

Bent, Busted or Broken

Sunday April 18 – Day 39

One of the things I have learned in isolation is, *it is the little things that count*. Like *Dad's Cookies*.

There was a *Dad's Cookie* factory near Regina when we lived there in the early 1980's. Adam and Aaron were very young then. On Saturday morning I would bundle them



into the car and take a drive out to White City. There was a retail store in the lobby of the factory where they sold bulk, reject cookies. There was nothing wrong with the cookies; they could be misshapen, broken or slightly over-cooked, but they tasted great!

For \$5 we would get a two-week supply in a big brown paper bag. None of us ever got our fill.

It is not surprising that Dad's has endured since 1929. (No, that is not a *Best Before Date* – wise guy!)

Bear and I ordered two dozen Dad's *Oatmeal Chocolate Chip* cookies to keep our spirits up in isolation.

They taste okay, but I prefer them....



A Balanced Meal - Aaron (left) and Adam

..... Bent, Busted or Broken

Super-Six

Monday April 20 - Day 40

I mentioned last week that I was reading *The Grapes of Wrath*. John Steinbeck's iconic 1939 novel follows the Joad family as they leave their bankrupt farm in Great Depression era Oklahoma and cross the country to the promised land in California.

Eleven members of the Joad family and a lapsed preacher, drive a dilapidated Hudson Super-Six car, modified as a truck, across two thousand miles of bad road to escape poverty.



The economy in Alberta is in dire circumstances right now. Our oil and gas industry has been devastated, just as agriculture was during the Great Depression. With primary industry in a spiral dive, prospects for a return to prosperity in Alberta are not much better than they were in the 1930's.



I have a 1929 Essex Super Six car, the predecessor of Hudson. It is a little older than the Joad's car but in good condition.

If things get really rough, I think I can modify the Essex into a truck capable of carrying Bear and I, our four kids

and their spouses, my dad, Furgus, and a backsliding preacher to California.

Bear has relatives in California, and we have friends there we haven't seen for years. Won't they be surprised when we all show up in our modified....



.....Super-Six

Riley's Reality Cake

Tuesday April 21, Day 41



This young lady turns 29 today. Riley inherited her mother's intelligence, charm, wit and good looks, and her father's last name. Lucky girl!

Riley is a teacher at Fairview School in Calgary. She is educating Grade 4 students during a pandemic. Riley prepares lesson plans and succeeds daily in elevating 28 scholars to a higher plain, using a *virtual* format.

Picture twenty-eight energetic young minds, isolated, bored, and simultaneously super-charged. Add in a measure of anxiety. Toss these ingredients onto a flat pan without institutional structure and bake in an open oven. What you get is...

...Riley's Reality Cake.

And, she will serve it every day until the pandemic ends. She is my hero!

We tried to think of meaningful gifts we could give Riley on her birthday. Bear baked her a real cake. I decided that the best gift I could give is some time off.

For the past three years Riley has invited me to make a presentation to her class. It has been one of the highlights of each year to instruct children on topics as varied as *Agriculture*, *Aviation* and *Alberta's diverse Geography*. Unfortunately, I will miss making an in-person Power Point Presentation to the class this year. Instead, I prepared a printable lesson plan for her shut-in students. My small gift might mean Riley can relax - for just one class.



I hope that Riley's students learn and have some fun with "Signal Flags". If any readers have a child or grandchild who might benefit from a diversion, feel free to pass the lesson along to them.

Happy Birthday Riley!

<https://d.docs.live.net/762ab699a5dacc69/Journals/Incomplete%20Journals/Pandemic/Chapter%206/Signal%20Flags%20-%20Grade%204%20Lesson.pdf>

Orville

Wednesday April 22 – Day 42 - Earth Day

Our little piece of paradise is situated 4495' above sea level. At this altitude and at this latitude (50.72°N) we can get frost almost any month of the year. Which makes gardening tricky.



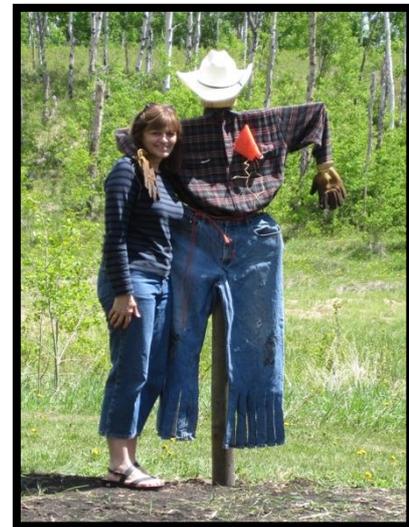
That is why we employ an expert. Orville is not only handsome; he knows a lot about agriculture.

We have a patch of dirt near the house. With Orville's guidance and his vigilance in scaring away pests, we produce some tasty root vegetables and short season items like peas and beans.

Orville's contribution is strictly supervisory. Bear and I do all the hard work, while Orville stands on the sidelines (with a spike up his rear end) and points out our mistakes. The good news is he doesn't eat much, so we enjoy 100% of the produce.

With the Covid 19 pandemic stretching into gardening season, we have decided to expand our agricultural enterprise by launching a community gardening cooperative. I cultivated five acres of hay land last year with the objective of planting trees, but I have decided instead to make that land available to anyone in our circle who wants to grow their own groceries.

In my former life I would have consulted with experts, drawn a schematic of the proposed garden plot, prepared a business plan, drawn up contracts for participants, allocated resources, and delegated authority. I would have monitored progress and made changes as required to perfect the process. But that was then, and this is now.



If you want to be part of our growing coop, come on over. Bring some seeds and a bottle, jar or can of your favourite beverage; we will stand two garden rakes apart, grow a few plants, and have some fun.

If we encounter any difficulty, we will consult.....

.....Orville.

My Mistake

Thursday April 23 – Day 43

I was listening to John Prine again today. The lyrics to his song *Lake Marie* triggered a powerful memory.

*Many years later we found ourselves in Canada
Trying to save our marriage and perhaps catch a few fish
Whatever seemed easier.....,*

- *Lake Marie* – John Prine

Many years ago.....

Do you know what colour your bones are? White, really, really, white. I know this because I saw one of mine once.

It was on our honeymoon, the first one. Ivy and I took a canoe trip in Quetico Park in northern Ontario. I was cutting some spruce boughs to line our campsite with. I had a very sharp hunting knife and, what I intended to do with a branch, I did to myself – I peeled the bark off my left index finger, from the knuckle right up to the tip.

Stupid damn thing to do when you are ten miles deep in an endless chain of lakes, west of Thunder Bay.



I wrapped my finger (and my revulsion) in a rag, and we proceeded to paddle out to civilization. We had passed a fishing camp about three miles back, so we angled that way. I told a fisherman on the dock about my predicament and asked about the easiest route back to the road. He said there wasn't an easy route out, but there was a doctor in the camp who might look at my finger.

Not only was the doctor willing to look at my injury, but he also happened to be Ivy's family physician, and he had a surgical kit with him!

I still have a scar on that finger. If you look closely, you can see where the providential doctor ran his curved needle through

....my mistake

<https://youtu.be/vzCjQwt2rgl>

Riding the Chicken

Friday April 24 – Day 44

A guy I worked with a long time ago spent his winters in Maui. Larry had a natural, darkish complexion so, between that and perpetual sunshine, he always had a great tan.

We were at an early summer out-of-office event. It was a nice day, so I wore shorts.

Larry shot a glance my way as I arrived. Without hesitation, he said: *Are those your legs, Paton? Or did you ride in on a chicken?*



Which is hilarious, unless you are the guy.....

.... riding the chicken.

I think of Larry's line every spring when my legs first see the light of day.

The bleached white snowbirds on the left are my brother Kevin and I, buying lemons from some young street vendors in Arizona.

A Snappy Dresser

Saturday April 25 – Day 45

Bear and I had a slight difference of opinion today. It was about my wardrobe.

I was doing yard work. The weather was mild, somewhat windy, and muddy, but a nice spring day. I put on clothes that I thought suited every task and climate condition.

Bear never paid much attention, but when I met her on the front deck later, she looked me over and asked if I thought maybe I am taking this isolation thing too far. I told her I didn't really understand what she was talking about.



Just as we were having the conversation the UPS truck rolled up, so I asked the driver his opinion.

“My wife thinks I dress like I take her for granted, what do you think?”

“It looks fine to me.”

So, there you have it! 100% of the people I interacted with today, other than Bear, think I am....

.... a snappy dresser.

To be continued.....

Chapter VI was somewhat laid back – more of the *beautiful* than the *terrifying*. Next week you don't get off so easy.

Buckle up!

Russ
April 25, 2020



The young lady in the fancy Easter Hat in the picture on the left joined us this week. Diane comes by her fashion choices naturally. Her Grandma and Great Aunt Jen also had a thing about hats.

