

June 2004
Volume 11, Issue 2

Scoops

Quarterly publication of the Alberta Farm Writers' Association

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Scoops

is published quarterly and is free to members of the Alberta Farm Writers' Association

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Wasn't that a party!

by Edna Boil

Rained on, treated like cattle, exposed to hazardous chemicals, threatened by wild animals, forced to gag down both low and high carb foods, and in the end they voted two members to leave the group to carry on. Was it a combination of Survivor and Fear Factor reality TV shows? No. Just the best darn Alberta Farm Writers' Tour of 2004.

Hot on the heels of the highly successful 1988 winter Olympics, Calgary and area hosted another grand gathering of powerful people in mid-June as farm writers and communicators from across the province gathered in Okotoks for two action-packed days of no-nonsense investigative journalism.

They came by the bus load from as far away as Botha, Edson and High River for the 49th annual "Be There or Be Square" tour.

"It was truly a moving, life changing experience," said Larry Thomas, of Cattlemen Magazine, co-president and co-organizer of this year's event. "I'll need months of therapy after this, and if they ever come to this area again, I am definitely moving."

The tour was a classic memory-maker. "I will certainly be telling everyone at work about this experience," said a mildly traumatized Harry Sugimoto, Royal Bank, Strathmore. "After standing ankle deep in cow manure for hours and that close encounter with a grizzly (see related story page 3), I not only had to be tested for pasturella, but I am seriously looking at my legal options. There was nothing in the agenda about this."

Co-president Lee Hart, Meristem Information Resources,

Calgary was unavailable for comment. He was still in post-buffet withdrawal at press time, only able to slur out something about "more Saskatoon tarts" before drifting back into a coma.

"You pay your money, you take your chances," is all Janet Kanters, AFWA secretary-treasurer and co-organizer would say.

"We promised them a bus ride and some food and that's what they got. Anything of educational or entertainment value is purely an accidental bonus.

"No one was seriously hurt or permanently disfigured so I'd say it went well."

Cont'd on page 2

Farm writers loaded up and ready to go!



Wasn't that a party!

(Cont'd from page 1) The two-day tour was launched with a Thursday-evening semi-formal reception at the Best Western Okotoks Lodge, sponsored



From left: Dawn Ius, Carla Babichuk and Jodi Hesse groove in the hospitality suite.

by Alberta Canola Producers Commission. About 15 of the 24 registered conference delegates attended the hospitality suite to get first dibs on the overstuffed SWAG bags,

and dine and dance away the evening.

Western Producer's Mary MacArthur was resplendent, appearing in a mauve taffeta gown, with puff sleeves, off-the-shoulder neckline and an empire waistline, looking much like Glenda the beautiful Witch of the West of Wizard of Oz fame. The tiara was a nice touch, Mary.



Legendary radio personality Chuck Greig.

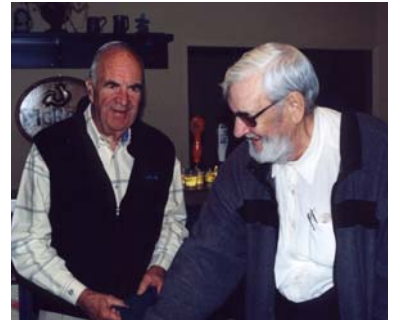
The big mystery of the evening: who stole 16-month-old Sarah Stecyk's soother? Parents Tamara and Bill were quite perplexed over the incident. And was it just a coincidence that Chuck Greig, former AM 1140 star, left so suddenly after – what was it – three diet cokes? But who's counting? Just mail the soother back, Chuck, and no one will ask any questions.

For a less formal flavour, a few gathered later at the *In Cahoots* bar down the block just to keep Marion Owen and Gail Halseth company. I'm not sure when they poured that pair out of the bar, but they are sure lucky gals to have rocks like Bill and Ross stand by them.

Look for more tour photos, as well as **Seen and Heard**, on pages 3, 4 and 5.

Fantasy Friday...

It was a two day whirlwind tour that bridged both fantasy and surrealism. Friday it was Nufarm ag chemical manufacturers, Big Rock Brewery, Agrium nitrogen fertilizer plant, dinner at the Saskatoon Farm, and a visit with the Alberta Pork people.



Beer baron Ed McNally, left, greets old pal and Alberta farm writer John Schmidt at Big Rock Brewery.



Hard hats were de rigueur at Nufarm.

Surreal Saturday...

Saturday, breakfast in Black Diamond and a visit with poultry producer Reg Ference, a tour of the Bar U National Historic Ranch south of Longview, a presentation by the Pekisko Land Owners Association, followed by lunch in Longview and a tour of OH Ranch, the guest of Bud Maynard.



Gordon Cartright, Ken Stiles and Mac Blades of the Pekisko Land Owners Association (above). At the OH Ranch (below).



Writer trades office shoes for rubber boots

Deb Craig of Fairview College's Communications Department is being put out to pasture. Literally.

This July, when Fairview College officially becomes the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), she'll be heading out to the "back forty" of the campus.

"I've had a hobby farm, I've taken agriculture courses, I attend agriculture conferences as often as possible. But I wanted some hands-on training," says Craig. "Due to the merger, our entire department becomes redundant at the end of June and we were asked what we wanted to do instead. I knew right away I wanted to farm!"

The 48-year-old writer will be assisting the college's farm manager with a number of new research projects as well as helping with the day-to-day operations. The college raises cattle, pigs, sheep and horses.

"I know not everyone wants to trade in their office shoes for rubber boots, especially at my age," says Craig. "But it really is my dream job! And I think I'll be a better agriculture writer for the experience."

Community concerns about the fate of the college farm after the merger have been laid to rest.

"NAIT is very excited about the farm," Craig stresses. "There are plans for a number of new short-term courses for producers, which will help fill a training niche here in the north.

"We still teach Animal Health, Turfgrass, Horsemanship and Horse Training. And the campus will continue to host agri conferences and seminars, as well as support all our local 4-H groups as we've always done."

THANK YOU...

Alberta Canola Producers Commission
Ground Words Communications
Alberta Pork
AdFarm
Canadian Angus Association
John Schmidt
Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
Meristem Information Resources
Hart Writing Services
Canadian Cattlemen Magazine
Adculture Group Inc.
Best Western Okotoks Lodge
Tamara Stecyk – Publish It!
Adam Reid – Alberta Express
Alberta Egg Producers
Chuck Greig
Caitlynn Reesor – CFCW Radio
Nufarm
Big Rock Brewery
Agrium – Greg Yong
Paul & Karen Hamer – The Saskatoon Farm
Reg & Erna Ference
David 'Doc' Paulsen/Cory Brown – Bar U Ranch
National Historic Site of Canada
Bud Maynard – OH Ranch

...for making AFWA Tour 2004 a success!

'Seen and Heard' at AFWA 2004

by Edna Boil

A hearty Humpty's breakfast sponsored by **Tracey Fiest** of Ground Words Communications launched Friday. Too bad the southern Alberta crowd is losing her to the back woods of Ardrossan. Jobs and families move. Cochrane's loss is Sherwood Park's gain.

Was that **Wendy Dudley** the freelancer, author, environmental activist filling out a job application for a Nufarm hostess? Rumor's circulated she thought Nufarm was a

wonderful place to work!" Not sure in what context that was spoken. Most likely her heart is still entrenched in Donkey Town just west of Millarville. (Okay, burros – whatever.)

Hey, wasn't that the foxy old **John Schmidt**, the Exchequer of Chancellor, and **Bard "The Buff" Haddrell**, Alberta Ag communications czar who just happened to park themselves near the Big Rock beer sample bar? Just a lucky accident?

(cont'd on page 4)



Awaiting the pork banquet on Friday night.

'Seen and Heard' at AFWA 2004



Jodi Hesse and Ross Halseth sizing each other up.



Jennifer Cockrall-King and Terry Juzak on information overload.



Wendy Dudley and Mary MacArthur compare notes.



Larry Thomas (right) regales Chuck Greig with a yarn.

(cont'd from page 3)

John, who's looking a little older, maybe moving a little slower, but still feisty, was the gracious sponsor of bus refreshments. You can never go wrong with Kool-Aid and Tang.

While nitrogen processing barely edged out 2,4-D bottling for compelling topics, doing donuts inside a quarter mile long urea storage building with a tour bus sure had **Natalie Scollard** of Meristem squealing with delight. Doesn't take much to excite those young account managers.

Alberta Pork's **Roy Kruse** and **James Ducs** grilled some fine pork loin for dinner at the Saskatoon Farm. While **Paul Hodgman**, assistant general manager of Alberta Pork proved a compelling after dinner speaker.

Too bad **Jodi Hesse** of Alberta Pork and **Dawn Ius** of Alberta Turkey were kibitzing in the corner and missed part of the talk, but then they just won't be as prepared as the rest during the post-tour exam.

While Paul was good, the real dessert, however, was the table of sweets laid on by Audrey and Colleen of the Saskatoon Farm. Was that **Ben Graham** of AdFarm making three trips to sample Saskatoon tarts? But who's counting?

What was with **Jennifer Cockrall-King** and **Terry Juzak**, Editors of the Edible Prairie Journal collecting material at every stop. Menus perhaps, but napkins, silverware and condiments? Come on. I think that's pushing the "research" excuse.

Trust **Adam Reid**, Alberta Express editor, to know the shortest route to the start of the buffet line. The only man I've ever seen who could get sparks off a plastic knife and fork.

Did someone say **Carla Babichuk** of Alberta Milk was complaining there was no milk among the bus refreshments? She seemed to manage okay with what was in the coolers. But who's counting?

Legendary demo derby driver **Jack Howell**, of Call of the Land, tried to convince everyone that some "mysterious" vehicle backed into his rented government van in the hotel parking lot. Did someone say they saw Jack driving **Marion Owen** and **Gail Halseth** back from *In Cahoots* the night before? Need I say more?



Big Rock Brewery.

What has four wheels, 24 talking heads and is full of crap? You guessed it a stock trailer full of Alberta Farm Writers heading off to some ungodly location on the OH Ranch. Too wet for the bus to travel the ranch roads, so the crew eagerly piled into the trailer which host **Bud Maynard** pulled out to the middle of the 20,000 acre ranch with a 4x4 pickup.

What has no wheels, 24 talking heads and is full of crap? That's right, a group of farm writers outside a stock trailer, looking across the beautiful Highwood River valley, where cattle graze and elk roam.

(cont'd on page 5)

'Seen and Heard' at AFWA 2004



Saturday's breakfast featured Reg and Erna Ference.



James Ducs (left) and Roy Kruse serve up the grub.



The "scenic" tour.

(cont'd from page 4)

Good work to **Harry "Hawkeye" Sugimoto** for spotting the grizzly (see related story this page) that emerged from the bushes to cross a pasture about 400 yards from where the AFWA group stood. Exciting moments for all as the bear calmly wandered for a couple minutes before catching the sight or sound of the group and taking off. Harry also spotted a half dozen coyotes frolicking in a pasture on the other side of the valley. He's a regular AI Oeming.

Was that **Bill Owen** comparing tattoos with the bikers at the Longview Saloon during the Saturday lunch

(Edna Boil is Scoops society columnist, and author of the best-selling journalism reference book, "Who Needs Facts?")

break? Did anyone see where that Go Flames Go tattoo was?

Caitlynn Reesor of CFCW radio helping poor **Mary MacArthur** clean up her mauve pumps after the ride in that stock trailer, overheard saying "I told you it would be casual!"

We're still waiting for **Chuck Greig** to 'fess up in the 'stolen soother' case. Ve haf vays ov makink you talk!

A couple firsts noted by **Ross Halseth**. First, Gail was able to stay standing during both days of the tour. Second, **Tamara Steyck** actually offered to be AFWA president and host the 2005 tour at Edson.

Grizzly or black? The 'official' word...

It's a cow, it's a steer, it's a deer, it's a bear! But what type? The colour hints at a grizzly bear, but the size and shape point toward black bear.

Scoop Kanters decided to take the question to one-in-the-know, her hubby Fish & Wildlife Officer Garry Shmorong.

"Black bear, absolutely," stated Shmorong officiously. "I'd say a yearling."

So there you have it. With an endorsement like that, why even bother with a second opinion? Huh? You gotta problem wid dat?

