

March 2003
Volume 10, Issue 1

**Individual
Highlights:**

Remembering Frank Jacobs	2
AFWA author	3
Comment	4
Coming agricultural events	5

Scoops

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

Editor: Janet Kanters
PO Box 2147
Strathmore, AB T1P 1K1
Ph: 403-901-1160
Fax: 403-934-9263
E-mail: janetkanters@shaw.ca

Scoops

Quarterly publication of the Alberta Farm Writers' Association

AFWA tour 2003 scheduled for June 19-20

by Jack Howell

We've been receiving a few gently worded inquiries regarding the farm writers' tour, most especially from members wanting to know what dates have been chosen.

It's nice to know that you are all planning ahead so you can join the tour to be amazed and entertained by the interesting agricultural operations that have been chosen for your touring pleasure. In answer to the most pressing question, the AFWA Tour will be on June 19 and 20, 2003.



Plans are to visit north-eastern Alberta, and a few stops have already been 'scoped-out'.

Ideas for tour stops include Iron River Hutterite Colony, where they use manure to power all of their heating and lighting. We also plan a stop at Highland Feeders; Lakeland College; Windsor salt plant in Elk Point (someone remember to bring the tequila!); and, Bob Plum's bison ranch. Plum has successfully cornered an export market, supplying bison meat to a restaurant chain in England.



If you have any suggestions for other points of interest in this area, please contact either of your presidents, and we'll be happy to contact the operation and see about adding it to the itinerary.

Jack Howell: Ph: 780-422-3981; E-mail:

jack.howell@gov.ab.ca

Lee Anne Palutke: Ph: 780-422-6958; E-mail:

lee.anne.palutke@gov.ab.ca



TOUR 2003

Alberta Agriculture's *Call of the Land* turns 50

Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development's *Call of the Land* turns 50 on April 1 this year. The five-day per week, nine-minute agricultural information and extension radio program is aired on 22 Alberta commercial radio stations and two in northern B.C. It reaches a daily audience of over 110,000. The program has been hosted for the past 33 years by AFWA member Jack Howell.

Aimed at rural Albertans, the program's mandate is to keep the agricultural community current on the latest agricultural technologies, research findings, production methods and marketing trends, as well as government programs and policies. Guest interviews are an integral part of each broadcast. As well, the program serves as an advertising vehicle for regional and provincial agricultural meetings.

If all goes as planned, Everett McCrimmon, who began the program in 1953, will be a guest on the April 1st program, talking about how and why it began.

Former AFWA members who also hosted the program in years past include Don Potter, John Andrew, Warren Wismer, Doug Pettit and Scott Flewitt.

Keeping Frank Jacobs' memory alive

by Jack Howell

At a meeting of the AFWA on Thursday, Jan. 30 in Edmonton, members discussed how best to remember the late Frank Jacobs, one of the AFWA and CFWF founding members.

Member Tracey Feist forwarded some information about an application that her group submitted to the Calgary Stampede Foundation, with funding to be split between two agriculture journalism students. Unfortunately, the Calgary Stampede Foundation restricts recipients to southern Alberta.

After discussion during the Jan. 30 meeting, members felt this wasn't an option the AFWA would choose to dedicate to Frank's memory. We wish Tracey and her group success in securing this funding, and we hope that she will report on the success of the application in a future *Scoops* issue.

After more discussion, it was agreed that the AFWA executive will pursue the possibility of establishing a bur-



Frank Jacobs

sary for a student from western Canada who enrolls in the University of Guelph's Agricultural Communications Degree Program. This program is the first of its kind in Canada (for more info, check out www.cfwf.ca, click on 'NEWS', click on 'Announcements and News', then click on *Major support unveiled for new communication initiative*).

U of Guelph's Owen Roberts has been contacted regarding our proposal, and we are currently waiting for his response to determine the amount of funding needed to establish the bursary.

AFWA members have indicated their support for this

idea, with many writing that they would be willing to personally donate various amounts.

Frank Jacobs was also a member of the Rotary Club, and that club, along with Frank's long-time employer – *Cattlemen* magazine – has committed to a one-time donation, with amounts yet to be determined.

AFWA member Ron McCullough, also a member of the Rotary Club, has graciously offered to investigate the feasibility of establishing an interest-bearing endowment under the auspices of the Rotary Club of Edmonton Strathcona, with funds flowing directly to the Frank Mark Jacobs Scholarship. The Rotary Club's positive response was received about one month ago, and should we decide to go this route, they will administer the fund. They will also issue tax receipts to members wishing to make personal donations to this fund.

We will have more information by the tour dates.

Meet a new AFWA member:

After a daily newspaper career spanning 30 years, during which he left agriculture reporting to those with the necessary expertise, Peter Scott is paying more attention to fields and pastures when he drives Highway 3 outside his home city of Lethbridge.

Peter left the daily grind at the end of 2001 as managing editor of the Lethbridge *Herald* and opened Scott Writing Services.

Called on to fashion several pieces on agriculture for a variety of publications, he discovered how much he needed to learn.

While the catch-up process has been intense in recent months, one question remains: "Is there anyone alive who can tell the difference between canola and mustard?"

Ph: 403-394-6772

E-mail: peter.scott@scottwriting.com

www.scottwriting.com

Web site: www.scottwriting.com

RENEW YOUR AFWA MEMBERSHIP TODAY

PLEASE SEND YOUR CHEQUE FOR \$40
TO ENSURE YOU STAY UP-TO-DATE
ON AFWA HAPPENINGS!

SEND CHEQUE, PAYABLE TO AFWA, TO:
ALBERTA FARM WRITERS' ASSOCIATION
C/O JANET KANTERS, SEC./TREAS
P.O. BOX 2147
STRATHMORE, AB T1P 1K1

Let loose – write a book!

by Wendy Dudley

Well, it's done. Well, almost. After almost a year of plugging away with thoughts, words and pencil sketches, I am pleased to announce the birth of my book, a collection of stories and drawings about living in the country.

Entitled *Don't Name the Ducks*, it will be published this fall by Fifth House.

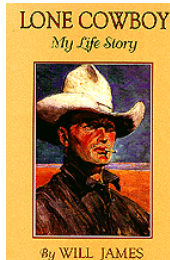
The book has much to do with the silly things I have done here in the foothills, from believing my ducks could peacefully wander through fields of coyotes and beneath skies shadowed by hawks, to my hunt for the source of bizarre odours (in other words, my discovery of the sweet world of septic tanks).

The book is ripe with wilderness reflections, my thoughts on sharing our land with cougars and bears, and my belief in the importance of children learning they are part of – not separate from – the natural world.



Part whimsy and part essayical, it tells the story of how my mother and I returned to what mattered most – the land. In travelling full circle, I have surrounded myself with those things that touched me as a

child: sky and earth, and the creatures that inhabit the world beyond my front door. Readers will meet Lucy the mule, and donkeys Raven and Georgia, two comical canines, and Hud, the blind cat.



Raised on such literature as the cowboy books by Will James, and introduced to farming

through a summer job on a dairy farm, I came home when I moved to Burro Alley Ranch. As anyone who lives in the country knows, it can be hard work, but it is a life my mother and I have fully embraced. Scything hay, stacking bales, cutting firewood and training animals. All by hand, and without hired help. "Two ol' crows," some folks say. "Two broads and a mule," others giggle.

My dad, who broke horses, taught art and guided wilderness trips, would have loved Burro Alley. He died several years ago, but his spirit lives on through my words and sketches.

As some of you know, the idea for this book was

launched this past summer, after I was launched from the back of my mule. Striking a rock, I broke my hip, and was served a four-month sentence of confinement. No work, no driving, and crutch-walking only.

For three years, I had tried writing this book, but little time and many tasks (such as making a living) always got in the way. But now time was plentiful.

Writing this book was an adventure, a roller coaster of peaked highs and cavernous self-doubts. I know from working part time in a book store how many thousands of books line the shelves, and how few are ever discovered by the reading public. I know that a book cover can make or break a title, and that publicity can boost sales like nothing else.

No, I don't expect to be on Oprah, but I do intend to be shameless about letting the world know that I have finally left the equivalent of scratches on a cave wall.

So for all you writers who want to make the leap to being an author, do it! Don't expect to make any money, but take solace in knowing that you have left something behind that you can call your very own.

Meet a new AFWA member:

Some 20 years ago, city born and raised Brenda White jumped into agriculture with both feet, after picking up a Bachelor of Science degree in Home Economics (major: Food and Nutrition) from the University of Manitoba.

First in Ontario, but mostly in Alberta (from the Peace Region to the deep south), Brenda has worked as an employee and as a freelancer with provincial agriculture and health departments, food commodity groups and various food/nutrition/agriculture-related organizations and associations all the while bridging the gap between those who produce our food and the rest of us who merely reap its benefits.

As Marketing and Communications Manager with the Alberta Egg Producers Board since 1998, she spends her days spreading the word that Alberta eggs are not only some of the safest in the world, but have been produced by farmers who lead the country with their humane animal care practices.

And as far as Brenda's stance on "which came first...?" Well, I don't think I have to say any more!

Ph: 403-250-1197

E-mail: whitebj@telusplanet.net

Other member news.....

- Alberta freelance farm writer Tamara Stecyk (with help of husband Bill) gave birth Feb. 24 to Sarah Rebecca Stecyk, who weighed in at six pounds, 15 and a half ounces at the High River Hospital.
- Janet Kanters is back in the freelance game. Contact her at 403-901-1160, or e-mail janetkanters@shaw.ca.

Comment

Not all lobby groups are what they seem

by Will Verboven

Those of us who work in the media business are all too familiar with the profusion of lobby and special interest groups. It doesn't matter what the issue is – some group, committee or cabal insists that they represent the concerned and are on the side of the righteous.

At one time, lobby groups represented members and their vested interests. Some of those still exist, but about 30 years ago, we saw the rise of special interest groups that pursued specific causes, such as whales, seals, clean air, etc. They were run by admirable people who had altruistic intentions.

Many were quite successful, but therein lays the temptation to turn the cause into a business. It's what happened to Greenpeace, World Wildlife Fund and other organizations that started out as single-issue groups. As the donations poured in, they – like any corporation – had to diversify into other causes in order to stay in business.

This situation did not go unnoticed by those that could see profit in a cause. No bet-

ter example exists than Ralph Nader (now a self-admitted millionaire), who created an organization for himself called Public Citizen. That proved so successful that 19 other related groups were spawned.

One of the more notorious offspring is the Center for Science in the Public Interest. Michael Jacobsen, the founder of the organization, is quoted as stating, "We can find something wrong with almost anything." This individual has been used by the CBC for his dubious expertise on food issues.

Many of today's special interest groups are self-appointed and do not represent anybody except themselves. They are run by PR masters who create an aura of expertise on issues. They attract attention because the media has been duped into believing that they represent informed opinion. Not surprisingly, all these groups attract millions in donations from gullible citizens.

The last few years, more insidious groups have sprung up, called 'bounty hunters'. Under the guise of being environmental groups,

they are created by lawyers to launch class-action lawsuits against corporations. The goal is to force businesses to settle out of court to avoid bad PR. The instigating lawyers then collect outrageous legal fees.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and his Waterkeeper Alliance are accused of this type of activity. For example, to pursue his self-interest, he has stated, "Intensive hog operations are more dangerous than Osama Bin Laden." Guess who his groups will be suing next?

The special interest group business in North America attracts billions of dollars annually in donations and grants. It has also attracted the unscrupulous to exploit those riches. We in the media need to become more aware of who they actually are and what they really represent.

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 June issue of Scoops by May 23rd, 2003, to the editor, janetkanters@shaw.ca



Alberta herd testing vital in disease prevention

by Cindy McCreath

Over the past few weeks, randomly selected beef cattle producers in Alberta were issued invitations that could save them thousands of dollars in lost production.

The invitation was to take part in the national Production Limiting Diseases Survey, a joint industry-government project that will determine the prevalence of Johne's Disease, Neosporosis, Bovine Leukosis and Bovine Viral Diarrhea (BVD) in Canadian beef cattle.

These diseases cause economic losses to produc-

ers and the industry through unthrifty cattle and lowered reproduction. They also impact Canada's ability to trade live cattle, semen and embryos.

The \$1,000 cost of herd testing is covered by the study for those producers who respond to the invitation. Participants will receive their herd's test results, which will remain confidential from the rest of the industry.

Herds may suffer from low levels of these diseases without the producer being aware. Infection with one or

more of these diseases in a 50-cow herd could cost the herd owner over \$2,000 in lost production each year.

Results from all the herds tested will be compiled to give a picture of the prevalence of these diseases across the country. This is the first step toward determining and promoting management practices that prevent these diseases.

For more information on the program, contact the PLDC Beef Survey 2003 Alberta communications liaison, Janet Kanters, at 403-901-1160, or at janetkanters@shaw.ca.

Coming agricultural events in Alberta

MARCH 2003

Mar. 19: Annual Ag Day Seminar – Rosiland, AB, community hall. Reg, 780-375-3782

Mar. 19: Rainy Creek Soil Conservation Club 8th annual workshop and tradeshow – Blindman Valley Agricultural Centre, Bentley, AB. Harvey Brink, 403-748-1777

Mar. 20-22: Smoky River Agricultural Trade Show – Falher, AB. Roch or Ron, 780-837-2900



Mar 26-29: Northlands Farm and Ranch Show – Edmonton. 1-888-799-2545, ext. 560

Mar. 27: Peace Country Silage Seminar – Rycroft, AB, Community Hall. Leanne or Greg, 1-888-999-7882, ext. 799; 780-835-6799

Mar. 28: High Prairie Silage Seminar – High Prairie, AB, Agriplex. Gary, 780-523-5955

APRIL 2003

Apr. 10: Managing Hard Times on the Farm – McKay Hall, Wildwood, AB. 1-800-814-3935

Apr. 12: Wildrose Opry – Wildwood, AB Almer Real, 780-325-2119



Apr. 26: Llama sale – Beaverlodge, AB, Ag-Plex. Wilf Hartfelder, 780-963-6499

Mar. 29: AB Amateur Quarter Horse Assoc.

MAY 2003

May 3-4: CAMELIDynamics "Tteam" Weekend Clinic – Tell Tale Farm, Bonnyville, AB. Jane Tellier, 780-826-5174

