

The University of Wind

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I grew up in south-eastern Saskatchewan and was educated at the *University of Wind*.

I was five years old when we moved to the farm near Arcola, Saskatchewan. This windmill was the tallest structure I had ever seen. I was fascinated by it.

My father noticed me constantly hanging around and warned me not to climb the tower or touch the green activating handle. Of course, the first thing I did when he was out of site was grab the handle and give it a pull. The wind was blowing strong from the west, as it usually does in Saskatchewan. When I pulled the lever over centre it snapped up and caught me under the chin. The force knocked me off my feet and bloodied my lip.

I knew I wasn't going to get any sympathy, so I wiped my tears and washed my bloody face in the cold water gushing from the pump.



1920s Monitor Model "L" Windmill
Photo courtesy Gervais Goodman

This windmill taught me that actions have consequences, and that I alone bear responsibility for mine.



Dancing on the Monkey Board –
Photo courtesy Gervais Goodman

On another occasion when Dad wasn't looking, I decided to climb the ladder to the top. I was eight or nine years old at the time. About 2/3 of the way up I began to regret my decision. My eyes wouldn't focus properly, my palms were sweating, and I froze up there. Dad came by and talked me down, but my knees were very wobbly on the descent.

Dad recommended that if I wanted to climb to the top, I should ease into it. He suggested I climb up one rung for every year old I was. If I did that he said, "*you will be able to dance on the monkey board by the time you are an adult*". So, every year on my birthday I would climb up one more rung.

I moved away from home when I was 18, but by then I had overcome my fear of heights.

This windmill taught me that fear is fragmented, it can be broken down and dealt with in pieces. Reduced to manageable bits, there is nothing that can't be overcome.

I continue to learn from the windmill.

As it lay in a heap of disassembled components, the tower seemed weak and unsubstantial. As the beams and spars and bolts came together the tower grew stronger. Once all components were working in harmony the tower could support the heavy cast-iron head, the concrete counterweight, and the wooden sails, all in a heavy wind.



The windmill has reinforced the concept of the power of cooperative behaviour.

The four legs of a windmill can't stand straight up, by necessity they pull toward the centre. In a world that continues a reckless march toward polarity and tribalism, we can all take a lesson from the ...

... University of Wind.



Wind doesn't care if you lean to the left or to the right politically, if you are male or female, tall or short, black, white, brown or polka-dot. Like the windmill, if civilization is going to survive for another 100 years, we need to stand tall and pull toward the centre.

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