including a train derailment and many late arrivals. One year, John was in traction for six weeks in the hospital. The altercation he had with the taxi cab proved that cars are stronger than a thigh bone. When he was finally released in a body cast and on crutches, his grandparents arrived and it was decided that we would drive to Flin Flon for a weekend visit. The station wagon was packed up, John loaded into the very back seat, and the rest of the children found a convenient lap to snuggle in. On arrival we checked into the motel rooms and went for dinner. We made quite a large group and a suitable table was arranged for us. We thought that the excellent service we received was due to how well behaved our children were, in choosing, ordering and eating their food. Several of the staff came by to smile and enquire about our meals. They all seemed to pass by Dad's chair, since unknown to us, Dad was tipping at every opportunity. Dad was a very generous tipper and liked to tip ahead and while receiving service, whether on the train or in a restaurant. Needless to say, we were very well received whenever he was there. The next morning, at breakfast, the staff greeted us warmly. Pancakes got extra syrup and eggs were cooked just so. We were proud that our children were so well behaved in restaurants, and such good travellers. Grandpa just smiled sweetly.

The same reception was given us when our clan went to Souris, and practically took over the small restaurant with Uncle Frank, Aunt Pat, Uncle Peter and Aunt Mary, other relatives and our family all got together for breakfast at the motel restaurant. Once again, Grandpa was smiling and tipping the servers.

In March of 1972 we left Thompson for Copper Cliff. The northern winter put on a last show for us. The night of our farewell party, the thermometer showed 52 degrees below zero. What a send off!

## Reflections

### **Copper Cliff and 41 Dow Drive**

The townhouses where we found rental accommodation were fairly new when we arrived and we were happy to move into a four bedroom, two bathroom unit, where we were able to stretch out, and enjoy the company of new friends. There was a large grassy field just outside the back door, separating the older homes from the townhouses. That proved to be a great place for scrub baseball games, football scrums and all sorts of outdoor fun. There were many children in other units, and a lot of coming and going. Uncle Lloyd and Aunt Alice, on a visit, were astounded to see the candy jar on the coffee table being visited by little ones who were not at all familiar. Each would come in the front door, help themselves to a candy, and go out the back door to continue their games. "It was like a parade", said Uncle Lloyd.

Copper Cliff was then still an INCO town site, with the exception of these new townhouses that had been erected to supplement housing. The good school, library, hospital and clinic, dentist, bank, swimming pool, park, bus service, and stores in close proximity were all appreciated. The CBC radio station brought us special delights with programs such as Fresh Air heard early Saturday and Sunday mornings. Bill McNeil and Cy Strange were great hosts of this program and these gentlemen were so pleasant to wake up to with "Blue Spanish Eyes" and "Autumn Leaves" as their theme songs. Weekday mornings, we could hear Don Herron or Bruno Gerussi and Peter Gzowski with their guests and many Canadian anecdotes. Morning programs had children and teen-agers listening in for the inept tooth-fairy, whose hilarious conversations with the host and sound effects when he took flight, crashing through windows and doors really started each day with a smile. Yes even teenagers smiled!

In Copper Cliff there was a hospital and clinic, a dentist, hardware store, Wilson's Pharmacy, the Post Office, a Red and White store with a butcher to cut meat to order. In a part of town called Little Italy, there was an Italian bakery with a regular clay wall oven. They made the tastiest bread in the city. My favourite was a grocery store in Little Italy, called Pianosi's, owned and operated by Eddie Santi. My order for groceries could be phoned in. It was prepared, and delivered to the door within a few hours. Not only that, the charge was to be paid later, "When you are in". It was a remarkable business, and even after we moved to Sudbury we would stop in to pick up some of the great sliced meats, or roasts. This kind man would phone and note that a shipment of our favourite sirloin roasts would be coming in, and would I like him to reserve a box for us? "We can deliver Wednesday and



## Reflections

you can pay whenever you are in.”

Several heart attacks left Eddie unable to continue the business, and it is now closed. Interestingly, almost ten years after his death in 1999, a long tribute was printed in the Sudbury Star by Janice Leuschen entitled “Eddie Santi a dedicated man”. We were not alone in adding many other qualities such as generosity, honesty, integrity, and friendliness to this remarkable man.

Changing province and school wasn't easy on our children. . Juniper School in Thompson had been an experimental ‘open school’, where children were to develop their skills and interests at their own pace. This was great for Kathie who had the best of help, with Miss Gloria Sirski taking charge of the special education group. Anne, Donna, Mark and John were not as able to learn necessary skills in an unstructured setting. Their transfer to Copper Cliff's great school system was not without pain, but was definitely worth it. Some of the great teachers that cared for our tribe were Miss Loughead, Mrs.Higgins, Sandy MacDonald, Mr, Zinkie, Mr.Hardacre, Mr.Roger Pyle, and Mr. Camillucci. At their graduation, his grade eight class showed their appreciation when Kelly Leclair dedicated her singing of ‘To Sir With Love’ especially for him.

Activities such as T-ball, cubs, guides, gymnastics, skating and swimming were available in CC. Don's work, the school and activities were so close that all came home for lunch. We had three meals a day together every day! Here too, we were fortunate in finding old friends, who had preceded us from Thompson, such as the Taylors. Gereghtys, Sirois, New friends Dick and Terry Drewe and Anita and Denis Leclair, have been very involved in our lives ever since. We travelled to Cuba, Florida and Portugal with Dick and Terry, and spent many week-ends at their Lake Penage Camp. Don and Dick became great friends while taking Laurentian University courses in evening classes for several years. They graduated together in 1981. Both families have now established scholarship funds and keep in touch through the alumni association at Laurentian University. With Anita and Denis Leclair, we went on our first trip to Florida. Later, when we had retired, we travelled with them to the west coast, visiting friends and family in Vancouver and Victoria. We motored south to the Seattle and Portland area, and on the Chuckanut trail, with its beautiful rainforests and waterfalls. (Aunt Alice had previously shown us this scenic route that parallels Interstate 5 ).

We took advantage of our new location to do tour the country on our vacations. With the tent trailer, we visited Montreal, finally seeing in 1972

## Reflections

the Expo 67 site before continuing to Quebec City and spending time at Ile d'Orleans, very close to the mouth of the St. Lawrence River, where the effects of the incoming tide surprised us. Each of us probably has different memories of these trips. One of mine is the caleche tour of Old Quebec, and the problems we made for the driver of a caleche pulled by a nice white horse. Apparently, there is a strict code to be followed in hiring these conveyances; each must be hired in the order of their lineup in the square, and when this is disturbed, much yelling and swearing ensues. We loved the Expo site, several years after Expo itself, and remember even now, stopping for a large pizza, where the cook, seeing our large family made an extra large pie, with lots of cheese. Delicious!

We also remember going to a small restaurant for lunch or dinner with our family. The waitresses must have had bad experiences with large family groups, for they seemed to hustle us along to one particular waitress, and watched us all from the kitchen doorway, anticipating chaos, or so it seemed. Our children have always been good travellers, and were model restaurant patrons. They read the menus, ordered what they wished, and sat quietly talking until the food came, where they ate well and neatly. The 'audience' seemed quite surprised and impressed and our waitress received an especially good tip for her good service. She had the last laugh!

One year, our tent trailer was replaced by a travel trailer, and with it we toured Canada, from Ontario to British Columbia, to Quebec, to the Maritimes and many times to Manitoba or Welland. Don's Uncle Peter and Aunt Mary who lived in Welland frequently welcomed us and our clan for Easter or Thanksgiving. There are many photos of the extra long table seating aunts, uncles, cousins, and cute babies. Although we towed the trailer, the children preferred spreading their sleeping bags in the rec room where they could enjoy the many TV channels available there.

During our first trip to the Maritimes, we visited with Jack and Terry McGee in Amherst, Nova Scotia before ferrying across to PEI to explore that province. We had intended to stay on the island just a few days, but the weather was wonderful and the great camp ground at Cavendish convinced us that ten days there was just what we wanted to do. Fresh seafood from Courtt Brothers dock at Rustico, or thick steaks from Gallant's store, became our staple foods. It was here that we developed the "Perpetual Clam Chowder", supplemented each day with fresh ingredients, particularly lots of clams. Visits to Anne of Green Gables, Woodleigh Replicas and to Charlottetown mall were diversions after the swimming in the surf.

## Reflections

We left the campground and headed for the small ferry at Wood Island, only to find that it was full and couldn't take us across until the next morning. A campground was conveniently provided for overflow passengers. The tide was out, allowing us to spend an unforgettable evening walking on the beach digging for clams, spotting fast moving razor clams and a starfish and a horseshoe crab. The sea scallop was so beautiful, its shell edged with sapphire blue dots (its eyes) that we carried it back to the water line to let it go. The sun continued to shine as we travelled on the next day. The Cabot Trail and Baddeck each were beckoning.

## Reflections

### **2261 Muriel Crescent - July. 1976**

John and Kathie had been enrolled at Lockerby High School, and Anne desired to go to Marymount for her high school education, so it was time to find a house that was situated in an area served by school buses for those schools. We drove around many areas and saw small and large homes all seeming very expensive. Finally, the house that has become our home was on the market, was purchased and we moved in July 16, 1976.

While there were many disappointments with the state of the property, we have been able to transform it into a desirable place. The improvements we have made to the yard, adding the back deck and patio and renovations to the interior, have brought us much satisfaction, and pride. Being home owners we had to repair, design, landscape, paint, remodel, fix, retile, carpet, plant, build, and generally keep the place together. The electricity, plumbing, windows, siding, roof, eaves troughs, doors, basement and finally the kitchen were completely redone. We are so thankful for wonderful friends and neighbours in this area. For many years, the Parrotta family has been our good neighbour, clearing the driveway of snow, bringing in sand or soil or planting trees. Fern and Norm Price, Dorothy Picard, Hans and Margot Huch, especially were fun to share birthday celebrations, or cross country ski times, or blueberry picking expeditions, or New Years Eve parties. There were anniversaries, showers, retirements, farewells, multiple birthdays, and sad good byes.

For several years, I worked as a library clerk first with the Separate School Board Office and then at the Sudbury Public Library. Our family was enlisted to help around the house while we were all busy going our various ways each morning. One of the ideas that helped us cope was that each made up the brown bag lunch for the next day and that each person had one day every week to cook a meal. Some of the ideas for meals were complicated too. John liked cooking potato pancakes, and onion rings. Donna could be counted on to prepare her favourite pasta or macaroni and cheese. Anne developed a great popover recipe, and everyone tried something different for the evening meals. Mark remembers first trying out a sugar pie recipe and Kathie often tried baking buns and muffins. All are good cooks today, and it would be nice to think that this routine sparked

## Reflections

their interest in cooking.

There were also many new friends I made at the library, among both staff and the patrons. I especially loved working at what is now known as South Branch, but then called Regency, and Cedar Point Branch. Beautiful, talented, dedicated Heini Heinonen was the librarian there. Later, as a clerk at the Main Library, many different librarians, co-workers and patrons came to be familiar friends. By 1989, the huge task of computerizing all books, albums, periodicals, etc. was to be undertaken. The library closed for two weeks, while each item was bar-coded, and registered on the new computers. Patron's borrowers cards were also computerized, and their information processed. Waving the new wands over the bar coded items kept track of all information. It was a formidable task. The next year I retired from SPL.

## Reflections

### Retirement

Don gave up his long, forty two year, work career in 1991. We immediately left on a three week visit to Winnipeg. Mom outdid herself with the baking and wonderful meals to celebrate the occasion. Especially wonderful was a stuffed crown roast of pork with all the trimmings shown in the photos of the occasion.

### Trips

We made plans to travel and went to Florida to escape the winter, and to visit with other snowbirds there. We were able to spend several winters in Springhill, Florida, thanks to Bob and Peggy Fera, who graciously rented us their beautiful retirement home. We went on a bus tour of France and Spain. We spent a month in Portugal at an apartment hotel on the south coast with Dick and Terry Drewe. We enjoyed a week at the Five Star Riu resort in Puerto Vaillarta, Mexico that was completely luxurious. A short cruise to Nassau, Bahamas, was our first cruise, but hopefully not our last. In between these trips, we have driven to many parts of Canada, and the USA. There were drives through northern Michigan, and the discovery of outlet malls. Wow! Big name manufacturers offered some of their products at good discounts. There were products from London Fog, Liz Claiborne, OshKosh, Mikasa, Black and Decker, and many other suppliers. There were dishes, linens, crystal, leather products, small appliances, clothes, knitwear, gifts, sports equipment, paper products, and perfumes.

We did a circle tour with Dick and Terry, through Sault Ste. Marie, to Interste 75 south, stopping in Frankenmuth, (Christmas year round). We enjoyed the Tyrolean atmosphere, food and beer, and spent a few days showing them our discoveries. Dick was becoming quite crippled with terrible arthritis but he enjoyed the experience so much that he asked us to stay longer so that he could continue shopping around.. Terry shopped with dedication, and the car was soon packed with purchases. We continued south and re-entered Canada at Port Huron, driving north along Lake Huron through to Owen Sound en route to the Cheecheemon ferry for a lovely trip across to Manitoulin Island, then home to Sudbury.

Dick and Terry first introduced us to the Stratford Shakespeare Festival. Since then it has become a yearly treat for us to attend one or more of the plays that are presented at the Festival Theatre or Avon Theatre or at the Tom Patterson venue. Many are Shakespeare plays, but musicals, and presentations by other playwrights are offered each year.

## Reflections

Tom Patterson had the vision of reviving the town of Stratford from the dying railroad industry. He convinced the citizens to remake Stratford into a festival destination. Today, three large theatres operate from April to October. Streets, restaurants, businesses, hotels, B&Bs, schools, and even menu items have names from Shakespeare and the Elizabethan era. Wide parks edge the Avon River where cosseted white swans swim about in the summer, after they are piped out of their winter homes and march (waddle) down the street in a spring festival parade that often makes the national news.

Another great attraction in southern Ontario is Niagara on the Lake. The parks and floral displays are fantastic as are the many shops for tourists. The Shaw Festival venues are smaller than Stratford's but attractive also. The drive from Niagara Falls along the Niagara Parkway to Niagara on the Lake is a favourite with us, as is a stop at Konzelman Winery. Son Mark settled in St. Catharines, and his homes there and in Fonthill and now his apartment always draw us there for visits. Donna has an apartment in St. Catharines, where she attended Niagara College and is now employed with the Niagara Regional school board.

Thanks to Dennis and Anita, we joined a group of seniors from Lively on a bus trip to Magog, in Quebec's eastern townships. The fall colours were an attraction, but the fog and rain dimmed that part of the trip. The three day reception at the resort was not at all dimmed however, and in the three days, we celebrated Christmas, New Year's Eve and Epiphany at this wonderful place. The resort sent two motor coaches to pick us up in Lively and drove east to Montreal, then southeast to Magog. These comfortable coaches also took us south to Abbey St. Benoit, and back to Montreal for a day's sightseeing and visiting

### **And parties!!!!**

We can smile over birthday parties, weddings, births, anniversary parties and retirement parties. We've happily been to birthday parties for children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents and great grandparents, friends and neighbours. It became traditional that a home-made cake be prepared and fancifully decorated for the birthday child or person. There were cakes frosted as balloons, elephants, clowns, flowers, carousels, trains, boxes of candy or of chocolates, and numerals of the birth age. There were flat cakes and tiered cakes, domed cakes and round cakes. Besides the black forest cakes and heart shaped cakes there were cakes from Jeanne's bakery



## Reflections

and from La Tour Eiffel in Winnipeg, and from the Finnish bakery in Sudbury. Memorable among these were cakes for Gram's birthdays, especially the 'Scrabble Board Cake' for Gram's 95<sup>th</sup> birthday. The very best was the 'Basket of Flowers Cake' for my 75<sup>th</sup> last year. I shared it with nephew BJ since we share the same birth date, though fifty years apart.

Don's Mom especially loved baking and baked her delicious wedding fruit cakes for ours and for Anne and Petr's and John and Shelley's weddings. The fruit was carefully prepared and floured, the batter mixed and baked and when cooled the cakes were wrapped in cheesecloth, stored in a crock in the basement to be frequently laced with rum or brandy. The product was always delicious and appreciated. She took special pride in baking butter tarts. Even after her first stroke, she related how Anne had found a wonderful wooden pastry press that allowed her to continue baking. There were even tart making sessions, when she, Anne and Katherine would bake together.

Her home on Melrose East was the scene of many visits, parties and dinners. Every week end, the Krestas, and John and Shelley would get together for a shared dinner, each family taking turns in providing the main course or dessert. This went on even after Gram moved to the apartment, and in to Riverview Residence. All became experts on carrying hot casseroles, and cold foods, and on leaving everything spotless after the meals. Any visiting family members were included so that the group was often quite large. We are so proud that the tradition carries on even after Gram's passing. Mom often told us how her long life was due in large part to having her family close to her and looking after her welfare as they did so very diligently.

There were parties for memorable anniversaries. Who can forget the 40th anniversary for Mom and Dad Danko (and for Uncle Joe and Aunt Millie's 41st) in November 1971. There are photos of the family posed in their living room decked out in finery after the friends had gone home and before our clan left for that fateful drive back to Thompson on icy new Highway 6. That November week-end was warm and rainy causing the collapse of the snow tunnels used by the small rodents, who were left to scrounge in the open. This made it an easy catch for the lynx. We saw several caught in the headlights of the car. They were swatting mice and catching them as a snack.

Despite our careful driving over the icy road, our car slid deep into the snow filled ditch on the left side of the road. We were trapped in several



## Reflections

feet of snow many miles from anywhere. Happily for us, two RCMP constables on patrol came up to the spot, and stopped to offer assistance. Seeing the five young children and their hapless mother, one decided to drive us to the closest location, which happened to be a café/gas station in Ponton some thirty or forty miles north. The other stayed with Don and the car in the wilderness, waiting for a tow truck they had ordered from Ponton. After about half an hour of waiting, a snowplough came along, dressing the shoulder of the highway. The officer hailed the plough driver and convinced him to attach his chain to our car and ease it back on to the road. Within an hour, the family was reunited at Ponton, and we completed the return trip to Thompson. Everyone reacts differently in extreme or stressful situations, and what is especially memorable about the drive to Ponton in a police cruiser, was that Donna, who was always quiet and shy, talked continuously with the constable, telling him about our visit to Winnipeg for her Gram's and Gramp's WEDDING.

Then there were my parents wedding anniversaries: 50, 55, 60, 65, and 68! Each was very special. For their 50<sup>th</sup> Don and I were contributing dozens of delicious dainties from La Tour Eiffel of Winnipeg. Since we were going to Laurier from Winnipeg, we had to keep these beautiful confections cool. Our car was not air conditioned, so, at a parking lot somewhere in St. James, bags of ice were bought and placed in coolers, and the dainties transferred to icy safety for the trip to Ste. Rose. This was probably the last time we had a celebration at the little house in Laurier. Our children remember it as the time all the young ones buried Uncle Jim's car under mounds of freshly mowed hay from the field in front of the house.

The 55<sup>th</sup>, and 60<sup>th</sup>, and 65<sup>th</sup> were great reunions for Grandpere and Grandmere at their comfortable Senior Apartments in Ste Rose, where they had moved after selling that house in Laurier. In mentioning the custom of 'Charivarie' in some areas, the germ of an idea grew into a plan for playing a trick on my parents. Both were getting on in years so the trick would have to be gentle. No one will own up to spreading potato chips between the bed sheets in their bed, but we do have suspicions for two sons-in-law. Donalda was staying at the apartment and related the story the next day. Grandmere had gone to bed first, found these chips and after sharing the fun, laughingly shook the mess out the front door. But the next early morning's quiet was shattered when a flock of large gulls came to feast on this treasure trove scattered about the front door. The noisy squawking was considerable. Even then that was not the end of that adventure, since at a later anniversary, artist grandson Danny Leskiw presented his grandparents with a beautiful pen and ink sketch of two gulls soaring high, analogous to Grandmere's and

## Reflections

Grandpere's many years together. It was also a reminder of those well fed birds at their earlier anniversary.

These tricks have inspired others in a similar vein. After our surprise 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary here in Sudbury, Don and I found five pounds of dried beans scattered in our bed. No, these were not scattered out the door, but we did carefully keep them and dutifully sent them with Anne's cousin, Louis, to be deposited in the bed at Anne and Petr's tiny apartment in Toronto for their enjoyment on returning from their honeymoon. Talk about being full of beans!

This also brings to mind the trick played on Bob and Lise after their wedding. It seems that their mobile home in Ste. Rose was completely stuffed with scrunched up newspapers, carefully gathered and scrunched by many Ste. Rose inhabitants. Now, both of the previously suspected in-laws were hundreds of miles away. Others must have been at work. Who could it be?

Uncle Joe and Aunt Millie were feted on their 50<sup>th</sup>, 60<sup>th</sup>, 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversaries and Uncle Joe's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Anne and Petr and grandchildren and Mom Danko organized a fine 35<sup>th</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary party for us in Winnipeg. Petr worked night and day to finish the large deck and railing to accomodate all the guests from the area, from Florida, and Sudbury, Souris and Ste. Rose. What fantastic memories these events make, and what stories came from them.

George and Ellen had a great 25th wedding anniversary party in Detroit. Those two are experts in putting together reunions and parties. They have experience, having prepared many surprises, including a surprise 70<sup>th</sup> birthday party for Aunt Mary. We have photos of many, many visits to Welland, and Souris over the years most of them have us sitting at extended dining tables ready to enjoy the delicious meals and great company.

Jack and Terry celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary in Amherst Nova Scotia. We had announced our plans to drive there to enjoy that celebration. They did not know that Bob and Cathy Laye were driving to Sudbury, and would be with us when we arrived. Bob and Jack had played in the original Gold Spots Band in Manitoba and still enjoy making music together whenever they can. The surprise worked and a large group of family and friends had a three day gathering to toast the bride and groom. Receptions were held at the nearby Truemanville Hall, and at their home, in

## Reflections

their large RV Barn (garage), and at the wonderfully located home on the shore of Northumberland Strait owned by Mike and Michele. Guests came from California, Manitoba, Ontario, BC, and various other parts of Canada and the USA. As promised, there was much music, refreshments, and food at each venue. It was a great reunion.

Each celebration seems more unforgettable than the last. Jack and Don were born in September of 1932. At least every five years we celebrate their birthdays together. Additionally, both couples were married in early July, though five years apart. This has certainly proven to be another good reason to get together. We have been to Amherst, Sudbury, Montreal, Las Vegas, Stratford, St. Catharines and most recently to Halifax. Jack and Terry organized a combination, birthdays and our wedding anniversaries at a presentation of the Nova Scotia International Military Tattoo in Halifax. What fantastic entertainment those many international bands put on. In addition, Paul and Maureen, Alan and Brenda, and Michele and Mike and six grandchildren all came together to fete us and to celebrate the six grandchildren's birthdays at the same time. Michele and Mike were exceptional hosts. They entertained us, BBQ'd for us and saw to our having extra surprises in our hotel rooms when we checked in. Fantastic!

## Reflections

### **Our Florida Sojourns.**

We had first trip to Florida in 1983, with Denis and Anita, when we spent a week at his brother's newly acquired "double-wide" trailer in Pinellas Park. Denis did all the driving, and showed us around the city of St. Petersburg, its many beaches, shops and restaurants. At Red Lobster we first heard of 'Shrimp-wreck Mary', a Bloody Mary with a stir stick that skewered several lovely shrimp. It was on that trip that a group of Copper Cliff snowbirds got together for a lively evening of singing and dancing at Charlie's Oasis. The audience was invited to sing their choice of music, accompanied by the band. So we encouraged Denis, who had been taking voice lessons, to go onstage. There he stood, manfully singing "How Great Thou Art". When we asked him why he chose to sing a hymn in a beach bar, he replied that it was the only song he could think of as he stood before the microphone! That fantastic evening at Charlie's Oasis comes to mind when we hear that hymn now. We often tried to find the location of this club on later visits to the area, but never were successful. Must have been looking on the wrong beaches!

Years later, in 1991, we spent a wonderful week with George and Ellen at their luxurious time-share on Treasure Island (St. Petersburg beach). This was a brand new concept for us, and was very popular in the south and Mexico at that time. In St. Pete, we became familiar with the beach names, Clearwater, Madeira, Indian Rocks, Pass-a-Grille, Belleair and St. Pete. Another favourite spot was John's Pass, a tourist centre, where great shops provided many opportunities for finding treasures or bargains. We never missed the chance to go to the upper level, overlooking the docks and John's pass, where we could get generous servings of the best ice cream in Florida. Great shopping opportunities were found at Belk-Lindsay, Bealls and Bealls Outlet, Dillards, and the Malls with their shops big and small. At the large Orange Grove market, gallons of fresh juice and other citrus products were available. Sadly, the ice cream shop and the Orange Grove are no more. Sic transit favourite places.

One day, after a day trip to Cypress Gardens, we stopped at a wonderful restaurant called The Captain's Table, for a fantastic dinner. The host (no waiter, he), was able to describe each dish on the menu both for us fish lovers, and also for George, who prefers meat to seafood. Following dinner, this capable person asked us if we wished a dessert and, at my inquiry, he described in detail and named about 18 items without even consulting a menu. Thinking of the large meal already consumed, I declined. I was promptly rebuked by my husband, who said that after that

## Reflections

admirable recitation of choices, I was going to have dessert. And I did!

On another occasion with George and Ellen, we were at "The Brown Derby" which I remember as a great restaurant/ bar along St. Pete beach.. This time, the drink menu was offered, and the special featured was The Brown Derby Grog, a combination of several rums and fruit juices. Don and Ellen each ordered one. George and I received our less elaborate drinks, neatly served on a tray. Next, the giggling waiter carefully carried a huge, attractive stemmed glass, seemingly half the size of a wash basin, to set it before Ellen. He then returned carrying a second, similar glass for Don. He explained that management did not allow these Grog drinks to be carried on a tray, and that each was to be carried separately to prevent accidental spills. We just had to buy the glass, of course, and we still use it at home, though not necessarily for drinks. Seeing it on our bar always makes us smile.

The four of us also saw one New Year in at a resort within walking distance of their time-share on Treasure Island. As the evening progressed, it was clear that the waiters were having their own celebration in the kitchen. During the evening one appeared to take further orders for drinks, and when a Bloody Caesar was ordered, this waiter said: "What is it with you Canadians? You live 1500 miles from any ocean and you want clam juice in your drinks?"

George and Ellen are now retired and live in a beautiful home in Englewood, close to Venice and Naples, Florida. We were fortunate to visit them on two separate occasions, and became more familiar with the south western part of that state. The large home, pool with spa in the screen-enclosed lanai is a favourite spot for these great hosts, their visitors, and especially Sassy, their CAT, who is sure that she owns this space, and can come in or go out and request, and get served, ice-cubes as desired.

Ellen's and George's vacation time ran out after New Year's Day, so they had to return to their home in Canton, Michigan. Being newly retired, Don and I continued touring and exploring Florida. With advice from Patsy and Mark, we drove to Orlando and spent four or five days at Disneyland theme parks: Epcot, MGM Studios, and the Magic Kingdom. All the walking and sightseeing tired us out so that we had to take rests at the huge outlet malls nearby. Sigh ...

We drove north to St. Augustine, and have good memories of that city, although it was unseasonably cold during our tour of the city. Going south again, we followed US A1A for a spectacular coastal drive through

## Reflections

seaside towns, passing luxurious estates, some having yachts on a channel at the back of the property and Ferraris in the front drive. After that memorable sunshiny day, we stopped overnight at Hollywood, just north of Miami. Next morning we drove the Tamiami Trail, alias Alligator Alley, alias Interstate 75, to Fort Myers to visit with Fern and Norm Price who were visiting with her brother. While visiting the area we stayed at a hotel in Coral Gables

Fern, Norm, Don and I made a day trip to Everglades City, where the Everglades empty into the Gulf of Mexico. A boat tour of the mangrove reefs had us wondering at the snow white egrets standing in the brackish, black water without dirtying their feathers. Pink flamingos actually nested in the trees, probably because of large gators waiting below and we saw anhinga with their wings spread out to dry. Back in port we had a seafood dinner and, while they aren't considered seafood, Don had some deep fried alligator tail. The following day we toured the Henry Ford winter estate and the nearby Thomas Edison laboratory. Apparently the two men were good friends as well as being fellow inventors and innovators.

One evening in Cape Coral we wanted something different for dinner so we called "The Green Iguana" to ask about their menu and location. "It's really close to your hotel... The Big Ugly Green building a couple of blocks west"... We astonished everyone back at the hotel when we told them that we had walked there and back...."not in THAT part of town!", they admonished.

We visited the Ding Darling Wildlife Refuge (what an unusual name), also unusual was the fact that visitors could drive through the park and see the wildlife from the comfort of their air conditioned cars! Next we spent a most wonderful, unforgettable day at Sanibel Island beach. Unfortunately, our vacation time was running out and we wanted to spend a few more days with Mark, Patsy, Gertie and Louis before returning to the cold north. So off we went to St. Petersburg.

### **Mark and Patsy**

During all the several years that we went south we could always count on a fantastic welcome to St. Petersburg from Mark and Patsy. We were fortunate to share many visits there with their friends and with Gertie and Louis. There were so many outings together, with splendid visits, trips, boat rides, expeditions. One recent Christmas season, Mark took us to "The Pier" to see the decorated boats parading by on Tampa Bay. On another,



## Reflections

there was a drive through the cays seeing the homes brilliantly arrayed in Christmas decorations, and on still another, a walk through a neighbourhood where unbelievable, magnificent displays were set out at homes, in garages, and front yards. Then there were the evenings at the Legion where their friends' band provided the entertainment. Gertie and Louis were honoured as MOM and DAD and we were all treated royally. The Wagon Wheel Flea Market was a good Saturday morning diversion, and the entertainment there provided us with several discs of Andean music by MALKU, many house wares, shirts, and even the reputed "SHAM WOW".

We were also treated to the dog races, a really new adventure for us. Louis and Gertie especially enjoyed this diversion. During the week preceding the races, Louis would study the racing form and decide on the greyhounds he would back. He and Gertie did pretty well at the track whenever they went. We bought a lot of dog food! .

Mark and Patsy took us all out to sample 'the blooming onion' at the Australian Outback restaurant, and we were quickly addicted to that delicacy. On a subsequent occasion, we did not want to wait the two hours for a table at the Outback, so Mark guided us all to The Great Texas Steakhouse. When we ordered, little did we know the size of the steaks that we were about to be served. Jim Cooney, especially had little appetite, and was floored on seeing the huge platter bearing his order set before him! Even those of us with hefty appetites went home carrying large "doggy bags" that kept us in food for three days afterwards (or so it seemed).

Several times, the Tuckers were able to visit with us in Spring Hill for a barbecue. Some memorable, multi-vehicle trips were also made to Silver Springs, where that great photo of the five rocking grandmas was taken. Our group also ventured to Cypress Gardens, Tarpon Springs, and Sarasota. Cypress Gardens was my favourite theme park. Jack and Terry joined our big family for a great day seeing the grand floral and light displays. The Kodak Arm that lifted us up on a circular platform and rotated high above the park, gave us a bird's eye view of the park and its surroundings. We also enjoyed the boat ride on the winding canals, going through an array of floral gardens, shrubbery and, to us, exotic trees. The display put on by the water skiers was spectacular! We were twelve or thirteen of us on one visit, and four or six or eight at other times.

That same year, several cousins were in Florida, including Jean and Jeanne d'Arc Lagasse from Montreal, who had a large fifth wheel RV in a park a few miles down Highway 19. It was always fun to be together, and

## Reflections

we all treasure those memories. They also joined us when Lamontagne cousins from Detroit called and made arrangements to meet us at the Ringling Mansion and museum in Sarasota. We had a good reunion that afternoon, full of reminiscences and renewal of relationships. Not wanting the day to end, we all decided to go for dinner at Mrs. Appleby's in Sarasota. So, we formed a cavalcade of five or six cars and followed Mark and Patsy as they led the way. Upon seeing the number of us coming in, the staff rapidly switched some tables around so that we were all sitting together at one long table. The food was good, the company even better. It was another day to remember.

### **Jack and Terry McGee**

Our friends Jack and Terry McGee had retired and decided to travel to Florida for the winter. We made a point of getting together with them for excursions and good company, whenever we were in Florida. They were proud owners of a large fifth-wheel RV and travelled south from Nova Scotia to the sprawling Florida Camp Inn at Haynes City just a few miles from Orlando's attractions. They had done a lot of camping over the years, and this luxurious RV was the most luxurious camper they ever had. It had every convenience: kitchen appliances, bathroom and a separate bedroom. The campground was a spot where they made many friends, most of whom returned there every winter. Terry was able to take part in many craft groups, and Jack continued to make music with groups that appreciated his sax playing talent. From the other campers, Jack and Terry heard about many activities, different theme parks, attractions and flea markets. When we visited them or they came to the home that we rented in Spring Hill, we shared these discoveries. Together, and at times accompanied by our guests, we toured central Florida, visiting Silver Springs, Cypress Gardens, Bok Tower with its carillon, and Key West. Each place had its own charm and appeal. Close to us were Weekie Watchee Springs, Homosassa Wildlife Park, Tarpon Springs, Crystal River, Hudson, and many malls and restaurants along Highway 19, and the gulf coast.

The first year we stayed in Spring Hill, Jack and Terry told us that Disney World was honouring Florida wintering Canadians by selling a passport to their theme park, allowing unlimited visits. Both couples bought passports and together or separately over that winter, we spent at least twenty days at Disney World with various visitors. We especially loved Epcot, with its different country presentations, and of these, the Mexican, Canadian, Chinese, French, Scandinavian and American pavilions were awesome. Other pavilions that impressed were of future travel and of

## Reflections

agriculture, and oh so many others. Even after visiting twenty times, there was more to be seen. This theme park visit was much too physically taxing for some of our more senior visitors so we went to other theme parks with different groups

### 1992 FLORIDA

We had so many wonderful times at 9020 Swiss Road, Bob and Peggy Fera's beautiful home in Spring Hill Florida. For several years, we prided ourselves on being good tenants, but we happily shared our beautiful rented home with family and friends. This beautiful home had three comfortable bedrooms, two of which had twin beds. This was just right for Germaine and Donald, and Jim and Delphine. At different times, these same bedrooms were occupied by other friends and relatives.

At the time, a new gold bank card provided the holder with three weeks of travel insurance. For visitors coming from Canada, this was the ideal amount of time for flying down for some Florida sun. We'd pick up our guests at the airport, St. Pete, or Tampa or Orlando (a two hour drive from Springhill for those airports), a day of rest by the pool, and then off to sightseeing! Starting with a visit to a theme park, resting, visiting relatives, resting, more theme parks, more resting poolside, Mall hopping, Mall shopping, sampling various restaurants, resting again, as befits health conscious seniors (actually, pooped seniors).

For us, one great enjoyment was being able to pick oranges or grapefruit from the trees in the yard and have them for breakfast. Don learned a special way of preparing them that made it a real treat. When my sisters and brother-in-law were visiting, we were four seniors, in various states of health, so our rest days were pretty quiet, just sitting by the pool and playing dominoes or cribbage. Stanya and Vaclav had gifted us with a delicious looking Chocolate picture puzzle and Danny had given us a beautiful puzzle of Renoir's "Lady with the Red Hat". A side table was set up by the window, one coolish week, and at different times we all looked for a missing varicoloured piece, having 2 insies and 2 outsies, describing the prongs that held the puzzle pieces in place.

Some of us would go for walks, Delphine, the "power walker", striding ahead, and go past Hope Lane, Frost Street and several other streets. A shorter and slower walk for us was to the corner mall, to the Food Lion for milk, soup or wine or to the hairdressers, or gift shop. Frequently we would go out for breakfast or lunch at Arnold's Diner, and Robby's Pancake

## Reflections

House was a favourite for breakfast. Nellie's, Angelina's, Chili's, the Australian Outback (for the blooming onion, and huge steaks), or Family Buffet were dinner places that the six of us liked. We sometimes ranged much further afield.

Don was the only driver in the group, but we had gotten a seven passenger van just for the purpose of comfortably transporting six of us around Florida's gulf coast. Jim usually sat with Don in the front, since it was easier on his back. Donalda and Germaine sat in the middle, for ease in getting in and out, and Delphine and I, being younger and sprier, sat in the very back. Inevitably Jim would gallantly open the sliding door for Donalda and Germaine to enter the car and I can still hear Germaine's giggle as she was climbing in. On an evening drive back, she would also read all the signs along the route, just to make sure that the driver did not fall asleep at the wheel. Don notes that I continue that habit even now. It is to their credit that I so admired all my sisters that I find joy in emulating their habits.

On one occasion, Delphine lost an earring in the back of the van, and while searching for it she and Germaine were saying a prayer to St. Anthony, who among the heavenly hosts, has a great reputation for finding lost articles. This was said in French, but the English equivalent goes something like this.

Tony, Tony, Listen. Listen. Hurry. Hurry. Something's missing.  
Tony, Tony, Look around. Something's lost and must be found.  
Tony. Tony, Look and see. Something's lost. Return to me.

St. Anthony came through and the earring was found.

Later in the visit, toute la gang went for a lovely dinner at the Family Restaurant down Highway 19. All six of us sat in a large booth close to the door and really enjoyed our meal. We returned to the house and saw a very pale Jim and distraught Delphine searching the car. Jim's wallet was missing - ID, credit cards, travel items, not to mention cold cash, was at stake. If it was not found in the car then it must be at the restaurant. Don, Jim and Del drove back while the rest of us were storming the heavens for St. Anthony's help ... and help us he did, for the booth had not yet been cleared and the wallet was still lying on the seat where it had dropped out of Jim's pocket. **Thank you St. Anthony..**

Probably the first visitors we accompanied to Disney World were the Holowaty family, Eric and Philly, with Greg and Helen. Greg especially

## Reflections

enjoyed the rides, and rode down Splash Mountain sitting in the front seat, with Don as his seatmate! Since they only had one week with us, we went back to Spring Hill after two days at Disney and Greg spent the next day happily splashing around the pool, while his family drove out to Gulf View Mall on a shopping expedition. During their stay with us we celebrated my sixtieth birthday with an afternoon at Weekie Watchie Springs where, at Philly's urging, the bird trainer had one of the cockatoos sing Happy Birthday to Della. Did I blush?

Danny and Kim came from Souris, and we again spent a couple of days visiting Orlando. I treasure the poems that Dan wrote about his visit, especially the one written about the tasting different varieties of in season oranges and grapefruit at a favourite produce stand in Homosassa. (See the Appendix for the two poems that Dan wrote.)

### 1993 Florida

Anne and Petr with young Peter and 3 month old Michael arrived from Toronto for a week's vacation. Of course we had to take them to experience Disneyland. Michael seemed especially taken by: "It's a Small World After All", and young Peter loved the ride from the parking lot to the parks in the tractor drawn coaches. Peter seemed to be affected by loud noises and the sound systems were loud. At one point he said: "No more movies!" (these were part of the introduction to almost every pavilion tour). He also enjoyed boats: "Let's go on the boat!" he'd suggest, referring to the shuttle craft on the lagoon at Epcot. On their return to Toronto and even in Winnipeg, Petr had to repeat the same tale of going to Disney on the tractor train as a bedtime story for Peter. During one of our visits to Robby's Pancake House, our attractive grandchildren drew the attention of a group of seniors, obviously missing their own families. An old gentleman asked Anne tentatively if he could please "just touch them", with such yearning. Did they soon return to their families? I wonder....

Dick and Terry Drewe came for a stay while Jim and Delphine were with us, and the six of us went to Kennedy Space Centre, with Jack and Terry, and then to Homosassa Springs, and Weekie Watchie Springs. Dick claimed that he loved having Jim for company, since Jim was the only person to walk slower than he did. Jim was plagued with back and kidney problems and Dick was crippled with arthritis. Both loved to play cribbage. Del and Terry were great walkers, and would speed walk every morning.

This was the year that George and Ellen, Aunt Mary and Joanne



## Reflections

spent their holiday in Panama City on Florida's panhandle. We stopped there and saw that part of Florida and used a different route home. George is given a gold star for finding a restaurant on the gulf coast called Canopies. Our group was seated in an alcove overlooking the gulf and had a memorable meal with unbelievably good service. A TV comedy at that time was called "Three is Company". Jack Tripper, the male character was a restaurant owner-waiter-chef. These people must have studied his style. The evening was so memorable - the company; the ambience; the location; the food, the service - perfect in every way.

It was spring in the south when we drove home, and pecan trees, and peach trees were in bloom, as were displays of seemingly wild daffodils along the roadway ditches. Even the azaleas put in an appearance. Oh, how nice it would have been to be able to extend our stay,

### 1995 Florida

This Christmas season, Ellen and George were hosting Aunt Mary and Aunt Alice at their time share. We made plans for them all to come to Spring Hill for a second Christmas dinner. A flurry of preparations followed. Ellen asked what she could contribute, and it was suggested that she bring dessert. Zounds! She must have spent many hours in her kitchen, for she brought in nine kinds of cookies and bars, all home made. The photos we have of us around the dining room table show how much we all enjoyed the dinner. We teased Don, who was trying to get us all into the photo, to "Back up! Back up! Back up!" until he flipped over onto the chesterfield back of him, where Ellen took HIS photo doing the flip.

St. Petersburg had prepared for a great event in a newly refurbished downtown supermarket location. The building was transformed into a museum that brought world artefacts to showcase. The city of St. Petersburg Russia, was allowing "Treasures of the Tsars" from the Hermitage to be featured in a grand opening of this museum. We just had to see this! So, accompanied by Germaine and Donald we took it in. It was fabulous! That evening we had dinner with Mark and Patsy. On the way home, Germaine read aloud all the billboard messages along Highway 19, supposedly to keep the driver awake. In following years, we were able to see and Egyptian Antiquities of King Tut. All were truly astounding.

On one occasion, we visited the Salvadore Dali's art gallery. We had seen some of Dali's work at the Beaverbrooke Art Gallery in Fredericton, New Brunswick a few years back, and we were curious to see what was



## Reflections

reported to be the largest collection of his paintings. Dali was not my favourite artist until we toured the gallery with an excellent guide to relate his career and interpret the paintings. Our fresh understanding made all these huge works really appealing.

At another time, we travelled to St. Petersburg and went touring the St. Petersburg Art Gallery. We each took our time looking over the paintings, sculptures and crystal works. Dick was out of sight, presumably well ahead of us when suddenly he appeared, he had hurried to gather us all together, saying that he had a surprise for us. He had gone to the entrance for a rest, when their good friends from Toronto came in. They too had decided to come to the gallery, and had unknowingly chosen the same day and time to be there. With them was a former Thompson resident, Beulah Devine, another proof of Petr's theory that everyone had lived in Thompson at one time.

### 1996 Florida

Much had happened since Petr and Anne moved to Winnipeg. My sister Germaine had moved from Ste. Rose to Charleswood in autumn and almost immediately had to be admitted to St. Boniface hospital, where she was diagnosed with cancer. Many family members visited her daily, but her condition deteriorated despite the dedicated caring, especially by her children Denis and Pam, Jeanne, and Adele and Bill. Everyone tried so hard to ease her pain. Bill spent many nights at her side, holding her hand while she underwent cancer treatments. Jeanne was with her every day looking after her care and Adele, Denis and Pam and the whole Molgat family were exceptionally admirable and attentive. All of us visited daily, despite the cruelly cold temperatures. It was 33 below Celsius on many days from mid November through the ensuing two months.

Meanwhile, our first grand daughter Katherine was born on November 23, but after that great event, Don and I drove back to Sudbury arriving home shortly before some friends arrived from Vancouver on a short visit. Following that, we prepared for Christmas, and on Christmas Day we got the message that Germaine had passed away. We drove back to Manitoba, stopping at Don's Mom's home in Transcona, and then travelled with Gertie and Louis to Ste. Rose for the funeral.

Back in Transcona, plans were underway for Katherine's christening. Flashbacks of this event have proud great grandmother, Don's Mom walking up those long concrete steps at St. Ignatius Parish church, buffeted by the

## Reflections

stormy, cold Winnipeg wind. She seemed so fragile, but a prouder great grandparent could never be found. From the beginning, she and Katherine had a very special bond that never was broken. Many photos show the mutual adoration between those two Katherines. Once inside St. Ignatius, the ceremony took place, with Eric and Philly as godparents for Katherine. In another flashback, two year old Michael appears, sitting in the priest's chair, seemingly uninterested in the proceedings, munching on raisins that he had brought along for a snack.

At home, Young Peter and Michael kept everyone busy reading to them. At this time it was "Thomas the Tank Engine" that fascinated them and Eric especially read the complete book so many times that the children knew each word by heart. They were read to every day and at bedtime by Petr or by Anne, and by visitors too. The boys were able to correct any missed word from any of the books - : Princess Prunella; Delicious Aloysius; Toes in your Nose; Sleeping Dragons all Around; Merry-Go-Day; Franklin, the Turtle; and always, Thomas the Tank Engine. Music also was an important part of the devoted care that Petr and Anne provided their family. It is evident in the great interest that Peter, Michael and Katherine have in these and many other subjects, particularly science and math. Not only are the book shelves crammed, but the visits to the library are frequent and provide all manner of books, music, videos, CDs, and taped books.

### **The tale of the lost purse!**

Many fortunate incidents have occurred in my life, besides meeting and marrying Don. One that could have had dire results took place in Winnipeg after the christening of our granddaughter Katherine. Eric and Philly had come from Toronto to the frozen city in January for the occasion. The four of us planned a touristy trip to "The Forks". It was a desperately cold, stormy day, but we drove out, and spent a few hours visiting the Johnston Terminal, and shopping in the large market. I especially remember buying a couple of attractive T-shirts, with stylish, artistic craft painting that I knew would be lovely to have on our upcoming trip to Florida. At lunch time we stopped at a café and had lunch. We noticed that few people were about and saw that the storm had worsened so we decided to leave for Anne and Petr's home on Elm Street. It wasn't an easy drive, for the streets had not been ploughed, but we made steady progress and had almost reached Grant Park Mall where Eric and Philly wanted to make a short stop when I remembered my purse. I had carefully hung it on the arm of my chair when we stopped for lunch. There was pure panic, for I carried our passports, credit cards, travellers cheques and IDs for our trip south.

## Reflections

Abandoning Eric and Philly at the mall, we retraced our drive to "The Forks" where I dashed inside to find the hostess at the restaurant.

"I've done a very foolish thing and left my purse in the restaurant about an hour ago", I said.

"WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?" was her reply. And then "Can you describe it?"

Could I ever! It was exactly the same colour as my coat. With that, this blessed angel pulled my purse out from under the desk. Not only that, but she declined my offer of a reward! My thanks were enough, she said. Certainly, the drive back to the mall to pick up Eric and Philly was easier and happier. We celebrated our good fortune at Anne and Petr's and slept well that night.

### **Finally, Off to Florida.**

The day after the happening at The Forks, saw us leaving for the south and further adventures. For this journey, we travelled through the central states, and surprise...it was cold and stormy there too. We were well dressed for the weather with heavy boots, warm coats, gloves, hats and scarves. After all, hadn't we lived in northern Manitoba, in Thompson, for twelve years?

The first day went well, and day two started out fine, but the further we drove, the icier the roads became until all traffic stopped. Even large rigs pulled over, as well as vans and cars. The way seemed clear, but icy, and it seemed that all were waiting for the sanders. Shortly after we stopped, a car with large Sheriff Markings passed slowly and proceeded up the hill ahead of us. We decided to follow and got through fine. Later, we noticed that the snow banks at the side of the road were very black. We inquired about it at the café where we stopped for lunch. We were told that ash from the power plants was used on icy roads, to provide traction. Was this what traffic was waiting for? We happily continued south, shedding sweaters and coats, (but not the purse) as we got closer to Texas. Our visit to San Antonio was especially memorable. The Riverwalk was especially enjoyable and the statue of St. Anthony on the walk reminded us to thank the saint most profusely for his help in finding missing articles.

From San Antonio we drove to New Orleans, stayed there for a few

## Reflections

days enjoying what it had to offer. Then went on to Spring Hill, where we spent a couple of weeks with Dick and Terry Drewe who had rented 9020 Swiss Road for several months. Before we arrived, they had discovered many new places where we gladly went. One of these was the Legion Dinner, a fund raising event held one or two evenings a week. They offered, at a very reasonable price, a complete roast beef, or meatloaf dinner, cooked by a retired chef, Tom Kubas, whom we had met on one of our earlier stays in Spring Hill (see below).. He had been hired by the Legion to prepare and oversee the serving of these weekly dinners. As its reputation grew, so did the attendance. When we went there must have been several hundred people lined up for dinner.

Don had been cleaning out the car after our arrival, when Tom Kubas walked by and, seeing the Ontario licence plates and the golf clubs beside the car, asked Don if he golfed. They went golfing several times at a golf resort that was being developed near Crystal Springs, north of Springhill. Tom and his wife, Blanche and her mother had moved to Springhill from Chicago after Tom had recovered from a stroke. He had been a chef at a large hotel, like the Hilton. After the stroke he exercised by walking around the perimeter of a golf course where he picked up lost, stray golf balls. He had quite a stash and gave them away freely.

Another discovery they made was a meat market on Mariner Drive, where the most tender and tasty steaks were available. Dick and Terry grilled some New York cut steaks for a farewell dinner the night before we returned home.

### 1997 Florida

Our great coup was in finally convincing (coaxing) Don's Mom to come to Florida. As was her wont, she had to decide for herself that she would come and see what we all had been raving about these many years. She flew down to Orlando with John and Shelley. Once again, we met the plane and went directly to Jack and Terry's for lunch together at their RV, before driving on to Spring Hill. Mom seemed to enjoy our agenda of rest, theme park, rest, visit, but the use of the rental wheelchairs at theme parks was embarrassing for her. Also, the idea of a theme park, where you go in and spend several hours, or a day or days was very different from Canada's Parks, where you can drive through at you leisure, look around and exit when you desire. We did take her through Homosassa Sprngs, and Weekie Watchie, and Cypress Gardens, all of which she enjoyed. I think she

## Reflections

appreciated the wheelchair after all. We really felt that the walking was too strenuous for her.

### **1998 Florida - At Leon's on Abigail Crescent.**

Florida was really being developed and immigration into the state was at an all time high. Developers and builders put up many lovely homes to lure Snowbirds into buying property and then renting them when not in use. We too were courted both for the gated community or the Spring Hill development, or even the many RV home parks throughout the state. In presenting the various model homes for us, the Wellington home was promoted as being right for us. We were able to rent this model home on Abigail Crescent and indeed found its plan to be very comfortable and convenient. My unfortunate fall in early December had resulted in a broken left shoulder and this had kept us from arriving there until mid-January. This year we settled in like veteran snowbirds and had few visitors. Only Jack and Terry came for a few days at Easter, and Denis and Anita came for a short visit. It was quiet, but we can remember another snowbird from Pennsylvania calling to us across the back yard. - "YO, CANADA", inviting us to join he and his wife at their pool. The solar heating for his pool had brought the temperature up to 90 degrees. It was quite a difference from the 54 degrees at our unheated pool.

We did spend a fair amount of time with Mark and Patsy. Mark was busy setting up a new business to produce and market Electrical Surge Protection equipment at an industrial park near the St. Petersburg Airport. He had a partner in Ottawa who was marketing the product in Canada, and wanted the two places to use the same accounting software for reporting. Don acted as a consultant to Mark on the software installation, so there were a number of trips between Springhill and St. Pete before everything was resolved. We still managed to do some shopping and a bit of restauranting, but much less than usual, the exchange rate was killing us!

### **2000 Florida**

Bob and Cathy Laye flew down on one of our last times at Springhill. We always have such a good time with Don's cousins, and this was no exception. The grapefruit and orange trees in the yard were especially good that year, and we made good use of them. We took Bob and Cathy around to our favourite haunts: like Pine Island, Bayport at sunset, Homosassa Springs with its "inverted fishbowl" underwater observatory to see manatees and schools of fish, and the restaurants, to be sure! Bob was impressed by the

## Reflections

“Outback” and its bloomin’ onion in Springhill. When we drove them back to Orlando for their return flight, they must have forgotten to close the doors after them when they got home: because an unprecedented cold spell descended on Florida and it caused us to question if we should really drive back home.

They and many friends have laughed with Charlie Prose when his tapes and videos are played, a real flea market find at Auburndale not far from Haynes City. Some key phrases from this comedian are still good for a good shared laugh.

Before and since, we have been together for many a breakfast, lunch or dinner, at favourite haunts. There was G’News in Oakbank, Altos, the Transcona Golf Club, Olive Garden, Moxies, and the famous evening that we kept the staff at Alycia’s.....the Ukrainian restaurant on Cathedral Avenue open beyond its nine o’clock schedule. Our leisurely dinner and conversation went so well that we did not notice that the other patrons had gone and that the remaining staff had donned their coats and were seated at a table waiting for us to leave. We hurriedly put on our outerwear, paid the bill and left to hear the door lock click on behind us and all the lights turned off....Those good folk were anxious to go home!

We were happy to have Kathie and Donna come to Springhill with Mark (and Buddy) for a Christmas and New Year stay. Mark was able to drive the girls down to explore the Disney site without having the “old folks” tagging behind. He had driven down once before with Vince Franco, a school friend. That may have been Vince’s first time away with non-Italians, for when he arrived, he had with him provisions enough to survive the two weeks he would be away from home. A large cooler contained such delicacies as arroncini, and other great Italian food. He so enjoyed his visit though. We joked that he never stopped smiling while there.

The home in Spring Hill is now the winter retreat for retired Bob and Peggy Fera. We are fortunate in being on Bob’s list of e-mail friends, and so keep up with the many changes in the neighbourhood, and at the house. The area where I first saw palms, palmettos, anhinga, armadillo, turkey vultures, ospreys, red cardinals, and mocking birds is really built up. Stores have closed, and others opened, farther away on Route 50 or on Mariner. The neighbourhood Food Lion and Winn Dixie supermarkets have both disappeared. Publix, Wal-Mart and Target are now the closest, but there are many superstores a bit farther afield.



## Reflections

### **The Church of Ste. Frances Cabrini, Springhill, Florida.**

The large church, Ste. Frances Cabrini holds many happy memories for us too. The services at Christmas, New Years, and Easter are memorable; each has its own charm. One year, the church hosted a splendid presentation by the Mantovani group, full orchestra and sixteen member choir, that was especially uplifting. The evening program of the Mantovani arranged music was fantastic. The church was the perfect setting for their rendition of Handel's Halleluiahs Chorus. As an interesting aside, we were sitting beside a couple from Minnesota, who, many years ago spent their honeymoon in Winnipeg!

That Christmas morning we went to mass, and marvelled when a white robed trio, standing in the loft above the altar, blew a perfect fanfare on long silver trumpets. Heavenly! The choir's choice of music was absolutely fantastic. All in all it was inspiring without being theatrical.

We went to the New Years mass of the Epiphany with Jean and Jeanne d'Arc Lagasse. The sermon was about the Magi following the star on a risky journey. The visiting priest, from New York City, suggested that we, too, should accept the risks of life. He suggested that the wise men must have run into problems when explaining to their wives why they had to leave on an uncharted journey to FOLLOW A STAR, for an unknown time, with unknown destination, taking the gold, the camels, some servants, etc. Their wives protested: "Who was going to look after the flocks? Who was going to tend the place? How were they going to pay the bills? Who would mow the grass? Etc. etc.". This was a humorous and unforgettable lesson to start the year.

The Easter vigil promised to be a really long affair, but Jack insisted that we should go. Terry had suffered a heart attack that year and I did not think a long ceremony was a good idea for her, despite the comfort of the church. We went for seven o'clock when the rituals of Holy Saturday began.

First came the blessing of the fire. With the church in darkness, a bonfire was lit in a gas barbecue just outside the glass wall. Tapers were lit and carried in procession into the church, where the light was distributed to each person holding a candle, until the church was illuminated by these hundreds of candles. Wow! Beautiful!

The lights were turned on and the candles extinguished before the second office, which was the blessing of the waters. This ritual culminated

## Reflections

in the baptism of several adults, who had been preparing for their baptism and were now waiting in the sacristy, dressed in the white gowns of the catechumens. Each candidate was brought in separately to kneel in a large tub that served as the Baptismal Pool in the sanctuary. The candidate's sponsors stood beside him/her during the rite. The priest used a two litre glass pitcher and gently poured the water of baptism over the candidate's head, while reciting :“in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”, at which point he DUMPED the remaining water from the pitcher over them. It wasn't a small pitcher of water and it seemed to me that the priest did this quite happily if not gleefully. The newly baptised was then helped out of the pool (tub), wrapped in a fluffy white towel and brought to the sacristy to change into street clothes and return in triumph to the church for the rest of the service. This was repeated until all the catechumens had been baptized.

Other Holy Week ceremonies included the singing of the Litanies, sung by a sweet voiced Cantor. With this, many saints in heaven are called upon by name to “pray for us”, and with such a lovely singing voice, the saints have to have been listening.

Finally a high mass, with choir, organ and the familiar alleluias of Easter was sung. Four hours later we left this church absolutely elated and so happy to have been part of the Easter traditions.

As mentioned previously, the church was very large, probably holding over a thousand people. The pews were arranged in about twelve groups so that at communion, twelve servers would come down from the altar to offer communion to people in each area. It also impressed us that after every service at Spring Hill area churches, which are very well attended, a Sheriff's Deputy was posted at the parking lot exit to direct traffic on to the street.

## Reflections

### 2008 Christmas Tree

We 'took down' the Christmas tree today, it being Epiphany, the 12<sup>th</sup> day of Christmas. For a while, each ornament was examined and admired, each bringing up a flood of memories. Recent ones decorated this years' parcels, a tiny elephant "for you know who", a sparkly snowflake, a silk bell. There were other firsts, those received for our first tree in Thompson, some sent to us by office suppliers as a yearly promotion, each neatly packaged in a smartly designed box signed by the personnel for that particular year. One box was shaped like a toy drum, others like alphabet blocks for adults. There is a smart red apple given to Don by his former supervisor..

Many ornaments were hand crafted by our children, our friends and neighbours, work mates, and now by our grandchildren. Fern, Norm and Kendyl Price sent us wood, cross stitch, felt and bead ornaments. The tiny Flyer Sled, the Victoria street light, the bird feeder and Santa face are near the little red double-decker bus from our first trip to Victoria. Tiny wooden bead snowmen and skiers were produced after one of our trips to visit our children at college and universities in Kitchener-Waterloo. Fern, Jeannie and I would frequent craft shows and could often be heard to say "We could do that". And we did! We came home inspired to sew and produce all sorts of items.

A red cardinal perched close to the top of the tree is almost as traditional as the tree top star. It was a gift from Dorothy. Margot crocheted coloured wreaths, bells and candles. As well, she gave us many of the glass ornaments that are now carefully packed away along with Memere's special crystal hummingbirds, including one with a considerably shortened bill, but still treasured as a reminder of the feeder at the window of their apartment in Ste. Rose.

There are many baked ornaments made by Vivian, though one she had made called "Almost Momma" when Anne and Petr were expecting our first grandson, was lost to moisture when carelessly packed away one year. We learned our lesson from this loss. The wooden rocking horse is a reminder of Peter's arrival and several pretty crèche ornaments, many elephants, and hand made decorations are from our grandchildren. Last year, Katherine painted a delicate glass ball with tiny patterns.

Kathie crocheted many snowflakes and angels and sewed a tiny

## Reflections

mouse peeking out of a felt stocking. Donna strung together a dozen bead wreaths. Mark placed tiny birds on a wooden bird feeder. John's very first creation is also placed in the box with dozens of tiny ornaments that decorated a foot-tall 'live' tree, purchased at the super market many years ago. This tree was planted in the back yard and is now at least thirty five feet tall.

There are several Florida ornament gifts, such as the comical sea turtle carrying Santa, and tiny wreaths of vines decorated with silk flowers.

Don's childhood favourites cannot be used now. They are lamp shades for the larger tree lights that were in style when Pluto, Mickey and other Disney characters were promoted 'back then'.

One December, Don and I were hurrying back from Winnipeg via the south Superior route. It happened to be a year when many Canadians were going across the border to do their grocery and general shopping due to a favourable exchange rate. Our trip back had to be rushed, so we only stopped for gas, food and rest and arrived at the Soo customs declaring to the agent that we had made no purchases, nothing to declare. Many were bringing over a month supply and here are these two not bringing anything? Alarm bells rang in this agent's head and we were pulled over for a complete inspection. We were asked to step out of the car while it was searched from top to bottom, end to end, the glove compartment, under the seats, my purse including all papers and receipts for gas bills and overnight hotel room, and finally the trunk was opened. The only thing there aside from our luggage, was the set of lights, with their fraying wires, and the Disney lamp shades. The customs agent acted surprised and only said, "Oh, those are OLD, I hope you don't use those." before sending us on our way home.

Finally, all the boxes are closed and put in storage for another year with the strings of lights and garlands and memories galore. Perhaps next year we will have a new tree to decorate!

## Reflections

### **“Oranges at the Roadside”**

Oranges at the roadside,  
Fresh and plump and round  
Vibrant heaps of sunshine  
At twenty cents a pound.

Here's a pile of kumquats,  
Plums and peaches too,  
Grapefruit, lemons and tangerines.  
It's like a citrus zoo!

Bins full of veggies,  
Carrots, peas and potatoes  
And calling out to me  
Succulent tomatoes.

The essence of ripe mango  
Sparks my taste buds into gear,  
Then a papaya and a kiwi  
And I grin from ear to ear.

Red and green and purple grapes,  
Try as many as you please  
And here's a taste to die for.  
Glistening cherries. Such a tease.

These strawberries are delicious.  
The coconuts and bananas a delight.  
The pineapples next, and I wonder  
“How much room have I got tonight?”

Another napkin for my chin drip  
Into the pail beside the stall  
Where eight strains of Florida oranges  
Demand attention over all.

Orange Florida sunshine  
Sliced by the wedge, delivered with a smile  
Makes you “lip-smacking” want  
To stay home for a while.

After trying eight sensations  
Including navel and mandarin as well  
My favourite has got to be  
That sweet, dear HONEY BELL.

**Dan Leskiw**

## Reflections

### **“So Many Restaurants, So little Time”**

It was forty below, the week we left,  
When all of Manitoba was freezing to death.

“Just bring me some cheese” is all Don had asked for,  
“I need little else. We have sunshine galore.”

So on to Orlando, and then to Spring Hill,  
Where we rested and fed till we’d all had our fill.

“Homossassa Springs” said Don, as he drove there with ease,  
“will delight you with nature from ‘gators to manatees.”

By the pool next day, we ate and drank with delight,  
And gazed at the heavens on that starry, starry night.

Their home was amazing, an ambience full of charm,  
All protected completely by the security alarm.

Fabulous Epcot Centre was to be our first test  
As tourists, you know, never let their feet rest.

The wonderful pavilions filled us all with delight  
As did the dazzling array of “Illuminations” that night.

Next day, we witnessed MGM studio’s finest,  
But sadly noted half our holiday was behind us.

Undaunted, we thrilled at the Magic Kingdom’s glory,  
From Mark Twain’s adventures to Cinderella’s story.

Then off to Tucker’s to visit, pick oranges and float  
Out to the Gulf of Mexico in Mark’s sturdy boat.

A challenge was decisions, when it came to meal-time  
So many restaurants. So little time.

Our very last day forced Dan to endure  
Shopping for presents. We had much to procure.

At last our adventure had come to an end  
But Della and Don promised to invite us again.

**Dan Leskiw**



## Reflections

### THE BASIC RULES FOR CLOTHESLINES:

(if you don't know what clotheslines are, better skip this)

1. You had to wash the clothes line before hanging any clothes – walk the entire lengths of each line with a damp cloth around the lines.
2. You had to hang the clothes in a certain order, and always hang "whites" with "whites," and hang them first.
3. You never hung a shirt by the shoulders - always by the tail! What would the neighbours think?
4. Wash day on a Monday! . . . Never hang clothes on the weekend, or Sunday, for Heaven's sake!
5. Hang the sheets and towels on the outside lines so you could hide your "unmentionables" in the middle. (Perverts & busybodies, you know!).
6. It didn't matter if it was sub zero weather . . . Clothes would "freeze-dry."
7. Always gather the clothes pins when taking down dry clothes! Pins left on the lines were "tacky!"
8. If you were efficient, you would line the clothes up so that each item did not need two clothes pins, but shared one of the clothes pins with the next washed item.
9. Clothes off of the line before dinner time, neatly folded in the clothes basket, and ready to be ironed.
10. IRONED? Well, that's a whole other subject!

Anonymous