

Creatively Speaking

THE ELLINGTON WRITERS

ROCK OF AGES

I am a stone.

Don't get me wrong, I don't mind being a stone. It has actually been quite exciting if I do say so.

My first years of life were spent on Prince Edward Island. I was born over a long period of time as I was pushed and pulled out of the soil due to erosion. I am light red in colour like the sand around me. You can call me "Red" if you like or "Rocky." The actions of the waves and water on my body over time have worn away a lot of my rough edges so that I have a very smooth surface. Maybe you should call me "Old Smoothly".

Anyways, one day a man and his wife from Ontario were visiting the Island and the man's wife picked me up, brushed me off and took me home with her. It was a long ride of about 1200 miles, but that didn't bother me at all. It beats sitting on the ground with nothing to do.

Now, I can say I have a very good life. Why?

Because I'm resting in a place of honour in an apartment at The Ellington Retirement Residence. I tell my stories to anyone who drops by and wants to listen.

By: Elda Portt

Well, once again, Fall is upon us which means that Winter is just around the corner breathing down our necks. As everyone comprehends the season that is with us and the one that is about to come, why not take some time to curl up with the latest issue of **CREATIVELY SPEAKING** and let your cares slip away. This is the fourth installment of articles and stories written by members of our group. Hopefully, this issue will have something in it for everyone who decides to turn the pages. Read about a cat and her memories, a stone and its life, shoe horns both old and new, Halloween tricks and treats, park meanderings, sports' poetry, a westward adventure...and much more. What better way to pass some time.

By: The Ellington Writers



MITTENS THE CAT RECALLS HER MEMORIES

I entered the world with my sisters, all cuddled up and waiting to be fed by our mother. Once strengthened by our mother's nourishment, we looked for ways to expend our energy and began rolling around on the floor, poking and pawing at each other.

As we grew, our numbers began to dwindle as different hands lifted us up and carried us away. Soon it was my turn. I said goodbye to my remaining two sisters and was transported off. My first ride was spent in a cage with bars on it as we bumped along the road to my new home.

I was carried into a very noisy atmosphere and was quickly examined by small, curious hands. I found out later that it was a little girl. She was reluctant to pass me over to her older brother who had much larger hands, but she did so. A small argument ensued as to who had held me the longest and I decided it was time to escape to somewhere quieter in the house.

As time went on and I got used to my new surroundings, I found new places to hide when too many hands arrived on the scene. I uncovered favourite places such as under the chesterfield where I could rest in peace along with my toys.

I am a great runner as well and use it to my advantage when children get too close for comfort or adults want to coax and lift me onto their lap. Stroking and petting can be nice at times, but only under my terms.

One thing that I have grown to love is to lie in the sun, whether outside on a deck or a portion of lawn or just basking inside on a window ledge. I do wonder from time to time where my sisters are and hope that they are having as happy a life as I am.

By: Jane Crawford

WESTWARD HO! A TRIP TO REMEMBER

A trip out West I once had with friends was a real adventure. The adventure was not so much what we ended up seeing as much as the experience we had in getting there.

My friends Tony and Marie were from Provost, Alberta. Another friend, Jose, was from Maple Creek, Saskatchewan.

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A friend of the Albertans was Ray. And then there was me. It was just after the completion of our nurses training and the Second World War was still on. The girls were returning home and we all decided to take the trip out together.

As part of our plan, we had purchased two cars and were going to fix them up to sell once we arrived out west. How would we get back? We hadn't thought that far ahead. Neither car had tire pumps or a jack, but there were some used tires stored in the sedan. The other vehicle on the journey was a coupe. I was the only non-driver as it turned out, so everybody else had to do all the work while I enjoyed the scenery.

We passed through many small towns heading north from Toronto to Highway #2; places like Port Arthur and Rainy River. During the course of our trip, I remember that we had 13 flats and three complete blowouts! By the end of the trip, we were experts at applying patches. Here is what we did. We first scraped the leaky area clean then covered it with glue. Next we set this sticky concoction on fire to adhere, quickly blew out the flame once intact and then slapped on the patch. It was teamwork at its finest and the best part was nobody blew up or died.

Despite these periodic setbacks, there were many interesting sights that I remember along the way. For instance, we passed a railway station at one point where German prisoners of war were having a night out just watching the train arrivals and departures. There were also sightings of Native Indian ladies walking along with papooses strapped to their backs. Jose borrowed one and strapped it to her back in order to take a picture.

On route from Saskatchewan to Alberta the rain pelted us mercilessly and turned the road to mud. One car sank in the quagmire, the other hung on for dear life. We all spent the night outside. In the morning, Ray wandered off to the nearest farm for help. When the farmer's wife heard of our plight and that there were ladies stranded as well, she sent over a roasting pan of toast and jam and hot coffee while we waited to recover and be on our way.

We were greeted when we finally arrived in Provost by the girls' parents and their two brothers. All ended happily for us, but I was not sad to see most of the trip disappear into our rearview mirrors.

By: Thelma Hornberger



KNOCK, KNOCK! WHO'S THERE?

When I opened the door on this particular day, the riddle was answered for me. I never even had to guess because I knew...it was my daughter Jean, my granddaughter Kara-Lynn and my niece Diane. In three part harmony they sang out: "Where would you like to go? We're here to take you somewhere."

I didn't want to put them out, but of course, when given a chance, I always love to go to Riverside Park. So off we went and, after many stops and starts due to traffic lights, we arrived at the beautiful stone gates that announced the park's entrance.

Everyone agreed that a first stop should be the colourful floral clock brilliantly decked out with a variety of fragrant flowers. We found a place to park and Jean got out my walker for me, a trusted and necessary attachment if I am ever on the move.

We moved slowly as there was so much that I loved to always see. I wanted to stop every few steps and admire the work and efforts of the gardeners involved. We sat in the gazebo and reminisced. Many pictures were taken to help capture the moments that we were having together. And then it was time to go.

The way back up for me was steeper it seemed, but this didn't stop Kara-Lynn from crying out: "I'll race you to the car Grandma." She gave me a head start of a few days and off I went.

Everyone laughed as I shuffled off with my walker, huffing and puffing like the train that circles the park with parents and children. Funnily enough, I won the race although I'm not sure how many were really trying to catch me.

We watched the birds and animals by the river for a while, then stopped at Artisinale, a French-style restaurant in town for a delicious supper and headed home. What a wonderful day out with my girls.

By: Dorothy MacQueen

WOOOOO! IT'S HALLOWEEN

Halloween, and the celebration of it, has been with us for a long time. While the tradition has evolved and changed there is still much about it that is the same.

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In my father's time, which was in rural farm country where homes were relatively far apart, Halloween's arrival was used by the older young people (teenagers they are called today), to play tricks on their neighbours. It was not uncommon to see an outhouse tipped over or a horse drawn buggy elevated to the roof of a barn or driving shed. These antics were performed after midnight when the witching hours had commenced and the farm dogs quieted somehow.

Have these traditions of old ceased? Not really. Go to any University campus today advertising an Engineering program and see what the Engineers are currently capable of on a Halloween night. You would be truly impressed.

While Halloween was never a big thing for me, I did as a youngster go door to door, in handmade costumes mind you, knocking for shell outs and threatening the occupants with dire calamities should the treats not be up to par. Today's children seem much more softer in tone and appreciative than in the past, but perhaps that is only my memory playing tricks on me.

Seven years ago when my wife Audrey and I lived on Westhill Road our experiences were more sedate. While we were the seniors on the street, there were many newly built homes with lots of young families. My wife loved to see the kids arrive in their costumes. My job was to carve a large pumpkin, set in on the front deck with an extension cord and light inside and then we would hand out the candy as kids arrived.

As is the tradition, the tiniest children came first while we were still at supper. It was a jump up meal for us to say the least. Gradually the older kids would arrive until our stock of goodies was, like us, retired. I heard on the radio that in the U.S., young people spend an average of \$79 per person on Halloween. This includes the candy, costumes and all the other paraphernalia that goes with the ghostly experience. Oh for the simpler times. On the other hand, maybe I don't want to have to crane my car down off my roof if my neighbours are in a particularly festive mood. WOOOOO!

By: Ken Reeves



SHOEHORNS BOTH LARGE AND SMALL

The word “shoehorn” is never one I have thought much about until it was suggested as one of our writing topics. A series of objects were brought in one day and placed on the library table, a shoehorn being one of them. We were asked to choose one of the objects and write about it. I decided to put both feet in and chose the shoehorn.

As I thought about it, the shoehorns I recalled were varied. They ranged from long to short, metal to plastic, and came in a variety of colours. The first shoehorn that entered my life was my mother’s. It was part of a dresser set, meant to be placed on a woman’s dressing table. With it came a matching hairbrush, comb and mirror. The set, made of celluloid mostly, rested on a dusty table as part of my parents matching bedroom furniture. The brush, comb, mirror and shoehorn set were probably a gift from my father to my mother early in their marriage.

I believe these lady’s items were rarely used by my mother, a city-bred woman familiar with the “good life” of coming from a large family who were financially comfortable. I don’t remember that shoehorn being used by us either, though we were five children strong in our household and all with shoes. My father was no materialist and my mother never seemed to cherish the shoehorn overly or speak of it. After a time it simply disappeared.

Another memorable shoehorn is one I still have and use almost every day. It’s made of a durable red plastic and has a very long handle. It’s wonderful because it requires almost no bending down. I bought it for my husband on Yonge Street in Toronto about ten years ago. He was failing physically and I did most of our shopping and other errands, walking about a kilometer over to Yonge Street three or four times a week.

He wasn’t one to want or expect gifts, but I knew his tastes and wanted to bring something back on one occasion that was not just groceries. The shoehorn was ideal for a tall man who was physically impaired. While I don’t clearly remember how he received it, he was probably thankful and pleased. We had long given up on giving Christmas presents, but the red plastic shoehorn was practical and of good value. In the end, it has been a nice reminder of my dear, deceased husband and it still comes in handy for me as well.

By: Helen Hansen



ROOM 403

Isaac, my great grandson, enjoyed sports a great deal. His particular favourites were skateboarding, soccer, and baseball. However, a dark cloud hung over him for a while as he had broken his leg very badly while on his friend's trampoline. Now he has a plate in his leg and a cradle for protection.

The instructions for care at the time were many and movement was to be at a minimum. This was very difficult for Isaac and so the focus of his concentration became the teasing of his sisters and mother. I suggested that he try writing as a diversion and here is the poem that I offered to him by way of example:

No thunderclouds today but
steamy heat, a July sun relentless.
The physio room is quiet,
only the curtains moving,
small fans to help ease misery.
Exercises repeat themselves,
knee, hip, back,
slow progress mixed with pain.
You had better help yourself,
push on through or the image of
old age will gain credibility.
Sports with their pending injuries
can be penalties that box you in for life.

By: Dorothy Hart



We hope you enjoyed this edition of the CREATIVELY SPEAKING Newsletter!

A special THANKS to David McConnell, for his ongoing support and contributions to the Ellington Writers Club.

For information on how you can actively become involved with this program, please contact the Recreation Department.

Stay tuned for our next edition to be released in early 2016!