

Such an Ogre

January 2, 2022
Millarville, Alberta

I remember Dad taking me to the home of an elderly woman when I was a tyke. I am not sure who she was, or even where this took place. All I remember is the wizened old creature was sitting in a big rocking chair and she beckoned me to come closer. She asked through age-stained teeth and a wrinkled mouth; “What is your name, child?” The woman indicated I should speak into a horn she had stuck in her ear.



I said “Russell” into the horn three times, ever louder, but she didn’t seem to understand. “Well, you seem like a fine young man, whatever your name is.”

She was probably a very nice person, but the woman terrified me. It was the ear trumpet that repulsed me most. I had never seen such a thing.

Fast forward sixty years and I am the guy with the trumpets in his ears. Mine have technology that Granny had Yellow-tooth; I have Bluetooth.

My tiny apparatuses are capable of sorting and amplifying sounds I haven’t been able to hear for ages. I had forgotten that the little green turn indicator in my truck is accompanied by a clicking sound, or that songs have lyrics without a headset. Bear doesn’t even have to be in the same room to speak to me since I got them.

I am sure the elderly lady has long since departed but, if I had another chance to communicate with her, I wouldn’t be ...

...such an Ogre.



Slush Fund

January 7, 2022
Millarville, Alberta

In the last collection I told you about the wagon axle grease box I received as a Christmas present. What I didn't tell you was everything I learned about *grease* while researching that gift.

I decided to dole out grease stories sparingly. Not everybody is as excited about lubricants as I am, but I thought you might enjoy this tidbit....

There weren't many perks to being a cook aboard an eighteenth century Royal Navy ship. The work was relentless, the galley was cramped, and the pay was dismal. The cook was often up to his elbows in slush.

Slush – *Greasy substance obtained by scraping the fat from empty salted meat storage barrels, or the floating fat residue which accumulates while boiling the crew's meal.*



The galley crew would collect slush in an empty barrel and sell it when they went ashore.

Royal Navy ships used the sludge as a lubricant on running parts of the sail rigging. The greasy cooking residue was applied to sail blocks to ensure that ropes ran smoothly.

The money the cooks earned selling galley grease became known as a...

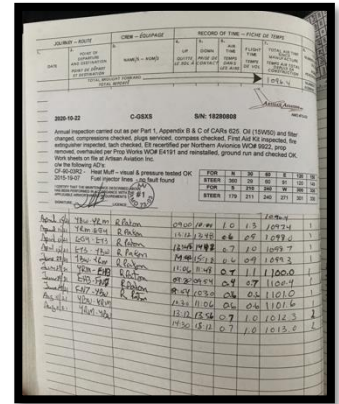
... **slush fund.**

Logbook

January 8, 2022
Springbank, Alberta

Every January I take a photo of last year's entries in my aviation log books. That way, if I lose the books, I still have a record. I keep the photos in a computer file; a *logbook of my logbooks*, so to speak.

Logbook is an old nautical term. Aviation uses a lot of them; port and starboard, **airport**, nautical miles, cabin, cockpit, crew, boarding, galley, knots, and trim are all examples of aviation terms borrowed from sailing.



Journey Logbook for C-GSXS

To calculate the speed a sailing ship was moving, a wooden **log** attached to a spool of thin rope was thrown overboard. The rope had knots spaced every 47'3" along its length. As the ship moved forward, the rope was allowed to play out for 23 seconds, then stopped. The rope was then reeled in, and the number of knots were counted. Using this calculation of distance over time, the speed of the ship in *knots* could be determined. The ship's speed was then recorded in a ...
...**logbook**.



C-GSXS flying at approximately 140 nautical miles per hour.

One more aviation fact, then I will shut up. The little lens-shaped clouds over the tail are *alto-cumulus standing lenticular clouds*. They form during a chinook when there are rotors of air rolling over the mountains. Flying under them in a small plane can be quite dangerous.

Fortunately, this is a Photoshop image. GSXS is in no danger.

Kiss Your Travel Agent Goodbye

March 24, 2022, about 3:30pm
Worldwide

I recently completed a scientific research project and am pleased to advise that Covid will end Thursday March 24, 2022, at about 3:30pm.

The results of the study are indisputable. My research was conducted using time-tested technology, blind faith, and unbridled optimism.

I placed this one-hundred-year-old precision instrument on the dining room table and dimmed the lights. The wolf moon cast a pale glow on the proceedings as I implored the spirit of the board to guide me in a séance.

“Ouija!” I chanted, “When will this shit end?”

I placed my trembling fingers on the bobby-headed turtle¹ and watched with rapt attention as Bob guided my hand through the characters: *m-a-r-c-h-2-4-2-0-2-2-3-3-0-p-m*.



The evidence is clear. On March 24th you can toss your masks, resume handshaking, and ...

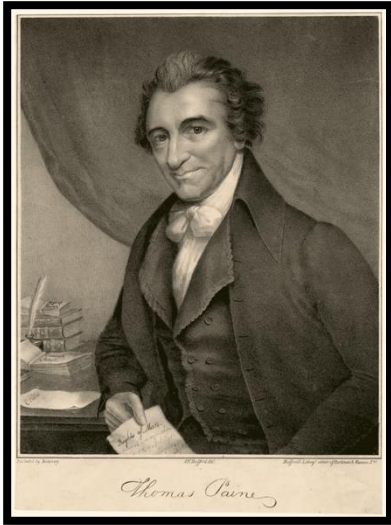
... kiss your travel agent goodbye!



¹ The planchette for this Ouija board is missing. Fortunately, Bob - the bobby-headed turtle, possesses the same mystical powers.

A New Dark Age

January 29, 1736
North America



Thomas Paine (b. January 29, 1736) would never have used a Ouija board to reach conclusions, for two reasons:

- a) The Ouija board wasn't invented yet, and
- b) Paine was a man of science, a proponent of reason.

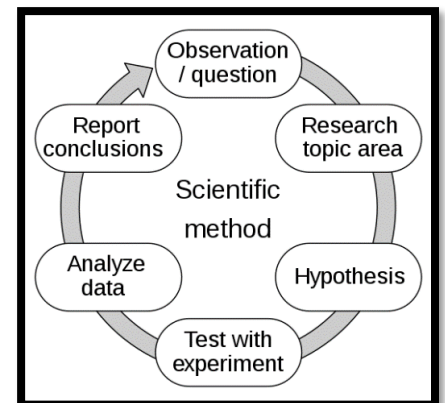
Thomas Paine, the *father of the Founding Fathers*.

In the years leading up to the American Revolution Paine published two influential essays entitled, *Common Sense* and *The American Crisis*. Paine used sound deductive reasoning, and clear and persuasive language to influence and encourage the common people of America to fight for moral, balanced government.

Paine's pamphlets were distributed widely and read aloud in taverns, (at a time when most of the American population was illiterate). The uneducated (but not unintelligent) public seized upon Paine's evidence-based clarity and demanded that political leaders of the time govern in accordance with scientifically derived, reasoned principals.

The Founding Fathers were influenced by the groundswell of support Paine's words achieved. The Founders drafted the *Declaration of Independence* and the *American Constitution* using the rational principals Paine and the American people espoused.

Aspects of the Scientific Method have been used for millennia but the process by which conclusions are reached matured during the Age of Enlightenment. A broad range of disciplines beyond politics; modern medicine, exploration of the natural world, and technological advances are all grounded in the Scientific Method.



Anybody who drives a car, gets hearing-aids, or reads this drivel on a computer (in short, *everyone*) has benefited from the Scientific Method; it is the bedrock of an advanced civilization.

January 29, 2022
North America

What the Hell happened?

Most of the North American public can read, and access to information has never been easier, yet a vast number of citizens today (bordering on a majority) are willing to disregard science and reason and follow bombastic political claims and pseudoscientific claptrap (which for the purpose of this article I have condensed under the all-encompassing label “*Woo Hoo*”).



Woo Hoo: *Falsifiable political rhetoric, conspiracy theories, the anti-everything movement, homeopathy, psychic phenomena, telepathy, extraterrestrial interaction, telekinesis, mediumship, miracles, astrology, dousing, Loch Ness monster sightings, Ouija board necromancy, and 1000 other unproven, yet broadly accepted, cultural phenomena.*

America, and the world, is at a tipping point. If another Thomas Paine doesn't arrive on the political scene soon, and *Woo Hoo* continues to run amok, we will devolve toward ...

...A New Dark Age.



The Magic of Reality

May 10, 2017
Boulder, Colorado

People are entitled to their own opinions, but not to their own facts.
– Daniel Patrick Moynihan

Several years ago, Bear and I joined an anti-Woo Hoo organization. We took the risk of familial and societal ostracism and joined a small but vocal association of secular humanists assembled as *The Center for Inquiry* (“CFI”).



Excerpt from CFI mission statement:

...CFI’s vision is a world in which evidence, science, and compassion—rather than superstition, pseudoscience, or prejudice—guide public policy.

Discarding myth and superstition and finding *magic* in the real world has been transcendent.



In 2017 we travelled to Boulder, Colorado (a funky, fun little town, if you ever get a chance to go), to attend a lecture given by renowned evolutionary biologist, Richard Dawkins. Dawkins is one of the founders of CFI and a driving force for the principals of promoting science and reason.

Meeting Dawkins was probably the closest I will ever get to knowing Thomas Paine.

Bear and I aren’t into proselytizing, and we would not dream of depriving anyone of the comfort of their beliefs but, if you want to take a deeper dive, click the link below to discover...

... The Magic of Reality.

<https://centerforinquiry.org/about/>

Left: Richard Dawkins, BSc, MD, DPhil, DSc, Fellow of the Royal Society, Emeritus Fellow of New College Oxford, Professor for Public Understanding of Science - University of Oxford, evolutionary biologist, author, and one of the leading intellectuals of our time.

Right: Russell Paton, fellow.



Street art in Boulder



Nuts

January 26, 2022

Trans-Canada Highway

What do anti-vaxxers and bull's testicles have in common?

It sounds like the start of a crude joke, but it is a real question. Yesterday, when we were driving back from Saskatchewan, there were cars and pickup trucks scattered along #1 Highway at regular intervals. We later learned that a convoy of long-haul truckers was on its way to Ottawa, under the banner of *Freedom Rally 2022*, to protest vaccination mandates for cross-border truck drivers.

People who support the anti-vaccine movement were lined up at intersections along the Trans-Canada, to wave and blare their horns in support of protesters on their way to the nation's capital.



A disproportionate number of support vehicles had bull's testicles attached to their rear bumpers.

I tried to draw a conclusion from this observation.

I researched *Freedom Rally 2022* and found that it is supported by a minority of truckers, and not at all by their federal association. The *Canadian Trucking Alliance* issued a statement in support of vaccination mandates, distancing the organization from the roughly 15% of drivers who remain unvaccinated.

The CTA supports members joining a peaceful protest but is in favour of vaccination generally.

Vaccines have been scientifically tested and the conclusion is that they save far more lives than they end. In an ideal world, no one would have to take the jab, but this is not an ideal world.

The freedoms of the “many” outweigh the freedom of the “few”.

My research drew no correlation between vaccines and bull's testicles. Scientific evidence eluded me, so I had to fall back on conjecture. My unproved conclusion is ...

... they are **Nuts**.

The Limitless Prairie Horizon

January 27, 2022

Arcola, Saskatchewan

Saskatchewan isn't on most people's *Top Ten List of Winter Travel Destinations*, but here we are...



It was a funeral, a sad occasion, that brought us back to Arcola this January. Our dear Aunt Carol passed away after a brief, but courageous battle with cancer. We used the occasion to gather as a family and I am pleased to report that we experienced joy and grief in equal proportions. Carol wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

Carol and Jim, in happier times.

While we were in Arcola, we mined Jim and Carol's photo albums. Every image brought back memories.

Grandpa Billie and Uncle Earl stacking sheaves, while the dog looks for mice.



...the limitless prairie horizon.



Grandpa and Uncle Roscoe, discussing crops.

Cousin Gordon, riding bareback.



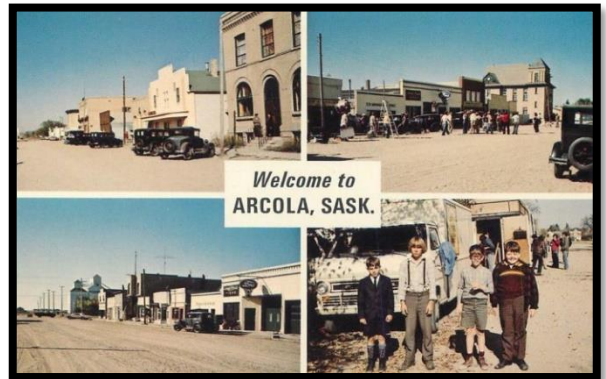
You Are Probably in Saskatchewan

January 27, 2022

Arcola, Saskatchewan

The second-best thing about Saskatchewan is their unique dialect. I have listed as many Saskatchewanisms as I can think of below. If you have trouble interpreting any of them let me know and I will translate for you, it is my first language:

- In Saskatchewan, you measure distance in hours.
- “*Take the grid road to the correction line, Estevan is about an hour south*”.
- Rural Municipality is pronounced “*arm*”, as in: “*I am going to the “arm” office to pay my taxes.*”
- Sloughs, nuisance grounds, and scrub brush are all features of the prairie landscape.
- *Who has Seen the Wind* – is not a question, it is a movie shot in Arcola.
- Co-op is pronounced “*cwaap*”. Many people can’t remember their anniversary, but nobody forgets their *cwaap* number.
- Saskatchewan people know the difference between a *dugout* and a *borrow-pit*.
- Many people have a cabin at the lake, nobody has a cottage. And nobody specifies the “lake” it is on.
- Some elderly Saskatchewan people have numbers like this; 17-7-4 W2, as the birthplace on their birth certificate - they were born at a farmhouse, not in a hospital.



- If you drive recklessly in Saskatchewan, you could *miss the s-curve, hit an approach, and end up in the rhubarb.*

For the record, this article is in no way autobiographical.

- There is a sharp s-curve on the back road to the lake. Locals refer to it as *kiss-me-ass-curve*.
- To properly navigate an s-curve you must make a sharp Ralph, then a Louie.
- “*Sure as shootin’, we are goin’ huntin’ jumpers in the hills*”.
- Saskatchewan, where underwear is *gotch*, and *thongs* are worn on your feet.

- If you are going to town for a Pil, you aren't going to the pharmacy. Unless of course, the pharmacy and the liquor store are the same place.



Arcola Pharmacy/Saskatchewan Liquor Board Store (on the right).

The Old Drug Store (far left), where my dad lived for many years.

- The *board store* is not the lumber yard.
- If you don't wave to every vehicle you meet, you are probably from out of province.
- In-province vehicles have a *cubby hole*, all out-of-province vehicles have a *glove box*.
- *Gone* and *went* are all mixed up in Saskatchewan. "I should have went to the store for Pil earlier, they are closed now."
- "While I was there, I could have picked up a *bat-ry*, a *mat-rus*, and some *melk*". (Battery, mattress, and milk)
- Thongs are worn on the feet, but cultivator shoes are not.
- Everybody knows you blade roads to get the washboards out.
- If you have *bin to the biffy*, you may have visited the outdoor *two-holer*.
- Time stands still in Saskatchewan; they don't do *daylight savings time*.
- While you are visiting at the gas station you can *lag for quarters* while you wait.
- There are no cats at a kitty corner.
- If you aren't 18, you can usually find someone to *pull some beer* for you.
- If the *great white combine* came by, your crop probably got *hailed out*.

➤ Grandpa Billy on a Massey combine.



- If you are in Irvine, Alberta, you are *prit'near* in *Saskatchew-en*.
- If you are driving through the province to meet your Ukrainian family near Yorkton, you have passed through *the garlic curtain*.
- Dipper, cistern, Siwash, cowlick, chokecherry syrup, Vico, and Beep are all familiar to you.

And,

- If a café patron grabs the coffee pot and fills every cup in the room, ...

... You are Probably in Saskatchewan.

In a Town This Size

January 18, 2022

Arcola, Saskatchewan

I will close this episode with a music video dedicated to Aunt Carol, and everybody who has ever lived in a small town.

In a Town This Size – John Prine and Dolores Keane: <https://youtu.be/sLMuQbYB4vM>

Warning: Carol would have enjoyed most of the images in this video, especially the ones with cats, however, there are a few cuts that may not be suitable for all audiences. Sorry Carol.



Bird's-eye view of Arcola



Carol Paton, in Lynn Lake, Manitoba

Every Paton, *In a Town This Size*



To Be Continued.....