



ROOTS & BRANCHES

VOL. 24 #2 SEPTEMBER 2026

BRINGING THE PAST

TO THE PRESENT

FOR THE FUTURE! ©

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The Wetaskiwin Branch
of Alberta Genealogical Society
respectfully acknowledges
Alberta's Indigenous People on whose
traditional territory we gather.

ROOTS & BRANCHES

is published three times a year
by and for the members of
Wetaskiwin Branch of AGS.
It is emailed to members and
posted on our website.

Articles may not be reprinted
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EXECUTIVE: President: Nelda Layton
Secretary: Pam Cooke
Past President: Alice Hoyle

Vice President: Lorraine McKay
Treasurer: Leroy Koop

BRANCH MEETINGS: Third Tuesday of the Month. Except July, August, December

BRANCH LIBRARY Located at City Archives
For access call 780-352-0227 (Heritage Museum)

WETASKIWIN FAMILYSEARCH CENTER Wednesdays: 6:15 pm - 8:15 pm
Thursdays: 10:00 am – 3:00 pm Closed July & August

MEMBER LUNCHEON

ON TUESDAY, SEPT. 15

AT 11:30 AM

AT HUCKLEBERRY'S

(No charge, unless you order from the bar).

See page 10 for menu suggestion 😊

MEETING AS USUAL @2:00 pm at the LDS Church

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Sharon Aney

You never know when and from where a precious family memento will show up!

My mother passed away in 2011 and we thought that we had saved everything of importance from her time with us. Recently however, as my brother was sorting through the records of his parish church prior to passing them along to a new treasurer.

He came across a 3-ring binder entitled "Sacred Heart History 1950-1980" which had been compiled as part of Saskatchewan's 75th anniversary celebrations. It had been compiled by our mother... and recorded entirely in her own handwriting!

We are able to read of her (and Dad's) commitment to the development and sustainment of the parish. She described various events, ranging from fund-raising to weddings and funerals, and illustrated them with photos... often of our extended family members, since it was her own photo album that she raided.

But the most important memento is her handwriting, a personal touch we will never again receive.

PRESIDENT'S PONDERINGS

Nelda Layton

Weather was the talk of the summer. If it wasn't raining, we were baking. Then there were the killer mosquitos. I couldn't sit or walk outside without wearing a "coat of bug spray." There were advantages to the rain as the crops and the gardens thrived. My grass was green and didn't need any watering; wild fires burning in Alberta in August were zero compared to 47 active wildfires burning last August. It's the first time in 40 years that there hasn't been a fire burning in August in Alberta. Smoke from the Northwest Territories and BC did venture into our atmosphere but the quality of our air was refreshing most of the summer.

It did take me by surprise to see a partially submerged truck navigating a lake that formed in the south lane of the Automile just north of A&W after a torrential downpour. The driver was so distracted from traversing the flooded lane that she went through a red light.

I spent two weeks in August with a cousin who visited from the Netherlands (Holland) and was so thankful to have her identify photos of relatives that I have never met or seen before. We had fun scanning, enhancing, colorizing, and printing photos that I shared with her to take home for her family. We went to two farmer's markets, three pawn shops, and several shops to find treasures from Canada to take home to her family and friends.

I was pleasantly surprised to see an election for the AGS president in August. There were 3 candidates in the running. The board (consisting of executive members and branch presidents) elected Janine Carroll from Camrose as our new president.

Janine has been serving as AGS membership chair and she served two years on the AGS finance committee. She has been president and vice-president of the Camrose Branch. She has the vision and determination to position AGS for long term relevance and growth. She sees the need to actively re-engage members and is committed to fostering a board culture that is thoughtful, inclusive, and focused on AGS' long term health. I visited one-on-one with Janine on Zoom on August 30th and I am so pleased to have such a strong leader at our helm.

As we embark on a new year in the Wetaskiwin Branch, I am looking forward to working with such talented and dedicated members.

The comradery I feel when I am with you makes me feel so included and supported.

*Blessed are the great-grandmothers,
who hoarded newspaper clippings and old letters...
For they tell the story of their time.*

~~~~~

## MEETING PROGRAMS

### MAY – MOTHERS

**Carole** spoke about her mother, Kathleen Jorgenson who after her family of 7 was raised and away from home....became a entrepreneur . She, along with her husband, turned the family farm into a Bed And Breakfast venue with enhanced attractions that attracted school tours, group gatherings, and even international visitors. She was a leader in the field, being chairman of the Manitoba Farm Vacation Ass'n from 1979 – 83.

**Nelda** composed a humorous essay about her mother, Lily Mabel Hull, who was the "Queen of the Idioms", and how she found a quote for just about any situation.

### JUNE – MOTHERS AND FATHERS

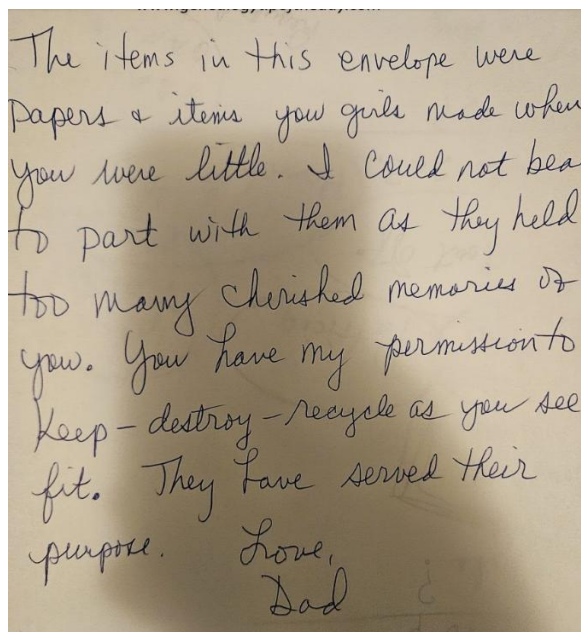
**Alice** – 1. Her paternal Larson grandparents were a young married couple with 3 children when he enlisted for WWI, leaving her with the children on a rural property. Alice has letters that they wrote to each other, describing their situations and revealing a loving relationship.  
2. Her maternal grandparents story was not as inspiring.... her grandfather being a man not liked or respected and who abandoned his wife and 3 daughters. Grandmother worked at cleaning jobs and eventually remarried to a kind and supportive man.

**Claudia** – her 3<sup>rd</sup> great-grandmother was only a name on the family tree until FamilySearch notified her that someone had posted a picture of her and a small biography.... A treasure!

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TIP OF THE DAY

MICHAEL JOHN NEILL



The items in this envelope were papers & items you girls made when you were little. I could not bear to part with them as they held too many cherished memories of you. You have my permission to keep - destroy - recycle as you see fit. They have served their purpose. Love, Dad

Can't part with some things? I understand that.

Put that artwork, schoolwork and the like of your kids in a box and put this note like this (or make your own) on the top of it or taped to the very top of the box. Your kids may think you're a sentimental whatever. No worries—you know things about them that you are probably taking to your grave.

Still good to sort and get rid of what you don't need, but I get that some things can be hard to part with.

Digitize as you feel the need.

Or do nothing. It's your choice.

It's your stuff. It's your life.

~~~~~

## WALKING IN MY DAD'S FOOTSTEPS!

Rosella Plaquin nee Gyte

Recently I had the opportunity to participate in "Canada's Path of Remembrance" in Europe. It started in France, went through Belgium, and ended in the Netherlands.

My dad served with the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps as an ambulance driver from January 1943 to February 1946. Due to a problem with the ship he was on he didn't land at Juno Beach on June 6, 1944, which I am eternally grateful for. He landed on Nan Green Beach on June 8, 1944.



There are many named beaches close together: Sword, Nan Green, Juno, Nan Red, Utah, Omaha. I had the good fortune to be able to place 8 Canadian flags, one for each member of my family, at Nan Green beach in honor of my Dad who landed there 82 years ago. I was also able to find the plaque representing Dad on one of the kiosks at Juno Beach Center and was able to place a poppy there.

While at Juno Beach we were guided through 2 German bunkers. It was eerie!

A significant stop was at Pegasus Bridge which had been captured by British Glider troops. It crosses the Caen Canal in Normandy, France. We had lunch in the legendary Café Gondree in Benouville, France, the only building left standing after the assault.

Standing in front of Canada House, the first house to be liberated by the Canadians by sea and a symbol of Remembrance was pretty special.

Over the course of the tour we visited several Canadian War Cemeteries, the largest being Groesbeek in the Netherlands. It had over 2300 Canadian soldiers. All of these cemeteries had a Cross of Sacrifice with rows and rows of white headstones. An observance was how well the cemeteries are maintained, clean and with flowers or flags. Walking through these cemeteries it was chilling to see how young many of the soldiers were. Many of the headstones had no names or information so they were inscribed with "Only Known to God". Many of our stops were very emotional as other members of our tour placed Canadian flags by their family member's headstone.

After hearing about and visiting Dieppe I was very glad the raid, known as Operation Jubilee, had occurred in 1942 before my dad arrived in France.

Although the majority of the tour was for the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, we did step into the 1<sup>st</sup> World War to visit dire battles such as: the Somme, Beaumont Hamel, Vimy Ridge, Ypres Salient (first gas attacks), and Flanders Fields. Two memorable cemeteries were a German Military Cemetery in Langemark, Belgium where all headstones are black, and Thiepval Monument. This is the largest commonwealth War Memorial where 72,000 British and South African soldiers are laid to rest with no known names.

One thing that made this tour even more interesting is that, as a group, we were taken to several areas where we were given details of what occurred there and asked to reenact and make decisions as if we were at war. I learned that the Germans were afraid of the Canadians and often retreated when they heard the Canadians were coming

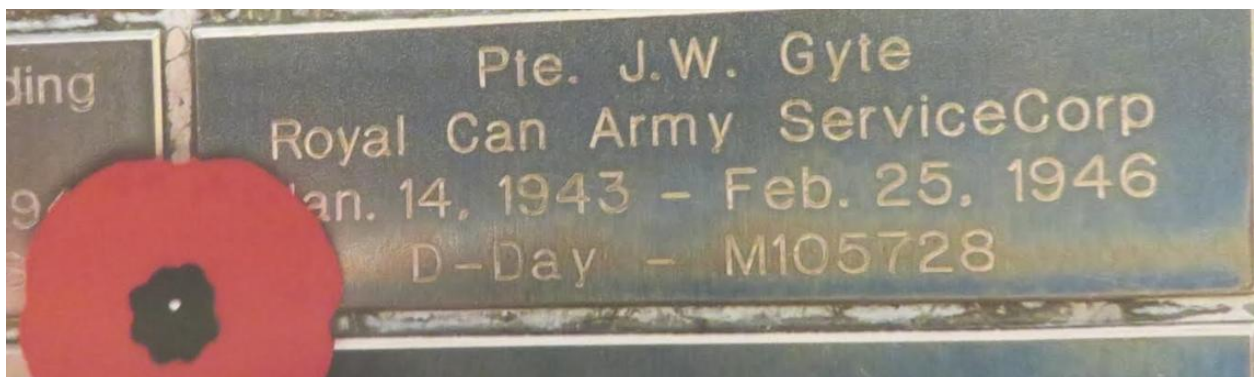
In 2004 my husband and I had been in Ypres to take part in the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate. At that time we were in Legion attire for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D Day. This time visiting Menin Gate, I had the honor of placing a wreath for our tour group. My dad was with me every step of the way!



One last place that was special was standing under the Frost Bridge, also known as The Bridge Too Far, where I know my Dad had stood beside his ambulance.

Being able to follow in the path where myDad had been 82 years ago was the most moving experience I've ever had.

Thank you, Dad, for my freedom!



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"A PENNY FOR YOUR THOUGHTS"

Nelda Hull Layton



Almost every day I am reminded of my mother, Mabel McMurray Hull, her sense of humour, her kindness, and her wisdom. These memories are often brought on when I think about or hear something she said and then I echo the words myself because "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree." Sometimes I say, "How do you like them apples?" and I laugh.

I grew up being told that "children are to be seen and not heard". Here's a classic, "This is going to hurt me more than it hurts you!" Mom didn't care "what everyone else was doing." I learned not to say I was bored because she'd always "find something for me to do." I was told "when you have your own home, you can make your own rules." There were no "ifs ands or buts" when her mind was made up.

If I got into trouble Mom would scold, "Well, you made your bed and now you can lie in it!" Another classic, "Who ever told you that life was fair?" If I tried to hurry Mom she would say, "hold your horses" or "simmer down." If I pushed too far she would tell me that I was "cruisin' for a bruise" or that she was going to "tan my hide!" Other classics include, "Don't make me pull this car over!" and "Say that again and I'll wash your mouth out with soap!" Her kindest warning used the words of Thumper from the movie "Bambi" – "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all!"

Some expressions were good advice; "It will all come out in the wash" or "this too shall pass." She warned me "not to bite off more than I could chew" and "neither a borrower nor a lender be" (thank you Shakespeare!) When it came to helping others she encouraged me to "go the extra mile." When it came to judging others, she would say, "actions speak louder than words." If I was discouraged, she would encourage me to "keep my chin up". If things seemed impossible she would urge me to "put my thinking cap on" or she would declare "where there's a will there's a way!"

Mom taught me to take risks carefully because it was "better to be safe than sorry." When choices didn't really matter, they were "six of one, half dozen of the other." If things were really good they were "tickety-boo!" "How do you know if you won't like something if you haven't tried it?" Her best advice; "It's a great life if you don't weaken!" or "It doesn't matter who is right, what's important is to do what's right."

Yes, there's more! Mom "had her hands full" running a farm and we learned to "make hay while the sun shines". I went to go get the cows to be milked because you could be waiting forever "til the cows came home." If a neighbour didn't follow her instructions, Mom knew that she "might as well be talking to a fence post." It was important to do things right the first time because "a stitch in time saves nine" and "you reap what you sow." If things were tough, "this too shall pass." If I made a mistake, Mom would tell my sensitive soul not to "cry over spilled milk." Sometimes she would be secretive because "curiosity killed the cat" and it was better to "let sleeping dogs lie!" My mother wasn't one to "let the cat out of the bag." She was smart and she knew that there is "more than one way to skin a cat" and that it was often possible to "kill two birds with one stone." We learned early that "money doesn't grow on trees."

Mom's idioms are ingrained into my thoughts and my expressions. When we were in a hurry to get somewhere on time, our appearance needed to be done with "a lick and a promise." Mom would sometimes describe herself as looking like, "the wreck of the Hesperus". I had no idea what the Hesperus was so I looked it up – it was a ship that was shipwrecked in a Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poem and it meant that you looked like a disaster. If it was time to go she would say that we better, "skedaddle". My mom had a lot of flatulence and she would say, "Now we're cooking with gas!" I was so embarrassed but she wasn't. She also told us, "If you gotta go, you outta go!" referring to the bathroom. You could say my mother was very "down to earth."

My mom didn't swear, except sometimes I would hear "when hell freezes over", "H-E-double toothpicks" or "hells bells!" If someone was distracted, she would comment, "They'd forget their head if it wasn't screwed on" or when I was watching TV, she would realize that she "might as well be talking to a brick wall." You never ever wanted to "get a taste of your own medicine." When I wanted to retaliate after being hurt she would say "two wrongs don't make a right." Some hard lessons to learn were that "the grass is not always greener on the other side", "waste not, want not", and "honesty is always the best policy." I knew that I couldn't fool mom because she was "not born yesterday."

If I could just have a penny for my mother's thoughts I'd be rich! Wait a minute! I am rich with memories and indelible lessons that I learned from my funny, kind, and very wise mother.

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## **WOMEN OF ASPENLAND - 30 YEARS AT WETASKIWIN HERITAGE MUSEUM**

Sharon Aney

This October (Women's History Month) the Wetaskiwin Heritage Museum will hold its 30<sup>th</sup> annual induction of 4 more worthy women into its Women of Aspenland exhibit. The name was inspired by the proliferation of aspen trees in our area.

In 1996 seven women of Wetaskiwin City, County, and Maskwacis were inducted recognizing their roles as community leaders, athletes, professionals, homesteaders, business owners, advocates, caregivers, educators, etc.

The museum board felt it important to recognize and celebrate those women who played significant roles in the development of Wetaskiwin and area. Each woman's life story reflects some of the diverse traditions and abilities that shape our collective identity as a community.

The first women so honoured were:

- Marjorie Montgomery Bowker – a lawyer raised in Wetaskiwin,
- Amy Conroy – a public health nurse
- Jaqueline Lakeland Jevne – a teacher, farm wife / manager / consultant.
- Estor Somers Laidlaw – a pharmacist 1938 – 1972 in Northern Drug store
- Bertha Munn – a beloved mathematics teacher
- Nancy Ward Samson - a lifetime resident of the Samson Reserve and a leader in the growth and prosperity of their community.
- Molly Henderson Tofte – a teacher for over 35 years in Wetaskiwin & area schools

This year's ceremony on October 17 will bring the exhibit's count to 119 remarkable women.

When a woman has been chosen to be inducted into the exhibit a public ceremony summarizes and celebrates her accomplishments. On this occasion a cabinet that includes a story panel, photographs, and personal or community artifacts is revealed. It remains on display for one year following induction, is subsequently turned into a permanent panel and information binder, and is added to the collective display in the museum's main floor gallery. It is reputed that the Heritage Museum houses the largest collection of this kind in Canada

Anyone searching for their family history in Wetaskiwin and area would be well-served to look to see if their ancestor is a "Woman of Aspenland".

*Note: I think it is appropriate to feature Sylvia Larson as this issue's Woman of Aspenland. She was the Board Chair and Manager of the Heritage Museum when the exhibit was launched in 1996.*

## **WOMAN OF ASPENLAND** Sylvia (Rasmuson) Larson

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<http://www.wetaskiwinmuseum.com>



Information compiled in 2017

Sylvia Rasmuson was born on November 5th, 1936, to parents George and Edith (Sanford) Rasmuson in the Old Wetaskiwin Hospital. Sylvia grew up helping parents on their farm alongside her younger sister Marilyn and brother Dennis.

She began her education at the one-room Offerdale School, for grades 1 and 2. From there, she moved on to Crooked Lake School, followed by Wetaskiwin High School and the University of Alberta.

Sylvia's love for music was a kind of education as well. It began with singing along as her grandfather played and attending country dances with her parents. In time she learned to play the piano by ear and joined the High School Glee Club. She also took music classes while getting her teaching certificate.



Sylvia met husband, Helmer Larson, in the late 1940s while he was working as a hired hand on her farm, marrying him in 1955 after she graduated from University. They built their first home in Wetaskiwin two years later and Sylvia began teaching in Queen Elizabeth School.

She switched to substitute teaching as her five children, Sherril, Charlotte, Laurelle, Lorilyn, and Barbara came along between 1960-70. Her daughters couldn't keep her from teaching music though, as they all received lessons from mom.

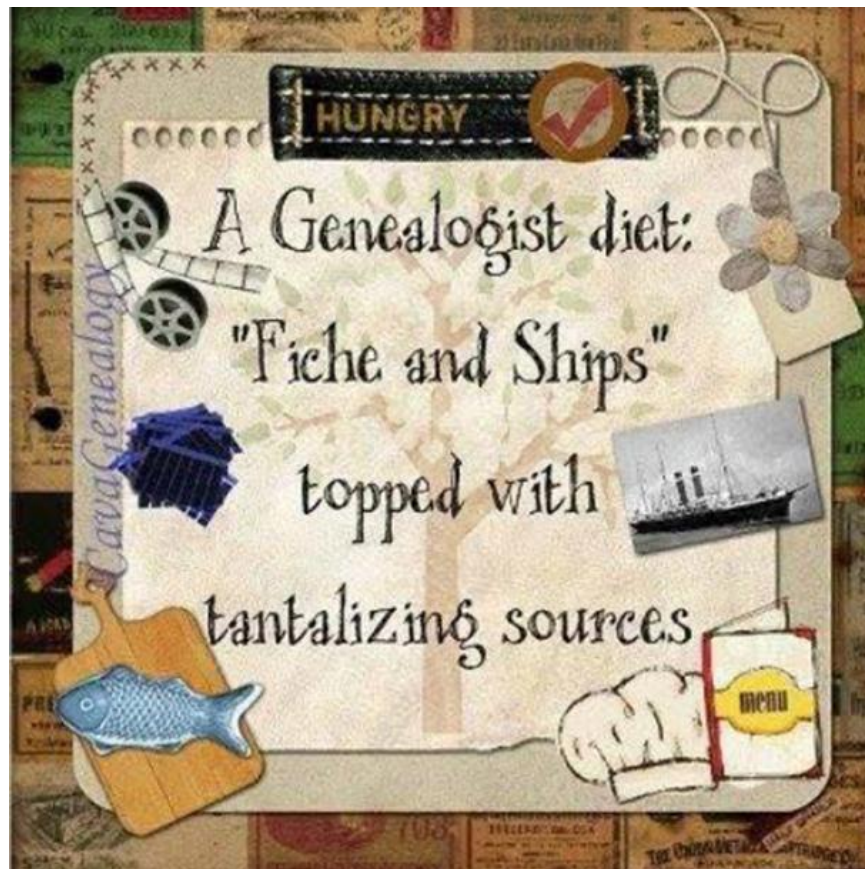


**The Larson Family** - Laurelle, Lyn, Sherri, Sylvia & Helmer, Charlotte, Barb

Shortly after Lorilyn was born Sylvia was approached for a teaching role at Sacred Heart School. There, she started several school choirs, later expanding to create the Wetaskiwin Childrens' Chorus and serving as director of the Music Festival.

Sylvia has played an important role at our Museum for over 30 years, serving as both President of the Board and Museum Manager. She has also served on the Community Learning Council and taught courses at Norquest College.

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# **Wetaskiwin FamilySearch Center**

## ***September 2026***

Hours of Operation

**Wednesdays** 6:15 - 8:15 pm (by appointment only)

Please phone or text Jason Jones to make an appointment

Cell: (403) 807-8855

Use back Northwest Door in the evening

**Thursdays** 10 am - 3 pm

Use Front Door during the day

September changes to the schedule:

**Wednesday evenings will be by appointment only.**

**The FamilySearch Center will be closed**

on the following dates:

Wednesday, **September 9<sup>th</sup>** – Wetaskiwin Parade of Programs and City Open House at Co-op Place 5:00 – 8:00 PM BBQ included

Wednesday, **September 30<sup>th</sup>** – Building closed for cleaning