



COMING of AGE

A Publication of the Saskatoon Council on Aging

Seniors Will Be In The Spotlight Oct. 3

By Diane Brownell

The Saskatoon Council on Aging is again partnering with TCU Place to host Spotlight on Seniors, sponsored by Quality Hearing Centre of Saskatoon. Be sure to mark your calendar for Wednesday, October 3.

This popular annual event will again be held in the upper level of TCU Place, from 10 am to 4 pm.

It will feature entertainment, educational presentations and other activities. Commercial and non-commercial booths will

display a wide variety of products, services and informational displays of particular interest to older adults.

Volunteer retired nurses from the Council will be available to check blood pressures for those who wish it.

The \$5 admission fee includes coffee, sponsored by TCU Financial. Lunch will be available for a reasonable price. Limited transportation assistance will be available – call the Council at 652-2255.

SEEKING SASKATOON'S SENIOR IDOL

Do you have star quality? Have you got what it takes to wow the crowd? Are you a fan of Canadian Idol?

Then here's your chance! The Saskatoon Public Library is looking for senior singers who aren't afraid to get up and strut their stuff. It has lined up an M.C. and celebrity judges who are ready and waiting to crown the first Saskatoon Senior Idol.

Bring your accompanist and your loyal fans to the Frances Morrison Library on Wednesday, October 24 at 2 p.m. The public is invited to attend and cheer on the brave competitors.

Contestants must register in advance. To do so, or to get more information, call the library's Outreach Services at 975-7606.

Don't Miss 'The Prime of Life'

A new column for seniors began appearing in *The Sun* in September. Sponsored by the Saskatoon Council on Aging, 'The Prime of Life' will be carried in the last issue of each month.

It will address subjects of interest to seniors and their families that promote the dignity, health and independence of older adults – which is the Council's mandate – including travel, housing issues, fraud, power of attorney, senior education and much more.

The column was inspired by the 2006 World Elder Abuse Awareness Day conference, which recognized the need for better information for seniors, caregivers, family, friends and the general public.

It is overseen by a committee of Eleanor Williams, George James, Elliot Paus-Jensen and Katherine Ash, Council president. Bubs Coleman is coordinating the column in the first year of what is hoped will be a long-running, popular and informative addition to *The Sun*. The Council is grateful to *The StarPhoenix* and *The Sun* for this opportunity.

INSIDE **3** Meri *mist*its **4** Saskatonians on Inca Trail **6** Living Will Can Help **8** Remembering That First Car



President's Message

BY KATHERINE ASH

PRESIDENT, SASKATOON COUNCIL ON AGING

It is refreshing to think of the autumn issue of *Coming of Age* in sweltering late July. The Council had a productive year under the leadership of Jeanette Dean, and I thank her for her keen understanding and able involvement in addressing issues that affect seniors and working to enhance quality of life for all of us. Fortunately she will continue on our board.

In early March, the North Saskatchewan Independent Living Centre invited several organizations to join in forming a plan to increase accessibility in Saskatoon. Out of this meeting came the goal of a permanent City of Saskatoon Accessibility Committee. Hard work has achieved that goal: City council voted July 16 for a permanent Accessibility Committee.

The Council on Aging has exciting events planned for this fall. The annual Seniors Walk on

Sept. 26 will start at the Mendel Gallery; please pre-register by Sept. 21. Lunch is free. Proceeds from a Steak Night Fundraiser at the Somewhere Else Pub and Grill on Sept. 27 will go to the Resource Centre. Call for tickets by Sept. 24.

These events are a great prelude to Seniors Week, Oct. 1-7. With a provincial Population Health grant, the Council produced a Seniors Week Event Planning Guide. Call Saskatchewan Health at (306) 787-1509 or check www.health.gov.sk.ca.

Always part of Seniors Week festivities here, Spotlight on Seniors, sponsored by Quality Hearing Centre, will be at TCU Place on Oct. 3. The final fall event is a Caregiver Forum on Oct. 24 at McClure Place. Please register by Oct. 22.

For more details for any of these events, call the Resource Centre at 652-2255. See you there!

Katherine Ash

Just for seniors: Forever...in motion

By
Janet
Barnes

come more physically active. Other benefits identified were improved strength (75%), endurance (77%), flexibility (80%), reduced tension and worry (54%), maintaining independence (55%), more confidence in their ability to exercise (81%) and the opportunity to meet people and socialize (74%).

For information on where to find a **Forever...in motion** program in your community or how to get one started, contact 655-3648 or check out our website, www.in-motion.ca.

Janet Barnes is Senior Recreation Therapist, Older Adult Community, in motion

Do you want to become more active and improve your health this winter? **Forever...in motion** is a program designed specifically to help older adults do just that.

A targeted strategy of **in motion** – a community-based health promotion strategy begun in 1999 by the Saskatoon Health Region, City of Saskatoon, University of Saskatchewan College of Kinesiology and PARTICIPATION – **Forever...in motion** started in 2002.

Now, at 49 seniors' housing complexes, condominiums, churches and community centres, older adults are enjoying participating in these regular physical activity programs. Most **Forever...in motion** programs include gentle stretching, low impact

cardio, balance and light strengthening exercises, either standing or sitting. They are offered at little or no cost and are led by a trained volunteer.

Last year the program was evaluated, and 39% of participants felt that attending a **Forever...in motion** program helped motivate them to be-

in motion
Physical Activity - do it for life!

Coming of Age

Published three times a year by the Saskatoon Council on Aging, 301 - 506 25th St. East, Saskatoon S7K 4A7 (652-2255) with a grant from Saskatchewan Lotteries and assistance from the Saskatoon Health Region.

Opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Council.



Visit the Council on line at www.scoa.ca

Publication Committee:

Jeanette Dean, chair;
Michael Gillgannon,
Mercedes Montgomery,
Eleanor Williams.

Editor: Jenni Mortin

Scanning: Michael
Gillgannon

3 Meri Misfits

With Songs and Funny Skits, Seniors Warn About Falls

By Jenni Mortin

It's no surprise that falls can be serious for the elderly, but it is surprising that warning about falls can be pretty funny – when the Meri Misfits are doing it.

And their warning is the more memorable for that humour.

The Meri Misfits are a group of seniors brought together by Prof. Don Drinkwater of the University of Saskatchewan Department of Kinesiology in an effort to draw attention to the hazards of falling and other situations dangerous for older adults, but in a fun way.

They present skits, some of them in the public domain but most written by the members, often by putting new words to familiar songs. "They're funny skits with a serious message," Don says. "The ladies who form the group have a lot of fun, so do I and so do the audiences."

Formed just a year ago, the group has put acting, singing, dancing and writing skills to work at Saskatoon senior residences and centres in a way that gets the point across, and also illustrates the art of growing old with grace.

Don, a member of the



Anne Smart discovers a new use for hip protectors during a recent Meri Misfits performance at Luther Tower and Care Home. Enjoying the lesson are, from left, Adrienne Sawchuk, Doreen Bauer, physiotherapist Dalene Newton, Fran Gordon and Olive Sipko.

Saskatoon Falls Prevention Consortium, was seeking a way to get advice about preventing falls across to seniors so they would remember and act on it. A skit about the perils of scatter mats, for example, led some members of the senior audience to get rid of them.

"The message is about being careful, and thinking about it more."

And it's conveyed with fun and laughter. Several of the Meri Misfits have been part of Caring Clowns at Royal University Hospital. Some play an instrument or have acting and singing experience, and like performing. "I've greasepaint under my fingernails," Doreen Bauer says with a laugh. Betty

The Meri Misfits will present three programs of skits and songs this fall at the Frances Morrison Public Library, called:

Be-Attitudes

Be Aware – Sept. 19

Be Safe – Oct. 17

Be Active – Nov. 21

Huckabay was a teacher by profession, "so you're acting all the time."

"I had always wanted to act and perform," says Anne Smart, who has been pleased with the group's response to the skit and songs she has written. "If you don't laugh, what can you do?"

Olive Sipko "grew up in a family that sang all the time," she says. She's particularly enjoyed the Meri Misfits because "I've always liked to horse around. In a way I've acted all my life."

Janet Gilmour, who sings with the Sweet Adelines and is in Caring Clowns, finds it "so rewarding to see a little light go on" in members of the audience when the Meri Misfits perform.

While they have started with falls – an early show opened with the song, "Please Help Me, I'm Falling" – the women plan to expand into subjects like fitness, isolation and denial. And they are always looking for new members to add to the present eight, and would welcome some men who like to sing and act.

Jenni Mortin is editor of Coming of Age.

Saskatonians Walk Famed Inca Trail, Meet Galapagos Wildlife Up Close

By
Louis Horlick

My wife Ruth and I always wanted to visit the lost Inca city of Machu Picchu, so in March we joined a 16-day University of Saskatchewan tour that also featured a cruise to Ecuador's Galapagos Islands with their amazing birds, mammals and lizards.

The tour was organized and conducted by Melanie Elliott of the university's Extension Division, and all but three of the 16 travellers were over 60. Four were over 80, with Ruth and I the oldest at 87 and 85.

We enjoyed it all – except perhaps getting there, which involved nine hours of flying, and returning, with 12½ hours in the air and a 10-hour wait in Atlanta. I mention this to emphasize that modern mass air transport can involve very long flights and long waits in uncomfortable settings, in which passengers are often immobilized for many hours. This can be hazardous for older travellers.

However, more prominent in our memories is our exploration of the Inca culture and civilization, which flourished more than 500 years ago. We began in Cuzco, with its magnificent relics showing the Incas' skill at working stone. With stone and bronze implements, they created buildings of large



Ruth and Louis Horlick marvelled at the tight stone walls the Incas built without mortar. Here they are in Cuzco, the Inca capital 12,000 feet up in the Andes.

stones that fit perfectly together without mortar.

We stayed there for a day to acclimatize to the altitude – 12,000 feet – and then visited the sacred valley of the Incas along the Villacanota River. As well as five picturesque towns with impressive Inca remains, it contains some of Peru's finest farmland. These Andean farmers developed more than half of what the world eats today – such as 20-plus varieties of corn, sweet potatoes, squash, many types of beans, peanuts, cashews, pineapples, chocolate, avocados, tomatoes, peppers, papaya, strawberries and blackberries.

At a demonstration farm, friendly llamas, alpaca and vicuna were happy to eat leaves and branches from our hands. An adjacent craft centre run by a co-operative called Awana Kancha used the animals' wool to produce woven materials that are the most colourful and exquisite I have ever seen. You can see examples at www.awanakancha.com.

That afternoon we climbed a narrow mountain trail to visit an Incan sun temple-observatory. I managed to fall off the trail but landed in a cactus patch, which kept me from rolling the rest of the way down the mountain.

Towering Machu Picchu

The next day we travelled by train and bus to Machu Picchu. When we started along the narrow road, the mountain was shrouded in clouds, but they soon dispersed to reveal towering peaks and a narrow valley far below. Machu Picchu – a complex of terraces, gabled houses, temples, sacred plazas and residential compounds – was never found by the Spaniards and was probably abandoned before their conquest. It was discovered by Hiram Bingham in 1911.

Because of the altitude, I decided not to investigate the large site in detail, but was content to enjoy the marvellous vista. Excellent photos can be seen at www.culturefocus.com. Choose Peru/Machu Picchu.

The next leg of our trip began in Quito, Ecuador, a congested city filled with noxious fumes. We climbed out of the valley into the mountains to reach the ecolodge that was to be our resting place for two days, a somewhat dilapidated old hacienda that may once have been charming. Our venerable age won us a room on the lower level, kept warm by an open fireplace until the fire petered out in the early morning, letting us experience the nocturnal Andean cold.

Breakfast featured a native dish of cornmeal mush wrapped in corn husks, which we found quite palatable as we enjoyed the varicoloured hummingbirds at the bird feeders. On a medical-botanical hike led by one of the native staff, I was amazed at all the useful plants he identified for their medicinal value. This type of knowledge was once an important part of the medical curriculum but has been abandoned to the drug companies.

We returned to Quito for our flight to the Galapagos Islands. At San Cristobal Island, we were ferried to the *Monsarrat II*, our floating home for the

next few days. It usually travelled by night and anchored at various islands during the day. At Genovese, one of the most northerly islands, we climbed a precarious path and walked along a lava trail, entranced by the profusion of birds and terrestrial reptiles.

Tortured Landscape

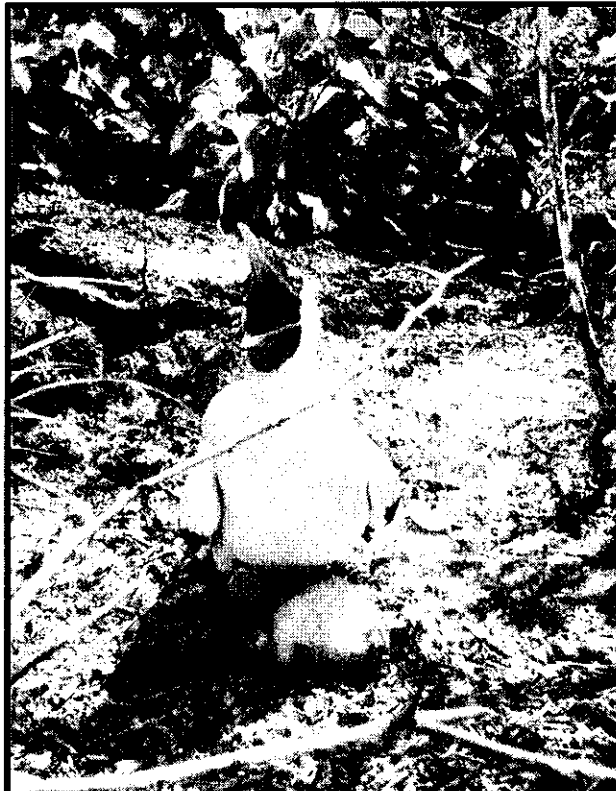
The creatures of the Galapagos are survivors of a "tortured landscape, an otherworldly archipelago, nine hundred miles out to sea." Long isolated from humans, they are fearless. On land, you sidestep hundreds of lizards, nesting blue-footed boobies, sea lions and crabs. The ominous frigate birds circle above, pelicans dive-bomb their prey, and red-footed boobies, lava gulls, noddies and terns are all over the place. Tortoises, turtles, iguanas, lava lizards and many species of crabs are plentiful, and there is a plethora of colourful sea life, including delightful miniature penguins.

It was a wonderful experience to see Charles Darwin's birds, mammals and lizards at close range. Ecuador declared the Galapagos a national park in 1959, and 90 percent is now protected, with a limited number of sites open to tourists.

The older members of our group found it challenging to negotiate the lava rock trails and climb the ridges and hills. We were fortunate to have in Melanie a knowledgeable and caring tour guide, and local guides who spoke English gave us much information and guidance.

It was a great experience and I would recommend it for most able-bodied seniors.

Those over 70 with health problems should consider caution.



Nesting blue-footed booby warns visitors away from its chick, in this Galapagos photo by Louis Horlick.

Louis Horlick, MD, FRCP(C), Professor of Medicine Emeritus of the University of Saskatchewan College of Medicine, recently published his third book of medical history, J. Wendell MacLeod: Saskatchewan's Red Dean (McGill-Queens Press).

Help Is Available to Prepare A Living Will

BY
FR.
MARK
MILLER

Many hospital patients ask about preparing an advance health care directive — widely known as a living will — in which they can specify just how much care they want as they near life's end. In 1996, the year before the Saskatchewan government proclaimed the law allowing such directives, the St. Paul's Hospital ethics committee began to look for examples that staff could make available to patients.

We found many versions, most of them short and dangerous. One we liked was specific to nursing home residents. So we created our own directive to help decision-making for the 70 percent of Canadians who die in a hospital or nursing home.

We designed it first as an educational tool. Reading it will make a person aware of issues a family might face at the end of a loved one's life — such as use of ventilators, feeding tubes, cardiopulmonary resuscitation or intensive care units. It asks about appropriate palliative care, the utility of medical tests, the possibility of dying at home, and what to do when a person is irreversibly demented or unconscious.

We added a safety valve that many directives too often lack: Permission to treat, even aggressively, if the outcome of an illness or accident is unknown. When a critically ill person goes to Emergency, for example, good health care demands all the possible treatment that might enable recuperation. If the illness proves irreversible, the directive would offer guidelines for proper, even palliative, care.

Very few of the directives we saw recognized that a person's religious beliefs are essential to decisions made at this time. People who have lived as Jews or Catholics or Jehovah's Witnesses or Buddhists generally want their dying process guided by the customs and rules of their faith. We added these for the Christian faith and as a model for any faith.

Advance directives give people the security of knowing who will make decisions when they cannot. Choosing your proxy or proxies is perhaps their most important function. They specify personal wishes that can relieve a family of guilt, disagreement and uncertainty around end-of-life decisions. Just by reading and discussing a directive, spouses, family members and proxies can get a feel for what the person

might want under what circumstances.

That discussion is probably more important than actually filling out the document! (Except for ensuring the right proxy.)

Our advance directive has a generic version based on personal values, a generic Christian version and a more specific Catholic version. It is available for \$5 from the Catholic Health Association of Saskatchewan in the nursing residence at St. Paul's. Even better, it is on our website at www.stpaulshospital.org and can be downloaded (in any or all of the versions). You can cut, paste and adapt it to create your own document.

At St. Paul's, patients occasionally ask about an advance directive. Our social workers and spiritual care providers are excellent at helping people express their wishes. I have been thanked weeks or months after the death of a loved one for the help that this document or, better, the process of preparation has offered.

Fr. Mark Miller, a Redemptorist priest, has been bioethicist at St. Paul's Hospital since 1993 and also works with rural health care facilities and health regions. He plays ethical hockey.

Versions of the Living Will available through St. Paul's Hospital

An Advance Directive for Health Care based on My Personal Values

A Faith-based Advance Directive for Health Care based on My Christian Faith

A Faith-based Advance Directive for Health Care: A Catholic Approach

Event Will Explore Hope for Families Caring for Persons with Dementia

By Rob Roy and Liz Quinlan



What is hope? Where does it come from? What needs to happen for there to be real hope in the lives of family members caring for persons with dementia? If you are a caregiver or know a caregiver, is there an experience of hope you can share that may help someone else who is overwhelmed and careworn?

"Exploring the Experience of Hope" is a special theatre event that will explore the complex and sensitive issue of hope, how to make it more deliberate, how to learn to appreciate and find meaning and purpose in difficult circumstances.

Informal caregivers will present short plays that show some of the obstacles to hope:

feelings of isolation, dealing with setbacks and the burnout that comes from not caring for yourself. We will stop the action at times and ask you, our audience of caregivers, what needs to happen for there to be real hope in these characters' lives? Can you suggest ways to create hope in the face of these obstacles? Would you show us so that others who are struggling may see what a choice for hope looks like?

"Exploring the Experience of Hope" will be led by theatre artist Rob Roy, a leading proponent of community-applied theatre, and integrate University of Saskatchewan research data gathered by Liz Quinlan and Wendy Duggleby. Theatre

contradicts the isolation we all feel and helps us envision new possibilities. We hope this event will create new hope by giving caregivers of persons with dementia the opportunity to support other caregivers and allow everyone to experience community as the necessary human event it is

This fun and engaging rehearsal-for-reality event will open up new ways of seeing and being together. No theatre experience is needed to take part.

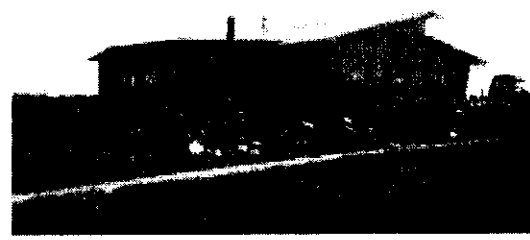
Please join us at Spotlight on Seniors at TCU Place on Oct. 3 at 11 a.m. or 2 p.m. and be a part of it all.

Eco-Adventure Awaits As You Travel South On Highway 11

By Jeanette Dean

Driving to Regina, most of us stop at Davidson or Chamberlain for a break but usually go right past Craik. However, this town has become much more than one in a string of places on Highway 11. It is home to a fascinating demonstration multi-purpose Eco-Centre designed to need as little energy as possible.

The wood used in the post-and-beam construction was recycled from old elevators, the



The energy-efficient Eco-Centre at Craik

exterior walls are made from durum wheat straw bales and the bricks for the oven came from a school demolished in 1988. Solar energy handles heating and cooling, with an in-floor system providing additional heat. The triple-glazed windows have fibreglass frames.

The Eco-Centre has attracted

worldwide interest and praise, and has encouraged Craik to make lots available for energy-efficient houses.

It has meeting rooms, a restaurant and gift shop and offers tours. The Council Drop-in Group and friends spent a most interesting day there last spring.

Look for the sign on the left as you go from Saskatoon to Regina. The Centre, including the restaurant, is open daily from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. You will really enjoy your visit, especially if you take the informative tour.

For information about the Drop-in Group's programs and tours, phone the Council office at 652-2255.

The first car - idiosyncratic and unforgettable

The first car I ever owned was a new 1964 Simca. It started out red but quickly turned burnt orange under a hot Kansas sun. (Yes, I was born and raised in Kansas. Insert Dorothy joke here.) Simcas were imported from France by Chrysler, and (for a tin can) performed somewhat adequately in the heat. But when the heat was removed, as sometimes happens in the wintertime, there was little to do but stay indoors, because the Simca wasn't going anywhere.

Block heaters in Kansas were as rare as wildebeest, and still are. Make sure, if you ever travel down there, to hide your block heater cord under the hood, lest the locals liken you to the antichrist, running your car on 'lektrissy instead of fossil fuels, in violation of the Good Book ("For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire." – Isaiah 9:5).

One might compare a Simca to something Barney Rubble drove in *The Flintstones*: boxy, underpowered and nearly as comfortable as a Roman slave ship. They looked a bit like the old Renaults but the similarity ended there,

Michael Gillgannon

especially if you were trying to do anything approaching a stunt, such as go fast, stop quickly or beat a 16-wheeler off the line. To try any of these things was laughably insane.

Of particular amusement were the vinyl seats, which when exposed to the aforementioned Kansas sun would sear soft thighs into beef jerky in seconds. These cars could not be air-conditioned, for then there would be no power left over to propel the box across cracks in the pavement. There was little to do but roll down the windows and invite the shrieking sirocco-like wind inside, where it would tear the words out of your mouth and hurl them into the hellish furnace outside.

As can be imagined, the little Simca was not too good on hills. At least not the upside of hills. A trip through the Montana Rockies in December became more and more unpleasant as the temperature approached absolute zero and electrons stopped moving around their nuclei. The Simca pushed bravely onward, its throttle frozen open, its headlights straining to catch a glimpse of Paris.

Michael Gillgannon is a member of the Publication Committee.

SHARING TREASURED MEMORIES

The Saskatchewan Century Club is for people over 90 who are determined to continue enjoying life and who want to live to 100. Membership is free and activities take place throughout the year.

The Saskatoon branch is a project of the Saskatoon Council on Aging. It has more than 140 members and generally everyone attends the same event, such as Christmas entertainment at a school, a movie at the Broadway Theatre or a presentation about River Landing.

In May, however, we tried smaller neighbourhood events. Members met at Oliver Lodge, the Palisades or St. Ann's Nursing Home,

whichever was most convenient. They brought something they would never part with and shared it with fellow members and the residents in each place. We shared photos, old books, jewellery, antiques, needlework and paintings as well as memories of early days on the farm, teaching in one-room schools and wartime experiences.

These afternoons, which ended with a social time and tea, were very successful.

Three more events are planned for this fall. If you would like to join the Century Club, call the Council office at 652-2255.

Jeanette Dean