

Appendix to Esther's Song

1. People in Esther's Song

The people included here have been mentioned in Esther's letters. Each played some role in her life. As well, many - as well as other names important in Alberta's Theatre History - are mentioned in other of Esther's written materials. This material is in no particular order. It is a collection of thoughts and materials produced by Esther for use as background in putting together *Esther's Song*.

2. Memories

- Keeping Body and Soul together
- '30s Country School Culture
- In the Classroom - letter from Bob Gruno
- Traveling the Alberta Roads
- Academic Life
- My Last Class
- Bird
- Dominion Drama Festival
- The Canwell Hearings Seattle
- Edmonton Recreation Department 1951
- Family Thoughts
- Swedish Cousins

3. Esther - Written Work

Letter - Health Care in Alberta to R. Kline
 History of Drama in Alberta
 Letter - Theatre 100 to K. Cameron
 Normal Schools (this is for information only - by G. Campbell 2011)

Once More - Esther's People

The events in Esther's career - 'career' both in the general sense of her years in the Province of Alberta and the specific experiences within the *Banff School of Fine Arts* - are bracketed by the names of the many, many fascinating people with whom she worked. Most of us have colleagues who are bosses or underlings or rivals, but seldom do we count in the dozens true, equally passionate partners in an inspiring venture to see dreams made into some sort of reality. Esther was part of such a venture and here there is a little about some of her dozens.

Why remark on these friends, as well as focusing throughout her biographical piece on the people that Esther worked with and knew over the years of her career in Drama? Because Esther has made it clear that the successes and the accomplishments that gave her pleasure were collaborations; adventures shared with a cast of characters who swept through her life.

Bette Anderson

Esther: *Bette had been working as a secretary after the Seattle Repertory Playhouse closed in 1951. She had been director of the **Theatre for Children** and had worked out a very successful association with the **Junior League** who helped arrange the details with schools and the order in which schools would attend the productions.*

*Bette taught make-up and was the **Playhouse** secretary. Thus the first letter I had confirming my scholarships was from Bette. She was intrigued at the sound of my hometown, Ponoka. To her I was 'Ponok'. Bette had been associated with the **Playhouse** as a student and from then on as a staff member. To be the only one in charge of the children's programme (she also taught creative drama for early teens) meant that she put in a full day. I spent a full day at the **Playhouse** too and it was natural to call on me for extra jobs. When we were doing **Circus Day** I stayed with Bette and her mother overnight because we had to pick up a cast member at a farm out of town: a small pig. The plays had a 6-week run which meant that piglets outgrew their parts; we went through at least three by the end of the run.*

*Bette was able to set up a programme very similar to the one in Seattle, including a similar connection to the **Junior League**. She became a member of the executive of the Allied Arts Council and gradually became known. She moved her productions to the theatre at Victoria High School, which allowed a larger audience and a decent stage that allowed more interesting settings. She continued to teach young people creative drama.*

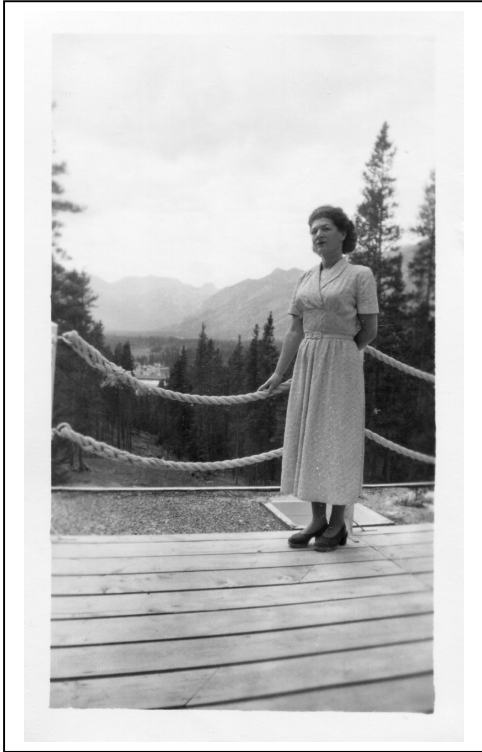
*She was asked to direct **Dark of the Moon** for the **Studio Theatre**. This led to her being asked to teach at Banff. She received a Canada Council Grant to tour theatres for children in Europe.*

*In the meanwhile students of ours from Banff who came to Edmonton found a theatre they could work in. A student of mine introduced me to the work of **Brian Way** in child drama and his plays for children that demanded audience participation. Those of us connected with theatre organization across Canada combined resources to bring him on a tour of Canada stopping at a number of centers for demonstrations. Bette and I worked out a time for him so that he could direct a production of his play, **Pinocchio**, with her people. In addition he taught classes and came up with a new approach (his own!) to use with Bette's **Playground Players** that toured city parks in the summer. I found his methods fit in with my own method of teaching acting. Eventually a member of his staff in England came to teach in the UofA Department of Education. Thus Alberta experienced a new approach to drama in schools.*

Although this was revitalizing for Bette, she had now worked very hard alone for a long time. In Edmonton she met a man who understood her interests. She decided to retire, marry and move to Vancouver where she had the first home of her own. She was also close to her family in Seattle. Sadly, she died suddenly in 1975 of a massive stroke. She deserved a longer retirement. Her contribution to Canadian theatre has received many tributes but alas they came too late.

One of her students went on to win acclaim as a designer. He and Alex Burton (one of my students) developed a method of lighting that enabled wonderful transformations of settings - ideal for theatre for children.

Myra Benson



Myra had been part of the attempt to revive *Everyman* in 1948-49, and went with Esther to Banff in the summer of 1949 - playing Jocasta in *Oedipus Rex*. In Vancouver in 1953 Myra was one of 7 people who each contributed \$20 and thus started the Holiday Theatre (why that name? because, "... *everyday you go to the theatre is a holiday*") - Canada's first professional children's theatre. It was Benson who, as business manager, made sure the same financial mistakes didn't take this theatre down as they had *Everyman*; Holiday Theatre went on for many successful years before merging with Playhouse Theatre in Vancouver and adding touring and teaching to its repertoire.

Myra went on to work in Calgary (Workshop 14), with the Burnaby Players, and then studied in Paris with Marcel Marceau. She, herself, taught professional acting and mime at the Camosun College in BC and in Toronto before retiring to England. Throughout her career, Myra remained one of Esther's friends, one who shared Esther's passion for drama.

Esther: Myra worked with me in Vancouver on the sets and acted in one of the plays Sydney had chosen. She attended Banff school and played Jocasta in Oedipus Rex. She worked for a time with Workshop 14 in Calgary then returned to Vancouver where she and Joy Coghill founded Holiday Theatre, a children's theatre that toured BC for a few years. She was interested in mime and went to Paris to study with Marceau. For a time Myra had a small company in Mime, taught mime and creative drama. She finally decided to return to England where she died in 1996.

When Myra first came to America she and a friend, Liz Bent, regularly used the expression "We're having an adventure!" I've used it many times myself since then and think of them every time.

Alex Burton

Esther: *The young man standing on the right side of this photo (also shown in the photo of **The Admirable Crichton**), is Alex Burton. I had him in an acting class years ago. He was a good actor and was quite devoted to Bette and to me. He moved to Texas and continued acting. (mentioned in Train Crash article)*



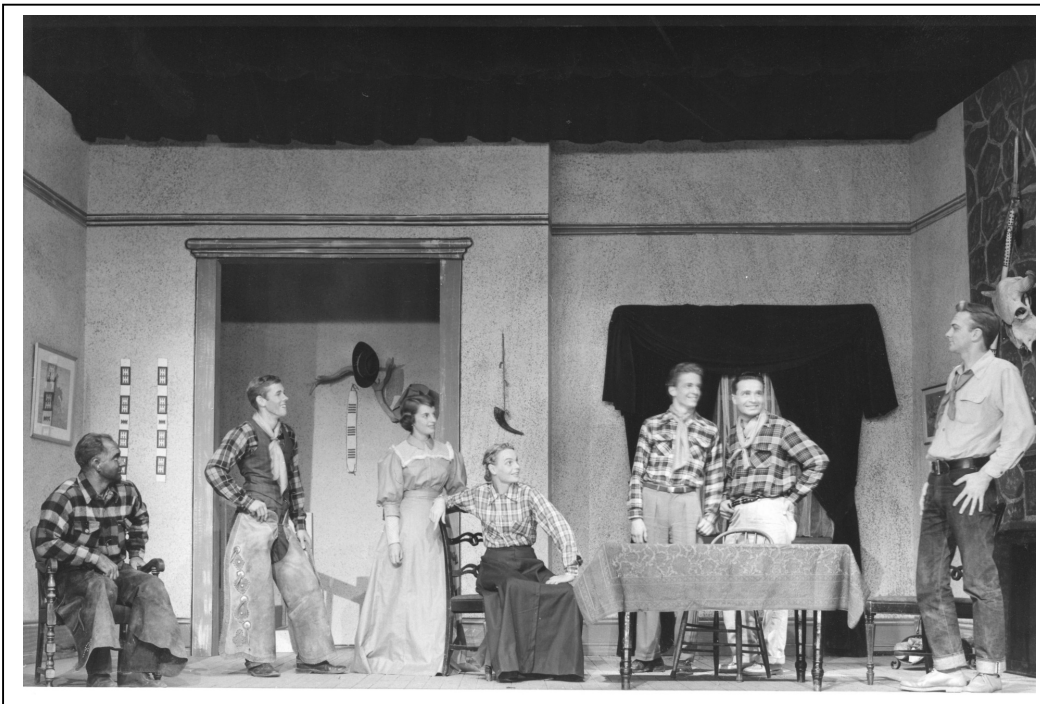
The Admirable Crichton: Alex Burton is on the Right, next to Megan Terry (Maggie Duffy). Both were scholarship students, starring in this play by J.M.Barrie, directed by Esther Nelson in 1956 at Banff. This was Esther's 2nd major production at Banff.

*...Alex returned to Banff for several summers to strengthen the casts of plays. Alex played in two of my productions after he graduated from the school. He also came to play in Bette's production as well as becoming a reliable member of her **Theatre for Children** in Edmonton (was this when*

he worked at the radio station in Edmonton and erroneously reported Esther's disappearance in the infamous train crash - early '60s?) *After he moved to the States he continued to be active in theatre. He, along with one of Bette's students developed a method of lighting that enabled wonderful transformations of settings - ideal for theatre for children.*

Georgie Collins

Esther: *In the picture of **Stampede** the woman seated is Georgie Collins. I met her in Athabasca when I helped with a play. She came to Banff on a scholarship, and later went to Calgary where she acted with various groups and appeared in a movie shot there. She worked with **Workshop 14** and finally ended her career as director of the **Pleiades Theatre** for a number of years. It was a small professional theatre that specialized in mystery plays - **The Mystery Theatre** established in the Science Centre.*



Stampede by Gwen Pharis Ringwood, directed by Esther Nelson at Banff in 1955 - her 1st major production at the school.

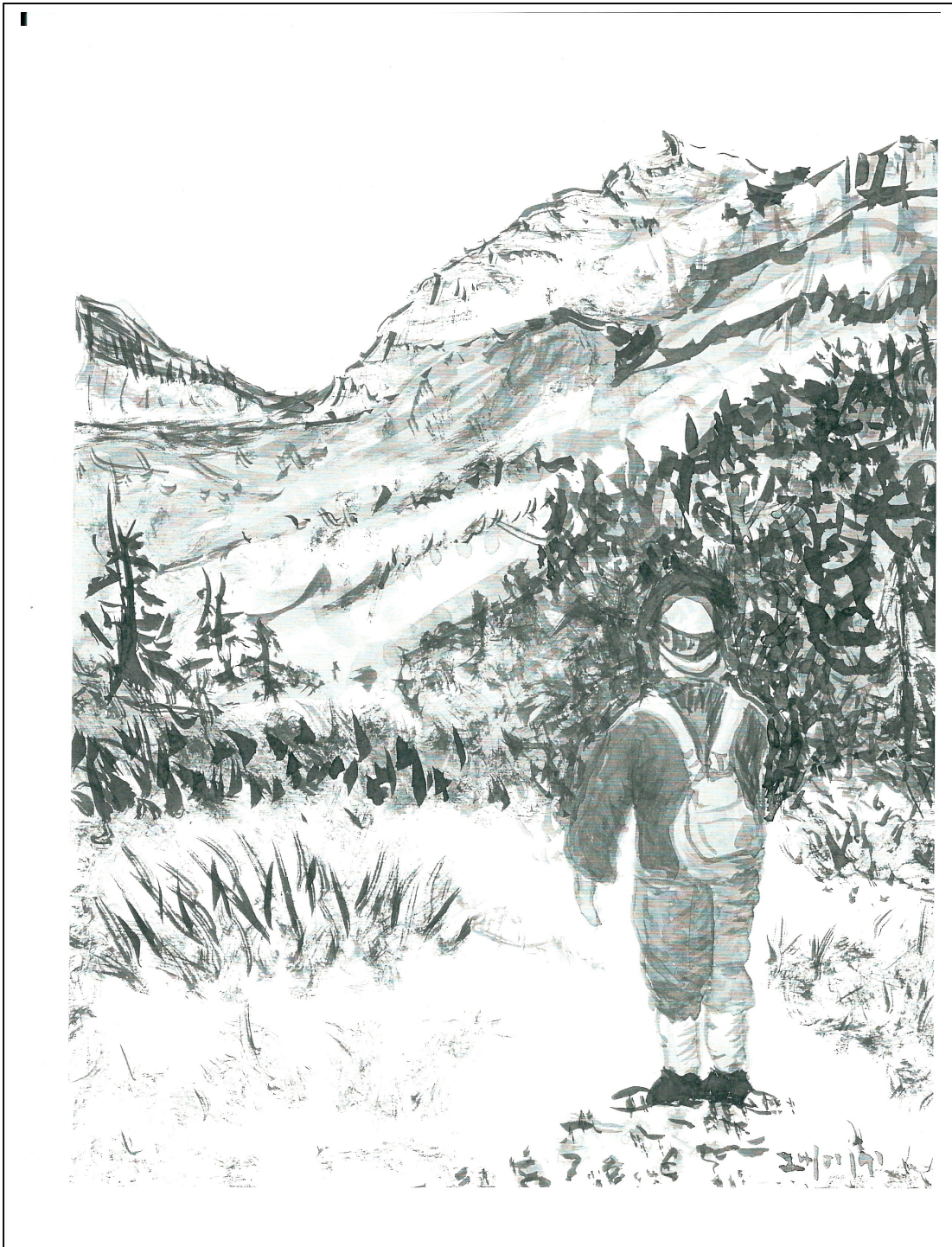
On the Right is Alex Burton, a graduate of Banff School, back on a scholarship. Seated is Georgie Collins.

A Special Friend: Barbara Carroll



Esther: 27 July 1988, our 3rd hike, Barbara having lunch at the Reversing Falls. Barbara became my hiking partner and x-country ski buddy in 1987. She and her sister Peggy had no relatives - they included me when they did

their Chirstmas in Harvie Heights. Barbara first knew Marilyn when they traveled to Banff together in the early 1950s, from Ontario.



Barbara and I celebrated her retirement from teaching in Toronto in July 1986 by spending 3 days at Mt. Assiniboine for Spring Flowers. We returned for another three days to celebrate my retirement in 1987 - to see the larch in Fall. On the 3rd day it snowed. This black and white painting is based on a picture I took of Barbara as she looked toward the snow on Mt. Assiniboine, transfixed with wonder.

Barbara developed Huntington's Chorea - a dreadful disease that made it impossible to walk. She died 11 Nov 2010 in Toronto. She was a good companion, summer and winter, for 14 years. I think I captured some of her rapture on taking in the magnificence of the mountains she loved. She bought a house in Harvie Heights, Calgary, so that she could be in the mountains as much as possible. We used to meet in the Kananaskis Information Centre on Thursdays when we hiked or skied, 10 to 15 kilometers. In summer we had dinner at the Kananaskis Golf Club House.

Jo Cormack (see Theatre Letter)

Elodia Christensen (see Theatre Letter)

Marguerite "Maggie" Duffy (Meagan Terry)

*Esther: I didn't know Maggie in Seattle, but came to know her later. Maggie came from a broken home. Both parents had remarried and Maggie was not comfortable in either household, so moved in with her grandparents who lived near the **Seattle Repertory Playhouse**. She had a strong interest in theatre and it was natural that it became her second home.*

*The James' recognized her remarkable talents. When Burton came to Banff in 1950 he brought Maggie to Banff where she played in **Midsummer Night's Dream**. Although I had left Seattle before she attended school there, the staff at the **Playhouse** knew what I was doing in Edmonton. They gave her my story and, probably, an overblown account of what I was*

doing. Thus, we met and had many long discussions about theatre. The **Playhouse** would be closing in a year and she liked the idea of trying to help me in Edmonton. In 1952 she came to Banff again on scholarship. She played the lead in **Peter Pan** and of course impressed the Director from Minnesota, Frank Whiting. She was a talented actress but was too bright and headstrong to work with most directors.

Maggie was not only talented she was ambitious, hard working and impatient of those who did not meet her standards of work. Although I had reservations, Maggie came to Edmonton in the fall of 1951. I was away much of the time and she had freedom to pursue her many interests. Maggie stayed with me from 1951 to 1953. During the two years she enrolled in and completed two university courses, and worked for the Edmonton recreation Department teaching creative drama and art to children. She designed and built the set for **Grandmother Slyboots** and a play at UofA's **Studio Theatre**. By the fall of 1953 Maggie had decided to return to Seattle and attend UofW. In the meantime, she promoted the idea that Bette Anderson should apply for the job of drama director then open at the Edmonton Recreation Department.

Our next contact came in the late spring of 1956 when I had a call from a mutual friend. Could Maggie come to stay for awhile? Her grandfather - to whom she was close - had died and Maggie had fallen into a deep depression. By then Maggie had completed her degree in creative drama. This was the year I planned to do **The Admirable Crichton** at Banff. At that time I was renting $\frac{1}{2}$ a duplex in Banff and there was plenty of room. I invited Maggie to take my spare room and then cast her in the female lead of the play. The play gave Maggie time to refocus. The summer gave her time to think about what she wanted to do. She decided to go to NY. This, after all, is where most talented Americans want to go to prove themselves. Maggie had already tried her hand at writing plays. So, in the fall of 1956 off she went to NY. And the rest, as they say, is history.

By 1965 she had worked with the Open Theatre an off-Broadway Company. In 1965 she was one of four young playwrights to have a work chosen for production at the **Tyrone Guthrie Theatre** in Minneapolis under the Rockefeller Foundation grant to the programme for Advanced Drama Research. She changed her name to Meagan Terry when she moved to New

York in 1956. Before that she endured variations on her name because she disliked her own given name - Marguerite. She succeeded in what she chose to do and became a prolific playwright. We lost touch - as busy people tend to do, but I'm glad if I was able to help her find her way.

Robert Gard (see Theatre Letter)

Robert taught Playwriting at BSFA in 1942, then founded and directed the ***Alberta Folklore and Local History Project***, in association with the UofA and the Rockefeller Foundation. He helped establish the *Provincial Archives for Alberta* in 1945 and his collections, assembled from firsthand accounts of pioneers still living, constitutes today one of the rare collections of the UofA. (see his biography: Wisconsin Idea Foundation)

Elsie Park Gowan

One of Canada's greatest writers. Mrs. Gowan was acknowledged (along with Ringwood) as a leading playwright in the 30s and 40s attempting to create 'distinctively Canadian' drama. The production of her play, *The Last Caveman*, by the Everyman Tour was a significant step along this path. She wrote the dialogue of the full-length political farce, *You Can't Do That*, with Wm. Irvine from Wetaskiwin, and although her name was omitted from the published play (!) it marked an important advance in her work, moving on from the, the normal one-act format. Elsie Park Gowan's work created radio drama in Alberta - and Canada - as a recognized venue for serious dramatic art.

Frances Hyland

Esther's first role at Banff was as the lay sister (in black) in *The Cradle Song*.

Frances Hyland is on her left. The next year Esther played Rhoda in *Death Takes a Holiday*. In her 3rd year at Banff Esther only took Stagecraft - from Pop James

Veteran actress mourned

TORONTO (CP) — Frances Hyland, the Saskatchewan-born actor described as the first lady of Canadian theatre, died Sunday.

She was 77.

Hyland died at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto of respiratory failure due to complications from recent appendix surgery, her son Evan McCowan said yesterday.

In a career that spanned more than 50 years, Hyland starred in and directed numerous productions at both the Stratford and Shaw festivals, but was also known for her appearances in regional theatre, films and in CBC-TV shows including *Road to Avonlea*.

"She had been ill for a number of years," McCowan said, indicating she hadn't acted for the past six years. "This came on in the last lit-



— CP

ILL ... Frances Hyland died Sunday.

tle while, the respiratory (illness). Heavy smoker, just like my dad."

Hyland's ex-husband, pioneer stage director George McCowan, died of emphysema in 1995.

Born in Shaunavon, Sask., in April 1927, Hyland displayed a penchant for acting at an early age.

She won the Governor General's Performing Arts Award in 1994 from then Gov. Gen. Ray Hnatyshyn who called her the first lady of Canadian theatre. She was also an officer of the Order of Canada.

June - July 13, 2004



Francis Hyland stands on Esther's left (Esther is in the black habit) in this photo of the cast of the 1943 production of *The Cradle Song*.

Burton and Florence James

*Esther: Their first experience with Canada came in BC. They taught summer school at UBC. They became familiar with Canadian art and spent one rare holiday with Emily Carr in the days when one pet was the monkey. Burton came to the Banff School of Fine Arts first as the instructor in Stagecraft. He felt that the school should be offering more than the commercial fare that the director of the major productions had been choosing. In 1951, he was made head of drama and chose **Midsummer Night's Dream**. Florence came for the last two weeks of rehearsal. She was an exceptional director as well as being a dynamic teacher and speaker. The play was a success. Florence joined the staff in 1952 and they chose **Much Ado About Nothing**. Then the Canwell Committee struck and Florence and Burton did not return to Banff.*

It was when Burton was teaching Stagecraft that I returned for my third summer at Banff. I elected to take both Stagecraft I and II, which meant that I could concentrate on learning all I could without the disruption other courses would cause. The unexpected benefit was that Burton had time to assess my abilities and personal qualities. He volunteered the idea of the scholarship. It was the 'dapple-gray pony miracle' repeated!

Florence met Norah McCullough, Director, Saskatchewan Arts Board, in Banff in 1951. She invited Florence to join the Arts Board as Drama Director, a job similar to mine. I have no doubt she knew Tommy Douglas (this comment because I had repeated a story I'd heard that Tommy had personally invited Florence to come to Saskatchewan).

Dick MacDonald (see Theatre Letter)

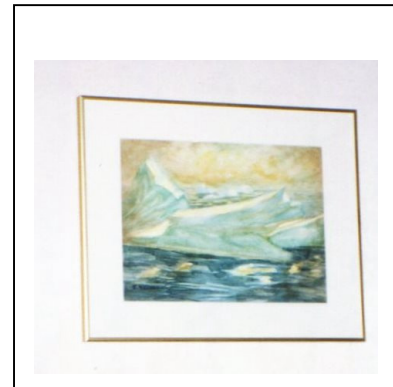
Lois McLean

*We met as students at the **Banff School of Fine Arts** in 1943. Our friendship continued through the years with Everyman Theatre and after she moved to England and I worked at UofA traveling the Province. Lois*

married an East Indian lawyer but after four children and settling in Vancouver, they were divorced. Lois continued her career in Vancouver and ended up working with her brother. She developed serious heart problems and died in 2009. This picture was taken in Kaninaskis... Marilyn 'gave me' the visit there with Lois for my birthday present in 1997.



Lois chose one of my paintings of an iceberg as a memento of our visit together and of our long friendship. She was another strong friend with whom I shared so much of my life.



Esther includes in her collection of letters two from Lois, the first was sent in 1942 reminding Esther to bring along her passport for their Everyman Tour (just in case) and the second sent shortly before Lois' death in 2009. *Esther: "...our lives were marked out by these two letters. The style in each reveals the idealism of her nature and the sweetness with which she accepted disaster and disappointment."*

Catherine Meehan



Catherine Meehan sharing lunch at the Calgary Heritage Museum hotel in July of 2010 with Esther and her nieces, Nancy and Susan, and her great nephew Paul Broska with Lorie .

Esther: In 2003 a former acquaintance, Catherine Meehan, joined my skating group. I first met her in Saskatchewan where we were both teaching a summer course. Catherine was an artist who had studied in England then had a career at a university in the States. Her mother, who had a house in Scarboro, was dying and after caring for her there Catherine and her husband decided to move to Calgary and retire. We met at skating, discovered a mutual interest in painting and finally settled into a weekly session of experimenting in paint in the sunroom.

Once again I have been fortunate enough to find a good friend and companion. And because she is 'computer literate' she agreed to relay emails messages so that my biographer (!) can be in quick communication. So Catherine became a friend to both and we all finally met in 2010 in Heritage Park. Catherine is fascinated with my big family and is gradually getting to know us.



Catherine painting my peonies summer 2011 - too warm in the sun room...

Alta MITCHELL Bento



*Alta now lives in Hawaii, one of the few of my friends from the Theatre years who has survived. Helen Berry introduced me to the mtns, taking me and other students to the top of Sulphur Mtn. to see the sunrise. I later climbed it with other students, including Alta. She has been a friend ever since. Alta designed the costumes for the first performance of the Theatre for Children in Edmonton in 1953 - *Grandmother Slyboots* - and she was an original Provincial Players member... she became a drama teacher too.*

Anne O'Donnell



Rosa Ponselle (left - dark dress), Zenka Milanov (centre) Anne O'Donnell (right) at a Metropolitan Opera performance of "*La Forza del Destino*" (Vedi) on 2 March 1953 in Baltimore Maryland... in Milanov's dressing room when Ponselle and Anne went back stage to chat! Anne was Ponselle's secretary... she had been key to seeing *Blithe Spirit* successfully performed in Wetaskiwin in the early '50s

Ponselle (1897-1981) was a legendary operatic diva acknowledged (even by Callas and Caruso) as probably the greatest soprano of the century. Though her public career was over by the time Anne came to work for her (Rosa's voice remained rich and full up to her death) she continued to work with young singers, coaching and mentoring. Anne continued this work and spent her career - for 28 years in NY City - organizing concerts and nurturing, furthering the careers of hundreds of young singers. Anne had been entranced by opera from her early childhood, and went to NY to study singing. Though she never had a singing career herself, she played a real role in her beloved art.

Marilyn Perkins

*Esther: Marilyn was born in Ontario where she received her early schooling. Her father was a realtor - he decided to try Calgary and moved the family there. They had a house in the Scarboro area and took an active part in building the United Church. The children all had musical talent and started their studies in Calgary. At an early age Marilyn played for a Calgary radio programme called **The Good Deed Club**. Her father decided to move back to Toronto when Marilyn had completed high school. She graduated from UofT in Education with a Mus.B. All through her school years she earned money by accompanying various students, music teachers and dance/movement teachers. She could sight read very well and could adjust to demands made upon her.*

She took her first teaching post at Eastman Commercial and taught there for three years. She retained her connections in Calgary and was asked to join the Opera Division at the Banff School as accompanist. While in Toronto Marilyn demonstrated qualities that dominated her life - if there was anyone in trouble they would find her, or she would find them. An example: a refugee family had found a house in Marilyn's school district... a daughter was in Marilyn's class. Marilyn asked her realtor father to find them an affordable house. He did and Marilyn became a friend of the family. The daughter chose Marilyn as a role model and became a social worker, then married a wealthy man who died young. She established a scholarship at Eastman in Marilyn's name.

*Although Marilyn had been working at the **Banff School** as accompanist for a couple of years we did not meet until 1953 when I was asked to direct **Martha**. I was ushered into a room full of singers and introduced to them as their director. At the piano sat Marilyn, smiling with encouragement. I said, "I'm afraid I don't know much about opera but if you will help me perhaps we can manage." It was the right thing to say. Most singers have had experience with directors who came from the old school of 'director as dictator'. During the course of the rehearsals I got to know Marilyn very well. We had the same way of working with people. She lived in residence and, being a light sleeper who worked long hours as the accompanist to singing lessons, she was often tired. She began to come to my duplex for a*

20-minute nap - then she was good for another 8 hours. Later I often envied this faculty that served her all her life.

***Martha** was a success. I passed the grade and was asked to direct another opera the next year: **Hansel and Gretel**. By then Marilyn had bought a VW - a little green bug she called 'Speedy Gonzales', a cartoon character. She brought her brother to Banff. Roger was a gifted musician but he had always been interested in theatre. He ended up in my acting classes for 2 years, acting in **Stampede** in 1955.*

Marilyn loved to drive. Now that she had her own car she wanted to take a trip to California. A singer (whose name I have forgotten) wanted to visit someone in California. So, along with Roger, we had a trip to California then back across country to Toronto. I came home by train stopping off in Regina to visit Mrs. James. She had taken a position with the Saskatchewan Arts Board.

I had taught each summer for 8 years and felt the need for a break. Marilyn and I planned a trip to Europe in 1958. We started in Paris with a rented Peugeot. We drove through France, Belgium, Denmark, Norway, Sweden. This is when I visited Baekkesletten and the Swedish cousins. We drove from Stockholm to Bastad in two cars. We were treated royally by Carin and Arne. I had met them both in Banff on Arne's visit during the geophysical year when he traveled across country on speaking engagements. We met Runa and Nils (who reminded me of Ed, as Arne reminded me of Mel).

During this trip I had mentioned how tired I was of living in an apartment. Marilyn convinced me I should buy a house. When I returned to Edmonton I found a small house that offered an equal distance for both Bette and I to our places of work. Bette accepted the change, I think, gratefully. It would be possible now to have her mother come to stay from time to time.

Marilyn had an offer from a former teacher to come to Calgary to teach Music and English at a new school where she was Vice-Principal. Marilyn had always liked Calgary and decided to accept. She moved back to Calgary in 1959 and taught at the new Viscount Bennett High School for more than 20 years and then served as Music Consultant for the Calgary School Board

until 1988. She then became Coordinator of Programmes for the Scarborough United Church. She was conductor of Scarborough Choir from 1959 until illness forced her retirement in 2001.

*In addition to Scarborough Choir, she conducted a large seniors choir, a multicultural choir and the Viscount Bennet Grad Choir that went on to be a community choir, regularly including as members the children of the original members. She gave help and support to **Michael Dobbin**, a former student, from his first attempt to develop a professional theatre in Jasper to his 25-year stint as director of the **Alberta Theatre Project**. She founded the **Opera Workshop** to give experience to local singers. From here **Alex Monk** went on to sing with the Met in New York and Roy... who sang with Los Angeles and San Francisco Operas. Members of the Workshop went on to help found the Calgary Opera Company. She continued to work at least a 14-hour day throughout her life.*

When I decided to retire in 1962, I decided to start a new career - at just 40, I returned to university as a mature student. I gave up tenure, income and pension. Marilyn had always wanted a house. I had enough for a down payment. If I rented out my house in Edmonton, if Marilyn kept up monthly payments, we could do it. One weekend we went looking and found 390 in a convenient part of town for us both. It turned out to be a perfect buy.

We moved in during August 1962. Bette was able to afford the modest rent on the house in Edmonton until she retired and moved to Vancouver. After she left I continued to rent the house, my last renters being Marilyn Hoar and Gord Cumming. When they decided to move I decided to sell. Prices had gone up since I bought and the profit provided the pension I had sacrificed on resigning from UofA.

Marilyn and I lived at 390 Wildwood Drive in Calgary for just over 40 years. Two days before she died she told me, "I could not have lived with anyone else." It worked because we knew each other well - to work together in any of the arts is a good way to get to know another person. We felt the same way about money and what was important.

Marilyn had her first bout with cancer in 1989, the year she retired as Music Consultant. It was a rare form of lung cancer. They sent the lump removed to the States for identification. It was related to skin cancer - very unusual. Of course they had to remove sections of ribs to get at the lump. Her doctor described it as 'such a terrible operation'. I know that the scar bothered Marilyn, but she did not complain. The doctor was sure he had all the cancer out, but early in 2001 it had returned and the diagnosis was 'terminal'.

She continued working for a year and continued to go to Scarboro where she, since 1989, had been the co-ordinator of programmes. She found a good musician to replace her, but even though she was on medication she insisted on 'being there' until about 6 weeks before she died.

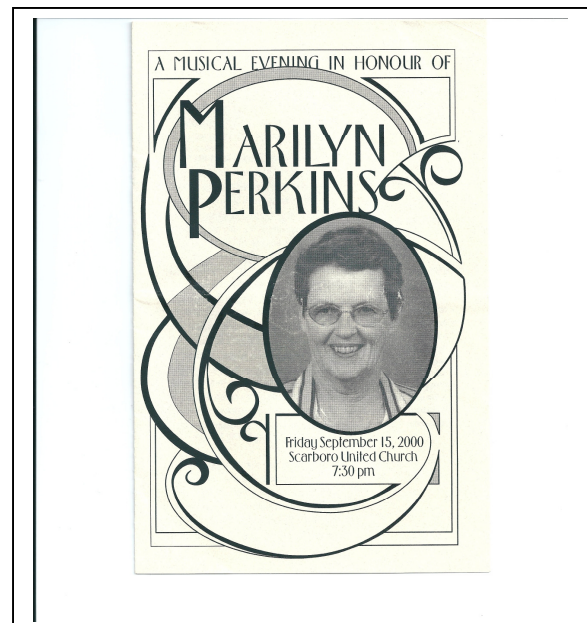
A friend, Enid Holtby, took over setting up a schedule so that her many friends could come to see her or sit with her. It was a big help. One day I had 3 people - one in the bedroom, one in the kitchen and one in the living room - weeping away. I am afraid the numbers have gone down in both choir and congregation since Marilyn left. She had a genuinely cheerful disposition that lifted the spirits of young and old alike.

The principal at Viscount Bennett said, "If I had two more teachers like Marilyn, we'd be in orbit." Before Christmas she would go early move the piano into the hall and conduct Christmas Carols. The hall would be packed, including a Jewish boy who loved Christmas Carols - and this gave him a place to sing what he liked. Getting boys to join the choir was a problem, they had early basketball practice. In our kitchen is the grill Marilyn bought. She made breakfast for the players after practice and they cheerfully joined her choir. She learned to drive the school bus so that she could help out the football players. They too found their way into the choir. There is a school music festival run by the Kiwanas Club. Her choirs won many of them - including the Matheson Trophy for the Canada-wide High School competition.

She helped her two brothers with their careers. When Ken was nearing the end of his life from cancer, his wife was unable to handle needles. Marilyn couldn't look at a needle on television but gritted her teeth and gave him his needles. When Roger was nearing the end (he had just sold

the house and bought a condo) I told him I thought he had handled everything very well and that Marilyn would be proud of him. He said, "That's the nicest thing you could say to me" and started to cry. That was our last conversation.

You see why I think of myself as blessed. Few people can claim 40+ years of friendship with such a special person.



Lt.-Gov. Lois Hole presents longtime music teacher Marilyn Perkins with the Order of Canada on Monday at Scarboro United Church.

Music teacher modest about life's devotion

FEROZA MASTER
CALGARY HERALD

For all her determination, for her devotion to help her students feel empowered, for volunteering endless hours in the community and for touching so many lives with her kindness, Marilyn Perkins became a Member of the Order of Canada on Monday night.

Surrounded by friends and those she holds dear, the 68-year-old received the award from Lt.-Gov. Lois Hole at Scarboro United Church.

Perkins is too ill with liver cancer to travel to Ottawa and doctors say she may not survive until the official ceremony in August at Rideau Hall.

Ever since her arrival in Calgary in 1954, Perkins has contributed to the province's musical scene and inspired countless students and other people.

As a music and English

teacher at Viscount Bennett High School, Perkins had a knack for reaching her students. To this day, she receives letters from former pupils that thank her for changing their lives.

But she says it is the subjects that inspired them, not herself.

"English and music are two good subjects," she says, her voice tingling with conviction as she describes her theory.

"They let students into the world of music — particularly into the world of singing, which lasts lifelong — and into the world of literature, which gives them lifelong experiences. And both of these subjects empower them to be the best they can be themselves."

Perkins also conducted the Calgary Theatre Singers and was an opera coach at the Banff School of Fine Arts and a director of the Scarboro United Church Choir.

Before her retirement from

teaching in 1988, she conducted the Olympic Choir for the opening ceremonies of the Winter Olympics in Calgary.

When the city's Adopt a Family program grew, Perkins and her church answered the call for assistance. Since the early 1990s, they have helped get schools and companies to donate clothes, food and presents for close to 350 families in need at Christmas.

Now, Perkins finds it frustrating her illness has taken away her vigour.

"It leaves me so tired, I can hardly move one foot in front of the other," she says.

But with the Order of Canada, she feels a great sense of accomplishment.

"I look at it as a thank you for the kind of work I did with both students and the people whom I met through the church, particularly through the Adopt a Family program," she said.

"I'm very pleased to get it."

AWARDED ORDER OF CANADA

JUNE 25 2002



Lt.-Gov. Lois Hole presents longtime music teacher Marilyn Perkins with the Order of Canada on Monday at Scarboro United Church.

Lorraine Hjalto, Calgary Herald



This bust of JS Bach, by Robert Stowell, was presented to Marilyn Perkins on her retirement as Music Consultant for the Calgary School Board. It has now been donated to the Rosza Centre at the UofC in Marilyn's name. The Centre has invested in a Bach organ so this seems to have been the correct final resting place for a special memento.



Marilyn commissioned this sculpture, entitled "Three-Part Invention", from artist Robert Stowell to provide funds for him to spend time in Europe furthering his art. This was one of many such generous gestures Marilyn made to working artists in the Calgary community. She understood and practiced 'philanthropy' that made a difference.

The sculpture stood in our hallway for many years and has now been donated to the Calgary Cancer Clinic in Marilyn's name.

Roger G. Perkins 1940 - 2 Jan 2009

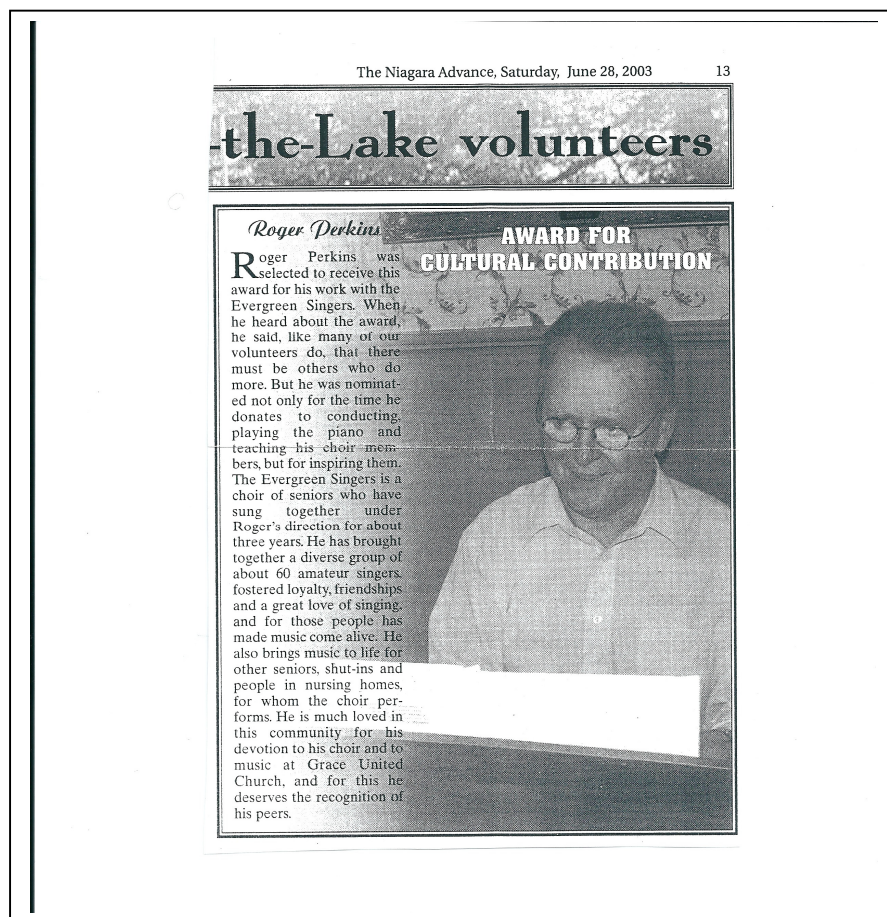


After a nearly three-year struggle with cancer, he passed on quietly, in the company of close friends, without pain, at his home in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Roger was a man of honour, a man of faith, a man of many talents and of great integrity. He viewed death as part of the adventure of living and approached it with grace and little fear. He will be missed by a very large circle of friends from his church community at Grace United, NOTL; from The Evergreen Singers, a choir he founded and directed; from Chorus Niagara with which he sang in recent years; and by his many friends from the theatre and arts communities in which he worked across the country. He was predeceased by his brother Kenneth; by his sister Marilyn; and by his partner of 25 years, Robert Benson. He is mourned by his extended family including cousins in Ontario; a sister-in-law, niece and nephew in BC; and, many dear friends in Niagara, Calgary, and across the land.

Born to Erma and Jack Perkins, in 1940 in Toronto, Roger grew up there and in Calgary; served as national president of the Student Christian Movement in the 60s; studied for a Masters in psychology at the University of Calgary; then followed a career in music, which saw him

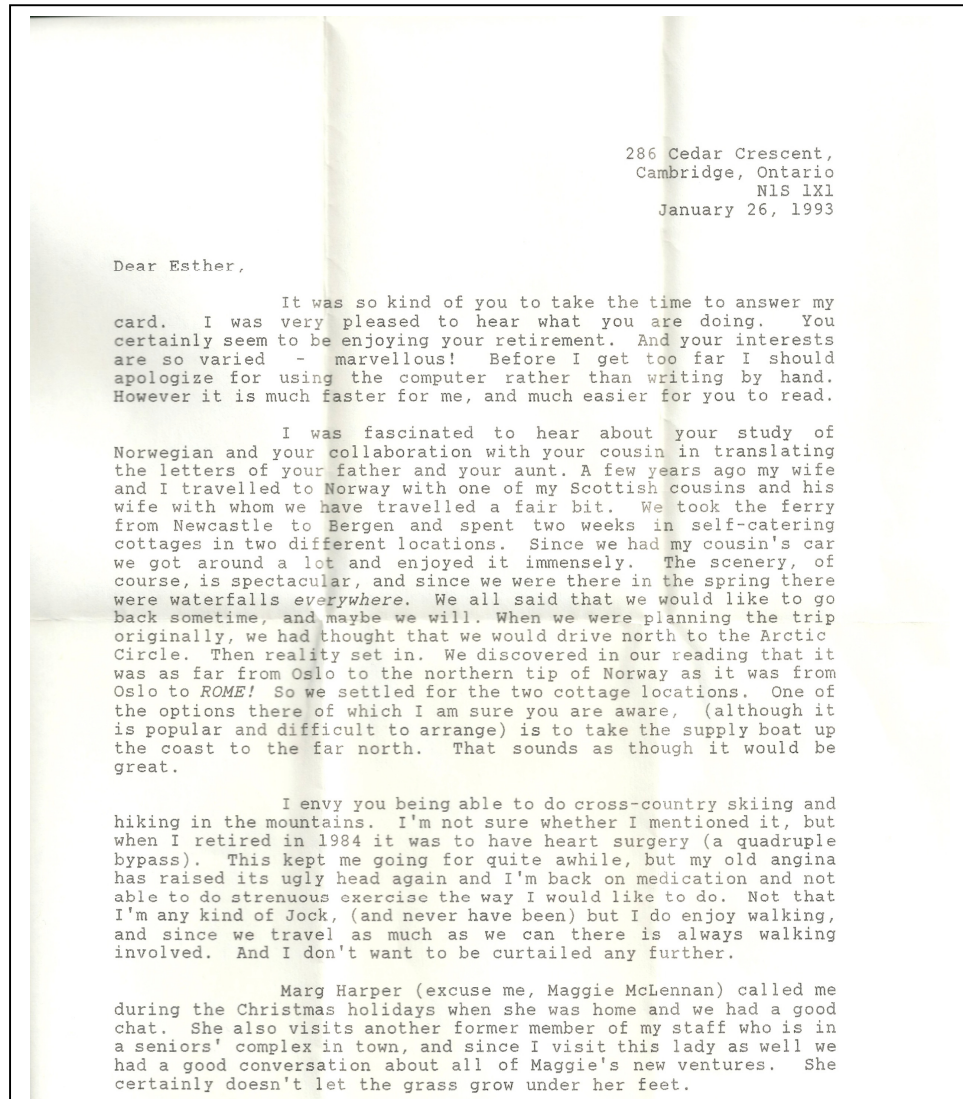
working for numerous Canadian theatres including the Shaw Festival (where he was Director of music for several years), Stratford Festival, and many others. He was a singing coach to innumerable theatre artists, accompanied hundreds of singers over the years and was a great inspiration in the field of choral music for many, both as conductor and singer.

Particular thanks to the remarkable core group of friends who supported him during the last three years and especially in the last few weeks when they provided 24 hour care at his home. Thanks also to the doctors and home care providers who formed part of the team, especially to nurse Nancy Solohub. With their help, love, and constant attention Roger was allowed to die in his new home, as he wished. He would want all who knew him to celebrate his crossing over by practicing random acts of kindness toward one another and treasuring every moment of life on the earth.



Irene Protheroe (see Theatre Letter)

Grant Reddick (see Theatre Letter)



Jim Rintoul

I enclose a letter from Jim Rintoul, a student I had long ago at Banff. It shows, I think, that it was not always easy to protect students. Jim was outstanding and worthwhile. He became a principal of his school. He was a friend of Murray's (Murray Robison) in school. His first note came out of the blue. We had not been in touch.

The final production with Murray was the realization of success at a difficult job (at least once!). The letter from Jim a reminder of how difficult it was to teach and build with a group of teachers who did not share your values. Murray and Jim died within a few months of writing these letters.

Since I renewed my contact with Murray I have been thinking about some of the people who were at Banff in 1952 and 1953. Just to refresh your memory, the two years I was there were the *Peter Pan* year and (from my point of view) the *Martha* year. Actually the play that year was *The Lady's Not for Burning*, but since I had nothing to do with it and since I stage-managed the opera, I remember *Martha* better. Actually you saved my life that second year (not literally), but I was so unhappy with the instruction from the man who was teaching directing (can't remember his name at the moment) that I went to you and poured out my troubles. That was when you put me on my own curriculum and my own timetable and gave me the responsibility of being S.M. for the opera. It saved my summer. I don't know if I ever thanked you properly, but I certainly should have. Thank you, Esther, thank you, thank you, thank you!

Getting back to the people, I had seen Marnie Patrick once or twice when she was living in Toronto and we corresponded at Christmas. But I wonder about some of the others, and what has become of them. Lois Bourcier is one, Ted Fowler is another...and Betty Palate. I heard that Margaret Martin was doing some acting in Vancouver, and I know of course that Diana van der Vlis went to New York and played opposite Walter Pigeon at one point. But what did Maggie Duffy do? She was so talented.

I shouldn't be bothering you with all of these questions and I certainly don't want to put you on the spot to try to answer them, but I've been thinking a lot about those two summers, especially since seeing Murray again. I really enjoyed my time there, and it developed and expanded my interest in theatre and opera and ballet. At the risk of repeating what I might have said on my Christmas card my wife and I see a lot of theatre. We have subscriptions at Theatre Aquarius in Hamilton, The Canadian Stage in Toronto and Grand Theatre in London (that's Martha Henry), as well as our own local Little Theatre. As well, we always go to Stratford and Shaw. I think last year we saw ten productions at Stratford and six at Shaw. As you can tell, we really enjoy it.

Before I close I should mention Gwenneth Lloyd. I was so sorry to hear of her death, but glad that she got recognition only a few weeks beforehand by being honoured at the Governor General's Awards. Did you see it on television? We taped it. Actually whoever planned it wasn't cognizant of the fact that Gwenneth and Celia Franca weren't exactly great buddies, but they picked Celia to do the narration of Gwenneth's career. By the look on Gwenneth's face that night, I'm not sure she was pleased about that choice. I have raved on at great length and probably bored you to tears, so it's time to stop. Thank you again for writing.

Sincerely, Jim
 P.S. Thanks for your phone number. Who knows, now that we've begun to explore the West we might get back there again soon. It would be great to see you. Z.

Peggy Haynes Rootes

Esther: Another early call for help came from a teacher in Sedgewick. She needed help with a play. By the time the play was ready we knew each other well. Years went by and she turned up at the Department of Extension as secretary to the Fine Arts Instructor. She did as much to help the ADL as I did, typing minutes and notices to the members, etc.

We remained friends and I regret so much not seeing her for a last time before her recent death. Such friends make up a large part of my life. The part Peggy filled is, with her death, so strangely empty.

Shelagh Norman-Martin RELJIC

b. 1928 d. 2008

Shelagh started her career as a stage manager and actor with Everyman Theatre in Vancouver in 1947. She moved on to Parry Films, becoming head editor, then to the CBC for several years before working freelance for the CBC, CTV and other television companies. She was the founding editor of the 16 mm Film Workshop at Simon Fraser University from 1966 to 1969.

Shelagh worked as a producer, director and editor at the National Film Board's Pacific Regional Studio. She worked on films such as: Anne Wheeler's "Every Saturday Night", Sandy Wilson's "He's not the Walking Kind", and the award-winning "Harrison's Yukon", a profile of acclaimed Yukon artist, Ted Harrison.

At every stage of her career Shelagh acted as a mentor to many women who were getting their start in the film business. She was made a lifetime honorary member of Women in Film. She was an uncompromising idealist who hated discrimination in any form, an agile-minded woman with high standards for life and art and an ability to see through the fluff. She prepared the ground for women who followed her into the Canadian film industry.

Her list of credits include:

Editor/Producer

He's Not the Walking Kind
Mental Patients' Association

Editor /Director

Harrison's Yukon
Soccer

Producer

Sauk-Ai
Salmon People
Rosanna: A Portrait of an
Immigrant Woman

Editor

Baby This Is for You
Man Who Choses the Bush
Play to Learn
Behind the Masks
Every Saturday Night
Tour en l'air
Jablonski
Sweet Substitute



Shelagh (on the far right)
with Esther and Lois McLean
- Everyman Pals



Shelagh visited Esther in May 1987 after her husband had died. She was a member of Everyman in the late '40s and early '50s. She worked in Banff at the Paris Tea Room, attended Seattle Rep. Playhouse with Lois in the '50s and finally became an editor for the National Film Board for documentaries that are still available. She developed severe arthritis and died as the result of an accident in 2008. She was a good friend to Esther and to Lois McLean.

Sydney Risk

Google: *Sydney Risk and the Everyman Theatre* by James Hoffman for a comprehensive picture of Risk's early career and the years of Everyman Theatre. His contribution to Canadian Theatre was extraordinary and Esther knew that she had been given, by this unusual man and in the unique circumstances of the theatre world of her era, training in her art that money couldn't buy.

The Everyman Theatre Tour group in 1942/43

Shirley Kerr
 Esther Nelson
 Hilda Nual
 Arthur Hill
 Peggy Hassard
 Floyd Caza
 Ted Follows

Murray Westgate
 Lois McLean
 Drew Thompson
 Dave Major
 Ed McNamara
 Ron Rosvold

Murray Robison (see more in Theatre Letter, see Jim Rintoul)

Esther: Murray was perhaps my most successful student within the context of the Banff School's original premise. Soon after I came to Edmonton I received a call from the 'Y' in Lethbridge to give a talk on theatre. I gave my talk, stressing the possibilities of community theatres and the challenge for their directors. He had he told me been doing plays with his fellow teachers. "But", he said, shyly, "I don't know if I could be the kind of director you are talking about." I said, "You are exactly the kind of person I am talking about." He had taken a course in drama at UofA and taught drama in his school in Coaldale.

*I gave a 3-day workshop in Coaldale. It was a success. Other workshops followed. I came to help with plays he was working on. He came to Banff on scholarship and proved an eager, promising student. The ADL was beginning and he became the secretary-treasurer. Finally he entered **Papa is All** in the DDF and won the semi-final. I must point out that I never helped directors with plays entered in either a one-act or a three-act play. He used what he learned at Banff to transform his drama room into a small workable theatre complete with good lighting.*

*The last year I was with the Department of Extension Murray asked if I would join him in an extended course. He wanted to do Shakespeare because there was a talented actor in Lethbridge he wanted to help by offering more challenging material. Knowing his actors, I suggested that we do scenes from **Twelfth Night** and **MacBeth**. Murray would take*

rehearsals during the week and I would take rehearsals once a week. By now Murray knew my way of working so we had no difficulty working together. We ended with a very successful production in his little theatre.

That summer the actor Murray wanted to help auditioned for the season at the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis. He was accepted and continued to make his way in American professional theatre.

*... There were great successes amongst many lesser moments and then time moved on. My great regrets now are not making opportunities to keep in touch with more of these great people. When I was on the **Everyman** tour we visited Alix, Alberta where Robert Haskings had developed a theatre and won the DDF in the 1930s. I found the remains of the theatre he had equipped down to the lighting board and dimmer of the time. Even after so many successful years I am sure Murray Robison's wonderful little theatre in Coaldale has gone the same way to dust. So much work for such brief moments of magic. Marilyn understood. She came home one afternoon just after I finished a painting. She said, "at least you have something to show for the time you spend..."*

Ethel Taylor of the Quota Club of Red Deer

Esther: We stayed in contact. On hearing that I had received the Canadian Drama Award in 1955 for my contribution to the development of theatre in Canada from the Dominion Drama Festival, Ethel sent me a lovely card expressing the excitement she and her fellow Quota Club activists felt on learning that my work - the work that she and the others had been part of - had been recognized.

The Quota Club undertook the continuing task of sponsoring the Provincial One-Act Final Festival for the Alberta Drama league. She was a delight to work with.

Shirley Douglas Sutherland

Esther: By the way - I had Tommy Douglas' adopted daughter, Shirley, as one of my students. She went to England and had some success, and later married a Canadian actor, Donald Sutherland, who acted in England, Canada and the US. She and he ended up for a time in LA where Shirley took on the US by supporting someone in the Black Panthers. Shirley and Donald had a son (Keifer Sutherland) and a daughter.

Shirley returned to Canada and has had a long acting career, including long-running TV shows. I liked her very much. I will always remember that, during one Banff summer, we needed a rain barrel for a play I was doing. At rehearsal one afternoon the door of the auditorium burst open and sunshine flooded in, lighting little Shirley pushing the biggest, most beautiful rain barrel in the world! She had walked up and down the streets of Banff until she found it.

Shirley is a staunch supporter of health care. I always meant to send her my famous letter to Ralph Klein (with copies to the PM, the Federal Health Minister, all party leaders, plus Provincial Health Ministers) tearing apart each of the points he offered. Everyone answered my letter and when the Liberals asked permission to table it (which meant it would go into the Alberta archive) Ralph suddenly retired! I think Shirley would have enjoyed that as much as I did!



Kiefer Sutherland unveiled the statue of his grandfather, Tommy Douglas, at Weyburn Saskatchewan in 2010

Memories EI NELSON

Keeping Body and Soul together so you could 'live theatre'

*Esther: 1948 - When I returned to Canada in 1948 to help Sydney re-launch the **Everyman Theatre** I found part-time jobs. This enabled me to work on rebuilding sets in the large building we called Little Mountain. **Lois McLean** and I fixed up a couple of small rooms. We moved in a bed and hot plate and set up housekeeping. Very economical- no rent, but also no heat. By the end of November it was so cold we had to move. We found a large single room in an old mansion on Marguerite Street and moved in our hot plate.*

Lois found a secretarial job and we were set. The first part-time job I found was in a (Westons) biscuit factory that also made candy. The company was facing a strike over an effort to unionize the staff. I thought it would be an interesting experience, and it was. When the strike vote came all the company had to do was offer a small raise from 50 up to 60 cents an hour and the workers didn't even bother to vote. Most of them had an education of less than Grade 9. For them this was a wonderful job. Otherwise the jobs open would be housework under the close supervision of a demanding housewife and an irregular income.

This was the time of the Christmas candy rush. When the rush was over the supervisor came at the end of the day and tapped unsuspecting girls on the shoulder: "You don't have to come in tomorrow." That kept on until there were just 6 of us left on the floor. Each day girls left the room weeping. Christmas was coming and they had no job. This was their company's reward for not voting for a closed shop.

One girl had worked relief on my machine - hard candy. You sat on an old bucket at the end of a long belt that carried a string of hot candy fed into the machine at the other end by a man who took the large, heavy batch from the stirring machine. The belt was run by cog wheels. Because there were many breakdowns the supervisor left the covers off the cogs. You broke up the hot candy wearing floppy gloves that the company provided.

When I returned to my machine the girl who replaced me had her glove and hand caught in the cogs. She disappeared for a few weeks and returned in January, very happy that the company took her back. She had a severely damaged right hand. The realities of work for so many then and now.

About this time Sydney had booked a show into a school in New Westminster. There was no one to set up the show. I said, "That's easy. I'll quit my job." The next morning we came in to work at the factory and the power was off. We were sent up to the 3rd floor to pack cello candy. You sat in front of a blower that opened a cello bag. You filled the bag and then sealed it by running it through a hot, vice-like contraption. Every so often you burned your fingers. All the while we sat and froze. When the shift ended and I knew I was finished, I said, "That's it. I quit." Looks of horror! "You're not going to quit such a good job." And they meant it.

The next part-time job was with the civil service renewing unemployment insurance. I learned how to work a machine that punched holes in cards and I learned much more about how the civil service works (or how people work the civil service). Each 'servant' had his 'territory'. Each jockeyed for position. When I came to UofA and UofC as well as UNB I found that I had met them all before. The salaries were different but the behaviour was the same.

When the cards were all punched the job was over. I had about six weeks until my job started in Banff and on checking the paper I found what I wanted: "Strawberry pickers needed". On Sunday afternoon I was on a bus and on my way to a large farm that hired about 20 people and had in addition a number of families in tents. Four of us became acquainted and after one week we realized that we could not make any money. The crop was not actually ready as a flood had seriously damaged their crops. The day was explained to us: you could pick, hoe or take time off and all you

could possibly earn was how much was charged for room and board (and meager fare it was - Mrs. Buck's frugal portions seemed lavish in comparison). (Mrs. Buck was Esther's landlady in Slave Lake in 1942/3 where Esther had her first teaching experience.)

Two of us set off to find other jobs for the four of us. We found a small farm that needed pickers, signed on then hitchhiked back to Vancouver to return on Sunday. When we came back they had assumed we had quit so they hired pickers on the weekend. Disaster! But, they were nice people knew someone else who needed pickers and in a jiffy we were loaded in the back of a truck that was heading straight for the place we had originally worked at! We were seriously relieved when we went by their gate. It transpired that there were two farms adjacent to each other. Our destination was the neighbour.

One of the girls teamed up with me and fortunately she was as thorough and slow as I was. We elected to pick by the hour rather than by the basket. We had a small cabin and could cook our own meals, but never felt comfortable as we kept expecting to be fired for being so slow. As the season marched on we watched as they gradually let everyone else go and kept us on, for an extra week - and they gave us a bonus! As the farmer drove us in to Abbotsford at the end of our work, he explained that we were picking properly which assured next year's crop. We wished he had told us before! With the bonus I had just enough to cover train fare to Banff. **Was it worth it? Of course it was!**

The Country School Culture of the 1930s

*Esther: In many ways, I think Blanche would agree, **Barbara Marr** was the teacher who really broadened our vision. She read to us each morning. At one time we had a choice between two stories: Beautiful Joe and a story she had written, Betty and Billy. I remember a vote one day and the class chose Beautiful Joe and I felt embarrassed. I am not sure if it was Betty and Billy or private conferences, but Blanche credits Barbara Marr with inspiring her writing. Miss Marr also introduced us to an interest in the natural world. We learned how to collect and mount butterflies; leaves*

were identified, mounted and dried. We built a rock garden. On Arbour Day we tidied and cleaned the schoolyard and just about burned down the barn and two little houses situated in the tall grass.

Barbara Marr also wrote plays for Christmas concerts and for other occasions, as well as the usual pageants, recitations, songs and dances. I remember Blanche reciting: "... not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse." I was cast as an unlikely Virgin Mary. Thin, sunburned and freckled, I was under no illusion about my appearance. I think Thea had hoped her youngest would be a beautiful child. She scrubbed my nose with lemon peel - all to no avail.

A higher point came when Miss Marr entered a play she had written about Laura Secord's journey with the cow through enemy territory in a festival in Wetaskiwin. I recall that Mel played the Colonel to whom she delivered information that 'saved the day', but I don't remember what parts Blanche and I played. I do remember that we went to and from Wetaskiwin in the back of August Kramer's truck. The experience gave me my first taste of competitive festival. At first, much excitement, we had won! Then came the announcement, we had not won after all. The plays were supposed to be about Western Canada and ours was about the EAST!

Later when part of my job was to adjudicate school festivals I was happy to find that non-competitive festivals predominated in schools.

*There were not many opportunities to see plays when I was young. I remember going to see **Here Comes Charlie** at the Brooksona Hall, directed by my brother Ed with his future wife Mildred Auten in the lead role. I thought she was quite beautiful.*

Another experience with live theatre was to attend a Chatauqua in Ponoka. Hans Paulson was one of the directors of the organization. It played in large tent. I still remember some of the acts in the program.

My feeling about Christmas concerts, the festival and the Chatauqua was not that I wanted to act, it was that I felt the coming together of many people to share the same experience was somehow important. I remember coming at night to the school. The lights were on in a place that had no

lights. The audience was already assembled. The curtains were closed above the makeshift stage. Mysteries were about to be revealed.

Later I learned that the impulse toward theatre was common to all countries, past and present. Our experience in Alberta was closest to the history of European countries: the population of each was mainly rural; travel to large centers was difficult and thus rural communities developed their own art forms including the various forms of theatre that emerged over time. The Chautauqua movement started in the NY State in 1874. It spread throughout the States and parts of Canada and lasted until WWII. Although I do not know of anyone writing about this I can see now that the Banff School of Fine Arts was modeled on the first Chautauqua: a mixture of instruction and practice of fine arts and lectures (adult education). Perhaps the tent in which the first Stratford Festivals played in Ontario was a solution that owed something to the tents spread out in the US and Canada to provide a stage for its traveling companies.

*Tom Patterson and the original sponsors would certainly have been familiar with the practical solution the Chautauqua tent provided. Rural US and rural Canada followed the same patterns. "Co-ops" in business evolved from the rural co-operative effort in building schools and community halls. During the Depression of the 1930s co-ops were formed to take over the running of telephones. In the same way rural communities acquired electricity. The co-op movement was developing when the Seattle Repertory Playhouse was formed; the Playhouse continued for more than 25 years. Norris Houghton toured the US and wrote *Advance from Broadway* about the theatres he found. He was impressed with the quality of work and the extent of the programme at the **Playhouse**: 2 plays were classical, 2 were modern serious with some social comment and 2 modern or original comedies. Each play was pre-sold for 18 performances. In addition theatre for children played 2 performances on Saturdays, 2 per day during Christmas and Easter holidays - a total of 3 or more plays. When I first came to the theatre in 1945 it had a staff of 22 people. All had been trained in the **Playhouse Theatre School**. Each staff member was paid an equal amount to 'work in the theatre'. Auditions were open to the public. Thus, Florence and Burton James had developed a working, successful semi-professional community theatre. Houghton, who assumed only the NY*

model of professional theatre would achieve such things was truly dumbfounded.

With the development of modern roads and transportation, educational opportunities and television Chautauqua gradually declined. WWII almost marked its extinction. Although I did not realize it at the time I accepted the job with the Dept. of Extension 13 Feb 1947, the day oil was discovered near Leduc, was to mark a similar transition in Alberta. The Province changed from small towns and cities and a rural economy abruptly to larger towns and cities with an economy driven by oil and gas. Immigration changed the cultural make up. Suddenly the government had money for projects that had gone hungry before. Pioneers would have been dumbfounded at the Jubilee theatres.



In the Classroom 1943-45

A letter from a student 60 years after the class at Eastside...

5709 Siasong Rd
Sooke BC V9Z0C4
2009-09-03

Dear Ms Nelson,

Your kind letter arrived on my birthday, yesterday!

It is very flattering to hear that after 65 years one of your teachers remembers you. We students of course have a different perspective and how could one forget the most glamorous teacher you had.

I still have vague recollections of standing in a hall in Ponoka reciting at length the story of "Johnny Dunn".

I guess that my family were poor, at least not too well off, mind you I never felt any lack. I lived alone mostly but had my books. School to me was not a challenge but an experience I looked forward to each day. I guess on IQ tests I had a pretty high score. That unfortunately meant I did not really have to try as hard as some to get good grades, but nevertheless I hated missing school for fear that I would miss something important. Thus, I never wanted to skip grades, although the opportunity arose. That was just as well, timing was to be important.

My parents sold the farm and we moved to BC, I heard later they did this because they felt I would have a better opportunity there. In high school I gained letters for various things and was groomed for a try at a special scholarship. In grade 12, I wrote the provincial exams (five). The first, on Monday, was in two parts – English literature and composition. I really did a bad job and was sick to my stomach for the rest of that week. On Friday, I wrote Math. The rest of the exams went well. I got 75 in English and 100 in Math. My average was 92.4, 14th in BC. It won me a district scholarship, but later that summer I was one of two in BC to win a scholarship that was renewable yearly for five years. All I needed to do to qualify thereafter was achieve a grade A average. It put me through UBC.

I guess that sounds like bragging but really it is not. It all came about I believe because of my family, lifestyle and those teachers in the one room school houses in my youth.

Upon graduation, I had married in third year, my family moved to Ontario where I worked for the Defense Research Board. A year or so later, I got a chance to return to UBC to Graduate School to attempt a PhD course in Physics. That was a most interesting experience! Since I had no prerequisites for an advanced Physics degree, I had the usual thesis requirement, proof of capability in two other languages but I had to gain 17 credits in course work at the fourth and fifth year level in Physics or Math. The normal PhD candidate needed only seven. Imagine if you will, walking in off the street and taking a fourth course in the Theory of the Complex Variable where you could understand most of the words but knew none of their significance. Worse than that the candidates were 70% Engineering Physics in fourth year and the rest Honours Math students! At Christmas all of the Engineering Physics students failed. I passed and as a graduate student my pass mark was not 50% it was 66%. The final exam was written so that anyone that answered three questions correctly got 50, eight correct were needed for 66 and 15 out of 17 for first class. A friend did that. He was the only one. I got 68 but all the Engineering Physics students got at least a pass. If the debacle at Christmas had continued there would have been no Engineering Physics graduates that year at UBC!

The interesting thing about that course was the difference in attitude of the people involved. The Engineering Physics student needed the course to gain a tool for their research and work and wanted practical examples of how the material applied to the world. The professor and math students looked at the subject as a pretty and exotic creation with beauty in its own right. Never were the views to merge!

Although I got my 17 credits in a couple of years, my research project went very slowly. Brightness was not enough. Hard slogging work was also needed. Eventually I was recalled to work at DRB without finishing the research I had been working on

That job was Canada's first effort in Space, the Alouette Satellite. I was a working level engineer who put the first model together and got it working. Headly times. We were earnest amateurs so the integration and testing of that first model was done with drawings on scraps of paper. At the time, Alouette was considered the most sophisticated satellite to have been launched (September 1962). I became seriously ill, (overwork and stress?) and had to take six months off, upon my return I generated the complete drawing set for the satellite.

Anyway, I am running on far too long and probably boring you.

I just wanted to tell you how much you were appreciated and what in part resulted because of your efforts.

Sincerely,
Bob.

Traveling the Alberta roads alone...

Esther: Generally the long hours of travel were not very exciting and I spent the time planning what I wanted to accomplish in the upcoming classes. Black ice and cold added interest and I had several incidents of driving off or being forced off the roads... happily with no serious consequences. The one truly serious event occurred when I was traveling by train.

I was returning home after a class in Lethbridge in a two-car train. It was a Saturday and I planned to spend the weekend with Marilyn in Calgary. She was to meet me. I was reading with my shoes off and feet on the opposite seat and noticed in particular two other passengers. At the end of the car was a Mountie handcuffed to a prisoner, near them was a beautiful teenager with a violin case, obviously on her way to a lesson in Calgary.

Suddenly there was a crash, a flash of fire, the car lurched to a crazy angle and people and suitcases were thrown about. I saw the door at the end away from the fire open as the Mountie and his prisoner jumped off the train. I had heard that when there was a fire to drop low to avoid the smoke, so I did. It was an uphill climb toward that open door because of the angle of the car, and soon people grabbed at my ankles to pull themselves out too, but consequently dragging me back toward the fire. I stood up and pulled myself along by the tops of the seats on either side. I finally got to the door to find it blocked by a rather large woman frozen with fear. Over her shoulder I could see the Mountie, still attached to his prisoner, ready to catch people as they jumped down - about an eight-foot drop. I put my shoulder to the seat of the lady in front of me and pushed her off. When the heroes below were recovered, I jumped.

I didn't think of saving anybody. My one thought was to keep the doorway clear so that people could get out. We were not through yet - the grass in the ditch had caught fire and to get away from that we had to get through the 4-string, tightly stretched barbed wire fence. About six passengers made it through the fence and then through a stubble field to some stooks where we could look back and see what had happened. A propane truck had hit the train between the two cars and had knocked them off the track.

We saw that some of the passengers had escaped on the other side of the train and that the police and others had arrived. At the same time the farmer came across his field to us and took us in his car to the Claresholm hospital. There, after being checked out, I met some people who had come to the hospital to see if they could help when they heard about the accident. They invited me to stay with them until someone could come for me, so off we went to their house.

The police had taken the names of those who remained near the train. They did not notice the 6 who had gone across the field. When Marilyn went to meet the train and found that there had been an accident, she was told the 'survivors' would be on the next bus. She hurried to the bus station; I was not on the bus. With no other choice, she went home and I was finally able to contact her there. The telephone line was jammed for quite a while. She came and picked me up; I was wearing a coat that smelled of smoke and a pair of large white shoes loaned to me by my hostess.

Because I was not on the police 'survivor list' I was declared missing. Friend and former student, Alex Burton, who was a radio announcer in Edmonton, picked up this misinformation. My relatives heard the news and told my mother at church on Sunday. I reached her just as she got home from church. Marilyn contacted Ed who was at a meeting in Banff and he picked me up and took me back to Edmonton the next day.

I have forgotten how many were killed besides the truck driver and the lovely young violinist.

An Academic Life - 1962 to Retirement



UofC 1964/65 Year Book

Ed and Mil came for my convocation. I didn't bother to attend convocation for my MA - once was enough!

Esther Nelson BA, MA

My Last class

*Esther: My last class was in the College at Hobbema, and they were shocked when they found out that it was my last class before retirement and I wasn't having a party! So, they took me to lunch and presented me with a pair of beautiful beaded moccasins. The lady who organized it sat next to me. She and her family had used the oil money that came to them from the tribe for travel. She had been to Europe, Hawaii, South America, the Caribbean, etc. Now that I was retired, was I going to travel? I said I planned a trip to Mount Assiniboine to see the golden Larch in the fall. Shock! **"Aren't you afraid of the bears?!"** I thought, 'everything is turned backwards', but I was glad to be accepted as one with them.*

BIRD

Esther: Others have written books about the psychology of school horses. Each seemed to develop its own method of dealing with its small owners.

Bird probably came from mustang stock. She never seemed to be accepted by the herd of farm horses. She made no effort to make friends. We had a strange relationship. She seemed to put up with me but there were no signs of affection as such. One bitterly cold afternoon, I was slow sliding off her back. She reached around, grabbed my collar in her teeth and shook me. Mel saw what happened and came to 'teach her a lesson'. I said, "NO, don't do that. It was my fault."

When I was cleaning at the school after everyone had left (at Anthony Hill, as at other one-room schools, children were given the opportunity to do janitor duties - sweep the floor, clean the black boards and brushes, etc - for a small salary. In my day it was about \$2 a week, and that was CASH money!). Bird was in the yard and played hard-to-get when I tried to catch her to go home. Finally she whirled and kicked me gently on the shoulder. I often wondered if she could judge distance accurately.

In summer the horses were let loose to graze in the schoolyard. Wasps were a constant misery for them. Whenever I was on the ball diamond Bird would come over to me to swat the wasps away from her. No one else had a horse that would do that. When she ran away and finally was returned to Fred Hagemann's she showed signs of memory. Evelyn used to inherit my red sweaters when I grew out of them. If she walked into the yard wearing my sweater Bird would follow her. Mel tried to ride her and she refused to move.

When I was bitten by the dog at school, and taken to Wetaskiwin Hospital by car, Bird was left in the school barn. Mary Kramer volunteered to take her home. That wasn't such an easy task. Bird liked to go home after a long day in the barn. We always went through the doorway at a gallop with me flat on Bird's back. My lunch bucket was a Roger's Golden Syrup can, carried in a satchel (that Thea had made for me out of a flour sack) over my shoulder. Thea never asked me why the lunch tin had such deep dents.

I just didn't always get it at the right angle as we galloped through the door and Bird's back was pretty close to the top doorjamb. I never thanked Mary enough for leading a reluctant Bird home. My horse knew that there was something wrong and Mary had to pull her every inch of the way and then walk the one and a half miles home.



1981 Esther and Mary Kramer at the Anthony Hill Reunion.

Dominion Drama Festival

Esther: The Festival started in 1932, dedicated to one-act plays. It continued in this manner until forced to stop its annual event with the onset of WWII. After a 10-year hiatus the Festival re-started in 1949, in its same one-act format. In 1950, though, it switched to three-acts until it stopped in 1978. In order to make the DDF work it was necessary to have Provincial organizations, and have a winner of festivals in each Province that could represent each Province at a Final Festival.

The Alberta Drama league was formed in 1933 for this purpose. It too stopped operation in 1939 and when the DDF started again it was necessary to re-organize the Alberta Drama League. It was decided that

in addition to organizing the 3-act competition the League would sponsor a Provincial One-Act Festival. This took up much of my time in addition to teaching. The ADL continued until the DDF came to an end.

***Mrs. Ethel Taylor** of the Quota Club of Red Deer urged that group to sponsor the Final Festival. They did this for a number of years and that strengthened the League, added members and broadened community involvement.*

*None of this would have been possible if it had not been that **Elodia Christensen** of Sterling wrote to enquire if the Department of Extension still offered help with drama. She was in charge of the drama programme for the Latter Day Saints Church. It turned out that she had known **Elizabeth Sterling Haynes** and had become her devoted fan. She was also interested in theatre and the DDF. Thus I went to Sterling to conduct the first of many workshops. Elodia went to the first meeting that reformed the ADL in 1952 and within a year she became its president. She was enthusiastic, a driving force, which was what ADL and drama in Alberta needed.*

***Peggy Haynes Rootes** made another early call for help. She was a teacher in Sedgewick. She needed help with a play. By the time the play was ready we knew each other well. Years went by and she turned up at the Department of Extension - secretary to the fine arts instructor. She did as much to help the ADL as I did, typing minutes and notices to the members, etc.*

The Canwell Hearings Seattle

Esther: The Canwell hearings began the spring of my last year at the Playhouse. In support of the James' I went to a session. It was to be one of the most frightening experiences in my life.

At the front on a raised platform was Canwell. At the rear, the doors of entry. Along the side walls, shoulder to shoulder, stood very big army police wearing two guns each and two long strings (belts?) of ammunition on

their shoulders. There were a number of young people in the audience from Bette's classes, I think, along with their friends. Afternoon proceedings started and continued in the manner that had been already established.

'Witnesses' were called - all were from out-of-town - and gave their testimony that one or other of the accused was guilty of communist activities. Cross-examination was not allowed. The witnesses left and returned to their home - New York, Chicago, etc.

Finally, the James' lawyer said, after cross-examination was disallowed again, with a polite bow, "I bow to more powerful authority" and sat down. A nervous titter ran around the room.

Canwell said to the soldiers (military police): "Remove those demonstrators." There had been no demonstration. The police looked at each other uneasily and then awkwardly grabbed a few people and forced them to walk out of the door.

One of the people forced out was a middle-aged man. The press was always waiting. An indignant 'demonstrator' was glad to be interviewed. The next morning we read: "I came here to see justice done but this is not justice. It's an outrage, ... escorted out as Mrs. James was. She was articulate, but The testimony of each of the 'friendly' witnesses consisted mainly of association as proof. There was no real evidence. The only way to avoid conviction was to use the appropriate phrase from the Constitution. I know that Burton and Al Ottenheimer lost their tempers, did not use the magic words and were convicted, I think of contempt, and jailed for 3 months each. Of course, if they went to jail they must be guilty! All the various Un-American Activities Committees succeeded in doing was to destroy the lives of many of their best and most productive artists.

Something that was general knowledge at the Playhouse was the animosity of the Head of the Drama Dept. at UofW, Glenn Hughes, toward Mrs. James and the Playhouse. Mrs. James had joined the staff at UofW when she arrived in Washington from New York. She was determined to do the best she could for her students and was one of the first teachers to become acquainted with the 'Stanislavski method' through the interpretation of his work by his students, especially I. Rappaport.

Consequently her classes in acting began to be sought out by all the students, especially those of Hughes. He became very jealous and continued his animosity after Mrs. James left and eventually founded and developed the Playhouse just 4 blocks away from the campus.

Because it was possible to make accusations to the Un-American Activities people without being identified, various people at UofW were also accused. We had our suspicions but could prove nothing. The Playhouse is now called Glenn Hughes Playhouse. Ex-members of the James' Playhouse helped create another venue downtown.

I was acting in The Font Page that spring. During the run (pre-sold productions) Of the play my visa term expired. I had to go to Vancouver to have it renewed. Bette volunteered to take over my role (the prostitute who commits suicide). Apparently I was not important enough to have my name on a list. I returned to Seattle to complete my obligations. That summer I returned to Vancouver. I felt that I owed Sydney for an experience I could not have bought anywhere.

The experience left its mark. When I was in Vancouver a left-leaning Jewish group wanted to produce a dramatic poem written by (possibly Szlengel...) on the Warsaw Ghetto during the war. Dorothy Somersett at UBC recommended me to them. It was a powerful piece that interested me. Available were six young people with good voices. There wasn't any pay, but I was satisfied. I designed a setting using only platforms lighting and a flexible shifting of individuals and groups. The actors were passionate about the story that contributed to a strong performance. Unknown to me they entered the play in a local festival. I couldn't desert them so I went along as the only stagehand. I again arranged the 'set' and lighting and was the only curtain puller. I knew that this fare was not the usual offering at festivals. When I pulled the curtain at the end there was a long pause. I found that I was shaking. Then the applause came. Huge relief. I was back in Canada.

To finish this anecdote, I will add that this was about the time readings became popular. The group wanted to continue so I showed them how they could adjust without 'scenery', just six teaching podiums with strong reading lights that would light up their faces. In a dark room it was quite

effective. The president of the group gave me a wonderful recommendation when I applied for the drama specialist job in the summer.

Returning to the "un-American" issue, it did raise its head once in Canada for me. One day in Banff I had a brief meeting with Dr. Cameron (the head...). He told me that 'a man from the University of Oregon' had been to see him and asked if he knew that he had a communist on his staff. I said to Cameron, "I wish you had told him to meet me and tell me that to my face!" The subject did not come up again. Cameron was not above using what he thought was a weakness to maintain his power over others. Perhaps the poor man wanted my job. I, of course, assume the event related to my attending a 'communist-run school'.

*The poison of that period infected Canada too. Only this year did the RCMP reveal that they kept a file on **Tommy Douglas** - the man voted the most outstanding Canadian of the Century at the end of the millennium. Perhaps they kept a file on Ed, your father, too. The CCF, NDP, or anything left-of-center was suspect while anything rightwing was Simon-pure. So naive.*

The Edmonton Recreation Department 1951

Esther: Your first paragraph in this section forced my hand. I wasn't sure that I wanted this story told. There were many things about my job I did not care for but tried to work around. First was my boss, Director of the Department of Extension, Donald Cameron (eventually Senator Donald Cameron). Second was his successor, Duncan Campbell.

Cameron wanted his way in ALL things and consequently fought with just about everyone. In the late 20s and very early 30s Dr. Ned Corbett was Director of the Department. I met him later and liked him. It was under his watch that the Banff School of Fine Arts was formed with Elizabeth Sterling Haynes in charge of drama at the school. He also was responsible for appointing her as Drama Specialist. I discovered that his general philosophy in working with Alberta communities was similar to Chautauqua.

Donald Cameron became Corbett's assistant at Banff as well as in Edmonton. When Corbett left, Donald Cameron automatically became head of both. Cameron didn't like women, especially strong women. He and Elizabeth did not get along. She left in 1937. From then on (the staff on stage suffered through his annual speech) it sounded as though he had started the school. It became his obsession; it would be the Saltzberg of North America. He gradually grew less and less interested in the Extension Department.

I found that his quarrels didn't stop with Elizabeth. Robert Orchard had replaced Sydney Risk as Head of the Drama Department in Edmonton. I later discovered that, although my salary was paid by the Drama Department's allocation for salaries, my work was to be entirely in the Department of Extension - a recipe for disaster. This was not clearly set out in my letter of appointment (though I was not in a position to reconsider). Later I began to see that I was trapped. In addition, a squabble between Orchard and Cameron resulted in the edict that I was to do no work in Edmonton. No wonder my predecessor had numbered his desk calendar backwards to his day of leaving! I found that there were things to do in Edmonton. I just said 'yes' to things I knew Bob Orchard was not interested in.

As I worked I gradually became aware of the change that was taking place as a result of the change in the economy. Alberta was changing from a rural economy to an urban one. Money for new projects was becoming readily available. New Universities were projected: Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, etc. I had had a first hand experience with the territorial aspirations that lurked behind a university's academic facade

FAMILY THOUGHTS

Blanche



Fort Ostell Recognition of Women

Blanche Hoar

Nominated by the Dakota Women
February 2004

Community Involvement:

- Active member of the Dakota United Church
- Member of the Dakota UCW for 55 years
- Sports
 - As a teen played 1st base with the Twin Creek Ball Team and Brooksona Ball Team, as well as high school and Normal School basketball and softball
 - A catcher with the University Summer School Women's Team
 - A coach of the Ponoka Jr. High boys and girls softball teams and later of the Crestomere Boys Summer League
 - Evening "Keep Fit" leader at Crestomere for 10 years
- Youth Groups
 - Worker with Edith Cane & other women in the area to offer Explorers They organized weekly activities including ball games, camping at the Ferrybank Canyon, crafts and sing-songs for youth in the Dakota district
 - CGIT leader in Lacombe for 1 year, Ponoka for 6 years and Dakota area for more than 12 years working with dozens of young girls

- Dakota Sunday School teacher for 45 years and responsible for many Christmas plays and celebrations. Still teaching in 2005

- Helped organize, promote and lead Dakota Summer Vacation Bible School for years. It was here that many played their first soccer games!

- County Rep on the Ponoka Recreation Board in its early years
- Co-founder, with Jennetta Miller, of the Crestomere Recreation Board
- One of the founding members of the Fertile Forest Historical Society that spearheaded the restoration of this one room school house
- Secretary for the Red Deer Presbytery for many years
- Secretary for the ATA local back when teaching full time
- Secretary for the Ponoka Retired Teachers' Association, 2004
- Member of the organizing team for the Normal School Reunions held each year for the grads on 1938
- In the 1940's, member and President of the Ponoka Stagettes, a group of working women who raised money to help families who had lost their father during WWII

Political Involvement

- Actively involved in the NDP party for many years working with numerous candidates and organizing forums. Worked tirelessly especially for her brother Ed Nelson in the 1960's
- In the 1970's and 80's was a member of the Ponoka Peace Group which focused on the need for peaceful solutions to conflicts.
- Uniform Convention delegate to Edmonton many times
- Member and often secretary of the UFWA (United Farm Women of Alberta)
- Long time member of Uniform and secretary for the Red Deer District Uniform for 6 years
- Secretary/Treasurer for Region #9 of Uniform from 1987-1990
- Longtime member of the Council for Canadians

Writing

- Family Herald contributor in the 1950's and 60's. While at home raising 5 children she wrote 30 children's stories which she is now preparing to put into a book
- Articles, stories, and news reports for the Red Deer Advocate, Country Guide, Western Producer, Small Types in the 1950's
- CBC School Broadcasts bought and used her stories for 25 years, before VCR's were in schools!
- Taught a number of creative writing classes to high school students in Devon
- Wrote the play "From Wood Smoke to Fax Machines" which was presented at a festive evening at the Ponoka United Church in 1993 to celebrate the history of the Ponoka area
- Contributing author to Alberta Council On Aging

Teaching & Studies

- Grades 1 to 9 at Sharphead (just west of Ponoka) in 1939 - 41
Also organized picnics, school dances, concerts, and adult theatre
- Lacombe Jr. High for 1 year in 1942
- Ponoka Jr. High for 6 years in 1943 - 1948 where she also coached softball
- Crestomere part-time and subbing for many years
- Studied drama and creative writing at Banff School of Fine Arts for 2 summers

Gardening

- Has always had a huge garden growing enough raspberries and strawberries for the community! She and her husband Don continue to enjoy the many fruit trees planted by Will and Olive Hoar, but have also added numerous Saskatoon bushes
- Ponoka County Fair supporter by entering vegetables, fruit, flowers, and baking, and she encouraged and guided her children to plant gardens and to participate!

- Won Best Over-All in Baking at the Ponoka County Fair

Family Life

- We, her family, feel this is her greatest contribution! Much of her community involvement was centered on her children and her desire to offer opportunities to them, as well as to make her community, province and world a better place. Month in and month out, she planned, helped organize and run various activities. If her grandchildren need goodies for a class project or apple cider for a skating party she is offering to help out. She was always a willing driver to and from games, practices, 4-H meetings, or lessons. She was ready to chase cattle even in the middle of baking bread and cinnamon buns, and supper was always ready for a hungry crew. No matter what her family members dream of doing, she is always supportive and encouraging. And, regardless of where her children and grandchildren have traveled or for how long (a few hours or a few years) we always know that Sunday morning will find grandma cooking waffles and that there might be a game of some kind. And finally, what woman is not worth her weight in gold when her and her husband load 5 kids into a station wagon to head out on their yearly camping trip that was always a go, rain or shine!

WOW!

**You have done a lot and we
thank you!**

Blanche

Esther: As you probably know Blanche and I were two very different people. She looked after me when we were little, made clothes for me, bought clothes for me so that I would be a little more presentable. I think that she was a much better teacher than I was. I was given Eastside, the top new school, because of her reputation, not my ability.

After she married Don and started raising a family, she was very involved in community and church affairs. She continued to look after Thea and Elof. She had a huge garden and was lavish with canned goods in the Fall. The family owes her and Don gratitude for ensuring continuing family reunions. I treasure the trip we took to North Cape, visiting Baekesletten and Swedish relatives. Blanche and I also had a visit with Arne and Carin Bjerhammar when they were at the University of Ohio.

It wasn't always fun for Blanche. When I was about 4 I was hurt about something and ran away from home. Blanche caught up with me at the bottom of the garden and persuaded me to come home. You were another famous runaway. Blanche looked after you and Doreen one time and was annoyed that you ran away ... walking purposefully down the road to the south. She brought you back and had to carry you because you were tired. The next day you ran away again. Once more you were brought home, but this time you were made to walk. On your third break out, you took your little red wagon along, determined not to have to walk home, you relied on your fluttering eyelashes to persuade Blanche to pull you back to the house.

(Several letters refer to Blanche babysitting for Hilda when various of her children were born, and that Esther was grateful not to have to do this family duty.)

*That Blanche should develop Alzheimer's is a tragedy. Her mind was always active and inventive. Her collection of her published short stories for children, *From Between the Covers* is a remarkable achievement. To accomplish as much as she did in school, church and community makes one wonder at her determination to make time to write.*

I recall one sun-drenched afternoon Mel, Blanche and I sat at the door of the hayloft looking east out of the farmyard, the field beyond, the 'small slough' (the 'big slough' was farther south), 'the big tree' (that served as the ceremonial object for the rite of passage performed by each of the Nelson kids - you could touch fingers reaching around it) and 'the big hill'. Blanche and Mel were talking about what they were going to do when they grew up. I was too young to know. Mel was going to fly planes. Blanche was going to be a writer. And so they did.

There were other things we did together. One was the continued story that evolved with Blanche's first doll - Flossie. True to Scandinavian tradition, Christmas Eve was a special time. Any little gifts were given. I know now that a certain amount of family planning preceded this Eve. Mel 'heard something'. He put his coat on and went outside. Soon we heard the sound of jangling chains. Elof did not go in for non-essentials like sleigh bells. Mel came in carrying a snow-covered little teddy bear. "Santa dropped it!" Later Teddy and Flossie became the parents of an unlikely 'family' when Mel decided to make a baby for them - with the help of the sewing machine, some wool from Thea's supply. He finally presented them with a rather skinny 'baby' that was called (what else?) Baby. This family was put through many adventures each time with an unlikely array of cooking utensils. They went many (imaginary) places; the stores and restaurants were great. Thea was very inventive about food and groceries.

Teddy finally lost his beeper. Mel decided an operation was essential. The beeper was unfixable but Teddy thereafter sported a neat scar and stitches. He also was subjected to a haircut, made possible by clippers used by Ed when giving us haircuts. Tucked away carefully and never used was the Eaton's Beauty given to Clara. It was made of porcelain, unable to stand up to the treatment of the other three. Flossie had lost most of her nose but otherwise was equal to the strain of family life imposed on her.

Christmas was important to both Thea and Elof. After we were working and came home for Christmas, Elof had found and set up a Christmas tree and Thea had carefully decorated it (jobs the kids had always done before Elof and Thea were left alone). In the Fall Thea made Christmas cakes and for Christmas there were always a supply of Norwegian cookies (sandkager,

Berliner Kranser, lefse and Fleischman buns. (Elof thought Thea was a good cook and liked her food... though he never told her. But, Thea knew.)

Although Thea had little money she would manage small gifts (thanks to the Eaton's and Simpson's catalogues). Giving us gifts gave her joy. She found it hard to keep them secret until Christmas Eve. I can remember she gave me a peek at what she had for Blanche and me - tucked in the flour bin of the kitchen cupboard, wrapped in tissue paper: a lovely pink, beige and white touque for Blanche and a red and white one for me. It was OUR secret! In addition to other preparations, the house had to be spotless.

After they moved to town Thea had the pleasure of attending Sunday morning services with her sisters, thanks to the kindness of August and Borghild Cervený (Borghild was the eldest daughter of Thea's eldest sister, Marit). But, Thea never sacrificed a Christmas Eve or morning when her children were home. How wonderful to know how much you are loved by your parents.

Clara

I have very visual and aural memories. She loved to recite poetry and sing songs no doubt learned at school. One was:

I remember her sick on the couch in the living room. She was no doubt hallucinating, "Put the cat out." There was no cat. I didn't really seem to understand death at the time. What I was aware of was the behaviour of people around me. I remember Ed came in from the field (a white cloth on the south screen door was the signal for coming to the house) - he was crying.

I remember Clara on the dining room table, Marit and Annie (Thea's sisters) were there. It was the 'laying out', and they shooed me away. Then I recall going upstairs to see Thea. She was surrounded by sisters and neighbours and I couldn't get near her to comfort her... At the funeral the coffin was placed on a contraption with wheels. I remember being lost among tall people and Fred Hagemann picking me up so that I could see Clara's face. Then there was the silent trip to the cemetery, following immediately behind the funeral wagon. It was my first experience with being totally helpless, unable to comfort anyone.

Later when I talked to Mabel Massing, who had been friends with Clara, I asked what her memories were. She said, "She was awful smart", then, "your Dad took it real hard." At the Anthony Hill reunion, her teacher, Audrey Osterland, said, "Clara? Oh, she was brilliant." And so when I came to do a portrait of Clara I chose to do it on sandpaper and idealized her face. I remember when she sat in Thea's rocker beside the west window, with the afternoon sun on her face and hair.

Much later I found that Thea had included with her schoolwork an obituary written by Blanche - aged about 7.5 years) that included the important information: "Clara was a good girl. She always helped her mother with the dishes."

I Had a Horse Whose Name was Napoleon

I had a horse and his name was Napoleon
All on account of his bony parts

He was sired by an old Hambletonian
Damned by everyone round these parts

He was so thin you could see right through him
Hair as fine as the finest silk

I hitched him up to an old milk wagon
Taught him to stop when I hollered, "Milk!"

As I was goin' to town one morning
Met a fellow wit a rig so fine

Said he, "I'll race your old Hambletonian."
Said I, "You're on", and I fell in line

Down the road a helter skelter
We were going at a hell of a pace

Sure as I'm a sinner I was comin' out winner
Someone hollered "Milk!" and I lost that race



Melvin

I have mentioned that we had an uneasy time of it when we were kids. Mel was something of a perfectionist - I couldn't live up to the image he had in mind. When he was on his own he was good to me. As I mentioned I could not have attended the Playhouse without his help. During the Canwell hearings I am sure he was nervous about his job at Boeing but Mrs. James told me that the doorbell rang and there was Mel offering her a contribution to help with legal expenses. He also drove her to Banff one summer - not easy as she was a chain smoker and just about asphyxiated him. It was Mel's way of paying them back for their kindness to me. Family responsibility.

When I saw him the spring before he died, I told him that I was planning a ride in a glider that summer. He said, "Why didn't I know you wanted to do that? I could have taken you!" I had my ride - a birthday gift from Marilyn. In spite of her many trips by plane, she did not like flying. She hid behind the hanger until I was back down on the ground.

He was a practical man too. He couldn't understand Ed's principles. "If he wants to be in government why doesn't he run for a party that can win!?"

He didn't always get along with Elof - the story of being thrown out of the house in 'Elof's Story', wanting to join the RAF against Elof's wishes. But when Elof was seriously hurt (broken ribs) in a fall from the hay loft through a hole in the floor onto a manger below, Mel came home from school in Ponoka to take over running the threshing crew - much to the admiration of neighbour Henry Muhs - and probably silent admiration from Elof too??

Pragmatism vs principle Mel and Ed - Mel's reaction to Ed's fruitless efforts to get elected: Mel, "If Ed want to be in government why doesn't he run for a party that gets itself elected?"

Mel's support of Florence James: perhaps less principle and more the personal debt owed to someone who helped 'family' (ie Esther).

When I saw Mel in the spring before he died, I told him that I was planning a ride in a glider that summer. He said, "Why didn't I know you wanted to do that? I could have taken you." I had my ride - a birthday gift from Marilyn. In spite of her many trips by plane she did not like flying. She hid behind the hanger until I was back down on the ground.



EDWARD

I wish I could be of more help with your father, but you know we were both working hard at the same time and didn't see much of each other. I associate him more with my childhood. He spoiled me, I know, treated me somehow as an equal. That gives a child confidence. Where did he learn to

do this? I remember two occasions he came to my office at UofA. The first time he was planning the house at RR5 and wondered if there were architects connected with UofA.

- *caught in the urban/rural shift in his fight for the family farm... fewer and fewer are listening.*

Your assessment is right on. I am afraid Ed spoiled me. Although we never discussed I'm sure Blanche and Mel resented it. Ed would insist on my going to things that were 'too old for me', like an overnight picnic at Gull Lake. Blanche was stuck with looking after me



1944 at Gwynne Esther took this photo of Blanche with Elof and Thea visiting with Edward and Mildred. Ken is 5, Pat is 3 and Doreen is a baby born in April 1944. (the man in the trilby hat must be the hired man of the day. The hired man was so important in farms of this era.) This must be mid summer of '44, Esther had finished her first full year of teaching, at Reo School, and would have been on her way to Banff - this year she played Rhoda in *Death Takes a Holiday*.

Theatre 100 - Letter & history of Alberta Theatre

390 Wildwood Drive S.W.
Calgary, Alberta T3C 3E6

December, 2006
Mr. Ken Cameron
Executive Director
Alberta Playwrights' Network
2633 Hockwald Avenue S.W.
Calgary, Alberta

Dear Mr. Cameron:

I wish to congratulate you and Ms. Watling on the publication of Theatre 100: Celebrating 100 Theatre Practitioners over 100 Years. I also wish to thank the person who sent me an invitation to the final evening of Playworks Ink on November 5, 2006 for merely supplying a picture of **Bette Anderson**.

The fact that my nametag indicated that I was there as a 'representative of Bette Anderson' would have amused Bette as much as it did me. It made me feel, however, that I had somehow slipped under the barricade and didn't really belong. Let me explain.

Theatre 100 was difficult to do, but well worth doing. I think, however, that the title created problems for you. History, in whatever form it takes, is just not that tidy. Another problem is that your contributors did not become active or aware of work in the province until after 1960. I have no objection to what was written (inaccuracies are inevitable in third-hand accounts) – but I do have serious objection to what was not written.

Some important work was done during the 1940s and 1950s. Unfortunately, there are no biographies that reflect this 20-year period. When I looked through Theatre 100, I realized that I am probably the only one still living who knows first-hand not just what happened during that period but, more importantly, how it came to happen.

With the publication of Theatre 100 you are going to find that you will be sought out as authorities on the history of theatre in Alberta. There is, as you probably already know, a tendency among the young to think that the professional theatre as it now exists was always as it is now - that it was born, like Athene, armed and fully grown out of the head of Zeus. I am distressed that names of certain people were either discarded or overlooked: **Sydney Risk; Dick MacDonald** - who was the first Co-ordinator

of Cultural Activities; **Ethel Taylor** and the Quota Club of Red Deer; and, **Irene Protheroe** of Calgary. Each played a pivotal role in the development of theatre in Alberta.

I think that the most unfortunate omission in Theatre 100 was the contribution of **Sydney Risk** to theatre in Alberta and western Canada. He was Director of Drama at UofA from 1938 to 1946. During that time he taught courses on campus and served as drama consultant for the UofA Department of Extension and he taught drama at the Banff School of Fine Arts for six years. He was one of the founders of the Western Canada Theatre Conference, which sought to co-ordinate theatre projects in the four western provinces. It sponsored annual playwriting competitions for one-acts. Winning scripts were made available through the Alberta Dept. of Extension. It was during this time that **Robert Gard** came to the Dept. of Extension to explore and write about the history and folklore of Alberta on a Carnegie Grant.

After taking a year off in 1942 to complete his MSA at Cornell, Sydney organized the first Provincial Players (a group of university students), which toured the province with three one-acts and provided valuable training for its members. A member of the first company was **Lois McLean** who went on to be a founding member of Everyman Theatre. Later she pursued her acting career in England and Vancouver. After Sydney left his position I believe there was another tour.

After I became Drama Specialist in 1949 another tour was organized in 1950. It was a co-operative venture between **Dick MacDonald** of the Cultural Activities Branch, the Alberta Drama Board (appointed by the Branch of which I was a member) and the Dept. of Extension that provided my services, office and business arrangements with sponsoring groups in communities and a truck to transport scenery. I bought a car, which along with the truck provided transportation. I went along as chaperone, a position deemed essential by the university in those days. **Grant Reddick and Jo Cormack**, whose careers are documented in Theatre 100, were members of that tour.

True to the spirit of the time and Sydney's goal to establish a professional theatre, the Alberta Drama Board hired one of **Betty Mitchell's** former students, **Gordon Atkinson**, who had just graduated from the Pasadena Playhouse School, to direct the production. Neither the cultural Activities Branch nor the Dept. of Extension had any money for projects. The director was paid \$500, a donation made by **Alan MacDonald (Mickey MacDonald's** husband).

In 1946 Sydney Risk left his position at UofA and founded Everyman Theatre. I enclose a copy of the Vancouver programme, which gives an outline of the tour to that point. The tour continued to Vancouver Island, where the company played several towns and concluded with its final performances in Victoria.

Sydney, with help from his family (and Lois, who sold her precious portable typewriter to get the company over a low point) financed the whole tour. He had no assistance from any other source. Of course the company ended up in debt. Rather than declare bankruptcy as subsequent theatres have done, Sydney went to work at UBC and finally paid off every cent of Everyman's debt.

The company started up again in 1948 but not as a professional company. It began with a modest tour of Vancouver and area schools. Eventually, Sydney found a home for the company in a theatre in Vancouver and gained semiprofessional status. After several successful seasons, the company finally folded, thanks to a dishonest bookkeeper.

The tour of Everyman Theatre was the first attempt after WWII to establish a professional theatre in western Canada. It took place during one of the worst winters on record. Perhaps Sydney was not included in Theatre 100 because none of your contributors knew him or the complete story of his creation of what the other 'movers and shakers' in Alberta only talked endlessly about and dreamed of.

I think that the story of Everyman Theatre is the stuff of theatrical legend. Indeed, if it had taken place in the United States it would have been recognized as such. But in Alberta, where nothing was of value unless it made money, it was something thought of as a failure: not to be talked about. I think of Sydney Risk as one of Canadian theatre's truly tragic figures. His 'flaw' was his idealistic determination to create a theatre in western Canada before western Canada was ready to support it.

Recently, I had a call from a graduate student in Regina who wanted to do a history of the theatre in western Canada. She contacted the UofC Faculty of Communication and Culture who gave her my name. I began to think where such a person might start a search. I looked up Everyman Theatre in the Canadian Encyclopedia and found a terse account that was almost totally pure fiction. The writer managed to get the founding date right but went on to misspell Sydney's first name – a sure sign that this was based, not on research, but on hearsay. Thus do Canadians treat their heroes. Perhaps I should say potential heroes.

I write this and enclose the programme so that you will have some knowledge of an achievement in Canadian theatre that might otherwise be lost. You may

recognize the faces and names of members who went on to work professionally in Toronto and area on stage and in film and TV. **Arthur Hill**, who died recently, carved out a career in London, on Broadway and in American TV – surely enough to satisfy the insatiable appetite for Fame and Success that has distorted so much of our natural appreciation of our artists and writers.

As a student at the Banff School of Fine Arts in 1943, 1944 and 1945 (when we eagerly shared all information available about theatre in Canada); as a scholarship student at the Seattle Repertory Playhouse in 1945-46, 1947-48; as a member of Everyman Theatre 1946-47, 1948-49; as instructor in Acting and Directing at the Banff School of Fine Arts for 11 years; and, as Drama Specialist for the Dept. of Extension I am one of the people who knew that 20 year period very well. Many of the people who appear in Theatre 100 I taught, directed or helped in some way.

After my experience with Everyman I realized that before anyone could hope to earn a living in theatre in western Canada two things had to happen: theatre education for the general public and government funding to help establish theatres. My experience and training at the Seattle Repertory Playhouse made me aware of the possibilities of semiprofessional community theatre. At the Playhouse the staff of 18 were paid to work in the theatre. Because each had been trained in the Playhouse School, it was assumed that everyone could act in productions when needed; but, at the same time, each had a role in running the various departments. Some had other skills as writers, musicians, composers and artists.

When I arrived the production was an original incident in Seattle's history: Calico Cargo. The play was very successful and had an extended run. Normally, six plays comprised a season, playing a run of six weeks each. In addition three different plays were offered in the Playhouse Theatre for Children: two performances each Saturday and through Christmas and Easter break. Students, as well as members of the community, were able to try out for productions. An innovative approach was developed in house sales to organizations in the community. Plays ranged from the classics to serious modern and modern comedy. There, in this unique environment, I formed a philosophy and had a model for Alberta if only I could find enough people to interest in the model.

When I joined the Dept. of Extension as Drama Specialist I found that I was comfortable with **Ned Corbett's** philosophy. I soon found, however, that Director **Donald Cameron's** goals, both for the department and for the Banff School, were no longer in tune with that original philosophy. His idea of success was to build a school that would outdo London, Broadway and Salzburg. For a time all went well. Cameron was primarily concerned with Banff School and I was free to pursue my goals and encourage as many

students as I could to attend the school to obtain the training they needed for work in their communities.

During my first year I met **Murray Robison**, after a talk on community theatre I was asked to give at the Lethbridge YWCA. I stressed the need for committed leadership. Murray approached me and said, "I don't know if I am the kind of person you are talking about." In his modest way he explained that he had just been putting on plays with fellow staff members at his school to raise money for various projects. I said, "but you are exactly the kind of person I am talking about."

In a short while I was invited to Coaldale for a 3-evening workshop in acting. Classes were announced for 8 to 10 pm. In the excitement generated by their introduction to improvisation and their wonder at their own creations, the sessions went on to 3 and 4 in the morning. These were all working people! And that is where and when the Coaldale Little Theatre was formed: in the basement of 'the pink house', Murray and Yvonne's home.

I taught many more workshops for Murray. He came as a student to Banff several summers, learning all he could about stagecraft and directing. In 1961 one of the last workshops I gave was for the Coaldale Little Theatre: a production of scenes from Shakespeare: Macbeth and Twelfth Night, complete with lights and costumes. Murray was afraid to tackle Shakespeare on his own so we worked out a schedule. I came to Coaldale once a week to rehearse the cast and Murray rehearsed them during the week. The performance was very satisfactory for both cast and audience. Thus, Murray was able to give **Sandy McCallum** the experience he needed to pass his audition for the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis.

The following summer I resigned from my position with the Dept. of Extension. This workshop and performance and my long association with Murray Robison was the realization of my conviction of what any community could do, given the gift of a committed director. It was also the realization of the dream set forth by Ned Corbett in the way in which the Banff School might contribute to developing theatre in Alberta. It was also the culmination of what I had set out to do. The gift of \$500 to the government branch had grown to a, rumoured, \$500,000. The future for theatre seemed assured.

My association with **Elodia Christensen** was equally long and productive. During my first year at the Dept. of Extension I received a letter of inquiry from Elodia asking if anyone was available to give a drama workshop, as there had been in the 1930s when Elizabeth Sterling Haynes was teaching. Elodia was in charge of the drama program for the LDS Church. She directed plays, helped inexperienced directors and taught workshops.

When I came to teach my first workshop for her I found that she was very well organized, indeed. I taught morning, afternoon and evening sessions for three days. There was no hotel in Stirling so I was a guest in Harold and Elodia's home then and on all my many subsequent visits: teaching workshops, helping with plays (mainly with direction) and adjudicating small festivals that she organized for the communities she worked with - all within her church.

I came to know Elodia well. She was genuinely passionate about the theatre and wanted to participate in more than the role her church offered her. That year the Dominion Drama Festival changed from one-act to three-act plays. As far as I could make out the Alberta Drama League had consisted mainly of drama directors and their groups who wanted to participate in the DDF. In order for a province to participate in the DDF it had to have an official amateur organization to work through. Up to 1950 the Alberta Drama League had been an informal association that came to life for the annual festival and then died back until next year. It needed the help of someone free to travel to organizational meetings.

Dick MacDonald was very interested in the DDF and finally left his position as co-ordinator of Cultural Activities (a small branch, for some mysterious reason, of the Dept. of Economic Affairs) to become its Director. Dick and I pooled our knowledge of groups and individuals. Dick knew the directors who had participated in the DDF before the war and immediately after when it started up again. I had discovered some new people who were interested in participating. A meeting was arranged to reactivate the League to cope with three-act festivals, as well as to host the DDF Final in Calgary, to be held in the Grand Theatre.

Either at that meeting or soon after, Elodia Christensen became president of the ADL. Her outgoing personality, knowledge of theatre and festival organization, her enthusiasm and drive were irresistible. I volunteered my services to the League as corresponding secretary, providing office and organizational continuity as membership and executive members changed. In 1950, six three-act plays were entered in the DDF, representing Edmonton, Medicine Hat, Calgary and Coleman. Because the ADL had no money, Dick MacDonald, ***Elsie Park Gowan*** and I agreed to act as adjudicators, traveling to each performance to select Alberta's representative. Later Lethbridge and Coaldale were added to DDF entrees, and all major centers except Red Deer were represented.

I had never been fond of competitive drama festivals (a chance remark in a public adjudication can destroy the future of an inexperienced director), but I realized they were a useful tool - not just for building audiences for live theatre, but also for stimulating government interest in smaller centers, as

well as in the cities. The distribution of seats in the Legislature favoured the area outside the cities, then as now.

Elodia and I had many discussions about how to increase membership in the ADL. We decided that a provincial one-act festival, in addition to its commitments to DDF, might be possible. I drew up a plan that divided the province into regions, providing a structure for present and future groups. I met with Ethel Taylor and the Quota Club of Red Deer. They offered a permanent home and continuing sponsorship of the final of the one-act play festival. This was a great contribution to the festival's growth and success.

When the plan was presented to the ADL membership it was accepted. Regional and final festivals were held the following year and continued in the 1960s. **Ethel Taylor** had a great deal of experience in local, civic and provincial politics. When I suggested to Elodia that it would be helpful to invite politicians to open or close festivals and thus learn more about live theatre, she became a willing accomplice. But it was Ethel Taylor, more than anyone else in the province, who understood what I was trying to do and agreed with my goals, who did the most in a practical way to help.

Thanks to their work, and the hard work of many directors with their groups, the League's membership gradually increased. But we had made a very small dent in a world that was still more interested in curling and hockey than in plays.

When I arrived at my office in the old 'lab' that housed the Dept. of Extension in the fall of 1949, I looked through the 'active' file. I found three rather old letters of inquiry but no copies of replies. I looked at the appointment calendar on my desk. No entries, except that my predecessor had numbered the pages backward up to the day of his leaving. I had met him at the Banff School that summer. He directed *Oedipus Rex*. The cast included **Douglas Raines**, who went on to work professionally in Ontario; and **Myra Benson**, who contributed to the rebuilding of Everyman Theatre, to the development of Holiday Theatre in Vancouver and finally - after studying with Marcel Marceau - teaching and working both in mime and theatre for children. Donald Cameron always sought 'the best' – first, for the Banff School and, second, for the position of Drama Specialist

For him, the 'best' meant anyone in professional theatre in London. **Robert Stuart** was a competent director but he must have spent a long, lonely year in that office waiting for someone to call. Later when another professional from London, **Michael MacOwan**, came to teach at the Banff School he flatly refused to direct a student production. After meeting his students the first day he came to me and said, "What am I going to do? They don't know anything!"

Although there had been a well-documented spurt of activity during the Haynes-Corbett era, during the war amateur theatre was impossible unless it consisted of 'entertainment for the troops', of which too little has been documented. After the war, in the cities some former directors picked up where they had left off. But in the smaller centers former leaders and directors had either moved away or died or had found new interests.

When I tried to locate the writers of the three letters in my 'file' I found that two had moved to another province. When passing through her town I phoned the third. A rather impatient voice answered. "Yes, I used to do some drama but I wouldn't recommend it to anyone. It's too much work." In the years that followed I often wondered if I should have taken her advice.

During my 13 years as Drama Specialist I put over 300,000 miles on my two cars, not including the trips I made by bus, train and plane, to communities that asked for my services as teacher, director, advisor and adjudicator. I also organized classes taught by other teachers such as **Leona Paterson, Irene Protheroe, Esme Crampton** and **Brian Way** (author of Child Drama who contributed to Bette Anderson's development of the Playground Players for the Edmonton Recreation Department, as well as providing direction for his play, Pinocchio, a new concept in theatre for children as part of the regular season of plays).

I gradually developed and taught theatre classes that followed the 5- and 10-week format now used by most adult education programmes, with one class per week. (I enclose a copy of a typical brochure.) I usually taught 3 nights per week in various parts of the province, leaving the rest of the week free for organizational visits to different groups on behalf of the Alberta Drama League, rehearsals to help inexperienced directors who were having difficulties (one of whom eventually became secretary to the fine arts specialists with the Extension Department: Peggy Rootes was of great help to me and, indirectly, a help to all the groups and individuals I worked with), adjudicating school festivals, adjudicating the widely separated CYO festivals - from Dawson Creek to Coronation and Medicine Hat, and final one-act festivals in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. I decided not to adjudicate for the Alberta Drama League because of my role as corresponding secretary, but arranged for others to adjudicate its various festivals. Nor did I assist with plays entered in ADL festivals.

Each year I reserved two weeks in the spring to adjudicate the wellorganized non-competitive festivals in the Peace River area. Leadership in adult theatre often came from teachers. In that area, highly competent teachers were devoted to building the quality of their school programmes in music and drama. Because they were isolated from theatre activity in BC, I often received requests from Dawson Creek and Fort St. John. On one

happy occasion I was invited to Fort St. John to adjudicate three plays written and produced by three local playwrights. After my adjudication I invited the audience to 'adjudicate the adjudicator'. The writers, casts and crew moved down with me to sit with the audience.

We had a spirited, positive discussion in which everyone took part. The festival had been organized by one of the writers who had entered an original play in a festival the previous year. My remarks then had encouraged him to try again, and to involve more people. It was a very satisfying evening. In those days the Peace River area was self-contained but rather isolated from the rest of the province. Festivals seemed to be a natural format for them and communities supported the participants with enthusiasm.

Occasionally I directed productions for groups who could not find a director. After directing the popular operas *Martha* and *Hansel and Gretel* at the Banff School, I was asked to direct a centennial production of *The Mikado* in Dawson Creek. In the cast was **Tom Kerr** who had studied theatre in England and who went on to direct in various places in Canada, including Stratford where he spent some time as assistant director. I helped with another *Gilbert and Sullivan* in Wainwright.

In Edmonton I was asked to direct two separate productions of *La Traviata* and one production of *Faust* for the Alberta Opera Company founded by Mr. and Mrs. Jean Letourneau. In Calgary I directed *Amahl and the Night Visitors* for the Calgary Theatre Singers and *The Medium* for Calgary Opera Workshop. Members of those productions went on to help with the founding of the present Edmonton and Calgary Opera Companies.

When I taught at the Banff School of Fine Arts, I directed at least three one-act plays each summer. I chose Canadian plays whenever possible; I also directed a revival of *Stampede* by Gwen Pharis Ringwood and *Teach Me How to Cry* by Patricia Joudrie.

Sometime before 1953 I was asked to give a talk to the Edmonton Little Theatre. I chose to speak about theatre for children in relation to community theatre, thinking that I might encourage them into expanding their programme. They agreed that it was a good idea but financially impossible. I promptly went to see John Farina, the director of the Edmonton Recreation Department. He agreed that theatre for children would be a worthwhile venture and promptly found money in his budget for a first production.

Within three months the Theatre for Children was ready, with the help of many young people: **Bernice Dorskind**, Drama Director for the Recreation Department; **Alta Mitchell**, drama teacher at the new

Victoria Composite, former student at Banff and member of the original Provincial Players; **Jo and David Cormack** (Theatre 100); and **Maggie Duffy**, an American student at UofA, former student at Banff and at the Seattle Repertory Playhouse School of Theatre - later known as Megan Terry, US playwright. I directed the first Theatre for Children production.

That year Bernice Dorskind left for England and **Bette Anderson** came in the fall of 1953 to take the job of Drama Director for the Recreation Department, complete with a small budget to launch the Edmonton Theatre for Children. Then, Bette Anderson came to Alberta because of the work I was doing in the province. She would have smiled that I was invited to Playworks Ink because of the picture I had taken in the small apartment we shared so long ago.

Something else I should like to add to information about that 20-year period is the remarkable, but also unnoticed, contribution to and influence on theatre in BC, Saskatchewan and Alberta of **Florence and Burton James**. They both had taught drama in summer sessions at UBC prior to 1943. When Burton James came to teach Stagecraft until 1949, then directing in 1950 and 1951, at the Banff School he directed its first two Shakespeare productions. Through Burton James I was granted a two-year scholarship to the Seattle Repertory Playhouse School of Theatre. Bruno Gerussi came a year later, and several other Canadians followed. Bette Anderson was a member of the staff and one of our teachers.

After the Playhouse closed and Burton James died, **Nora McCullough**, Director, Saskatchewan Arts Board, invited Florence James to become Drama Consultant for the Board. During her years there, until her retirement and beyond, she contributed greatly to the development of theatre in Saskatchewan. When **Ken and Sue Kramer** came to Alberta (Ken had been a student of Bette Anderson and then a student at LAMDA where Brian Way taught) they hoped to start a touring company for young audiences. When no help could be found in Alberta, they went to Saskatchewan where Florence James and the Arts Board undertook sponsorship. After Sue Kramer's death, Ken Kramer founded The Globe Theatre. Florence was retained by The Globe as 'Advisor' after her retirement.

Thus Florence and Burton James not only influenced Canadian theatre directly as teachers of many Canadians, but they also provided a link between their former students as they spread out to forge their separate careers. Many others were influenced indirectly by the model for semiprofessional theatre that was provided by the Seattle Repertory Playhouse. Everyman

Theatre's first programme after settling in Vancouver was identical to that of the Playhouse.

When ***Irene Protheroe*** took over the first year of production for Theatre Calgary, hers was identical in scope to that of the Playhouse - though as far as I know Irene had never met Florence and Burton James. In his youth Burton James had trained as a landscape gardener. When he talked about his philosophy of theatre, gardening metaphors came naturally to his explanations. They thought of theatre as a natural part of the community. Together the James planted many seeds. As Canada goes through its various stages, first with its imitation of the Broadway example, second with the emergence of smaller theatres without financial support, the playhouse model will again enable people to work in the theatre.

Because of the peculiar - even ridiculous - nature of my job, I learned that theatre - whether in Calgary, Edmonton and smaller cities and towns, or in rural community halls - reflects the nature of its society. If you analyze the abrupt shift that has taken place in rural Alberta you will notice the disappearance of first and second generation pioneers who settled in Alberta at the turn of the twentieth century. The urbanization that began with the improvement of roads and transportation was almost complete by 1970. The pioneers built their world together, co-operatively, without outside help. They built communities. They have been replaced by a new generation, equipped with TV and electronic communication: computers, email.

These are comparatively affluent people who do not know or need their neighbours. A new society. The old sense of community has been eroded and is to be replaced by what? Is it clear, or is it a permanent state of flux? How can a playwright grasp its essence? By 1960 I was aware of this change and knew that my work belonged to an era that was ending.

Florence and Burton James built a theatre that survived the Depression and WWII, more than 25 years without help of any kind. In his survey of regional theatre, *Advance from Broadway*, Norris Houghton expressed amazement that a theatre could thrive so far from Broadway, so far from the Broadway example. He didn't understand the energizing principle of the James' philosophy, which was summarized in the brief definition of theatre coined by Julius Babb: "Theatre is a unity at the core of which is the living community finding some vital part of itself reflected in the creations of the actor and dramatist."

It was my good fortune during those 20 years to experience such 'vital' moments for myself: Judith Anderson's performance in *Medea* (on tour from Broadway), Douglas Campbell's performance in *Oedipus Rex* in the newly completed theatre in Stratford, Burton James' and Bette Anderson's

recreation of the death of Aase in *Peer Gynt*, which had played two extended runs in Seattle. But one of those vital moments I also found in comedy.

In her Preface to her translation: *Grief Lessons: Four Plays by Euripides* (2006), Anne Carson makes the comment: "The actor, by reiterating you, sacrifices a moment of his own life in order to give you a story of yours." At one of the school festivals in Peace River that I attended as adjudicator, I was watching a Grade II class action song in which beautiful children performed in unison all manner of things that can be done with ball and bat, all of which required two hands.

Suddenly I realized that I was watching something that had all the elements of a classical Greek comedy. In those days when money was in short supply, parents often bought clothes that their child 'would grow into'. Here, set against a chorus of serene perfection, was a small boy wearing pants at least two sizes too big. He tried to perform each action perfectly, but for each action gravity took over and he was forced to make awkward, sometimes spectacular, one-handed catches and 'bats'. He was serious, determined. The chorus ignored his plight.

Afterward, I realized that I had, while convulsed with silent laughter, witnessed a portrayal of the struggle of my own 'life in art', Reality vs. Art. The reality of the constraints of my work, long distances, terrible weather, lack of help, interest or encouragement, the indifference of the university vs. my determination to achieve the impossible, I saw mirrored in that small boy's struggle with gravity. I thank him for unintentionally sacrificing a moment of his life for me. The memory of him moved me to laughter many times and enabled me to pause and see my work in relation to the whole of what I was trying to accomplish.

I am not sure that Horst Schmidt's views would have been so well received in the 1970s had it not been for the many individuals who, by their efforts and accomplishments, helped to change the attitude of many politicians who regarded the arts a 'frills' or as morally suspect. It bears repeating: the rural vote still outweighs the urban vote.

The abrupt changes that came with Alberta's wealth have created a new kind of society. One writer has proclaimed that the Internet is the 'new community'. If so, what happens to live theatre? What happens to the 'vital moments', as 'audiences' sit in isolation, individually, watching a small screen - or if they can afford it, an ever larger screen? Will it be more than Anne Carson's discovery when she tried to Google 'revenge' on her computer: "...and finally you will meet Revenge Unlimited, an empty black screen that says simply: 'New site and new shopping cart coming soon'?"

If you are still with me, thank you for sacrificing so much of your time!
Again, I commend you both for completing what must have seemed a
thankless job. It is, I assure you, a welcome tribute to people who deserve
both recognition and thanks. And so do you.

Yours sincerely,

Esther Nelson

cc Shari Wattling Editor, Theatre 100 ; Lois McLean



Another Banff moment! August 1949 - this is where Elof, Thea and Marie stayed when Mel took them all to Banff for a holiday. The house is no doubt still there today.



Enroute 1949



Thea and Marie

A History of Drama in Alberta -

The contribution of the Department of Extension University of Alberta

When **Dr. Henry Tory** became the first President of the University of Alberta in 1908 he had a definite idea of how a university should serve its constituency. He believed that the institution should make itself felt in a personal ways in and through the lives of the people. Therefore, he and his colleagues tried to go out among the people in the rural communities in Alberta.

They lectured to audiences of farmers and businessmen in villages and towns, and in country halls and schools. They talked of history, literature, philosophy, fine arts and the civilizations of the past. They often sat into the night in lonely farm houses exchanging ideas with farmers who were formerly engineers, artisans and teachers from the old world, people who had come to civilize the West. They believed they had something the people wanted and that the people had something to offer them.

The Department of Extension Created in 1912

It was only natural then, that Dr. Tory should establish an Extension Department within the University to extend that institution into the community. The formal organization of the University of Alberta Department of Extension took place in 1912, the first of its kind in Canada.

Its purpose was two-fold. Firstly, to make available to the farmers of the Province research results in agricultural sciences that had a direct bearing

on the work of farming, although most agricultural instruction in soils, marketing, and livestock were provided by a vigorous Provincial Department of Agriculture. Secondly, to foster public interest and good will generally toward the University, reaching in its educational work the people of the Province at large. These educators wanted to bring to the remote places of the Province whatever cultural and entertainment values the University could offer to encourage community solidarity, strengthen morale, and awaken the civic conscience to better home and school conditions.

AE Ottewell, at the age of thirty had just graduated from the first graduating class of the University of Alberta. He was headed towards the Ministry but Dr. Tory, with his keen eye for men of quality, had another idea about Ottewell's future. Thus in 1917 he chose Ottewell as secretary of the newly established Department of Extension.

Ottewell was a man of progressive spirit and experimental mind, and whatever reputation the Department of Extension achieved as a first-class educational institution of its kind was largely due to his vision, initiative and boundless energy. By 1920, when he progressed to be Director of the Department of Extension, there were close to three hundred libraries, fifteen thousand volumes on an open-shelf library circulated by mail, a package library system of materials for use by debating and discussion clubs, a visual instructions service with one hundred lantern slides, and a moving picture library with over one hundred films. Short courses were provided, correspondence courses in economics established and lecture courses arranged.

The Department of Extension reached out to Young Farmers

Early in the history of the Department of Extension, Ottewell organized "**Farm Young Peoples Week**". Every year, about the first week of June, two hundred young farm people from the Province became guests of the University of Alberta. It was really a school for training in community leadership and many present leaders of farm movements in Alberta got their first training in public life at that 'school'.

As early as 1925 realizing that radio could be a powerful medium in man's education, Ottewell persuaded the Provincial Government to provide funds for a radio station (**CKUA**) which was responsible for a great deal of experimental work in radio education. In musical interpretation, drama, the teaching of French and in the use of the radio to serve the everyday needs of the farm people, CKUA was the pioneer in Canada.

1920 saw the addition of **Donald Ewing Cameron** as Assistant Director of the Department of Extension. In 1921 he became librarian of the University. Also in 1920 Dr. Tory left Alberta and **Dr. RC Wallace** became President.

Ned Corbett joined the Department of Extension in 1928 when Ottewell left the Department to become Registrar of the University. Although the Department he joined was well organized he was largely instrumental in expanding it. He added Donald Cameron to his staff in 1931 as a Lecturer in Agriculture; this position later became known as Head of the Agricultural Secretary's Division.

Drama Added to Department of Extension in 1932: Pioneering in the Haynes Years

In 1932 Dr. Wallace (Pres.) with a committee consisting of Corbett (Director of Extension), Dr. Hardy (Classics) and Dr. John MacEachran (Philosophy) drew up plans for a program in the Fine Arts and submitted it to the Carnegie Corporation of NY. The Corporation granted \$10,000 a year for 3 years to the Department of Extension for the advancement of the Fine Arts. The Division of Fine Arts was added to the Department of Extension.

The committee decided that the best use could be achieved from the money by training community leaders who could, in turn, train others.

In the field of drama the committee felt a special need and a special opportunity existed. Corbett therefore appointed **Elizabeth Sterling Haynes** as Instructor in Dramatics. She was to hold this position until 1938. Mrs. Haynes had a gift of rare enthusiasm and she could inspire

people. In the middle of those Depression years, this combination of talents was essential. A graduate of the University of Toronto, ES Haynes had a thorough training in theatrical work under the tutelage of Mr. Roy Mitchell at *Hart House* Toronto. She had several years experience with *Chautauqua* work and had latterly been employed in a professional capacity by the *Edmonton Little Theatre* as Director and Producer.

In her work with the University Extension Department Haynes traveled an incredible number of miles, adjudicating, giving lectures and courses, assisting groups of local actors in productions, extending the ever-warm helping hand, lighting or rekindling the spark of theatre in many a lonely and discouraged heart.

In 1932 she assisted 23 communities in putting on amateur productions. She handled the organization of a *Chautauqua* in the village of Ryley, population 245. The program consisted of art exhibits, classical dancing, lectures, concerts, an operetta and two plays directed by ES Haynes. A play was produced at the Provincial Mental Institutes in which all of the sets, costumes, and properties were made by the inmates. A playwriting competition was also held. The Department of Extension Library now held 1500 plays; 250 dramatic groups were given advice on lighting, makeup, costume, direction, play selection, organization and general information by letter.

The Origins of The Banff School of Fine Arts in 1932

In the Province of Alberta at this time a group of people formed the *Alberta Drama League* that sponsored Provincial festivals where theatre groups were encouraged to present their plays in competition. After one of these festivals the adjudicators, Leonard Brockington (Solicitor - Calgary), CJ Eliphicke (Mgr. Station CJCA - Edmonton), and EA Corbett (Dir. Dept. of Extension) decided that Canada desperately needed a theatrical training center. So the "*Experimental School in the Arts Related to the Theatre*" was formed in Banff, financed by a portion of the Carnegie Grant. From this humble beginning has emerged today's *Banff School of Fine Arts*.

In 1932 Ned Corbett and one of his assistants, Donald Cameron, traveled to Banff and arranged to use the local schools and the Old Bretton Hall Theatre. Students could find accommodation in town or pitch a tent at the campgrounds for one dollar a week in the Banff National Park. With

teaching and living accommodations established the University now agreed to sponsor the school for four weeks during August of 1933 if forty students registered in advance. A registration fee of \$1.00 was levied. This was to be the entire tuition charge for the course.

Banff 1933 - *EA Corbett was appointed Director of the Banff School, Elizabeth Haynes and Theodore Cohen shared responsibility for the implementation of the program.* Imagine the pleasant surprise of the community when not forty but over 200 students enrolled. The majority were rural schoolteachers. For the next four weeks they studied the elements of Stage Production, Theatrical History, Dramatic Literature, Directing, Pantomime, Educational Dramatics and Acting, with great enthusiasm. Of the 17 one-act plays put into rehearsal, one play - Mary Caroline Davis' *The Slave with Two Faces* - was performed before the *Institute of Pacific Relations* that was meeting in Banff at this time. The school exerted a powerful influence on community culture and it was decided to try it again in August 1934.

In 1933-34, in the field of drama, remarkable results were achieved by Mrs. Haynes under the Direction of Ned Corbett and financed by the Carnegie Grant. With her leadership 40 towns and rural centers were assisted in the production of plays. Three local *Chautauqua*, of 3 to 4 days duration, were organized and successfully produced. At each of these a central meeting place was decided upon and the neighbouring communities produced plays for the benefit of all, the whole program being in the nature of a musical and dramatic festival.

Banff 1934- Donald Cameron was actively engaged with Corbett in the work of organizing the second "*School in the Arts Related to the Theatre*" and 1934 served as Registrar. He spent much time during the winter promoting the school and handled the formal administration. 1934 again saw a "*School of the Arts Related to the Theatre*". This summer it ran for one month and registration was \$5.00.

Arrangements were made to obtain the services of **Roy Mitchell of the State University, Dept. of Drama, New York City.** **Mr. and Mrs. Jocelyn Taylor and Wallace House of the same institution were also hired to assist Haynes and Cohen.** That year the school offered courses in Acting, Directing, Choral Speech, Make-up, Costume, Stage Craft, Eurythmics and Folksong. Maxwell Anderson's *Mary of Scotland* and Dunsamy's *Gods of the Mountain* were produced in the Bretton Hall Theatre before large and appreciative audiences.

The enrollment for 1934 consisted of 151 adults and 32 children. These adults served as local leaders and co-operated with the Dept of Extension by going back to work in their local communities throughout the balance of the year and for many years after. The students in 1934 came from many points in Alberta and from 25 centers outside Alberta. The school was already having far-reaching effects upon the community.

In 1935 Haynes' work became more comprehensive, dealing with stimulating creative interests in both individuals and communities. Her position involved community work, work in primary and secondary schools, radio instruction, advice in the form of bulletins and letters, and the work for the "*Summer School in the Arts Related to the Theatre*". Individuals were reached through drama schools and communities and through 12 *Chautauqua*.

Drama added to Experimental School Curriculum in 1935

As an experiment, teachers - at the request of the Taber School Board - began instructing dramatics. The experiment enlivened the interest of both pupils and teachers. Because of this growing interest in dramatics, it was decided to include the course in the new secondary school curriculum; Haynes submitted an outline for this proposed course to the Department of Education.

Meanwhile, in 1935 Donald Cameron became Assistant Director in the Dept of Extension and the administration of the Banff School became his full

responsibility. The Carnegie Grant was discontinued from 31 Aug 1935 to 1 Jan 1936 while the corporation assessed the value of committing more money to the Department.

Banff 1935 - The third Summer School continued to prosper in 1935, even without the Carnegie money. The tuition was set at \$10.00. Haynes and Cohen were assisted by **Professor Wood of the University of BC, Mike Almena Yeomans of the Brandon Normal School and Mrs. Elsie Park Gowan of Edmonton.** Classes were held in Acting, Directing, Stagecraft, Lighting, Costume, Choric Speech, Eurythmics and Playwriting.

Ninety adults and 45 children enrolled that year. The popularity of the school had, by this time, grown by leaps and bounds. Representatives were present from 25 different communities in Alberta, 11 from Saskatchewan, 8 from BC, 3 from Ontario, 2 from Quebec and one each from Missouri, New York and Australia.

Because of the positive accomplishments of the Department of Extension the Carnegie Grant was extended for another two years, with the recommendation that the University make provision for assuming full financial responsibility at the end of that time. With the renewal of the grant in 1936 it was felt that the time had come to introduce a greater centralization in the dramatic instruction afforded by this Department.

The first three years had been spent in fostering an interest in community theatre by practical assistance, in discovering and administering the needs of different localities and in awakening the people of the province to a realization of the important contribution Drama can make to community life. At the end of three years this had been achieved.

A certain homogeneity of knowledge and ambition could be seen in the many dramatic groups with which the Department had contact. It was felt that centralized instruction would have the advantage of reaching more people, of addressing a more diverse range of dramatic problems with far-reaching benefits and of providing the stimulus that planned instruction and discussion can give to a group of people drawn together by a common

interest. The resultant economy of time and money would make it possible to do more progressive work than previously.

Establishment of the Dramatic Schools

The plan for centralization was realized in the organization of several intensive dramatic schools of three days or one-week duration and held in towns where some form of theatrical enterprise had become an integral part of the community life. These Dramatic Schools were run successfully by Elizabeth Haynes and Teddy Cohen. Haynes' expenses were paid by the Department of Extension while the communities paid Teddy. It was felt that a school of this kind, in a town where interest was keen, was one of the most successful projects yet undertaken.

Haynes still continued community work, assisting in forty adult plays, giving 19 lectures, adjudicating and making visits to schools. The schoolwork was largely experimental and was designed to further the purpose of the new curriculum that included dramatics as a part of the course of study.

Also in 1936 EA Corbett was asked if he would become Director of the Canadian Association for Adult Education. Donald Cameron became Acting Director of Extension and Acting Director of the Banff School.

The Department of Extension decided to broaden the fourth "*Banff School in the Arts Related to the Theatre into a School of Fine Arts*". Accordingly intensive programs in music and art were added to the curriculum.

Banff 1936 - The theatre division of the 1936 school was again headed by Elizabeth Haynes and Teddy Cohen, assisted by **Alexander Koiranski and Professor F. Smith**. Koiranski had, at one time, been a co-worker with Stanislavski in the *Moscow Art Theatre*, and in 1936 was Director at the *Cornish School* in Seattle. Professor Smith, at that time, was a member of the Department of Speech at the University of Washington. The 1936 registration was 120 adults and 60 children.

In 1937 EA Corbett, Director of the Department since 1928, resigned to become Director of the Canadian Association for Adult Education and Donald Cameron remained Acting Director of the Department of Extension.

The Carnegie Corporation Grant terminated at the end of August 1937. This meant a curtailment in the work of the Fine Arts Division and a change in staff. As the Carnegie monies were exhausted, Elizabeth Haynes could not be retained and so she left to accept a position with the Department of Education in the Province of New Brunswick.

Change in Role of Extension Specialist in Drama

In September 1937 **Ronald Elwy Mitchell** succeeded Haynes as Extension Specialist in Drama. He was a Shakespearian lecturer in the Department of English halftime and worked with the Department of Extension half-time. Mitchell's main problem from September 1937 to April 1938 was adapting the amount of work possible to the limitation of a part-time office. He performed the same work as Haynes but to a lesser extent as he was only able to devote 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ days a week to Extension.

Banff 1937 - Banff's 5th season in 1937 went well, with the Drama Division still being run by Elizabeth Haynes and the school still under the direction of Donald Cameron.

In 1937 **Dr. Fredrick Koch**, head of the Department of Dramatic Art, University of North Carolina, was hired to instruct playwriting. He possessed the rare quality of being able to inspire confidence in the individual. He instructed Gwen Pharis who went on to further her studies at the University of North Carolina. Other authors influenced by Koch were Elsie Park Gowan and John MacEachran. (Elsie Park Gowan had reservations about the 'backward looking' direction encouraged by Koch... she preferred to write about current social problems...)

In 1938-9 the Drama Division in the Dept. of Extension still suffered because Mitchell was still only a part-time employee. The field work was mainly adjudication. Mitchell also lectured twice weekly in the Department of Education on Dramatics and directed on campus.

Banff 1938 - During the 6th session of the Banff School of Fine Arts (1938) enrolments increased, especially since credits were being accepted by Departments of Education and universities across Canada.

The War Years: 1945-1949 Gwen Pharis, Sydney Risk, Helen Stewart - Maintaining the Momentum during Difficult Times

In 1939 Mitchell resigned as Drama Specialist with the Department of Extension to accept a position at the University of Wisconsin and in October **Gwen Pharis**, who had just completed two years of post-graduate work for her MA in dramatics at the University of North Carolina, was appointed as **Dramatic Supervisor** on a full-time basis. She was there for 1939-40. Work still continued in adjudicating and correspondence and Pharis gave daily classes for 12 days at Olds School of Community Life.

A large part of Extension work in the year of 1939-40 was done with inexperienced groups having no previous training. Much of the activity of experienced groups seems to have ceased, probably because of the War and the accompanying decision to postpone the Provincial Drama Festivals. The most successful event was a four-day intensive School of Drama at Cardston with 10 communities represented. Also new were Youth Training Schools and 11 half-hour broadcasts of high school-written plays read and discussed by students. The programs were sponsored by CKUA with the assistance of **Dick MacDonald**. Much of the combined effort of MacDonald and Pharis was performed over the educational network CKUA under the title "*So You Want to be an Actor*".

In the year 1940-41 Gwen Pharis (now Ringwood) remained as Drama Specialist in Extension until December 1941. In January **Sydney Risk** was appointed as Assistant in Dramatics on a sessional basis. He was a Vancouver boy who had spent some years in England around the London stage. He carried on Pharis-Ringwood's work, holding a three-day Drama School in Barrhead. He also adjudicated school and community festivals and offered a course in Acting every second Tuesday, under the auspices of the *Edmonton Little Theatre*.

Banff 1940 and 1941 - The 8th session of the Banff School of Fine Arts in 1940 was held under the direction of the Department of Extension in co-operation with the Institute of Technology and Art, Calgary. The 9th session in 1941 had no changes in personnel or activities. The war went on and students were scarce.

In 1942-43 Miss Helen Stewart joined the staff as Supervisor of Dramatics, Department of Extension, to substitute during the absence of Sydney Risk. He was pursuing post-graduate work in Drama at Cornell University on a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship. Most of the supervisor's work was directed toward the high schools, as community drama groups had not carried on their usual schedule of plays because of the lack of young people, especially the lack of men. There was a loss of directors and key people in organizations, accompanied by a lack of time and ongoing transportation difficulties. This made Stewart's job difficult.

The Department tried to keep the community groups organized so at the end of the war they would be able to revive their former activities and meet the needs of the reconstruction period. Therefore, questionnaires were sent to the groups and a file compiled from the replies that indicated the extent of the group's activity, its leaders and its staging facilities. A monthly publication, **Stage Door**, was circulated announcing drama news in the Province. It maintained contact with the drama groups during those times.

Banff 1942 - During the 10th session of the Banff School in 1942 the War affected the drama section more than any other division in the school. This was because of the enlistment of a large number of teachers in the Armed and Associated Services.

Back at the Extension Department, *Helen Stewart left in June 1943 and in July Sydney Risk resumed his duties as Drama Supervisor with the Department of Extension. Again the main emphasis was on assisting dramatics teachers, but requests for assistance also came in from the Armed Forces and correspondence doubled. That year sixty people had personal interviews for advice and nine regular issues of Stage Door were published.*

Banff 1943 and 1944 - The 11th Banff School (1943) was held with an increase of 16 registrants, 204 total. In the 4th year of war this was a good demonstration of the solid roots the school had established in Canadian life. In 1944 there were no changes in the 12th Banff School.

An added service in the Department of Extension, in the year 1945-46, was an arrangement whereby the Drama Supervisor acted as Faculty Advisor to the University of Alberta Drama Society. With the war over the communities made greater demands while the schools continued their ongoing demands. The Department of Fine Arts at U of A offered degree programmes in drama and the concept of professional careers in theatre began to take hold.

Banff 1945 - During the 13th Banff School of Fine Arts, 1945, registration was limited because accommodation was scarce. However, this year marked the beginning of what would ultimately be a large-scale permanent development of the Banff School: assistance was secured through private funds.

*Sydney Risk resigned at the end of September 1946 as Drama Supervisor in the Department of Extension to go into private work. He was to found the Repertory Company 'Everyman', and the Department of Extension could not find a suitable replacement. So Mr. Robert Orchard, Assistant Professor of Drama in the Department of Fine Arts at U of A made a few Extension trips to provide advice and to do some festival adjudication. Elsie Park Gowan assisted the Department with *Stage Door*.*

Banff 1946 - The 14th Banff School was lengthened to 5½ weeks, from the previous 4½, in 1946. In 1947-48, **Rae Whitehouse** became Supervisor for Drama in the Dept. of Extension. He was from the Department of Fine Arts. A Saskatchewan boy who grew up in BC, he received his training from the University of Washington. He was assisted by **Bob Orchard**. Whitehouse acted as Editor for *Stage Door*, in association with Elsie Park Gowan.

Banff 1947 - The 15th Banff School in 1947 represented a sizable administrative task due to the increase in involvement and lack of facilities.

In 1948-49 Rae Whitehouse resigned as Supervisor of the Drama Department of Extension to work for the CBC. He was replaced by **Robert Stuart**, who was also with the Department of fine Arts and who acted as Extension Specialist in Drama. Stuart had adjudicated the Dominion Drama Festival that was held in Alberta that year. He spent little time in the field of community drama because of his course work on the campus.

Banff 1948 - During the 16th session of the Banff School of Fine Arts, 1948, Mrs. JH Woods of Calgary made a gift of \$125,000 to the Banff School to be used for the purpose of erecting two permanent chalets. This helped solve some of the facilities problems.

A Re-emphasis on Drama Outreach:

1949-62 The Esther Nelson Years

In the 1949-50 year **Esther Nelson** was added as Extension Specialist in Drama. Nelson held this position until it was no longer required in 1962. Her primary task was to initiate new programs since the War Years had been quite an inactive period with little drama activity in the Province except the occasional high school drama festival. Her main job was to revive the **Dominion Drama Festival**. This was an annual festival composed of entries from all provinces across Canada. To this end, she worked with **Dick McDonald**, who was the representative of the Cultural Activities (Development) Branch that the Alberta Government formed in 1946.

This was the most active year since the War. Extension combined forces with the Cultural Activities Branch of the Department of Economic Affairs and the Alberta Drama Board in arranging a tour of 30 Alberta centers by a group of university students known as '*The Provincial Players*'. This organization had been inaugurated by Sydney Risk.

Esther Nelson continued with school and community work, adjudicating festivals and holding drama workshops. The highlight of 1950 was a tour of the Provincial Players that performed in 31 centers. Sponsored by the Department of Economic Affairs and the Alberta Drama Board, the tour was arranged and organized by the Department of Extension.

Miss Nelson was also active with the **Alberta Drama League** as corresponding secretary and was involved in the Alberta Regional Festival and the Provincial One-Act Festival - two main projects of the Alberta Regional Festival. She also sat on an appointed board called the Cultural Activities Board, which attempted to interest the government in granting money to the Extension Programs and Fine Arts in general.

When Dick McDonald left to work full time with the Dominion Drama Festival he was replaced by **Blake MacKenzie** who also worked with the Board to obtain funds. MacKenzie was so successful that he managed to create three new government positions in drama, music and crafts.

It is interesting to note that the University foresaw the necessity for these positions several years before, but for undisclosed reasons the institute decided to postpone further differentiation. Perhaps it was logical for the government to initiate programs; traditionally the Extension Department pioneered and tested activities that the government then took over. The government eventually disposed of the appointed board and when Esther Nelson resigned in 1962 her position was dissolved.

Banff 1950 and 1951 - During the 18th session of the Banff School of Fine Arts in 1950 Banff facilities began to be used for conventions and short courses. In 1951, the 19th Banff School was given the Henry Marshall Tory award as the institution that made the most outstanding contribution to adult education in Canada in the academic year 1950-51.

In 1956 a major reorganization of the Department of Extension took place. The Banff School became an independent body with a campus of its own. Donald Cameron continued as Director and Duncan Campbell succeeded to the position of Director of the Department of Extension.

Esther Nelson resigned as Drama Supervisor for the Department of Extension in 1962. She felt that she was performing all she could and needed more personnel. Duncan Campbell seemed reluctant to add more Drama personnel to the Department of Extension. Esther saw there was no hope of advancing the drama area beyond the point where she had brought it to date, therefore she resigned.

Conclusion

In retrospect the Department of Extension could be divided into four main periods. The Haynes years were the pioneering days, then the War Years with Sydney Risk saw the Department at a virtual standstill. From 1945 to 1949 a new emphasis evolved with the formation of the Department of Fine Arts. Courses were taught at the University during 1945 on a scale that hadn't been possible before. As a result a kind of trust emerged in professional theatre because many of the students who came for a Bachelor of Arts in Drama were hoping for a career in theatre.

The final period would be the Esther Nelson Years from 1949 to 1962. These years brought the Department of Extension full circle as Nelson's main thrust was 'in the field'. At the end of her 13 years it is important to note that the rural areas had changed drastically and the need for an Extension person in drama was no longer the same. Alberta Culture gradually put more and more money into its programme and the Director of the Department of Extension and Duncan Campbell seemed reluctant to build up the Extension Department with more drama personnel. Thus Esther Nelson's job was at a standstill.

It should also be noted that in any Institution of Drama both administrators and creative personnel are needed. The Banff School of Fine Arts was founded by Ned Corbett as administrator and Elizabeth Haynes as teacher-creator. Donald Cameron, following Ned Corbett, became the builder of the new Banff School.

It is hoped that the information in this presentation will be of assistance to those wishing documentation of the History of Drama in Education in Alberta. Certainly the impetus for Drama Education originates with the

University of Alberta Department of Extension. In just 70 years that first creative impulse has expanded to include drama education programs in two other universities within the government and resulted in the creation of what we know as the Banff School of Fine Arts today. In a very short span of time Alberta has emerged as a leader in Drama Education programs.

The chronology of this history highlights all the change and the many revisions to Drama education that have transpired. Many of these have been beneficial: however, change can often be an indication of the positioning of the political and public sectors. In this respect there would seem to be a growing awareness of the performing arts in general in Alberta.

Experimentation, and the changes which must inevitably accompany it, could be viewed as the reflection of 'awareness' in our community. Hopefully Alberta will continue its forward thinking and her Drama Education will continue to reflect that progressiveness.

Compiled by Esther Nelson 2005

Banff School of Fine Arts Perspective in 2010

The BSFA is now the Banff Centre. It is now a place for professionals to come to create, experiment and improve their work. The idea of a school to train new leadership for amateur theatre is no longer its mandate. Acceptance of the urban model of professional theatre is the norm. Amateurs are no longer important. But if we have another deep depression where do they go? As a senior, even if I had my hearing I could not afford to go to the professional theatre. *Irene Pratheroe* who was director of Theatre Calgary, the first professional company in Calgary, admitted she was in the same boat.

As Drama Specialist I did my best to develop new directors, leaders who would commit themselves to developing theatres for their communities. I

enabled them to return to Banff year after year to become more confident in their craft and to contribute to the level of work at the school. One example was **Alex Burton** who returned to Banff several summers to strengthen the casts of plays. Alex played in two of my productions after he graduated from the school. He also came to play in Bette's production as well as become a reliable member of her Theatre for children. He later moved to the States but continued to be active in theatre.



Banff summer 1945? Blanche, friend of Faith, Faith and Bernice with Larry - Bernice sobbed with relief when the Banff church bells rang that the war was over and Hank would be coming home from his service 'overseas'.

NORMAL SCHOOL - Preparing Alberta Teachers

This article from the Alberta Teachers' Association News 2011 was written about the Calgary school, but it describes what was true in Camrose too.

Also look up: "*Just a Teacher*" *Who Made a Difference: The story of Donalda Dickie* One of the remarkable people who made Alberta Normal Schools work - including Camrose.

See: "*The Way it Was: Vignettes from My One-Room Schools*" by Edith Van Kleek

Gordon Campbell

The term *normal school* was derived from teacher training schools in France called *école normale*, and in Austria, *normalschule* were designed to inculcate the norms, models or standards of the culture. The translation of *normal school* also refers to such schools in the People's Republic of China. When the Calgary Normal School was established in 1905, the public school standards to be inculcated were presumably British. In the multi-ethnic Canada of today, the designation *normal school* is archaic.

The Calgary Normal School 1940/41 class was caught between two devastating world events. The first event—the Great Depression—preceded the class and continued to devastate society up to the outbreak of the Second World War. The provincial election of 1935 saw "Bible Bill" Aberhart, a high school principal and evangelist, elected premier along with his innovative platform of Social Credit. The theme song of the movement, "O God Our Help in Ages Past," was a timely message. The second event—World War II—shrouded everything, including teacher training, in uncertainty, perhaps calamity. Who could know?

Prior to the discovery of Leduc No. 1 oil well in 1947, Alberta was one of Canada's poorest provinces. "Normalites" of 1940/41, of course, shared in that poverty. Family funds for professional training were as scarce as hens' teeth. In our family of four boys, my parents could afford only for one boy to have one year of post-high school training. My oldest brother

defied the probabilities and elected to go to university. With summer work, he saved enough money to continue at university as well as provide tuition for me to attend normal school. Most students were in similar distressed circumstances. There were no residences. Lodging was found in boarding or rooming houses. Many students lived on \$25–40 a month sent from home to cover food, rent, streetcar and bus fare, and extras. Two male students had somehow scraped together enough money to pay their tuition (\$100) but had little left for survival. They were regularly evicted from their lodgings and often ate in soup kitchens. One of those two students, however, eventually became a heart specialist in the University of Alberta's faculty of medicine. Most students coped well enough and loved the excitement of change. For them, normal school was a transforming experience of great importance in their lives. Most normalites came from towns, villages and farms. There were only 38 men in a total enrolment of 186 students: six classes of women, one of men. For most of these men, joining the military was only a matter of time. The departure of men for the armed services made available better-paying jobs for women in defence industries. As a result, there was a smaller pool from which to choose normal school students. None had any university education—education beyond Grade 12 was a privilege attained by a few. What some students may have lacked in intellectual sophistication, they compensated for in dedication and sincerity—the salt of the earth. However, principal W. H. Swift was not impressed with the cultural background of the students. He complained of having “but a single student” from a professional home. Many were from families of low socio-economic status. In trying to decide who would make good teachers, however, preliminary tests were shown to be practically, if not entirely, useless.

Today's four-year education degree, designed for computer-literate teachers, can scarcely be compared to a normal school diploma. Today's technology—TV, cell phones, computers and satellites—now universal, was, in 1940, the stuff of science fiction. Children were read fairy stories to deal with everyday practicalities of K–12 classroom teaching and school management. Later, the need for teachers was so desperate that teachers were trained in six weeks. My first classroom assignment was Grade 1. One youngster became visibly excited by the presence of a new

(male) teacher, judging by the puddle under the student's desk. (I turned lobster red with embarrassment.) The regular teacher watching from the back of the room pointed diplomatically to the dustbin and broom as a way to tidy things up. In my second school, I taught five grades in one classroom. Fortunately, the local school board evaluated me not on the basis of my teaching performance but on the quality of the Christmas concert.

The curriculum of the normal school appealed to students who knew about a work ethic, whose agricultural background taught them how to survive and cope—they were practical folk. Complementing methods classes in English, math, music, science and art were extracurricular student-managed activities that enhanced competencies and helped provide a social life. With a \$70 allotment, for example, the student chair of athletics successfully operated two basketball teams, a hockey team and a boxing club using the facilities of city high schools. There were folk dance groups, a choral society, drama groups, an international affairs club and tumbling clubs. Christian Fellowship and Catholic and Mormon groups for students were represented. Special events included Sadie Hawkins and Hard Times dances, swimming and skating parties. In the absence of a campus, the collegiality of these activities in wartime built an *esprit de corps* and also enriched the professional preparation for the life of the new teacher.

Normal school graduates could not expect to sail into comfortable city jobs. For example, of all the students from Lethbridge, only one was that lucky. The remaining graduates were posted to the country or small towns. A typical rural destination might be River Junction School near Lethbridge: one room with a large coal-fired stove at the back for heat. Behind the school were boys' and girls' outhouses. Nearby was an outdoor pump or a cistern for water and a barn for the horses that brought students to school. Buses were often farm-built affairs—large boxes on a farm truck chassis. A high-grade gravel road was rare. Some teachers found room and board with nearby farm families. Others were provided with rather primitive teacherages on the school grounds. The Whoop Up Ladies Club annually prepared a Christmas turkey dinner served prior to the school Christmas concert. To accommodate the performance, desks were stacked against the wall. The warmth and

support extended to the teacher by the community more than made up for the often stringent circumstances.

Learning advantages currently realized in modern multi-age classrooms may have had their genesis in the one-room schoolhouses of days past. The normal school graduate teacher seldom questioned (and perhaps never fully appreciated) the rich benefits of having children of various ages in the same room. But benefits there were! Children in lower grades were greatly enriched by exposure to the lessons meant for more advanced students. Similarly, older students who may not have fully mastered the concepts and skills of earlier grades had an unobtrusive but effective way to have their earlier deficiencies removed and skills sharpened while listening in on the lessons intended for the younger students.

Little did normal school graduates know that the learning methods they used in the multi-graded classrooms were the forerunners to today's pedagogical techniques: cooperative learning (students working in groups, helping each other, learning together); peer-tutoring (older children assisting the younger to master the intricacies of reading and the magic of arithmetic, and child-centred learning activities (helping children learn) rather than teacher-centred lectures.

The war turned the traditional normal school into a makeshift state of affairs. The commodious quarters of the normal school on Calgary's North Hill were requisitioned for use in the "war effort of the Dominion." Temporary facilities were found in the old King Edward School. Deputy Minister of Education H. C. Newland said to incoming students: "Though the removal of your school to new quarters will undoubtedly impose certain hardships with respect to training, it should at the same time serve to remind you of the terrific importance of our struggle against the evil thing that is called 'fascism.'" In addition, there was a change in leadership; after a 30-year career as the first principal, E. W. Coffin retired. He was succeeded by an inspector of schools, W. H. Swift. Swift's immediate task was to reorganize a reduced staff for a less extensive service in a severely restricted facility.

The metamorphosis from a 10-month normal school to a four-year faculty of education university degree not only reflects the complexity of current life; it shows how profoundly education in its many dimensions has grown

with Canada. Tens of thousands of citizens have been nurtured by the province's normal schools and universities. The dynamism and prosperity of the province are illustrative of how well these two institutions have done their work. In 1949, one student, during her normal school valedictory address, spoke about her experience in these terms: "We have found more than friends, we have found ideas. We have found values both new and old and we have found a new happiness."

Author's Notes

I am indebted to Professor Robert Stamp for his recent and excellent study of teacher education in Calgary—*Becoming a Teacher in 20th Century Calgary* (Detselig Enterprises, 2004). I am also indebted to Earle Warnica, educational consultant, now in Oman, for his insights.

A more detailed account of teacher education in Alberta can be found in the *55th Annual Report of the Department of Education of the Province of Alberta, 1940* (King's Printer, 1941).



The Lewis Gang - Ponoka, 27 June 1941
(Esther shared Mrs. Lewis' Rooming House with these friends)

(L-R) Arlene Truman, Marie Lamie, Irene Falkinburg, Pat Stewart, Marie Stewart, Jean Dick
(on knees) Lorraine Kroening, Wilda Caswell, Esther

End of the first year at Ponoka High School and one year to go before Esther entered NORMAL SCHOOL!

Esther's response to Ralph Kline's Health Reform Proposal - 2006

390 Wildwood Drive
Calgary, AB T3C 3E6
March 11, 2006

Hon. Ralph Klein
Premier of Alberta
Province of Alberta
Legislative Building
Edmonton, AB T5K2B7

Dear Sir,

Re: Health Care Reforms Proposal (Alberta Legislature,
February 28, 2006)

I wish to respond to your request for "feedback" to the ten policies printed in The Calgary Sun, March 1, 2006. First, I confess to feeling insulted by being offered ten sentence fragments to deal with. Such an offering appears offhand and careless, and shows a lack of respect for either the subject or the reader. Second, because these fragments lack subjects and predicates, they present vague generalizations that must be translated by the reader into proper English before they can be discussed rationally (a daunting task for most Albertans). Third, I have only one month to prepare my discussion of your proposals. It would have been helpful to have specific details to work with, but since these have not been forthcoming, I will direct my attention to what has been made available.

#1 - "Putting patients at the centre."

Does this mean that patients have not been "at the centre" prior to your announcement? Because it is not clear who is doing the "putting" and one can only guess centre of what, one is left with a puzzle rather than a "reform".

#2 - "Promoting flexibility in the scope of practice of health care professionals."

Just which health care professionals do you mean? Family doctors, nurses or specialists - all, or some? Thanks to the cutbacks a few years ago, most of the doctors and nurses I know are too exhausted from overwork to take advantage of this (whatever "flexibility of scope" means). If Dr. Sarah Makhdoom (Calgary Herald, March 2, 2006) were to take time to explore flexibilities in the scope of her practice, what would happen to the patients she serves in her 70- to 80-hour workweek? Would all, or just some, of her patients still be "at the centre" of her practice?

All this proposal seems to mean is that a few specialists in a few fields (especially specialists who seem to have a peculiarly pecuniary interpretation of their Hippocratic oath) will be able to set up private clinics, charge what the patient

2.

is willing, or can afford, to pay, select the easy cases. Patients will now have to wait in line at the public clinic, until he, or another specialist, has time to meet the appointments made there. Thus, the specialist, not the patient, appears to be "at the centre" of this health care system. Because there are only a certain number of doctors available, only the patients who can afford it and the specialists who choose this path will benefit. This does nothing to cut down on waiting times; if anything, it will make waiting times longer, because doctors have been subtracted from the public system.

#3 - "Implementing new compensation models."

This is too vague to make sense. Do you mean that private deals will be made with private insurance companies? Do you mean that doctors will now be able to "double dip" at will? Discussing such generalities is a total waste of time. Please say what you mean, if you really want "feedback."

#4 - "Strengthening inter-regional collaboration."

Does this mean that it is now weak or non-existent? If so, why? Incidentally, I find "collaboration" an odd choice of word given its connotation ever since World War II.

#5 - "Reshaping the role of hospitals."

Does this mean blowing up or selling off a few more hospitals at the whim or advice of some self-interested appointees or elected politicians? There has never been a satisfactory accounting for what was lost or gained in either money or medical personnel. In Calgary, we lost doctors and nurses through that action as well as through cut-backs. Our present population was projected thirty years ago. The self-inflicted loss of space was hardly a response to the obvious. The waiting times we now experience are the result of lack of planning, pure and simple. This projected "reform" sounds like another "knee jerk" designed to appear to be a solution. All levels of government have at their disposal demographic statistics that make projections and planning possible. I see no excuse for not making better use of them. I see no excuse for inter-governmental bickering over health care. It wastes time and money.

#6 - "Establishing parameters for publicly funded health services."

"Parameters"? This mathematical term is often misused and misunderstood. Do you mean that there were no defined

3.

"parameters" before? Perhaps this just means cut-backs to services presently offered. Why not say so, and specify what you have in mind? This is a ridiculous exercise.

#7 - "Creating long-term sustainability and flexible funding options."

I assume that it is the Alberta government that will do the creating, but because there is no subject, it is impossible to know for sure. Unless you say how, this also is too vague to discuss. It sounds as though (and I depend on bits and pieces of prior information divulged for this) you just want to give away health care to private interests whenever it pleases you and reward individuals and corporations of your choice.

This is "reform"? As to your tiresome harping on "long-term sustainability," since you never provide facts and figures, past, present or future, it has become just another cliché. Unfortunately for your case, government figures revealed on a recent TV broadcast revealed something quite different. Your "passing the buck" to your Finance Minister suggested to me that you have something to learn from the late President Truman.

#8 - "Expanding system capacity."

Without details, this is just a "motherhood" phrase. Rational discussion is impossible.

#9 - "Paying for choice and access while protecting the public system."

Grammatically, it is impossible to tell just who is paying and who is protecting, but it sounds as though the patient is now the one protecting the public system. The government is nowhere to be found.

#10 - "Deriving economic benefits from health services and research."

With this, the patient has quite obviously been dislodged from the centre; unless, of course, someone else is cured of cancer after he is dead. You have failed to make clear just who benefits and how. Perhaps, on the other hand, you plan to install slot machines in the lobby of medical clinics: "make money while you wait." I am not against research, but why not build on the good programs we have, rather than launching something new and apparently unrelated to present efforts?

I started out in all seriousness to respond to your request for "feedback" but found only ten points of grammatical, and perhaps deliberate, nonsense. You have, as Shakespeare would say, "hoist yourself with your own petard."

4.

I am sorry to find that a plan that has been so long in the making has so little revealed for consideration. It appears from these ten points that what you want to impose on us are two health systems: one, a private system for those who can afford it; one, a public system for the rest. The two systems run parallel. It seems that the private system will thus be able to poach personnel from the public system, leaving the public system with longer waiting times. Eventually, this will set doctor against doctor, nurse against nurse, patient against patient. Ill will, if not chaos, will prevail.

It seems to me that the Alberta government has been hostile to public health care ever since you became Premier. Why is it that the Alberta government constantly complains about the sustainability of health care, whereas other provinces (except wealthier Ontario and Quebec) seem able to cope with its challenges. Your repeated argument begins to wear thin, especially since it is repeated ad nauseam, without evidence of any kind. We are supposed to accept your word without question. There is the example of the little boy who cried "wolf" too often.

What is there in your list of "reforms" that will take care of a possible disaster or a possible pandemic? Unless medical personnel work together in co-operation, not competition, they will be incapable of responding promptly to emergency; thus, lives will be at risk, regardless of income. What choice then?

I would have preferred a less pretentious plan, one that builds on what we already have, rather than replacing one system with two. Why not start with simple, straightforward goals to solve problems, not some abrupt, disruptive action, but a continuous, long-term action? Above all, I would like to see continuing committees of front-line workers in an advisory capacity. They know where the waste is; they know what is needed, the best ways to fix the problem. The solutions of business may be helpful, but health care is not a business and will suffer if treated as though it is.

There are three main problems that need continuing attention:

(1) We are short of medical personnel. We need to implement a long-term programme of scholarships, fellowships and other incentives to encourage promising students to enter the medical professions. We are an aging population; therefore, such a programme should include not just doctors and nurses, but home care and palliative care specialists. Special incentives and training should be provided for individuals who want to work with the elderly. Our nursing homes are under-staffed and their staffs are under-trained. Elderly patients are not "at the centre" of this system. Your ten points seem to ignore them altogether.

5.

(2) We are short of hospital and nursing home space. Demographic projections have always been available to governments. We need a comprehensive plan for space: where and when it will be needed to accommodate our growing population, not just according to where it will attract the most votes.

(3) The cost of drugs is excessive. Immediately set up a pharmaceutical agency similar to New Zealand's to bring the cost of drugs down. We don't need any more expensive "studies" to report the obvious. (See LiciaCorbella, The Calgary Sun, p. 4, March 1, 2006).

If a comprehensive 5-, 10-, to 25-year plan were developed based on just these three goals, improvement would take place gradually. There would be no need to keep tinkering with the health care system. It has already been eroded enough through greed, self-interest and political machination.

I think that your proposed "reforms" are wrong-headed and dangerous. They are wrong-headed because, if legislated, they would result in loss of co-operation and a lowering of morale among front-line workers in the health care system. Your proposed "reforms" are dangerous because they ignore the democratic principle that citizens are to be treated equally. As Canadians, we are hypocrites if we send troops abroad to preserve our democratic values and fail to defend them at home.

Yours truly,

Esther I. Nelson

cc: Honourable Iris Evans
Minister of Health and Wellness

Kevin Taft,
Leader of the Opposition

Brian Mason, M L A
Leader of N D P

Alana De Long, M L A
Calgary West

Licia Corbella
Editor, The Calgary Sun

Doug Firby
Editor, Calgary Herald

Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister
Government of Canada



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
ALBERTA

Laurie Blakeman
MLA, Edmonton Centre
House Leader, Official Opposition of Alberta
Official Opposition Critic, Health and Wellness

March 28, 2006

Ms. Esther I. Nelson
390 Wildwood Drive
Calgary, Alberta T3C 3E6

Dear Ms. Nelson:

Thank you for providing Kevin Taft, MLA for Edmonton Riverview and Leader of the Alberta Official Opposition with a copy of your correspondence regarding the privatization of health care in Alberta. Mr. Taft has shared your letter with me and I have the privilege of responding in my role as the Official Opposition Critic, Health and Wellness.

The Alberta Liberal Caucus is extremely concerned about the issue of health care in Alberta. Private involvement in health care will increase costs, limit accessibility and undermine the quality of care. Private insurance or private deliver system restricts choice. Certainly that has been the outcome in other countries where the insurer dictates all choice of doctor, hospital and procedure. This government must stop privatization and commit to building a strong healthcare system for Albertans based on solid evidence and not on ideology. This government must do what is right for Albertans and commit to strengthening the public health care system.

The Alberta Liberal Caucus believes that we have a good health system that requires strong steady management in order to be more effective. We agree that reform is required but we need reforms that strengthen the public system rather than give up on it entirely. We need to ensure fairness in health care. The government seems to be interested in cutting services from the publicly funded system and leaving patients responsible for covering those services. While it is important for patients to have a choice, it is also important to have a system that is available to Albertans when they need it. We will continue to lobby this government to improve the system through long term planning and proper management of resources.

I would be more than willing to table your letter during the spring sitting of the Alberta Legislature. When a document is tabled in the Legislature, it means that this item would become incorporated into Alberta Hansard and become public knowledge and the public does have access to this letter. As such, if you are in agreement with allowing me to table this letter, I would require permission from you. This can be done by contacting my Administrative Assistant, Gerri Kleim at Gerri.Kleim@assembly.ab.ca. Your agreement to this would be very much appreciated and will assist us in lobbying this government to improve health care through long term planning and proper management.

Sincerely,

Laurie Blakeman, MLA, Edmonton Centre
Official Opposition Critic, Health and Wellness

cc: Kevin Taft, MLA, Edmonton Riverview
Leader, Her Majesty's Official Opposition

*Thank you for the
thoroughness of
your response.*

*Permission granted
10/04/06*

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Retirement



The 'Monday Group' skated Monday mornings at the Optimists' Arena from 1987 to 2010. Unhappily, 2011 saw the group accept that there had to be a *last skate* one day...



The 'Monday Group' meet for lunch at the Skater's Annual Picnic 2011: Marjorie Kidd (founder), John Meehan, Lou Broadbent (founder), Catherine Meehan (sunglasses)...



After retirement in 1987 I joined a class in cross-country skiing for seniors - two years. I'm in the front row wearing a white sweater. I skied from 1987 to 2002



1981 Anthony Hill Reunion

L-R: Elsie Westman, Mary Kramer, Nellie Harris, Esther Nelson. Missing is Vienna Mails. We five went from Grade One to Grade Nine together at Anthony Hill.

The Swedish Cousins



Around 1935: Nils-Pauli Persson, Alma Persson, and Arne Bjerhammar, on the North Sea beaches of Bastad, Sweden - Elof's sister and her two sons

My first contacts with Elof's family in Sweden were when I was a child - I could recognize Arne and Nils in their pictures, all carefully put away in Elof's black box on the top right-hand shelf of the large cupboard.

Memories of Thea urging Elof to write to his sister (he usually owed her a letter) are very clear. Finally Blanche started to write to Elof's youngest nephew, Arne, which helped fill out our knowledge of their lives, but they were certainly different from our 'Norwegian Cousins' who lived just down the road. Our Swedish Cousins were very far away.

*Then in **The Geophysical Year** (1 July 1957 to 31 Dec 1958) Arne was on a speaking tour of Canada and the US (a Wikipedia search of Arne Bjerhammar reveals his academic credentials). This is the year the whole Bjerhammar family came to visit at the Ed Nelson farm. Mel brought Pop and Arne to Banff where I was teaching but I don't remember anyone else with them.*

(I've seen photos taken by Mel of Arne and Carin at Banff with the Buffalo, so Carin must have been along on that summer 1957 ? trip to Banff.) We also have photos of Mel with Joan holding Eric in Banff - with Thea and Maria?? As Eric was born in March 1957, and he was a babe in arms in the photo, this should be about August 1957?



Left: Mel & Joan and family visiting Esther at Banff 1957 ?... Above: Thea and Maria with Joan and Karen at Banff? (rustic doorway?) in 1956? (Karen looks younger in coloured photo than in b/w picture and Joan's hair is different...)



Lena, Agneta and Eva Bjerhammar visiting at the Nelson farm in the summer of 1957. Linda and Eva in the left photo, with Ken holding our lazy horse Tony; Lena and Agneta on Tony in the 2nd photo

Arne was not impressed with the Alberta universities - they had no geodesy departments! I remember feeling somewhat foolish in that Arne could speak English and I had not one word of Swedish. Mind you, Arne often expressed displeasure at having to spend so much time on languages rather than on science (which was the only thing that mattered!).

By 1957 Marilyn and I had decided we needed a break, both having spent our summers for many years working long hours at Banff. I realized that Thea was not well and would never realize her dream of seeing Norway again. With this in mind Marilyn and I spent the year planning a trip to Norway and Sweden, and as much of Europe and England and Scotland as we could manage in five weeks. The visit to Norway especially would be for Thea as well as for our own pleasure.

A First Trip to Scandinavia - July 1958

We set out in early July. In London we were met by my friend Lois McLean who had been working in London for some time. We spent a few days there and saw a little of London. Then Marilyn and I were off by boat to Paris where we picked up our rental car, a Peugeot that gave us much trouble - it turned out to be a need for new sparkplugs. Marilyn was a good driver and preferred to be behind the wheel. This gave me the advantage of being a

passenger. Mel had loaned me his old camera, so we were ready to 'do' Europe.

We drove through France to Denmark via Brussels, Antwerp, Hamburg. We did the old Tivoli in Copenhagen. There, I remember a strange game of football played on a large table, by mice. The 'football' was a very small balloon. When I returned to Copenhagen in 1991 with Blanche and Don the mice were gone - to whatever reward awaits mice who learn how to play football with their noses.

At Copenhagen we put our difficult little French car on a boat (ferry) to Oslo, then we drove north to Lillehammer. A great heritage park there gives insight into what life was like for our Viking ancestors (one item I particularly felt drawn to was the beds. These were short - not because the old Norse were short but because in this 'crib' one slept in a sitting position to enable a quick reaction to night-time invaders). That was well worth the visit, and from there we drove to Vinstra where we stayed at the Vinstra Hotel. In the hotel dining room the head waiter mistook us for Americans and put an American flag on our table. When we explained we were Canadian he rushed away and set up a Canadian flag. It turned out that he had homesteaded in the Peace River area. Before war broke out his mother became very ill. He returned to Norway and was caught - the invasion made it impossible for him to return to Canada, so he lost his homestead.

Thea had drawn the map you have seen (Thea made a line drawing of the area around Baekkesletten for Esther's first trip to Norway in 1957. See Book 2 - The Paulson Story to see the map) of the area around Kvikne. When I showed the waiter Thea's map he was impressed. Everything was exact and correct except for changes that had occurred after she left Norway 50 years before. It was those changes, and the unchanged, that I wanted to show in my photographs. If you look carefully at Thea's map you'll see numbers. Those faint numbers on the map are a record of the pictures I took for Thea.

From Vinstra we turned off onto a rough road and came to the Kvikne Church - the church that my mother and grandparents had attended while the family lived at Baekkesletten. Later I found that most of our relatives

from 1764 are recorded in this old church. How many more ages do our line of ancestors extend back in this mountainous area of central Norway.

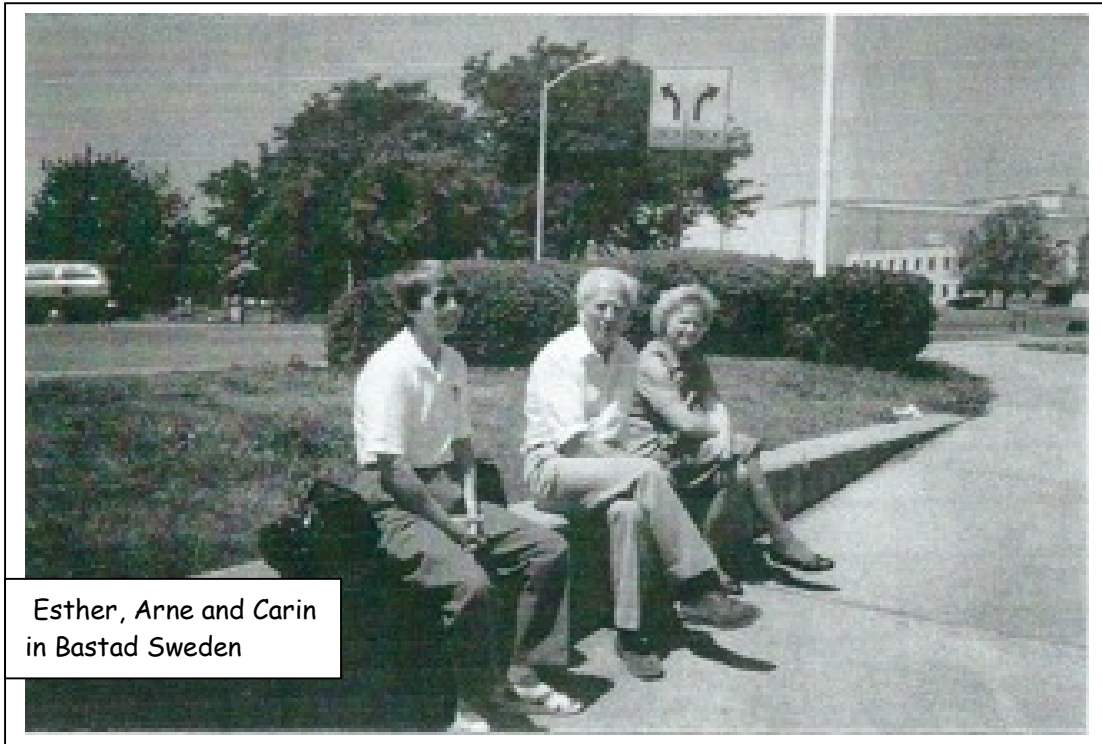
We drove the $\frac{1}{2}$ mile further to the road leading up to Baekesletten. As Marilyn was feeling unwell, I walked up the steep trail to the farm alone. I cannot begin to describe my feelings on seeing the buildings for the first time. A middle-aged man was working in the yard. I took as many pictures as I could, but without Norwegian I hesitated to speak. As I turned to go a woman came up the path: Magdelene Ungstad, whose relatives lived just across the highway, had spent a year in Norway and was just coming up to say her farewells. With her good English, we spoke about my visit and she introduced me to the current owner. I was disappointed to not be invited into the house, but I took more photos, then went back down to Marilyn. We continued up 'the Vinstra Road' taking the numbered photographs as we went so that my Mother could follow our progress along a road she had travelled so often in her youth.

After our visit to Baekkesletten we went back toward Oslo and then drove across country directly to Stockholm. We were met there by Carin and Arne, and visited at their home. They were very gracious, warm and hospitable, and showed us the university and other sights. I had met Carin and Arne that one time before, when Mel brought them to Banff with Elof while I was teaching there, but it was special to meet them in their own world.

The children, Eva, Agnetta and Lena, were lively and interesting - Marilyn was always good with kids - so we had a very pleasant time getting to know them all. After a couple of days they took their car and joined us for a visit to Baastad where Arne and Carin had a summer home. We visited with Runa, Nils and their two girls, who still lived at Lykabo - the home Alma (Elof's sister) and her husband John had kept as a summer hotel for many years, and which I had only ever seen in photographs.

When talking to Arne I discovered he had certain mannerisms that reminded me of Mel. Nils reminded me of Ed, physically and in expression, open, friendly and warm. He ran a radio shop and according to Arne was given to experimental projects that did not always succeed. That reminded me of the winter that Elof decided to build a generator for power starting

with a windmill he made from scratch, mainly in the living room. The blades were wooden. The parts were second hand. He never quite got it to work. Perhaps the drive to make something new was inherited by Alma's sons as well as by Elof's.



Esther, Arne and Carin
in Bastad Sweden

The high point of my time in Sweden was a visit to the Nilsson farm where Elof had been born in 1882. Unfortunately the house had burned down a few years before. The apple tree Elof planted when he was there still lived. The house and yard were at the south west corner of the very flat field - about 40 acres. Runa came with us. She grew up on a neighbouring farm and knew a great deal about the local history and about the Nilsson family. Again, we were shown the local highlights. Elof had provided me with a map - much less complete than Thea's - and I saw where he went to school as well as visiting Grevie (a small village) and the church where Elof's mother and father were buried. Now, as the graveyard is full, the graves have been replaced by others and head stones - theirs included - have been moved to become part of the fence around the cemetery.

All in all it was a lovely and lively reunion and I remember it with great pleasure. I particularly recall the children (Arne and Carin: Eva, Agnetta

and Lena and Nils' and Runa: Maria and Cecilia) were all about the same age. They decided, so that we would have a taste of Swedish custom, that we should dance around the Maypole. Good memories.

While in Stokholm Marilyn and I made a trip to Drottningholm, the summer home of the King and Queen. I wanted to see the theatre, built in 1766 for royal entertainment. It had been unused for years, treated as a storeroom. A few years before our visit the theatre in the palace had been discovered and returned to its original state: an 18th century theatre, complete with the scenery of the period and all of their methods of producing technical effects. I had read about these ancient techniques but this was my first chance to see them in action. Life is much easier now. For me this visit was simply magical. An unforgettable experience.

*With this, Arne had our car fixed with new spark plugs, we said our 'good byes' and we went on our way through Germany, heading for Salzburg. There we visited the usual musical sites and saw an indoor production of **Everyman** - because it was raining. Then on to Bonn and Lake Como. We returned our car in Paris then, back to London where we rented another car. Lois had arranged for me to join her in doing a commercial while Marilyn took the car off on her own. By the time we were ready to leave London she was proficient at driving on the left side of the road and off we went to Stratford. They were doing **Pericles**, not Shakespear at his best. I was rather disappointed in the acting. Lois went back to London and we went on the visit Marilyn's cousin's widow (the cousin had been killed in the war). Scotland was beautiful, green and damp. Our hostess later re-married and the two of them visited us in our Calgary house which we bought in 1962.*

The trip was a good test of whether we could get along. Marilyn was always good company, cheerful and interesting. A long trip is a good test. That fall (1958) I bought a small house in Edmonton which I sold in 1995. After I gave up my 'perks' at UofA I realized that the house would be my retirement package. Fortunately, the house finally sold for much more than I paid for it.

Second Contact - in Columbus *The next visit I had with the Swedish cousins was in the 80s. Arne and Carin were in Columbus Ohio at*

*the University where Arne had been invited to explain some of his esoteric theories (Google **Arne Bjerhammar** to see his Wikipedia description). Again they tried their best to show their Canadian cousins a good time. This was the first trip Blanche and I had taken together since 1945 when we took an early departure from a convention and played hooky at Sylvan Lake. (photo of E&B in row boat)*

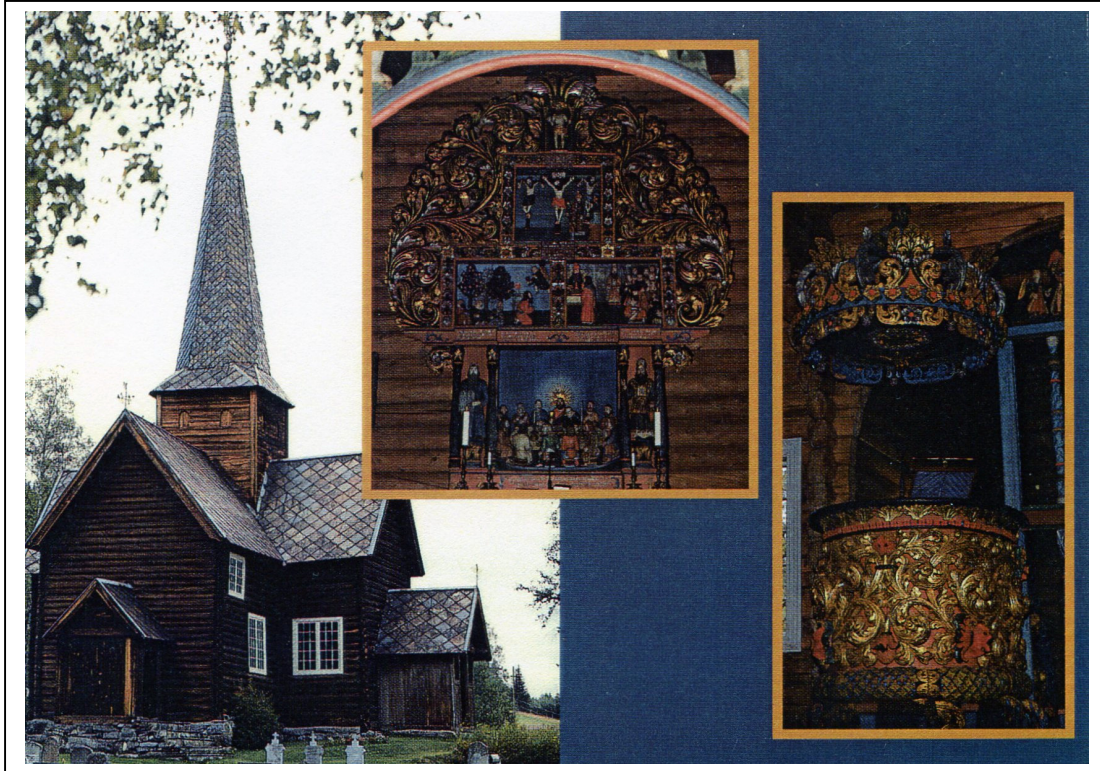
Back to Scandinavia 1991

In 1991 Marilyn Hoar persuaded Blanche and Don to take a Scandinavian tour and they asked me to go too. I had always wanted to see North Cap and realized I could be useful to Blanche and Don in the tour they had in mind in that I had been to Norway before so could guide a little. I also by this time had a couple of years of night courses in Norwegian and could make some sense out of newspapers and signs.

On June 21st 1991 I achieved my ambition and we were in North Cap - along with heavy fog. Oh well. We went on to the next stop - and found we were given a cabin for that night on a snow-covered mountainside. From the porch we had a view of open water. At midnight on June 22nd I got my perfect picture of the midnight sun.



The tour ended in Oslo. I don't like being 'organized' by a tour but I found it generally interesting. From there, on our own, we rented a car and drove to Vinstra. We stayed at the Vinstra Hotel (now a little worn compared to my first visit). A nice young woman worked there. It turned out that she went to Kvikne Church. I had not seen the inside of the church on my first visit. She arranged with the caretaker to come and let us in when we got there. He did and I got my pictures.



Back to Oslo, where we took the train to Baastad, again we spent time with Carin and Arne at their summer home. Eva and her two very bright boys came for the day. On another day we had dinner with Runa and Maria and her 2 children. I was sorry not to have seen Cecilia. We all, except for the children, went to the Nilsson farm.

This time, as we visited with our cousins I was able to produce the translation of Alma's letters - Arne's mother. With some emotion, Arne produced all the letters that Elof had written to Alma - all saved as he had saved her letters. That winter he translated Elof's letters and thus I was

able to have a complete set (except for the some that Runa and Maria translated later).



1991 Esther, Blanche and Don Hoar visit with Arne and Carin Bjerhammar

Above left: Solving a technical problem, the Nelson way.

Above right: Carin and Blanche sharing family photos.

Bottom right: Carin and Arne with their son-in-law Berndt (Eva), and Arne in front of one of his old schools.

Left: Arne with Eva and her two sons at Bastad



While in the area of the Nilsson farm, Arne took Blanche, Don and Esther to see the many Viking grave mounds of that district.

Back in Calgary I presented the full set of letters to a project at UofC called 'Legacies Shared' - an attempt to gather unpublished material in Alberta that provided insight into the history of the Province. When I contacted them about the letters they were happy to have them. The project is now complete and the results obtained have been turned over to the library - I knew of the first article that used the letters. A second article which I have not read resulted after the letters were sent to the archives.

You may or may not approve of my having the family's letters included in these historical projects. Arne's background made his approval inevitable. Also, I was well aware of Elof's love of history. Runa had given me the book that Elof bought with the first money he earned as a boy in Sweden. It was a history book, and it was typical that this would be his choice for his first purchase. In the end, it seemed that the family sense would probably favour history.

So, I met my Swedish Cousins four times. After that it has been a question of Christmas cards and letters - better than no contact, but not quite the same as being together. All in all, I wanted to tell you how much

richer I feel for having got to know the Swedish cousins. Runa and Carin were especially helpful. I treasure Runa's comment in her last letter: "I wish you hold closer."... and how wonderful of Carin to send me a detailed picture of a family reunion , identifying each member of their family.



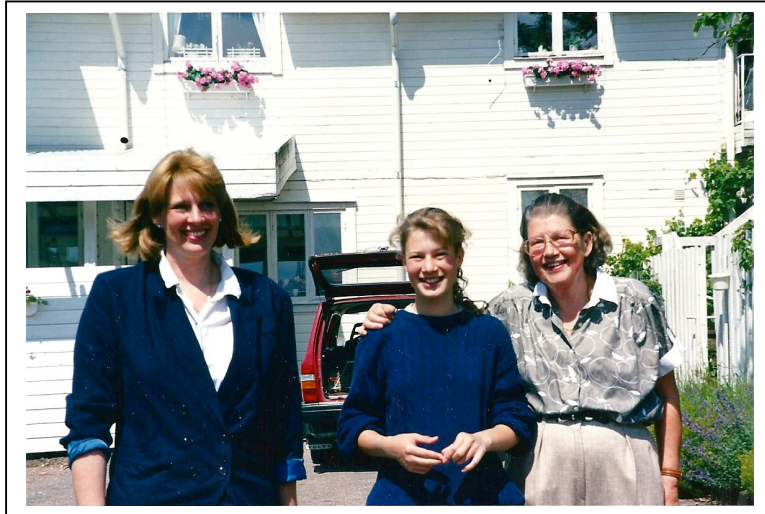
May 2008 Carin and Arne's family



*Left:
Runa and
Nils-Pauli*



*Right:
Arne and
Carin*



(Above) 1991 - L to R: Maria, Anna-Maria and Runa (Nils' daughter, granddaughter, and widow) in front of Lyckebo. Runa lives on the top floor, and Maria and her family live on the ground floor.

(Right) 2010 - Maria with son, daughter and husband

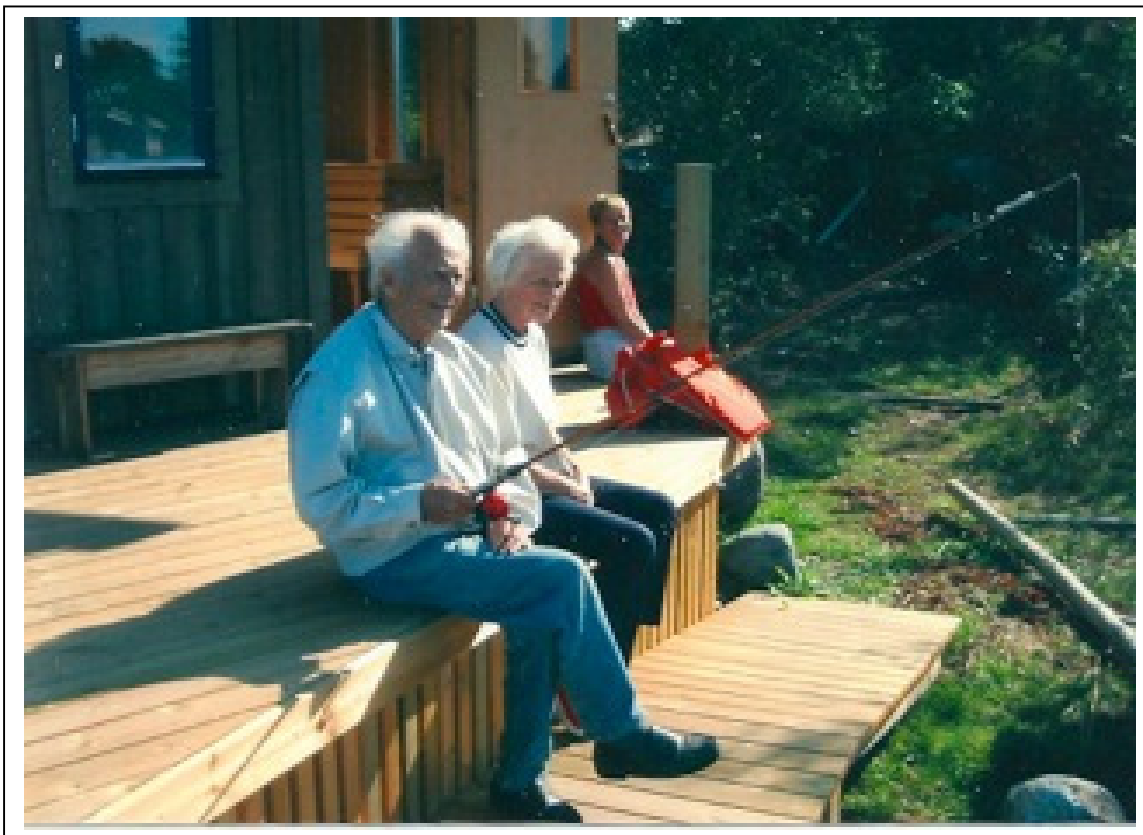


Lyckebo today, still Runa's home



Left: The grandchildren and Right: the children celebrate Runa's 90th birthday

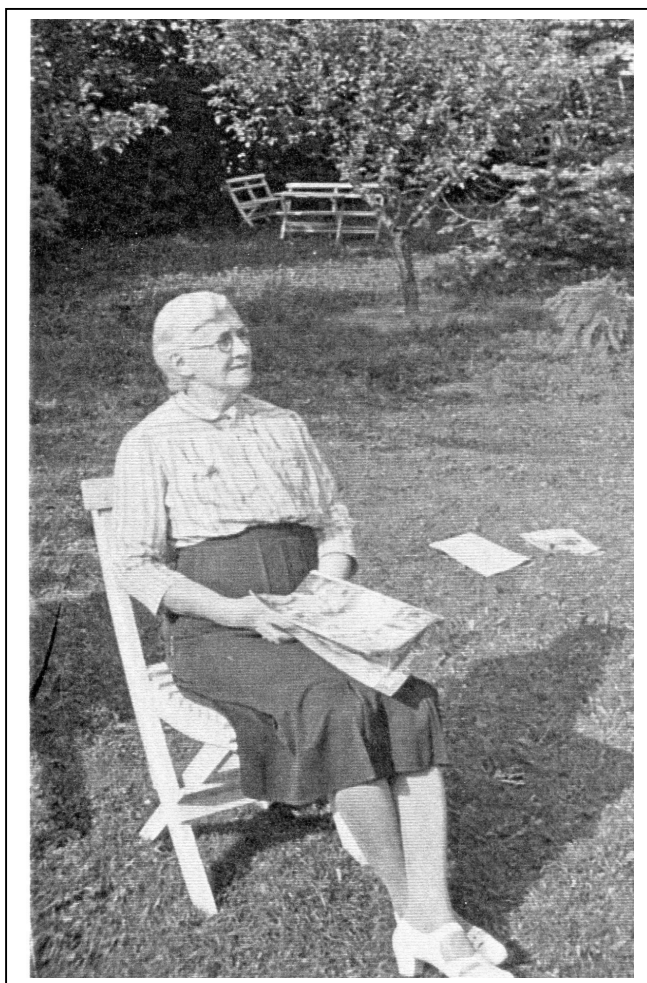
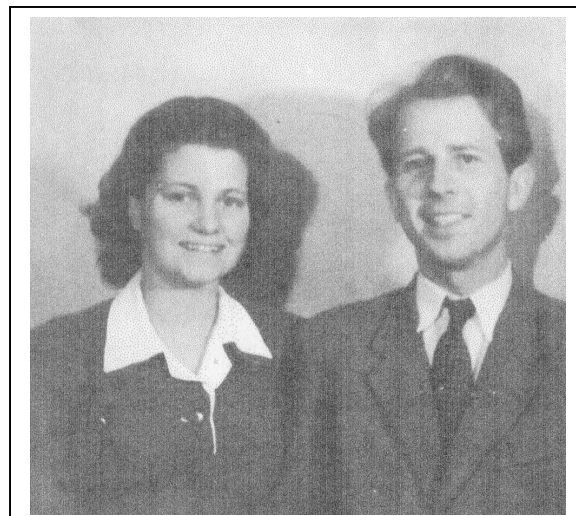
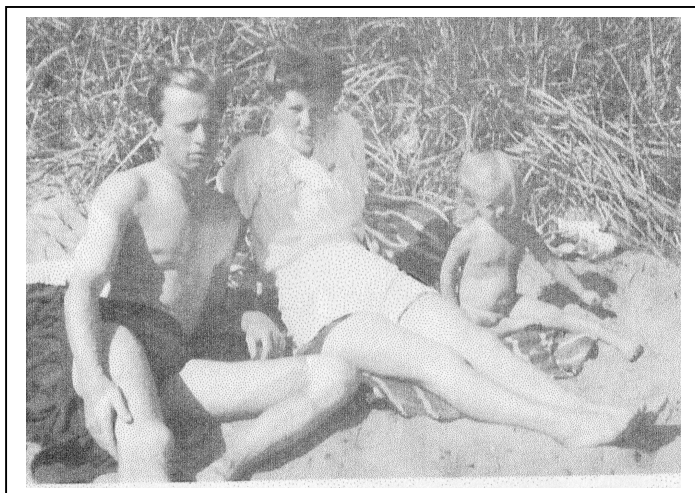
Maria, daughter of Runa and Nils-Pauli, has made a great effort to keep the family contact open with our Swedish Cousins. She and Runa are now in the process of translating a collection of letters from Alma to Elof, which were found recently. The letters will not make any great revelations, but just to 'hear these voices from the past' is of great value to the family.





*Arne and
Carin's family
on a sunny
beach...*





For more pictures and data see
Book 1: Elof's Story

