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Scoops

Quarterly publication of the Alberta Farm Writers' Association

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Scoops

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Peace, perfect Peace

by Geoff Ludkin

It won't be long before our annual tour is here.

For those who have always wanted to visit Alberta's Peace River Country, this is the perfect opportunity.

For two days, you'll travel through beauty and history that will remain with you forever.

Plan on arriving in Grande Prairie on Wednesday, June 19 (don't forget to reserve your room at the Sandman Hotel – 780-513-5555),

where we'll meet for cocktails and munchies in the hotel's lounge in the evening.

Thursday will see the group travel through the heart of the region aboard an air-conditioned motor coach, experiencing some of the area's unique agriculture, its rich Francophone culture, and its earliest history.

The first day ends at Fairview College, where we'll have a barbecue, and participate in a fun golf game on the College's golf course. Lots of prizes available, and golfing

talent is not required.

We overnight at the College, and next day, we will continue to experience the region's economic diversity and hospitality.

The Peace Country has a character all its own. It's a land where it's still possible to run into original homesteaders and farmers who are among the finest in the nation.

Throughout it all is a diversity and an energy that will amaze you.

ACC wins Gold Quill award

The Alberta Cattle Commission (ACC) recently won an International Association of Business Communicators Gold Quill Award for their RanchERS campaign.

According to Joanne Lemke, ACC manager of public affairs, the ACC campaign

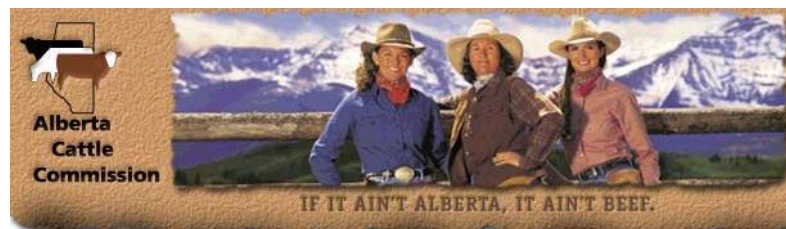
was judged out of more than 1,300 entries from around the world.

The ACC will be honoured at a gala banquet in Chicago June 10.

For more than 25 years, the International Gold Quill Awards Program has been the hallmark of excellence in

business communications.

The RanchERS *If it ain't Alberta, it ain't Beef* entry was named the best by a panel of judges from around the world. The campaign – using cowboys – was introduced at the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympic Games.



Meet a new AFWA member:

Tamara Stecyk is a freelance journalist based in Nanton, 40 minutes drive south of Calgary.

Tamara gained experience writing agricultural stories while working for the Brooks Bulletin for four years.

Since starting her business, Publish It!, her work has appeared in the Nanton News, the High River Times, Business in Calgary and Profile, the Alberta Chamber of Commerce magazine.

Tamara is interested in writing about business, agriculture, women's issues, artists and social issues.

Tamara is also completing a certificate in basic public relations through the continuing education department at Mount Royal College, Calgary, and is an assistant workshop facilitator for YouthInk Publications Society, a non-profit organization that promotes literacy skills in youth through journalism.

When she is not writing or working for YouthInk, Tamara can be found making pottery, hiking with her husband or playing with her two cats.

AdFarm, Parallel join forces

by Adam Reid

Two of Calgary's agriculture-focused advertising agencies are planning to join forces to create one of the largest agriculture-exclusive ad agencies in North America.

AdFarm, whose primary client roster includes Dow AgroSciences, Bayer Crop



Protection and Agricore United, is joining forces with the agriculture division of Parallel, which has been working with the Aventis CropScience account for more than a decade.

The new agency, under the AdFarm moniker, will employ more than 50 people and will have offices in Calgary, Guelph and Kansas City, Missouri.

It's anticipated that Canadian

parallel

advertising and public relations for the newly formed Bayer CropScience (the result of the merger between Bayer Crop Protection and Aventis CropScience) will reside with the new agency.

Details of the merger are available at www.axia.com/company/news/.

Canola Learning Centre partners with producers

by Simone Demers Collins

Growing is knowing. And who know more about canola production than the farmers who grow it.

At the 2001 Calgary Stampede, it was obvious that producers who volunteered at the Canola Learning Centre (CLC) were passionate about what they grew, and their farm business.



The group did so well, in fact, that organizers are expanding the program and have invited producers from across Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and parts of B.C. to volunteer for one day

each during the 2002 Stampede.

Dow AgroSciences Canada Inc. will be hosting the farmers during their stay in Calgary and have spearheaded a new display to help explain Canadian canola production.



Each provincial canola grower association is recruiting members for this year's Calgary Stampede CLC.

It's a big commitment for farmers to be away from their farm business for three days in July. However, many producers see representing farming and the canola industry as a great opportunity to tell the story of canola, help educate

consumers about agriculture, and have some family summer fun.

"Oil To Live By" is the theme of the 2002 CLC.

Dow AgroSciences Canada Inc., along with the Alberta Canola Producers Commission and the Calgary Stampede Hay and Seed Committee, started the CLC in 2000.

Farmers, dietitians, and members of the Alberta agriculture industry will be working together to welcome visitors and to teach them about canola, right from seeding to consumption, during this year's Stampede, July 4-14.



Comment

This urban daily supports agriculture

by Will Verboven

I am always bemused as to how many farmers and ranchers have unshakable opinions about big city newspapers even though very few of them actually read them on a regular basis. They have a perception that newspapers either ignore agricultural stories or only print those that have sensational value. For many urban newspapers, there is probably some truth to that perspective, but there is an exception.

Over the past year I have been writing an opinion column on agriculture and environment related topics for the Calgary Herald (I still have my day job as editor of Alberta Beef Magazine). That experience has given me some insight into how a large urban daily deals with an avalanche of news and opinion that pours in every day. Agriculture is just one of many interests clamouring for an editor's attention.

Now I should point out that the Calgary Herald has a long and proud history of agricultural reporting and opinion. It was after all for many years the home of that legendary godfather of Canadian farm writers, John Schmidt.

After his departure, ag reporting did falter for some time. But in recent years the Herald has expanded its coverage of ag news with a fulltime business reporter assigned to that beat. In

addition they use freelancers and stringers for additional ag related stories.

My role as a regular opinion columnist on agriculture is a somewhat unique position at a big city daily. But it does show that the Herald takes agriculture very seriously - contrary to some views in the countryside.

I would suggest that few, if any, big city dailies match the Herald's coverage of agriculture. I dare say that the number of ag related stories and opinion that the Herald publishes in most months even exceeds the number of stories published in monthly agricultural trade publications.

What has annoyed many in the agriculture community is the predilection of many city newspapers to publish what seem to be sensational and negative stories about agriculture whilst ignoring the positive stories. For instance, it seemed like any fanciful story with the headline "mad cow" in it was published ad nauseum.

What the farming community needs to understand is that most city folk have an extremely limited understanding and interest in agriculture. Most assume that food appears magically at the local grocery store.

City newspapers not only understand that reality but have to compete for the fickle consumer's attention. That means agriculture related

stories and opinions need to be written in a way that a city reader can find some personal connection (perhaps city folk can relate to being "mad"). The result is that such news and opinion may not always be favourable to agriculture.

In a way the Herald by providing a forum for critical opinion contributes a much needed service not found in the agricultural media. That media because it is beholden to a narrow base of advertisers and subscribers usually avoids controversial opinion.

I expect the Calgary Herald will continue with its genuine interest in agriculture news, issues and opinion. One editor made it clear to me that whether city folk understand it or not they all have one critical connection to agriculture and it happens every time they put food in their mouths and they need to know that!



Do you have a comment to make about the state of agriculture and/or agricultural coverage and farm writing/broadcasting? E-mail your opinion for the September issue of Scoops by August 19 to the editor, janetkanters@shaw.ca

Meet a new AFWA member:

Deb Craig has discovered the joys of agriculture mid-career. The 46-year-old writer from Fairview, Alberta, began a few years ago with a tiny farm, and immediately accumulated a strange assortment of livestock 'a la Wingfield Farm'.

"I now have a number of life's questions answered," says Craig. "Like, how many goats can you fit in the cargo area of a Ford Bronco? And how do you clean it afterward?"

Permanently hooked by the lure of the land, Deb left the world of newspaper and radio, and now works in the communications department of Fairview College, where she also studies agriculture part time. In her spare time, she freelances to a variety of farm publications.

"I love to write about every aspect of agriculture," notes Craig. "I'm studying Soils this fall, so I even look forward to writing about dirt!"

Guest Column

Time Alberta started putting people first

by Henry F. Heald

I have seen a fair bit of Alberta in the past 70 years. In the summer of 1933 when I was four years old, I sat between my parents on the front seat of a 1927 Model A Ford as the family drove across the prairies to escape the depression and seek work in Ontario. I remember a rodeo in Claresholm, the hot springs in Banff and the fires of Turner Valley.

Since then, I've driven the rural area in the late fall and seen farmers combining all night to take advantage of dry weather. I've flown over the irrigated southern areas in a Twin Otter to show Egyptian engineers how we farm in this country.

I've towed a green and white trailer from village to village in autumn as I campaigned with Bob Thompson in a federal election. And I've driven half the length of the province in early spring while the sun sparkled on the still snow-covered mountains as I visited local newspapers and radio stations to tell them what Canadians were doing overseas in CIDA's international development programs.

My visits to the province, arguably the most beautiful in the country and unarguably the richest, have been unfailingly pleasant, although tempered recently with a touch of sadness. Sad to see the beauty and the resources

being exploited by a political and corporate elite that worships the almighty dollar and fails to recognize the needs and concerns of the ordinary Albertan.

The oil patch executives and field personnel enjoy their climate-controlled homes and in some cases air-purified field offices. When they want to enjoy the outdoors they drive their air-conditioned cars or they fly to the unspoiled beauty spots of Jasper, Banff, Kananaskis or Waterton Lakes. So their lives are buffered from the polluting activities of their industry.

But if you put a gas processing plant or an oil well upwind of a farm, you interfere with the life style and the livelihood of the local farmers for the rest of their lives. They see the health of their families and their livestock and their crops deteriorate, but are powerless to do anything about it.

Alberta boasts some of the most progressive environmental legislation in the world. But legislation is useless if it is not enforced. And it is not only in the exploitation of petrochemicals that their cavalier attitude exists. It is the same with the forest and agricultural resources. The final approval for factory farms rests with the provincial politicians and

bureaucrats. So when the businessmen from Taiwan arrive with their pockets full of money wanting to build a 6,000-sow hog barn in a rural community, they may have to face some embarrassing questions from municipal councilors and residents who are most affected, but the final decision is made in Edmonton.

Yes, Alberta can develop factory farms to produce 10 million hogs a year, but why would you want to, when the impact on the environment and on rural society is so devastating?

Alberta was developed by farmers and foresters who harvested the trees and the crops, and raised livestock on the prairie grasslands. And when the coal seams and the tar sands run out and the gas and oil wells run dry, it will be the renewable resources of farm and forest that society will turn to for its energy needs as well as its food. Will they still be available? Or will the soil and water resources be too polluted to be able to produce?

It is not impossible to access the petrochemicals in a manner that doesn't pollute the land and the atmosphere. The technology exists and will be refined even more if society insists that pollution is unacceptable. It simply means that when you extract the oil or gas or coal, you


take all the elements that come out of the ground and you find ways to process and market them.

What is required is a change of mindset that recognizes that there are no such things as waste products - there are just different resources to be processed. Just as farmers have learned to treat every part of the crop or animal as a nutrient to be used in improved food production; so the oil patch can learn to find a use for every element that comes out of the ground.

A far-seeing visionary once expounded the theory that there is enough in the world for everyone's need, but not for everyone's greed. The question is whether your goal is to make money for your industry or to build a happy, satisfied society. The two are not mutually exclusive. Alberta is in a unique position to demonstrate that healthy, happy people are the foundation of a sustainable, productive community.

Henry F. Heald is an honorary member of the Canadian Farm Writers' Federation, and is based in Ottawa. In 2001, a new CFWF awards category was named in honor of Heald, recognizing the top three agricultural Web sites.


This and that.....

 The Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) is currently conducting trials with electronic (radio frequency identification) tags.

The trial will determine the feasibility of the tags, and will evaluate the cost benefits of widespread use of the tags in the National Identification Program.


A total of 35,000 tags will be tested during the length of the trial.

For more information, contact Julie Stitt, CCIA general manager, 403-275-2083.

 Over 30,000 acres of Ducks Unlimited Canada's conservation lands will be opened to Alberta landowners in need of forage this year.

The majority of the land being opened lies in central Alberta where DU's grasslands are concentrated as a result of conservation programs targeting local cow-calf producers.

For more information, contact Leigh Patterson, DU communications specialist, 780-489-2002. Or e-mail her at l_patterson@ducks.ca.

 The Southern Applied Research Association (SARA) produced and released a new magazine this past spring.

Farming Smarter highlights the newest cropping systems and leading edge technology for southern Alberta farmers.

SARA expects to continue producing *Farming Smarter* on an annual basis.

For more information, contact Helen McMenamin, SARA, ph 403-328-4939, fax 403-328-4039. Or e-mail her at sara-research@telusplanet.net

Meet a new AFWA member:

Carolyn King is a freelance writer and editor with over 10 years of experience.

She specializes in environmental issues in agriculture.

She lives and works in one of those little stucco bungalows in Edmonton.

Coming events in Alberta

JUNE 2002

June 8-9: Alberta Junior Shorthorn Show. Bashaw Ag Grounds. Ph: Jackie Northey, 780-372-3648; E-mail: agsoc@cable-lynx.net.

June 14-15: Ag Conference 2002. Medicine Hat Regional College. Ph: Karoline Fox, 403-529-3844.

June 21-22: Peace Country Bison Association Summer Field Day. Rural Hall, High Level. Ph: Robert Boos, 780-836-2689. Web site www.bisoncentre.com.

JULY 2002

July 2-3: Alberta Junior Hereford Show.
July 11-13: Canadian National Junior Angus Show.
July 14-16: Alberta 4-H Beef Heifer Show.

Bashaw Ag Grounds. Ph: Jackie Northey, 780-372-3648; E-mail: agsoc@cable-lynx.net.

July 19-20: Falher Honey Festival. Ph: Dan Dibbel, 780-837-2364; E-mail: ddibbelt@telusplanet.net.

AUGUST 2002

Aug 1: Lacombe Field Day. AAFRD Crop Research Centre. Ph: Carol Dyson, 403-782-4641; E-mail: carol.dyson@gov.ab.ca.

Aug. 15-17: National Young Cattlemen Program & Western Canadian All Breed Heifer Show. Bashaw Ag Grounds. Ph: Jackie Northey, 780-372-3648; E-mail: agsoc@cable-lynx.net.

Aug. 24: Breeding Sheep & Goat Show & Sale. Lloydminster. Ph: Lloydminster Exhibition Association, 306-825-5571.