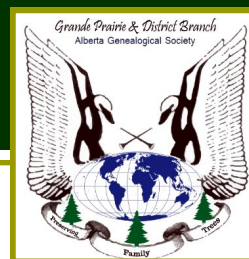


HERITAGE SEEKERS

Volume 43 Issue 1 Spring 2021



President's Message

by Al Bromling, President

Greetings and welcome to summer, hopefully a summer where we begin to rebuild a more normal lifestyle and enjoy the best of our seasons.

While it seems a bit pre-emptive to declare the pandemic over, it is useful to reflect on how our Branch has coped with the challenge of this past 15 months. My first step to thank all of you for re-newing your AGS membership which allows us to sustain our group at the 40-person level. Since the past year has been so limiting in terms of Branch activity, it is appreciated that you have maintained confidence in us as we go forward. We will try not to let you down.

We do hope to convene an in-person general meeting and a public presentation in the early fall. Please bring forward any suggestions you have for a program that members would enjoy. We also hope to test out your interest in virtual presentations from some of the gifted presenters in genealogy. Your Executive Committee has been able to carry on the core operations of the Branch for the past year using virtual delivery platforms so we have developed confidence in the technology. Virtual delivery is not a good replacement for face-to-face engagement with our membership, but I do see more hybrid programs in our future with virtual delivery used to enhance content and lower costs for some of our genealogy learning events.

A word about this issue of **Heritage Seekers**. A few of our members have collaborated to highlight some aspects of the pandemic period. The stories are both light hearted and heartbreaking. We hope you enjoy it.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the staff at the Grande Prairie Public Library who have always responded quickly to our requests for curb side service during the waves of this pandemic. Thanks, Fran and Clayton. Also, kudos to our friends at the South Peace Regional Archives, the Museum and the Peace Country Historical Society who have been committed and creative in keeping best possible service. Again, thanks to all the people who are working hard to keep our society going and doing lots of work both visibly and behind the scenes.

I hope you will all have an enjoyable summer..



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Old Newspapers

Births, Marriages & Deaths as extracted from the
"Grande Prairie Herald" newspaper.



By
B. Joan Bowman
AGS #1108

July 12, 1932 Issue:

- "Car plunges off Taylor Flats Ferry into the swift running Peace River on July 8th - all victims young children of Mr. and Mrs. Otto **HOFFSTROM**. Victims were: Lillian age 13, Florence 11, Olga 9, and Agnes 4.... The family were on their way home from the Dawson Creek annual sports stampede when the accident happened. Funeral July 10th. Internment at Rolla BC."
- "Sexsmith News: Shower for Miss Sarah **MCWHINNIE** July 25th For the past two years, Miss **MCWHINNIE** has been employed in the Sexsmith Public School...."
- "Rycroft News: Miss Annie **FERGUSON**, age 20 years passed away in Grande Prairie July 4th. The funeral took place at the Catholic Mission, west of Rycroft..... Miss **FERGUSON** was the daughter of Mr. St. Pierre **FERGUSON**, one of the first settlers in the Rycroft District...."
- "Hythe News" - Marriage of Harold **EVEREST** and Mildred **BEGON**, both of Dawson Creek. Miss **BEGON** was a resident of Hythe two years ago."
- "Born at the Grande Prairie Municipal Hospital July 1, to Mr. and Mrs. **SUNDERMAN** of Hythe, a daughter."
- "Born at the Grande Prairie Municipal Hospital July 2nd, to Mr. and Mrs. C. **MILLER** of Elmsworth, a son."
- "Born at the Grande Prairie Municipal Hospital July 8th to Mr. and Mrs. I.B. **BENBO** of Grande Prairie, a son."
- "Born at the Grande Prairie Municipal Hospital, July 10th, to Mr. and Mrs. R.N. **REYNOLDS** of Sturgeon Heights, a daughter."

July 19, 1932 Issue: - No birth, Marriages or Deaths found.

July 26, 1932 Issue:

- "The Valleyview and Sturgeon Lake District on Saturday last, learned that Alex **WILLIAMSON**, Jr. was fatally injured while working at the sawmill jointly owned by him and his father, Alex Williamson, Sr..... He leaves to mourn a wife and two small children, his parents and other relatives."
- "Mr. and Mrs. D. **MCPHERSON** of Clairmont celebrated their 25 the Wedding Anniversary...."
- "Old Timer Mrs. B. **ABERNETHY** of Clairmont, age 75, died July 17.... Leaves to mourn, her husband, and one son William at home, three brothers: F. A. **PERKINS** of Momart, Saskatchewan, Cryrus **PERKINS** of Grenfell, Saskatchewan, and W.A. **PERKINS** of Lang, Saskatchewan. Mrs. **MCPHERSON** maiden name was Maria Anne **PERKINS**, eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William **PERKINS** of Victoria County, Ontario, born May 4, 1858. At age 26, moved with her parents to Indian Head, Saskatchewan in 1890. Became the wife of Bruce **ABERNETHY** at Qu Appelle Station. Three children were born to this union.... Moved to Grande Prairie in 1912..... Funeral held at St. Paul's United Church. Rev. J.F. **MCNEIL** officiated."
- "Homestead News: "Born to Mr. and Mrs. Paul **STARK**, July 26, a boy."
- "Funeral for Mr. **MCCULLOUGH** of Valhalla on July 16th. Well known farmer of the district and leaves three daughters and two sons."
- "Goodfare News: Wedding at the Manse July 17th when Mr. **LIEN** of Valhalla married Miss Johanna **BRATT** of Hythe."

Medicine Hat Member Wins the Margaret Kay Bursary

The 2021 Margaret Kay Memorial Bursary has been awarded to **Debra Wickham** of Medicine Hat.

The Executive of the Grande Prairie and District Branch of the Alberta Genealogical Society announced the award on May 28, 2021.

The award is made available by donations to the Margaret Kay Memorial fund and contributions from Casino fundraising by the members of our Branch.

The one thousand five hundred dollar bursary will assist Debra in her studies at the National Institute for Genealogical Studies, the premier Canadian genealogical education institution. She is enrolled in the part time studies distance program at the Institute. Debra has completed 35 of the 40 courses in the program covering a wide area of topics in genealogical research.

Debra was a strong and deserving candidate for the award based on her contributions to genealogy activities in Alberta. She is Treasurer and Casino Chair of the Medicine Hat Branch. She also volunteers with the Research Queries Committee and the Bylaws Committee of the Branch. She was chairperson for the 40th Anniversary Celebration of the Branch. Debra recently hosted two study tours to the Family History Library in Salt Lake City. In April 2021 Debra joined the provincial Executive of AGS as the Board Secretary.

Congratulations, Debra!



Views from the Roots Tech Connect 2021 Virtual Conference

The Branch Annual General Meeting on May 11 included a Report Back Program where several members contributed their views on the Roots Tech Virtual Conference they had attended. It was the first ever totally virtual version of this long-standing event hosted by FamilySearch.org.

Gail Schau liked the format where you could tune into selected pre-recorded sessions at your convenience, pause, resume, etc. She noted that the format enabled participants to be selective and plan a program that met their specific needs even better than a large multi-presenter event at a physical location. She particularly enjoyed learning how to access new Irish genealogy sources on digital sites, as it has been quite difficult previously to research Irish ancestors.

Freddi Bromling also liked the pre-recorded format with being able to leave without being rude and especially having the study notes available. She was pleasantly surprised that there were a few sessions focusing on Dutch research, a few of high quality and was able to connect with a Dutch researcher who is now a Facebook contact and a resource for research. As a free on-line event she said the travel was easy and cheap and the price was right.

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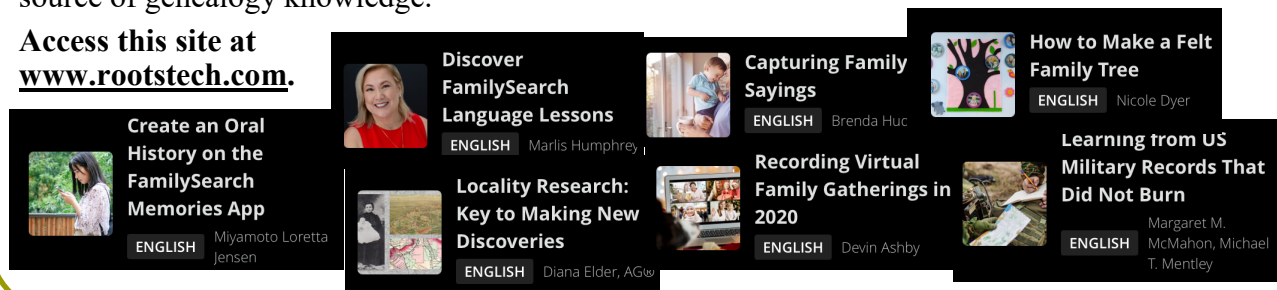
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Lynda Shopka, who joined us virtually from Ontario, also liked the format, finding the bookmarking feature very useful for listing priority sessions ahead of time and making best use of her time. She was able to connect with a researcher from Poland and has maintained this connection to help in researching her husband's ancestors.

Al Bromling liked the virtual and open menu format. He was amazed to learn there were over one million participants from over 200 countries and territories. He said he learned valuable new strategies for using the Ancestry and FamilySearch websites more efficiently for fine-tuning research on European ancestors.

Hundreds of the RootsTech sessions (covering a wide variety of topics!) are still available and may be accessed on-line whether you were a registered participant or not. This website is a rich source of genealogy knowledge.

Access this site at
www.rootstech.com.



AGS Provincial Notes

The 2021 GenFair and the AGM for the 2020 year were conducted virtually on April 24. Kudos to the Wetaskiwin Branch for hosting a successful GenFair for more than 100 participants under difficult circumstances. The Annual General Meeting, also a virtual event with 84 participants, was one of the largest in recent memory.

The 2020 Audited Financials and the 2020 AGS Annual Report were approved, as was the proposed balanced budget for the 2021 year.

There were only two changes to the AGS Executive. The 2021 list and portfolios are:

President, Lynne Duigo: overall Administration and ex officio on all committees

1st Vice President, Sheila Genaille: education, webinar series and chairs executive

2nd Vice President, Al Bromling: collaboration and policy/procedures

Secretary, Debra Wickham: membership and conference liaison

Treasurer, Marion Rex: financial and fund raising

Past President, Jock Howard: database project, nominations and awards

The LDS Affiliated Library project is being implemented with Edmonton Branch currently signing on to the arrangement which enables researchers to access a rich trove of genealogy records.

The Board has appointed a group to commence planning and fund raising in order to reactivate, rename and expand the existing Surname Database project.

The Board has appointed a group to propose a draft document for an Indigenous Acknowledgement preamble for our organization's meetings and events, for review by the Board.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for September, probably a virtual event.

News Just in: GPPL now Affiliate Library!

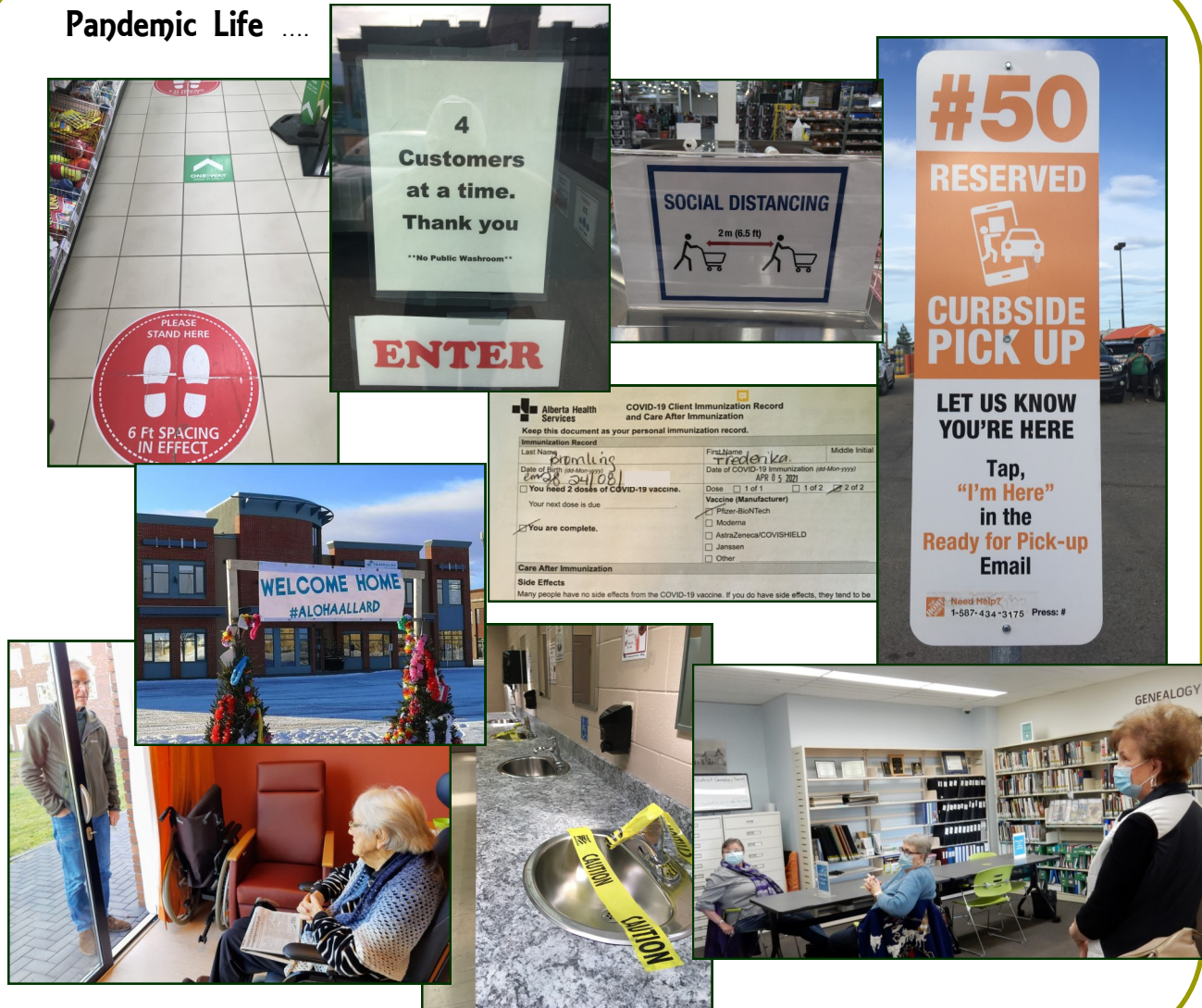
On June 1 the Grande Prairie Public Library advised our Branch that they had successfully contracted with FamilySearch.org to open additional genealogical records for the public online at the library. GPPL is now an affiliate library with the great genealogical library in Salt Lake City.

This arrangement will give family history researchers in Grande Prairie access to records not available on public databases such as FamilySearch, Ancestry and MyHeritage.

Users will need to open an account with FamilySearch.org and use available workstations in the Public Library to access these new files.

The Branch extends heartfelt thanks to the library folks who responded so positively to our request and added this new source of ancestor records.

Pandemic Life



Research: Documenting the Present

When researching our family trees, we look to the past, searching for not only names and dates, but the *stories of our ancestors* and the events that shaped their lives.

We rely on oral history, letters, newspapers, photographs, historical documentation, whatever source material we can access ... and are elated when we find those nuggets of information that provide context and bring our ancestors to life. But 'somebody' left those records for us, in whatever format.

We are currently all experiencing a significant historical event – the **Covid19 Pandemic**.

What information are we leaving for future generations about our Pandemic life experience? In this digital world, barring some unforeseen catastrophe, we can expect that much data will be readily accessible online. But will future generations be able to access our *personal stories* - the emails, Zoom sessions, Twitter, Texts, Messenger/Facebook posts; all those technologies that have taken the place of face-to-face contact, letters, even phone calls, but which now serve to document (often fleetingly) our daily lives and experiences ... those nuggets of information, those *personal records* of how we experienced this phenomenon in our lives, those anecdotes that will make our experiences come alive for our families in the future...? How will we pass on those very personal stories? Digitally, 'old school' (hard copy journals, scrap books, photo books, collections)? or some other way?

So ... a call was sent out inviting members of the Grande Prairie Branch to share *how they are experiencing and going about documenting* the lived experience of the present for future genealogists. Yeah, it's a bit of a mind-bender in terms of how we usually engage in genealogical research! A big thank-you to those who responded and shared; we're all richer for your efforts, and hopefully we're all inspired to not only search out but also leave records! *Freddi Bromling*

Documenting the Present

By Jean Gray

I was getting lonely and needed a warm body in the house.
So, I thought a kitten would be my answer.

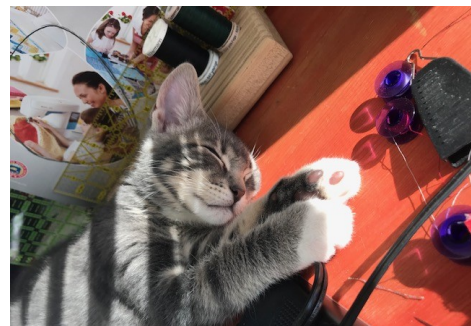


In January, Max entered my life
The little darling loved to cuddle, but couldn't jump up on my lap, so he climbed my legs. As a result my legs have been tattooed with little claw marks and one pair of jeans now have a nubby appearance.

But we have moved on to the teenage years. I can't believe how far that cat can jump. His last adventure was from my sideboard to the top of my china cabinet. Yikes! (but he seems to have moved on from that).

He has been my sewing assistant, my conversation buddy, helps with computer work, loves to cuddle in bed and is always ready for play time.

Even though our life together so far has been a growing experience for both of us, he has provided me with entertainment and filled that lonely space.



Documenting the Present

By Joan Bowman

March 16 2020 – The day we all found out we were in a Covid-19 Pandemic, and what did that mean?

Little did we know in the near future, we would be wearing masks for more than a year, seeing panic buying at grocery stores as well as empty shelves, limits on some products like toilet paper, paper towels, sani-wipes, limited numbers of people allowed in stores etc. Virtual Doctor appointments and the fear of what next. Then came the idea of a Covid vaccine shot for all and on-line-learning for children. Then no family gatherings at Easter or Christmas which we missed tremendously.



Come on in!

levels
during
the
past
15



Do I have enough???

This guy...



Amongst this wild year, I have diligently worked on my family tree binders, named and tagged family items throughout my house that no one but myself knows what parent or grand parent once owned the treasured item. And naming family pictures is now a work in progress. All of that has kept me focused somewhat.

Now, I think of our parents and grand parents at this time and know they would have said "We have been through all that and more. Hang-in-there!"

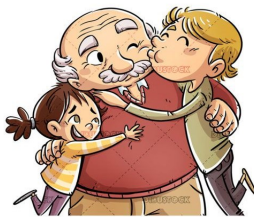


Documenting the Present: Pandemic Life

By Al Bromling

Following the March 2020 cycle of COVID-19 restrictions some new realities hit home for me:

- Regular hugs with grandchildren are far more important than I had realized
- Masking with eyeglasses means I am too often in both a literal and a metaphorical fog
- Social distancing means my hearing impairment is even more of an inconvenience
- My patience with folks who engage in unsafe public health behavior is much less than I had imagined
- My patience with politicians who struggle and often fail to provide the best leadership in tough times is greater than I had imagined
- My dislike of virtual meetings has mellowed to a somewhat wary acceptance of how helpful this technology can be for organizations operating under public health limitations
- The intensity of my gardening activity grew stronger with each restriction
- Having access to a cabin in the woods moved to the top of my list of blessings
- I am so thankful for family and communities who have pulled together for mutual support during these challenging times



Gardening at the cabin ... in a leaky 'decommissioned' canoe!



No Gym!!
Improvised Pandemic
work-out!



Documenting the Present: A Diary

By Gail Prette

May 19, 2021

How the pandemic affected me.

For the first 8 weeks of 2020 my routine life was having my grandchildren and great grandchildren over for supper every Wednesday and volunteering at the South Peace Regional Archives every Thursday afternoon. My project there is gathering current information from newspapers within the South Peace Region, clipping, data entering and creating hard copy alphabetical files for family and personal information.

In January I had rejoined the GP Branch of AGS. In February I agreed to take on the Treasurer's position. I also took on the task of gathering and data entering obituaries from the North Zone newspapers for their Website.

The first change came when the first shut down occurred on **March 13**. I was informed by the Executive Director of SPRA that I could no longer continue attending at the South Peace Regional Archives every Thursday afternoon.

On **March 14th**, my grandchildren, on the advice of my daughter, told me that I could no longer leave the house to go shopping, etc. and that they would do that for me. This was because all the people that were dying at that time from Covid 19 were seniors.

It took a while for all of this to sink in.

Soon I realized that I could not go shopping, get a hair cut, have Wednesday night suppers with my grandchildren; attend the Public Library to perform my Treasurer's duties for the GP – AGS; at-

tend the Public Health Nutritionist's office for support for the FODMAP diet she had placed me on; attend the Foot Clinic or visit any of my friends.



*Waiting for Good News from
Dr. Deena Hinshaw,
Alberta Chief Medical Officer.*



Social Distance, Stay Home, Wash your Hands

During the first month I defrosted my deep freeze and refrigerator and took stock of all the food that I had on hand. I made bread and wrote letters to my long distance friends who do not use a computer and are not on social media. I had planned on having a party for my 80th Birthday on the May long weekend. By April 14th I realized that the birthday party would not happen. I cancelled my reservation at the Golden Age Center and contacted all my invited guests to let them know. I had never had a birthday party like this and it was very heartbreaking to have to cancel it.

Continued next page ...

Research: Documenting the Present

Documenting the Present: A Diary By Gail Prette continued...

I did not feel sorry for myself for long as I got news that my dear friend Mary Nutting was in hospice and that she had passed away. Only 15 people could attend the funeral because of Covid. Therefore I could not attend. My compassion went out to Mary's family.

I had to learn new technology. As part of the hiring committee for the SPRA I had to learn how to use Zoom to do the interviews of candidates for the position. I would later learn how to use the Boardable Program and then Google Meet. I also started using Facetime to visit with my daughter in Devon and my Grandson in Australia.



On **June 30**, my brother Richard (92) was found lying on the floor of his home in VanAnda BC by his Home Care Worker and was taken to Powell River Hospital by Ambulance. There was no point in trying to travel to see him when I could not visit him in hospital. I am his only next of kin and as such it was very difficult to make decisions for the doctors on the telephone. He had to be transferred to St. Paul's hospital in Vancouver, where the doctors performed surgery. He was discharged on July 21. He eventually fully recovered. My brother can only have cell phone service as he lives in a RV Park. Although he has a cell phone he has difficulty using it. He has also lost his ability to use his lap top computer. I have to depend on contacting a friend to find out how he is doing.

On **August 1, 2020** my life time friend, Joyce, passed away in Calgary of cancer. No one knew she was sick. Again, no funeral because of Covid.

My daughter and her husband are entertainers. Most of their performances were at Senior Lodges. They have been unable to do enough performances to fully support themselves since March, 2020. As a result they sold their home in Devon and moved in with me

November 30, 2020. This has been a trying experience for all of us at times.

I have had both vaccinations, my daughter and son in law have each had one vaccination. Almost all of the people that I could associate with have either had both vaccinations or at least one.

We are currently experiencing the third wave and yet another shut down.



Documenting the Present: Strange Times ...

By Freddi Bromling

It's funny what helps to get us through strange times ...

I'm a (casual) recreational swimmer and enjoy getting a zero-impact (important at this stage of life) workout in the pool along with a sub-group of 'mature' ladies, brought together by the local swim club. It's all about a respite from 'life' and just trying to stay afloat.



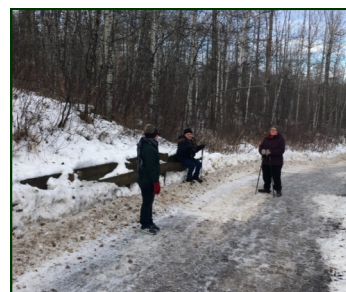
In March 2020, a few of us ('The Ladies' as we're known), were planning a trip to Edmonton to participate in a 'fun' swim meet scheduled for March 14; no pressure, just a day of friendly competition in the NAIT pool with likeminded casual swimmers, and a great group meal to wrap it up. The carload of us travelling together were looking forward to a fun weekend. Well ... things changed!



The World Health Organization (WHO) had declared an international Public Health Emergency regarding COVID19 on 30 January 2020, but it wasn't until the WHO declared it a global pandemic on Wednesday, 11 March 2020, that we felt the impact in a very real way. Soon not only our little getaway was cancelled, but Alberta announced a shutdown, seriously restricting all social interactions throughout the province.

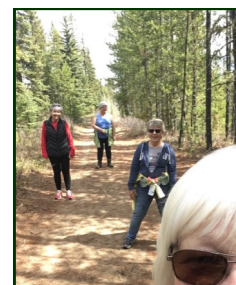


Still mourning our cancelled little outing, insignificant as it was in the larger scheme of things, it became *symbolic* of how things had changed. The Ladies stayed in touch; even though we couldn't swim together (the thing that we had in common and which brought this diverse group together). But, the idea of swimming together once again became something to look forward to, signifying a return to 'normal'.



Initially, the only social interactions allowed were those between our immediate 'household bubbles'. Even walks outside were restricted to co-habitants. So The Ladies entered the world of Zoom, to chat & commiserate with each other.

When the weather warmed and restrictions loosened somewhat, we adopted 'Garden Parties' - socially distanced outings where we could enjoy a chat in one of our backyards. Swimming was once again possible for a time, again with lots of restrictions and social distancing, but we could splash around in our own segregated lanes and chat from a distance.



With the fall weather, garden outings were no longer an option and once a new round of restrictions were announced in early December 2020 and the pool closed again, we switched to socially distanced walks.

As of June 2021, we're still walking, garden parties are once again an option and we're 'cautiously optimistic' that in the not too distant future The Ladies will no longer be land-locked and get back into the swim of things



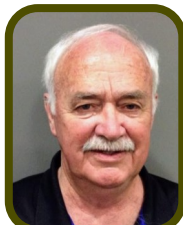


Grande Prairie Branch of the Alberta Genealogical Society

2021 Executive



Al Bromling
President



Ed Hall
Past President



Rilla Websdale
Vice President



Maxine Maxwell
Secretary



Gail Prette
Treasurer



Jay Sydoruk
GP Director
on the
Provincial
Board

Grande Prairie Branch Volunteers 2021

Our Branch activities and services depend on the energy and skills of our volunteers.

The Executive extends heartfelt thanks to the members who have committed to carry on these important volunteer roles.

Additional members are welcome and encouraged to step forward to enhance this volunteer team.

Branch Librarian - Gail Schau

Casino - Maxine Maxwell

Events/Programs - Executive

Genies - Rilla Websdale, Jay Sydoruk, Al Bromling

GP Director on the AGS Board - Jay Sydoruk

Gravemarkers Image Collection - TBA

Historian - TBA

Heritage Seekers Newsletter Editor - Freddi Bromling

HS Print Copy Distribution - Jean Gray

Margaret Kay Memorial Bursary - Ed Hall, Gail Schau

Membership - Jean Smith Gray

Obituary Reference Binder and Indexing

(Rural and DHT newspapers) - Gail Prette

Obituary Reference Binder and Indexing

(Funeral Home Websites) - Jay Sydoruk

Publicity - Executive

Social Media (Website/Facebook) - Nik Henke

Technical/Equipment/Inventory - Jay Sydoruk, Ed Hall

Research - Joan Bowman

Volunteer Hours Recording - Executive

Staying in touch:

Website: www.abgenealogy.ca

(this is Alberta Genealogical Society website, which will link you to the Grande Prairie Branch website)

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