

Happy 150th birthday St. Albert



Mars was the Roman god of war and his festivals were held in March. In Roman mythology he was the father of Romulus and Remus the co-founders of the city of Rome.

Today is Silent Auction Day

Welcome to our March breakfast meeting

I do not want to sound unduly pessimistic this month but after listening to the meteorologist from the Canadian Weather Office what sprang to mind immediately was the song from the 1944 movie *Christmas Holiday*—you will all remember that movie, I am sure—the song was “Spring will be a little late this year.” The meteorologist announced that he expected March and April to be colder than normal. Apparently, however, it is not just our problem. I talked to my cousin in the English Lake District only to hear that the weather there has been colder, snowier and wetter since last November and is only expected to brighten up in mid-March. What on earth would we talk about if it was not for the weather??

Whoops!

On federal politics, I am sure you all felt sorry for the Federal Minister for Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism earlier this month. Apparently his office used parliamentary letterhead to solicit donations for a Conservative strategy to target specific ridings with significant ethnic populations prior to the next election. Of course, the minister apologized for his office making the mistake. The minister has only been in the House of Commons since 1997 so his staff probably does not understand the rules yet. However, his message was delivered, despite the apology, after all it was impossible for it to be withdrawn. It reminded me of a story from Britain. A building contractor wanted to develop a housing project. Unfortunately in one corner of the property was an historic 16th century house. He asked for permission to move the house but met with numerous roadblocks. He became exceedingly annoyed so in the early hours of one morning he took a

bulldozer and destroyed the old house. When questioned his response was “so what are you going to do about it?” He had achieved his goal and everyone else could just forget it. We had the same approach happen with elevators across the province – knock them down and then admit that nobody was asked whether they wanted to buy them or find a way of maintaining them.

Then, of course, we all have to feel for our Prime Minister. He and his wife have been invited to London for the royal wedding. However, they may not be able to go if an election happens to be called prior to April 29. I wonder if an approach has been made to the organizers of the wedding to change the date should a Canadian election be called!

And finally a story from the federal government indicating that bureaucrats are expected to refer to the current Canadian government not as the “federal government,” nor indeed as the “Canadian government” but simply as the “Harper government.” Those of you who are more familiar with federal politicians might indeed be allowed to call it “Stephen’s government.”



Two final questions—why have we sent HMCS Charlottetown to Libya? Anybody have any suggestions? Why have we sent six

CF-18s to join another coalition of the righteous (or is it the interfering?) to make war with the Libyan leader in what is surely an internal revolution?

Smile

SEX AFTER DEATH

A couple made a deal that whoever died first would come back and inform the other if there is sex after death. Their biggest fear was that there was no after life at all. After a long life together, the husband was the first to die. True to his word, he made the first contact: "Is that you, Bob?" "Yes, I've come back like we agreed." "That's wonderful! What's it like?" "Well, I get up in the morning, I have sex. I have breakfast, and then it's off to the golf course.

I have sex again, bathe in the warm sun and then have sex a couple of more times. Then I have lunch (you'd be proud - lots of greens). Another romp around the golf course, then pretty much have sex the rest of the afternoon. After supper, it's back to golf course again. Then it's more sex until late at night. I catch some much needed sleep and then the next day it starts all over again"

"Oh, Bob are you in Heaven?"

"No...I'm a rabbit in Saskatchewan.



Upcoming Meetings

April 29— Margaret Plain, chairperson of the 150th St. Albert Anniversary Committee will speak on the various activities being undertaken to celebrate the Anniversary.

May 27— Annual meeting

The beginning of St. Albert can be traced back to when Father Lacombe met with the Earl of Southesk at the Lac Ste Anne mission in 1859. In turn the Earl influenced Bishop Taché to come west in 1860, thereby allowing Father Lacombe to show him the St. Albert location. Blessed as a mission site by the bishop in January 1861, the first buildings were being constructed by April of that year.

The Annual Meeting breakfast meeting on May 27 will include a musical presentation from STARTA's choir.

Intriguing!

Some of you will remember that in 2005 then premier Ralph Klein introduced the idea of a "Third Way" into the ongoing health care debate. It was an idea that aimed at reconciling right- and left-wing ideologies with a centrist approach. The idea goes as far back as the Fabian Socialist movement that began in 1884 in Britain. Its more recent appearance occurred in the 1980s in Australia and has been around a number of countries. It was used to try and introduce privatization into the public health care, education and social services systems gradually. Interestingly it was linked in Britain to Prime Minister Tony Blair.

The new British Prime Minister, David Cameron, has introduced a new slogan to define the political strategy of his coalition government, the "Big Society." The process has been proposed to bring the country from

the brink of bankruptcy by cutting services and bringing budgets under control.

The mechanism for achieving these ends is a so-called quiet revolution which will devolve power from the central government and give control back to local community councils, to doctors, to the school principals, to the chiefs of police, community groups and charities. It is called handing power back to the people to do the job with less funding. I am sure you recognize devolution from our federal government to our provincial government to our cities and municipalities without the requisite funds. By so doing the provincial governments can balance their books and leave the need for tax increases for the everyday running of the system to the municipal tax system.

I am not sure whether this move is a step forward or a desire to go back to the 1950s where local communities were responsible for their survival and a huge amount of the work was to be done by unpaid volunteers. Whatever is the case, what the process is really all about is balancing the budget. As one blogger stated:

One thing I am really unsure about is whether this is really the 'only alternative' to the mistakes of the past. How come it sounds so much like waffly think-tank-wonk, and that no one can explain what it actually means.

These spoutings they come and they go. But waffle is waffle at the end of the day and I may be wrong but I don't think that waffle ever revolutionized anything.

Another smile!

Ole, a furniture dealer from up in Duluth, Minnesota, decided to expand the line of furniture in his store, so he decided to go to Paris to see what he could find.

After arriving in Paris, he visited with some manufacturers and selected a line that he thought would sell well back home. To

celebrate the new acquisition, he decided to visit a small bistro and have a glass of wine.

As he sat enjoying his wine, he noticed that the small place was quite crowded, and that the other chair at his table was the only vacant seat in the house.

Before long, a very beautiful young Parisian girl came to his table; asked him something in French (which Ole couldn't understand); so he motioned to the vacant chair and invited her to sit down. He tried to speak to her in English, but she did not speak his language.

After a couple of minutes of trying to communicate with her, he took a napkin and drew a picture of a wine glass and showed it to her. She nodded, so he ordered a glass of wine for her.

After sitting together at the table for a while, he took another napkin, and drew a picture of a plate with food on it, and she nodded. They left the bistro and found a quiet cafe that featured a small group playing romantic music. They ordered dinner....after which he took another napkin and drew a picture of a couple dancing.

She nodded, and they got up to dance. They danced until the cafe closed and the band was packing up.

Back at their table, the young lady took a napkin and drew a picture of a four-poster bed. To this day, Ole has no idea how she figured out he was in the furniture business.



When you know you are getting older

Recently, when I went to McDonald's I saw on the menu that you could have an order of six, nine or twelve chicken McNuggets. I asked for a half dozen nuggets.

"We don't have half dozen nuggets," said the teenager at the counter. "You don't?" I replied. "We only have six, nine, or twelve," was the reply. "So I can't order a half dozen nuggets, but I can order six?" "That's right."

So I shook my head and ordered six McNuggets.

For Ornithologists

Over the second week of March our mountain ash tree has been savagely attacked by a flock of cedar waxwings. In the course of about five days they have stripped the tree of all its red berries and they have been a delight to watch, sweeping in a flock of at least a hundred, they stayed long enough to grab two or three berries each and then flew off to arrive back within minutes to go through the whole process again. We have also had visits to the same tree by a pair of white-breasted nuthatches.

I have often wondered what the bird life in this land must have been like when the voyageurs came through. Even now it is possible to see huge flocks of geese and ducks but equally we are told that some bird numbers are on the decline. It was, therefore, with some interest that I read a story in the *Edmonton Journal*, March 9, originating from a study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The outbreak of BSE [mad cow disease] in Britain and Europe in 1985 caused a significant increase in beef exports from North America. The resulting reductions in North American herd sizes reduced the need for hay cropping to feed the cows. As a

result there was an increase in grassland habitat and a consequent increase in bird populations of sage wrens, grasshopper sparrows and Eastern meadowlarks. What an interesting impact of world trade on wildlife! (Source: "Link between mad cow disease, grassland birds studied" by Randy Boswell, *Edmonton Journal*, March 9, 2011)

Advice for investors

Here is some totally useless advice for those who think that they can make their millions by investing. This list of the next expected mergers is only for fun.

Hale Business Systems, Mary Kay Cosmetics, Fuller Brush and W. R. Grace Co. will merge to become **Hale, Mary, Fuller, Grace Corporation**.

Polygram Records, Warner Bros., and Zesta Crackers will join forces and become **Poly, Warner, Cracker Inc.**

Zippo Manufacturing, Audi Motors, Dofasco and Dakota Mining will merge and become **ZipAudiDoDa Ltd.**



Summer Golf Tournament

The Ninth Annual STARTA Golf Tournament will be named **The Rod Thronson Memorial Golf Tournament**. It will be played June 14 starting at 9 a.m, at the Twin Willows Golf Course. Watch for more details and registration forms in the April and May issues of this newsletter.

More leadership contestants

Both the Progressive Conservative and the Liberal Parties in Alberta have additional candidates for provincial leadership.

For the PCs Gary Mar entered the race on Wednesday, March 16. Mr. Mar was Alberta's representative in Washington D.C. for the last three years. Previously, he was a Calgary-based MLA and held a series of portfolios under premier Ralph Klein, including education, the environment and health.

For the Liberal party the story is that Dr. Raj Sherman will seek the leadership of the party when that campaign gets under way. He will be challenging Laurie Blakeman for the position.



Mayfield Dinner Theatre

If sufficient members are interested, we would like to purchase group tickets to the Wednesday, May 11, brunch production of "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee." This is a Tony Award winning Broadway musical. If 31 or more tickets are purchased, we get a 25 percent reduction of individual ticket prices. This reduction would amount to \$55.90 or \$48.03 per person (including GST), depending on choice of seating. If we purchase 10 to 30 tickets, the reduction is 15 percent. In that case the cost per ticket would be \$63.36 or \$54.43 (including GST), dependent again on seating.

Interested members must submit payment to Dagmar Lietz at either the March or April STARTA breakfast meeting, or can make arrangements to submit the payment directly by contacting Dagmar at bdlietz@mcsnet.ca. The cost per ticket will depend upon the number of people attending, so let us hope we can get a large group together to attend what should be a great production.

A final smile!

An elderly gentleman calls his neighbour and says, "Please come over here and help me, I have a killer jigsaw puzzle, and I cannot figure out how to get started."

His neighbour asks, "What is it supposed to be when it is finished?"

The old man replies "According to the picture on the box, it is a rooster."

His neighbour decides to go over and help with the puzzle. He lets her in and shows her where he has the puzzle spread all over the table.

She studies the pieces for a moment, then looks at the box, then turns to him and says, "First of all, no matter what we do, we are not going to be able to assemble these pieces into anything resembling a rooster."

She takes his hand and says, "Secondly I want you to relax. Let us have a nice cup of tea, and then," she says with a deep sigh . . . "Let's put all the Corn Flakes back in the box."

Are you ready?

It looks as though our federal politicians are determined that we should have a federal election this spring. They are prepared to spend \$300 million of our money fighting yet another election that most analysts seem to think will not change our parliamentary structure, that is we will have yet another minority Conservative government. One sure bet is that Albertans will send all of its Conservative MPs back to Ottawa.