

# Eason's Grove

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**Sunday April 12 – Day 32**

My sister Val has been keeping us entertained during isolation by sending old family photos. I had never seen this photo before, but I am making up for lost time. I haven't put it down for three days. I find it fascinating on a dozen different levels.

It was taken at Eason's Grove near Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan, in 1952.

For clarification, when the word "grove" is used in south-central Saskatchewan, it can refer to any grouping of more than two trees, none of which you would have any trouble looking over the top of. There isn't a tree in the photo, so the *grove* must have been behind the photographer.



The lady in the white blouse near the left is Joyce Reeves. She is alive and well and still just as perky as she appears in this photo. She remembers the day vividly and was able to give Val some context.

The young woman seated on the right is my mom. If Joyce is "perky", Mom was absolutely effervescent. That quality allowed her to pack a full life into a compact 47 years. Cancer took Mom in 1981.

The guy with his arm on Mom's shoulder is her nephew, Ted. You heard that right, *nephew*. Mom was the youngest of eight siblings. Ted was born to Mom's oldest sister within days of Mom's birth.

Dad said that he remembers this day well, but he isn't in the photo. We assume he was the photographer.

Glen Erskine is the fellow in the back on the far left. Glen has been a steadfast friend of the family since 1952 (and probably before then). You can't see it in this picture, but Glen has the most compelling smile and laugh of any person I have ever met.

Glen's brother Russell is hard to see in the picture. He is the shadow holding Mom on his knee. Russell died in a hunting accident in 1954. I was born a year later and was given my name in his honour. I hope I am doing it justice.

The Poteaux brothers, Ray (with his arms around the two girls) and Roy behind him were members of the French community in Gravelbourg. Language was obviously not an obstacle to love, Roy married Joyce shortly after this photo was taken.

The tall handsome fellow on the right is described as a "displaced person" from Germany. I don't know how Wolfgang came to be *displaced*, but he was reportedly a "great guy". Wolfgang died in a mining accident several years after this photo was taken.

There are others in the picture whose names are familiar, but I don't know their stories. Aren't they all well-dressed! Can you imagine putting on a tie or a dress for a casual get-together with friends, on a summer afternoon in the country. I think it is a tradition that should be *resurrected*. (I seldom find a use for that word, but today is Easter!)

The tall fellow in the middle is Larry Becker. Like so many of the others, Larry has been a close family friend for decades.

There must have been something very special about that summer day at Eason's Grove, in 1952. The lives of everyone in the picture have been entwined for almost 70 years. Those who lived remain friends to this day.



Studying this picture, I believe that something very important has been lost.

Wouldn't it be nice if we could all find our way back to.....

..... **Eason's Grove?**

# Creative Speling

Monday April 13 – Day 33

We can't shake winter this year; it just keeps coming. Our remaining remedies are few:



I do not!

I have a new hobby.....

....creative speling.

# Overcoming Boredom, since 1963

Tuesday April 14 – Day 34

*Don't let the sunshine spoil your rain.*  
– Oscar the Grouch

I promised myself that I would keep this journal honest, even at the expense of a bruised ego. So, full disclosure, I was pretty grumpy yesterday. The morning was fine, but I rumbled around in my trash can most of the afternoon.

I feel great this morning, but I do not want Oscar to visit again, so I am trying to determine the source of my *green attitude* by process of elimination:

**Ancestry:** I took an ancestry DNA test a year ago. It concluded that my heritage is 60% Scottish, 20% Danish and 20% Tasmanian Devil. The predominant Scottish genes usually keep the Viking/Whirling Dervish characteristics in check, but yesterday I was all Taz!

**Drugs:** Not my cup of mud.



**Alcohol:** There was a time when *overindulgence* was my middle name, but the *pain* far outweighs the *gain* at a certain age. Wobbly pops weren't a factor yesterday.



**Caffeine:** Any time I drink too much coffee I can expect a visit from Taz. He shows up after the second cup; if I have three or more, we dance all night long. I have doubled my intake of coffee during isolation, from one cup a day to two, but I don't think caffeine was my issue yesterday. Taz never left his cage.

**Sugar/Salt:** I purposely left chocolate and pre-packaged sugar and salty products off my overflowing grocery cart last week. Bear and I are both trying to lose a couple of pounds. If that stuff is in the house, I can hear it calling me. Even if I put it in sealed containers on a high shelf, chips and chocolate will not leave me alone until they are nothing but crumbs. We are making home-made pastries - with plenty of sugar, but we limit our intake. Junk food wasn't the issue yesterday.

**Health:** No underlying concerns. Getting plenty of exercise.

**Sleep Deprivation:** Eight hours straight is a utopian myth, *dreamt* up by mattress manufacturers. Maybe sleep works that way before our 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, but I don't know anybody born before waterbeds were a thing, that achieves the lofty goal. I have a pattern of; go to bed early, wake in the middle of the night for a period of time that ranges from 15 min to four hours. Then I go back to sleep until I wake up naturally. My slumber interlude yesterday was about two hours. Sleep deprivation might have been a factor, but no more than usual.

**Relationship:** Just like good fences make good neighbours, physical limitations are essential to a strong relationship. Bear and I are fortunate to have both – a strong relationship and well-defined personal spaces. Bear was the recipient of trashcan behaviour yesterday, not the cause.

We Zoomed with the family yesterday. They all seem to be doing well. Marshall and Deanna have their wedding planned for July, so those plans are in jeopardy. The good news is M & D understand the relative importance of a *marriage* and a *wedding*. Whatever *Covid* has planned for *Cupid*, it won't matter in the long run.

**Boredom:** I don't do boredom. There are a million things to learn and do in isolation. We have marginal internet out here in the sticks, but I can still download an unlimited amount of resource material, endless music, and almost every book ever written. I have yet to watch a movie since the outbreak of Corona. We watched the third season of *Ozark* on Netflix but, other than that and an hour of news a day, the TV is off.

Which leaves only two things I can think of:

### **Covid 19 and Perpetual Winter:**

I can't solve either of these issues and the other factors have all been eliminated. If Oscar the Grouch comes back, I will just have to shake him off.



*Brad (it's his birthday today), taking Kevin for a ride in a laundry basket.*

*.....Overcoming boredom since 1963.*

# Things Covid Can't Affect

Wednesday April 15 – Day 35

I like everything about the first *real* day of spring. Pussy Willows!



Even a Dirty Truck - I washed mine this morning, then went for the mail.



First Robin, right Gervais?

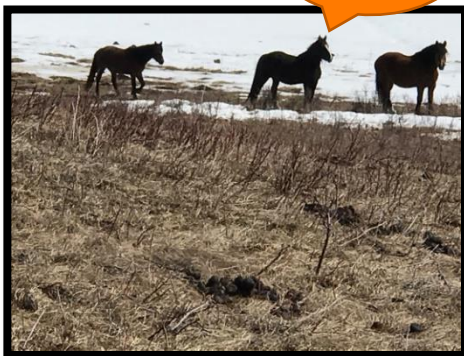


Those of you who lived in Ontario (Janice, Tina) and many more of you, will have visited Niagara Falls. I

haven't, but I have seen pictures. I don't think the falls hold a candle to the sight of water trickling down my driveway.

Deanna, Dave, Doug, Cheryl, Johanna, all of you will understand this; I think one of the best smells in the world is horse manure thawing in the spring.

Wasn't Me!



And, Crocuses. This is last year's crop, we still have 2' of snow on the flower patch this year, but I can dream.



There are some.....

.... things Covid can't affect.

# Furry, Gus McFuzzywuz

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Thursday April 16 – Day 36

All of you know that I am sharing incarceration with a Bear, but you probably know very little about our other roommate, Furry Gus McFuzzywuz. We seldom use his full legal name, unless he is doing something exceptionally irritating, as in:

*Furry, Gus McFuzzywuz! You left poop balls in the laundry room, again!*

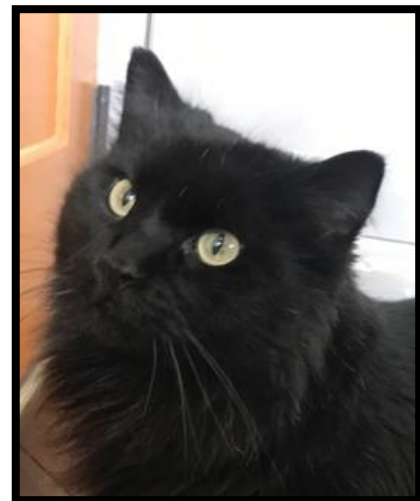
Most of the time he is *Furgus*, or even just *Furg* if he is being exceedingly well-behaved, as in:

*Oh Furg, thanks for killing that mouse and leaving it on the mat!*

Both of my roommates were very excited today.

A couple of weeks ago Gervais mentioned that Janice paints pet portraits in watercolour – specifically pet's eyes. He said that Janice would be happy to use Furgus as a model. I snapped a close-up of him and sent it over to her.

A few days later this portrait was hanging on the gate. I think she nailed it!



Bear loves it!

And Furg is so full of himself he is insisting that, in future we refer to him as.....

*.....Mr. Furry, Gus McFuzzywuz,  
Esquire*

# Shake Hands with the Sewer Sucker

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Friday January 92<sup>nd</sup> – Day 37

Today, we drove up to the cabin for a change of scenery.

*Chapter 2* has always been our sanctuary from the big bad world. It served that purpose again today.

We don't have a TV; internet is spotty and cell service is undependable. Perfect, actually!

In 24 hours, we had snow, rain, ice pellets, sunshine, black clouds, white clouds, steak, baked potatoes, fixins, asparagus, fire, wine, frost, slush, and every kind of weather in between.



Our septic tank was getting full, so I called Jake. Jake is the local “honey wagon” operator; he has been emptying our tank for 25 years, without fail. I usually call his cell and leave a message on voice mail when we need a pump-out. We rarely speak but the tank is always spiffy clean next time we come up to the lake. When I called today, I got Jake in person. We haven't had an actual conversation for years. I was happy to hear that the Covid bogeyman hasn't found Jake and his family, and that the septic pumping business doesn't stop in a pandemic.

I told him we would be gone after breakfast tomorrow. Jake said he would come around 10:00, so we could avoid personal contact.

What has the world come to when you can't.....

..... shake hands with the sewer sucker.



# World Gone Wrong

Saturday April 18 – Day 38

When I began this journey in isolation I thought; *What a great time to catch up on my reading.* I gathered up a few books I have never read, and some I had started and not finished. I lined them up on my desk; sitting ducks, ready to be picked off one by one.



Thirty-eight days later and they are all still paddling around on my desk. 🐼

The culprit is the device on the left side of the desk. Between it and my I-Phone, they monopolise my reading time. Reading books is hard work compared to streaming information from the www.

Yesterday, I said; enough is enough, I am going to put my devices in a drawer and tackle a book, the kind with paper pages.

I have plenty to choose from; a few novels, biographies of Chris Hadfield and H.L. Mencken I have been meaning to get to, and *West of Yesterday*, a book written by Bear's great uncle George Shepherd, which I have never completed. All these great new adventures at my disposal and I settled on *The Grapes of Wrath*, a book I have already read twice.

I started it last night and was drawn back into Steinbeck's.....

..... **world gone wrong.**



If you don't hear from me for a few days, I am in Depression era Oklahoma.

There is no cell phone coverage.

To be continued.....

Thank you for your feedback and encouragement again this week!

Happy Trails,  
Russ

*“We don't heal in isolation, but **in community.**” - S. Kelley Harrell*



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You will remember our neighbors – they of the pirate treasure? Well, their Grandfather, Rob Penner, is a photographer/storyteller. Rob has recently published a collection of photographs, with wisdom and quotations to complement each shot. He has entitled the book *Nostalgia Connections*.



In Rob's words, the book is *“a collection of nostalgia tools to provide springboards for conversation, social interaction and storytelling”*.

His timing couldn't be better!

Click on the link below for more information, and details on how to order a copy.

<http://www.nostalgiaconnections.com/>

