

1000 Little Soaps

March 19, 2021

Upper Right Arm, Alberta

I ran out of soap today. Time to start traveling.

It's a green thing, but I can't leave one of those little hotel soap bars or an open bottle of shampoo in a hotel room. After I use one, I put it in a baggie and take it home.

Pre-Covid, when we were traveling often, I always had a plentiful supply on hand, but today the well ran dry. I suppose I could go to Walmart and pick some up, but where's the fun in that?

We received our first Covid vaccination this week. How long can it be until we are able to get out and gather soap from around the world again?



Pena Palace - Sintra Portugal

Bear and I plan on exploring every corner of the planet. With any luck, when the kids sort out our estate, they will have to deal with

....

.... **1000 Little Soaps**

- Arizona - Nevada 2011
- Australia 2002
- Bellingham - 2017
- Boston 2010
- Boulder 2017
- California 2016
- Chicago 2011
- Chicago 2013
- Connecticut 2013
- Cuba - 2014
- Cuba 2019
- Denmark 2015
- France 2010
- France and England 2012
- Georgia Florida 2012
- Ireland 2014
- Jamaica 2007
- Kootenay BC - 2016
- Louisiana 2018
- Maritimes 2015
- Maritimes 2018
- Mexico 2004
- Montana - 2011
- Montana - Sask 2019
- Montana 2015
- Montana 2016
- Montana 2018
- Nashville 2010
- New England 2019
- New Orleans 2015
- Phoenix 2017
- Phoenix 2018
- San Francisco - 2012
- San Francisco - 2016
- Seattle 2011
- Spain - Portugal - 2017
- Tennessee 2019
- Texas 2012
- Texas 2020
- Victoria - 2019
- Washington DC - 2016
- Washington DC - 2018

The Art of Taking Your Time

March 29, 2021
Backroads, Alberta

It is going to take a while for all seven billion people on the planet to get vaccinated so borders can open again. In the meantime, we are going to have to gather soap and memories locally for a little while longer yet.



There was a time when I counted my days in 15-minute intervals: appointments, meetings, calls, to-do's, etc. I used to cram 36 hours into every 24-hour day. There wasn't much time for art.



Today, as I wait for vaccines to kick in, I spent 6 hours taking a 3-hour trip.



The Art of Taking Your Time.

Clinker Bricks or Ectoplasm

April 4, 2021

Fort Macleod, Alberta

There are some grand old historical buildings in Fort Macleod, like the Queen's Hotel and the AGT Telephone Exchange office.



I doubt the Queen stayed many nights in her namesake hotel, but it does have a certain regal charm.

The AGT building (below) is a solid little structure built in 1934. It is made entirely of clinker bricks.

Clinkers are bricks that get overheated in the kiln-drying process. The overcooked bricks are irregularly shaped, brittle and have a dark glassy finish. Clinkers lack insulating characteristics and are more

often used as road cobble than building material.

The AGT building was constructed during the Great Depression. I am speculating, but what do you bet the builder cut costs buying sub-standard bricks?

Maybe so, but the effect is quite stunning.



Downtown Fort Macleod

A courthouse is like a gun, its allure depends upon which end of it you are dealing with.



If you were on the wrong side of the law in 1888, the Federal Courthouse in Fort Macleod would have been a foreboding place to enter.

From a tourist's point of view, it is fascinating.

The building was closed on Easter weekend, but Bear and I took a walk around it. As I was admiring the architecture at the rear of the building, I almost stepped on these two.

I am not sure if the moose were convicts awaiting trial, or lawyers taking a break. We never stuck around to ask.



The Empress Theatre has been entertaining southern Albertans with live theatre, concerts, and motion pictures for more than 100 years. The building itself is an “event”.

Bear and I drive down to Fort Macleod regularly for an authentic small-town entertainment experience. We will be coming back to The Empress again in late 2021 for the premiere of *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, a movie shot in and around Fort Macleod last year. Why don't you join us?



Fort Macleod has got what you are looking for, be it ...

... Clinker Bricks or Ectoplasm.

Both Sides, Now

April 4, 2021

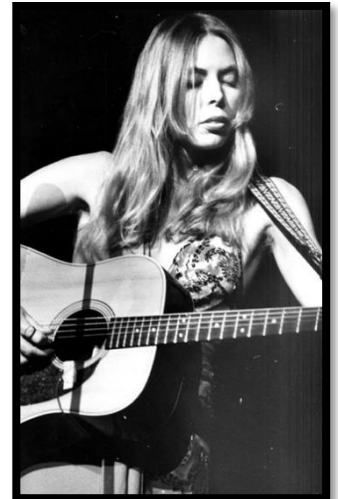
Fort Macleod, Alberta



Janis Muppet was born in Fort Macleod, on November 7, 1943. Or rather, her alter ego was.

Joni Mitchell's father was a flight lieutenant, training pilots at the military air base here. Her Mom was a teacher. When World War II ended and there was no further need to turn farm-boys into fighter pilots, Dad became a grocer. He moved the family to North Battleford, SK, and then to Saskatoon.

Joni displeased her parents by dropping out of high school in 1963, to pursue a career as a folksinger. She worked the coffee shops and folk clubs of Saskatoon and Regina, often busking to make ends meet. Mitchell's success didn't come easy, but everyone who heard her agreed that Joni was destined for stardom.



Mitchell shifted to Toronto, then New York gaining momentum as a singer/songwriter. By the early 1970's every radio station on the planet was playing the girl from Fort MacLeod's songs, through her own voice and the voices of hundreds of gifted musicians who had adopted her music. Joni Mitchell's career is legendary.

In 1975 Jim Henson created a folksinger Muppet with Janis Joplin as the namesake but whose image is unmistakably Joni Mitchell.



Russ & Bear at The Empress

I don't know if Joni Mitchell ever comes back to Fort Macleod. If she does and she plays The Empress, Bear and I will be there, humming along to

.... *Both Sides, Now*

*I've looked at clouds from both sides now
From up and down, and still somehow
It's cloud illusions I recall
I really don't know clouds at all.*

Except Marleen

June 29, 1954

South Arcola, Saskatchewan

I am looking for volunteers to join a baseball team. The objective is to have some fun, but there is a competitive aspect to it as well. Be prepared to travel some distance, and back in time sixty-seven years, to 1954.



The team we will be competing against is an all-girls, softball club, from the community of South Arcola.

You might think we will have an unfair advantage, but you have never seen these athletic women in action. The South Arcola Women's Baseball Club do not place second very often.

Back Row: Ester Ingram, June Sturgis, Anne Bird, Ethel Kramer, Marlene Kramer,
Front Row: Gail Lees, Twins Marjory and Margaret Johnston, Darleen Worden.
Coach: Harold Worden.

Two team members are missing, Thelma Anderson is having a baby and Muriel McElroy is tied up milking cows today. To round out the 9-person team, the South Arcola Club has recruited Ethel's 12-year-old daughter Marleen (top row, far right) to fill in.

Marleen is the reason we are here today, and why we so badly need to win this game. I must impress this young lady.

In 1961 I had a serious crush on Marleen. Our driveway and Kramer's were on opposite sides of the road. Before the school bus picked us up, she and I would spend a few minutes alone together. It was glorious! Marleen was in Grade 11 and I was in Grade 1, but the 10-year age difference didn't faze me, I was head-over-heels in love with this girl. Marleen even spoke to me once!

So, guys help me out here, we need to win this game and impress these girls. You can chat any of them up after the game,

.... except Marleen.

Goodby Kisbey, Hello Hollywood

April 1934

Kisbey, Saskatchewan

Every photo deserves a story, the one on the right more than most.

My sister Valerie found the image in an uncategorised file in my late father's archives. Everything we know about the subject of the photo is written on the back:

"Gordon Wheat, Bank Teller, Kisbey, SK 1934"

Not much to go on. A Facebook posting came up empty. Nobody in the community or our family had ever heard of Gordon Wheat. Few could remember there ever being a bank in Kisbey.

Lacking facts or evidence, the only way to attach a story to this photo was to employ a liar to conjure one.



***Gordon Wheat – An Unauthorized (Auto)Biography
by Russell Paton: Falsifier, Perjurer, Teller of Untruths.***

My last name is Wheat but that doesn't mean I know anything about agriculture. My employer, The Merchant's Bank of Canada, posted me to this rural community on the understanding that it would be a steppingstone to an illustrious career in banking.

"Get a few years experience out where the deer and the antelope play. We will bring you back to Toronto with hands-on banking exposure, and you will never look back", the Vice-President told me. That was 1929, before the crash. I have been stuck in Kisbey ever since.



Look at the place! This is Main Street on a "busy" Saturday afternoon. If it weren't for grasshoppers, Wilson's Dry Goods wouldn't have any customers at all.

Farms are going broke and taking local businesses with them. The only customer with a positive bank balance is the church, and the undertaker.

I have gained experience at The Merchant's Bank in Kisbey, filling the red inkwell.

The writing is on the wall, The Merchant's Bank is going under. I need to find a new career.

I bought a Kodak camera with one of my first paycheques. I am going to take a self portrait, draft a resume and send it off to everybody I know. My Drama teacher in high school thought I had talent. Mr. Cronenberg moved to Los Angeles a few years ago and directs motion pictures down there. He might remember me if I send him a photo.

My landlady isn't home this afternoon. I will set the camera on a stand in front of her full-length mirror. The Kodak has a remote trigger so I can take a self portrait.

Goodbye Kisbey, Hello Hollywood.



Grandma Rocked Them Both

April 10, 1930

Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan

I don't know who won the sack race in Gravelbourg in 1930, but Grandma (fourth from the right) would have been a contender. Florence (Bekker) Paton was an athlete; she played basketball in high school and was still swimming across the Wood River well into her 70's.

Family legend has it that Florence could tap the top of a doorway with her toe from a standing position.



Florence Bekker also had great fashion sense. No matter if she wore a flapper hat or a gunnysack

... Grandma Rocked Them Both.

Semantic Drift

April 14, 2021

Webster's Dictionary

Language evolves to suit the circumstances. Some words and phrases we hear every day have an entirely different meaning than they did a year ago:

Comorbidity: I didn't know what this was last year, but I knew I didn't want any.

Efficacy: In 2019 this might have sounded mildly pornographic.

Flatten the Curve: Last year's diet objective?

Murder Hornets: In case *Covid* and *nineteen* didn't scare you spit-less, another word combination to worry about.

PPE: A year ago a condom was the only Personal Protective Equipment we were all familiar with.

Social Distancing: What we did when Uncle George didn't wear deodorant.

Toilet Paper Shortage: Words you might have uttered to the occupant of the next public toilet cubical.

Zoom Funeral: A quick service for Uncle George (I never liked him much – too stinky), or a few words spoken about a friend's dead horse?



In 2020, many words in the English language experienced significant

.... **Semantic Drift.**

An image that has absolutely nothing to do with the topic at hand, I just found it interesting.

The Size and Shape of a Smartie

April 15, 2021

YBW, YRM, EG4, EY3, YBW, Alberta

You know that little button on top of a ball cap - that fabric covered knob? Well, on a day like today, you don't want one.

After six months of being a landlubber, I flew my little airplane, in a wide circuit from Springbank to Rocky Mountain House, to Drumheller; then Fort Macleod, Chain Lakes and back to Springbank along the foothills. It was a grand spring-time adventure, but a terribly bumpy ride.

Years ago, my flight instructor told me to think about air the way you think about a pot of boiling water. When it is cold there is not much happening, but when the heat gets turned on, bubbles form and rise in random globs. It works the same with air, you just can't see it.



Photo Courtesy Gervais Goodman (2018)

Add mechanical turbulence (wind burbling over the mountains) and flying low-level through river valleys trying to scare up dinosaurs, and the effect is a very rough ride.

I enjoyed the flight today, but the button of my hat got slammed into the roof so many times I have an indent on the top of my head, about ...

...the size and shape of a Smartie.



Tragic Ending

July 2, 1937

Howland Island, New Guinea



The chances of finding Amelia Earhart in Alberta are slim, but every time I turn around lately, there she is.

This picture showed up on the cover of the April issue of *Canada's History*. The magazine featured a life-story article about Earhart, with emphasis on her Canadian connections.

I came across a song entitled *Amelia* by Joni Mitchell while I was researching the piece on Janis Muppet. Then on Tuesday morning, CKUA Radio dedicated an entire segment to the famous aviator featuring stories, poems, and songs about the ground-breaking pilot and her achievements.

I read all the articles and listened to the ballads with growing interest. Each of them painted an ever-clearer picture of the courageous adventurer. The only disappointment (and all the articles had it in common), was the ...

... tragic ending.

There's more to life than being a passenger.

– Amelia Earhart

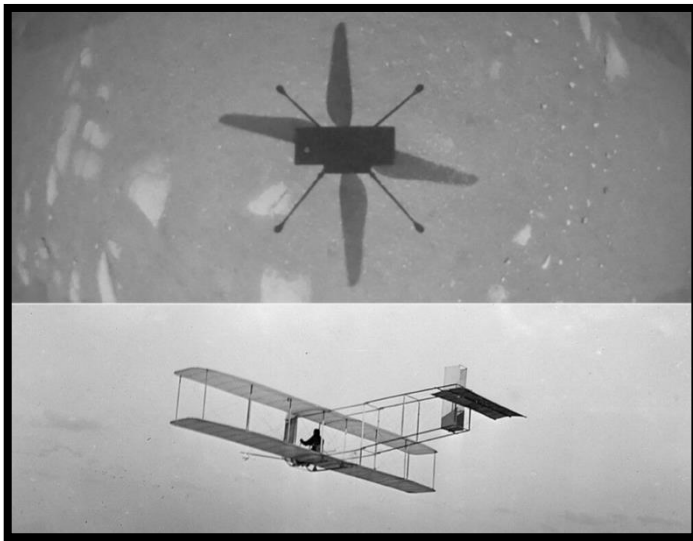


Ingenuity

April 19, 2021

Mars

A piece of fabric from the Wright brother's airplane went for a flight on Mars this week. The postage-stamp-sized piece of cotton muslin fabric (of a type originally intended for use in making ladies undergarments) flew aboard the Ingenuity helicopter drone as a tribute to that first monumental flight.



Flying in 2021 on Mars, and at Kitty Hawk, NC in 1901

Scientific achievement in flight over the past 120 years, is truly amazing.

The Wright brother's flight at Kitty Hawk in 1901 was shorter than the wingspan of a modern Boeing 747.

The Ingenuity helicopter drone flight on Mars today, lasted less than a minute and lifted only two vertical meters, but the drone had travelled 64 million kilometres through space to get there.

Aviation isn't the only field to experience enormous scientific progress in the past century.

Advancements in women's underwear fabric and styles have seen similar advances, from muslin bloomers to silk postage stamps.

Now, that's

.... Ingenuity

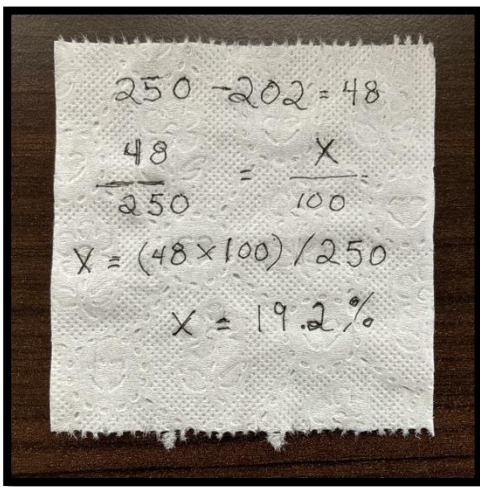


Down the Toilet

April 24, 2021

Western Canada

So, I was sitting where I do my best thinking and I noticed that the toilet paper we bought on sale recently seems to have less sheets per roll. I took a closer look at the packages and, sure enough, the label on the old stock says 250 sheets per roll – the *on-sale* package says 202 sheets.



$$250 - 202 = 48$$

$$\frac{48}{250} = \frac{X}{100}$$

$$X = (48 \times 100) / 250$$

$$X = 19.2\%$$

I grabbed a handy piece of paper and brushed up on my math skills.

If my calculations are correct, we paid 15% less for the product but got 19.2% less paper.

That is just *crappy* business practice!

Purex's slogan no longer applies to me. This Western Canadian will be doing his paperwork with somebody else's product.



Purex just flushed 95 years of *Trust* ...

...down the toilet.

Saskatchewanian

April 25, 2021

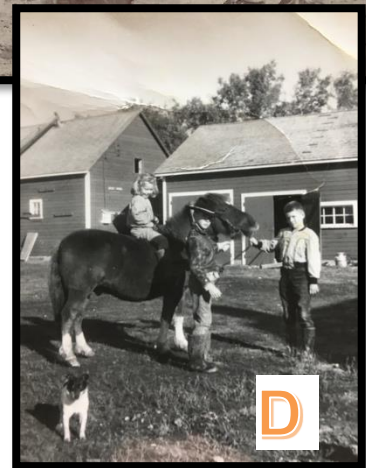
If you can match the ten phrases below with the appropriate photo, you qualify as an honorary Saskatchewanian, and there are prizes for the first three correct answers!

- ___ Shucking Peas
- ___ Carrying Dead Chickens to the Scalding Pot.
- ___ Kids at Kisbey Fair 1927
- ___ Moose Jaw Standard Auto
- ___ Curling on Kenosee Lake
- ___ Bathing in Moose Creek
- ___ Gathering on Moosemin Main Street 1880's
- ___ Russell, Brad, Judy, Chief and Spot
- ___ Stretched Beaver Pelts
- ___ Bear's Great Grandma Fannie Hopper





G: Only 25 Manufactured, in 1917



- First Prize:** Saskatchewan Roughrider's Bunnyhug.
- Second Prize:** Two Pounds of Frozen Saskatoon Berries.
- Third Prize:** A Month's Supply of Vico.

To Be Continued