



COMING of AGE

SASKATOON COUNCIL ON AGING INC.
301 - 508 25th Street East
Saskatoon, S

A Publication of the Saskatoon Council on Aging



Writing a life story: here's help

By Melanie Boyd

When my grandmother turned 100 in 1997, I made a book about her life. That experience provoked many questions about life story writing, and provided many answers.

Here is a sampling of both questions and answers to help you on a similar journey.

Ask: Why do I want to write this life story? Write down all your responses. Take your time.

Reflect deeply. Be honest.

There are many legitimate reasons to write another person's story or your own. They include:

- To pass on family history
- For personal growth
- To celebrate a life
- Curiosity.

Questionable reasons include: To become rich and famous; to get even; because someone said you should.

(Continued on page 3)

Seniors on ice: Seniors enjoy regular skating at the ACT Arena in Sutherland on Tuesdays and Fridays. Here, Mary Ann McNeill and Wilf Wagner show their style. For story and more photos, see pages 4-5.

Muriel Jarvis Receives Caring Canadian Award

Muriel Jarvis, one of the founders of the Saskatoon Council on Aging, was recently honoured with the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award.

The award was presented during a ceremony at the Delta Bessborough Hotel by the Hon. Jack Wiebe, Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan.

Ms. Jarvis, a nurse who worked for many years in long-term care, particularly at Sherbrooke Community Centre, was influential in improving such facilities. She now sits on the boards of Saskatoon District Health and Lutheran Sunset Home.

Inside

In My Opinion	2
Millennium gifts	2
NACA helps	6
Doing CPR	7
Mall-walking	7
You wrote us	8

In My Opinion

I often wonder at what point seniors begin to lose the resolve not to do the things they have seen in other seniors which led them to decide, "When I get older, I will take care never to do such-and-such."

It seems so easy to have observed through the years the little eccentricities and habits that seniors often acquire, and made mental notes that these are not practices that a person would willingly adopt if they could knowledgeably be avoided. Most of them are simple, but perhaps they are worth thinking about -- and yes, not all apply only to older persons.

For example:

■ The practice of engaging others in conversation in places where a blockage is created -- a grocery store aisle, the middle of the sidewalk or a doorway -- when it would be more considerate to move aside.

■ The custom of regaling people with the same stories over and over. If the stories can be remembered, perhaps it's possible to remember to whom they have been told.

■ Letting lack of motivation create poor dietary habits -- the soup and toast routine -- when we know that a balanced diet benefits our entire well-being.

■ The tendency to let our-

selves retreat from society, and in effect from life, by letting old relationships, interest in learning and some physical exercise fail.

■ Preoccupation with physical problems to the extent that others, wearied by accounts of aches and pains, are reluctant to say, "How are you?"

At what point do we lose our capacity to say, "I am intent on being the vital person I have always been, and if the years take their toll on me, they are not going to do so without my intentional resistance"?

Wendell Stevens

Retired United Church minister Wendell Stevens is on the Publications Committee.

Gifts to Community Celebrate Millennium

Seniors are represented on Saskatoon's committee for the nationwide Our Millennium program -- for celebrating the new millennium -- by Bill Bender, former president of the Saskatoon Council on Aging. C.M. (Red) Williams is the honorary chair of the committee.

The Our Millennium program, which is spearheaded locally by the Saskatoon Foundation, encourages people to celebrate the millennium by making gifts to their local community. "Gifts to the future, gifts that will improve our community for generations to come," Mr. Williams describes them.

The gifts must be made by groups, and must be significant to both the community and the givers, and symbolic of the Millennium. They could range from

a commitment to do odd jobs for someone who needs help to stitching a Millennium quilt, planting trees or creating a neighbourhood study centre.

Some gifts have been given already, Mr. Bender reports. The University of Saskatchewan gave an atlas of Saskatchewan. The Meewasin Valley Authority has given Relay 2000, a relay that will go through Saskatoon on its way across Canada. The Saskatoon and District Chamber of Commerce is reviving the Junior Chamber of Commerce, and

several groups are turning an old 20th Street grocery store into a youth centre.

About 37 local organizations are represented on the Saskatoon Our Millennium Committee, Mr. Bender says. He has made several presentations to local organizations, including the Council on Aging, about making a gift.

The Our Millennium program runs until the end of 2000, and the Saskatoon Foundation asks givers to register their gifts with the local committee for permanent record in Saskatoon and Ottawa.

Coming of Age is published by the Saskatoon Council on Aging, 109 Third Avenue North, Saskatoon S7K 2H4, with a grant from Sask Lotteries and assistance from the Saskatoon District Health Board. Opinions expressed are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Saskatoon Council on Aging. The Council can be contacted at 652-2255.

Publications Chairman: Marion Korol

Publications Committee: June Gawdun, Lorne Paul, Wendell Stevens, Art Sumner

Editorial Consultant: Jenni Mortin

Photography: Dennis W. Harley

Scanning of Photos: Pat Smith

Research well before writing

By *Melanie Boyd*

Your reasons for writing a life story reflect your motivation, which will show through in the final product and contribute to your story's uniqueness. Sound motivation adds richness; unsound motivation turns readers off.

ASK: Do I know everything possible about this life? Your research goal should be to collect too much information. Two kinds of research are necessary: direct and indirect.

Direct research asks: What was my subject's life like in particular? Indirect research asks: What was my subject's world like in general? That world is the context for your subject's life. The reader needs to understand how he/she fits, or doesn't fit, into that world.

In the 1920s, my grandmother -- a British immigrant and Saskatchewan pioneer -- refused to polish her husband's boots. "You can polish your own," she told him, "and do mine while you're at it." In the context of her world, this says a lot about Gram.

ASK: What can I leave out? Don't try to put everything into a life story. Research thoroughly, then pick the plums. The more you know, the more plums there will be. Toss out the culls -- or readers will.

ASK: How does this lifestory want to be told? If you haven't begun to research, you are not ready to answer this question. Thorough research shines a light on the themes and patterns of a life. It points out fascinating connections and suggests the best form for your story.

All life stories can be told chronologically, though this may not be the most effective method. Instead, you might write 10 episodes on one theme (*Jobs from lemonade stand to law office* or *Houses I've lived in*) or tell the stories of a dozen photographs. As I did, you might use your subject's poetry as a framework for short memoirs, artifacts and photos.

ASK: How did my subject respond when the unexpected happened? Dig for stories of sur-

prise and struggle. Did your subject lose a farm, a spouse, a job? Dig even deeper for responses, for responses to the unexpected reveal character.

ASK: Where can I show instead of tell? Readers don't want to be told, they want to discover. Your job is to provide the clues, which most often come in the form of detail which can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted or felt.

You can write: "My grandmother used a flatiron when she was a young mother. It was hard work but she enjoyed that part of laundry day."

Or: "It was January 8, 1934 -- a blizzardy Monday afternoon. Gram hefted a flatiron off the wood stove. She pressed it hard onto a sheet just in from the line. The iron hissed at the damp, frozen cotton. In the bedroom, the girls battled and the baby screamed with colic. In the kitchen, Gram



closed her eyes, leaned over a steaming sheet -- fragrant with ice and fire -- and breathed."

ASK: Is this the whole picture? An interesting and believable life story includes all facets of a subject's personality and various life roles.

My grandmother might be a "wonderful person", but she isn't perfect. Nor is she only a grandmother. I wanted to show the reader Gram's successes and failures, her positive and not-so-positive traits, her talents, quirks and opinions. I wanted to show her as a daughter, sister, wife, mother, friend, in-law, farmer, volunteer, world traveller, tomboy, poet and daring gal on the dance floor. Mostly, I wanted to show how she is human.

Because that's what readers are. And that's what readers want.

Melanie Boyd wrote One Hundred Extra Ordinary Years, Selected Poems and Memoirs of Dorothy Olive (Trent) Hodgson. She gives performances/readings about the book and workshops about writing life stories.

Photo: Shirley Patola

Gliding...

sliding...



*Agnes Pearce
and Al Schumacher
glide along.*



*Margaret Barnet
on her speed
skates.*



*Re-learning, Bill
Radocuk protects
his head in case of falls*

On Tuesday and Friday mornings, seniors predominate on the figure skating rink at the ACT Centre in Sutherland. Many are in their 80s and have skated for most of their lives, like Mike Mykolyuk who proudly reports he's in his "64th year of skating." It's a sport they love.

Others are learning a new skill or recovering an old one, and enjoying the company as they gain confidence and get exercise.

Thelma Pepper once brought along her daughter, a physical education teacher at the University of British Columbia, and says she was amazed that the people could skate so well. "You'd never find this anywhere else in Canada," she told her mother.

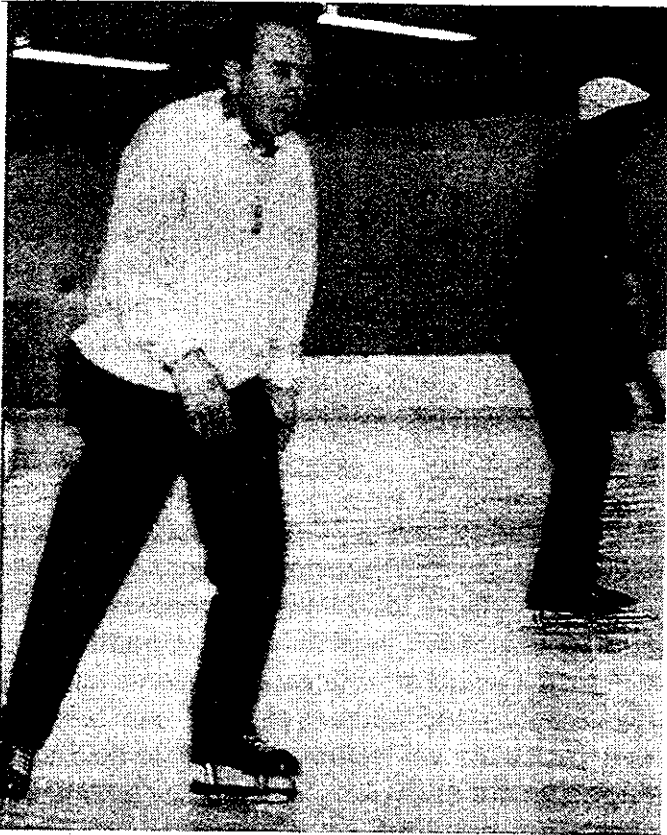
The ice time is donated by the Saskatoon Figure Skating Club, so each skater pays a loonie a session to say 'thank you' to the Club. Payment is on the honour system and helps keep track of numbers. On a cold January Tuesday there were 68 skaters over the 90 minutes from 10 to 11.30.

With no rules or regulations, no executive committee to organize the sessions, somehow everything goes smoothly. Mel Chiga can be relied on for much of the organizing needed for ongoing activities and special events; Eva Newcombe collects money for events like the Christmas party; others do what is needed to keep the group skating smoothly.

Miss Newcombe also belongs to the Sunday Club which skated for more than 50 years at the downtown and Exhibition rinks and now meets Thursdays at the ACT Centre hockey rink. In contrast, Stan Kolojay moved to Saskatoon recently from North Battleford, where he played hockey until an angioplasty put a stop to that. He is pleased to report that "at 75 I feel better than I did at 50."

... smooth as silk

STORY BY
TERESA HARLEY
PHOTOS BY
DENNIS W.
HARLEY



*Thordy Kolbinson, left,
and Roy Cushway use
different types of skates*

*Below, Lorraine Greer
and Ralph Thomas
make the circuit.*



Lorraine Greer, an enthusiastic organizer and participant in many of the group's activities, has found that men usually outnumber women skating. "About three to one on many days," she says, "from all walks of life."

Many of the men used to play oldtimer hockey, but not everyone is an expert skater. Bill Radochuk wears a helmet as he recovers skills learned as a youngster; "it could be a big problem if I fall." Mrs. Greer says it isn't unusual to see someone put a chair on the ice and push it around.

Skating is only part of the attraction for the 50 or so regulars; off-ice friendships and social events are also important. Some of these active people like to walk the Meewasin Trail or cross-country ski together, making sure to include time for coffee afterwards. The Christmas party is an annual highlight: more than 100 attended in 1999.

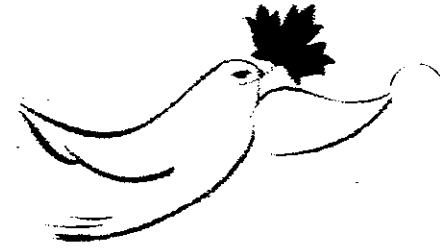
Long-time participant Gerry Hawley, now 83, had to give up skating because of inner ear problems, but brings his wife, Mary, to the Arena twice a week. While she skates, he walks the halls and corridors, keeping fit and remaining part of what he says is "more than a skating group, it's a social group as well."

*Teresa Harley is a Saskatoon senior and freelance writer.
Dennis W. Harley is a senior and an avid photographer.*

Update

It's not too late to be part of the Golden Gardens program that was launched by the Canadian Wildlife Federation as part of the International Year of Older Persons. Projects can be done in window boxes, balconies, backyards or at a seniors' centre, and the Federation offers financial support to eligible projects. Application forms are available at the Council office, and March 31 is the deadline to apply for funding.

An influential voice on senior issues



NATIONAL ADVISORY
COUNCIL ON AGING

BY BUBS COLEMAN, PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVE

N A C A.

No, the letters don't signify the beginning of a new alphabet for the millennium. They stand for an organization that may influence the life of every senior in Canada, on issues from health to financial security.

What is it? What does it do? Why is it important to residents of Saskatchewan?

NACA is the National Advisory Council on Aging, a 20-year-old commission which assists and advises the Minister of Health on issues related to the aging of the Canadian population and the quality of life of seniors. But the question is: Is it an authentic and able voice whose recommendations are acted upon?

From my experience as Saskatchewan's representative since last spring, the answer is an unqualified **Yes**. A recent example is the establishment in 1997 of a federal tax credit for family caregivers of seniors — a 1990 NACA recommendation. Another is the reform of the Canada Pension Plan in 1997 when, consistent with the recommendations in the brief presented by NACA, the federal and provincial governments did not reduce CPP retirement benefits to pensioners.

Saskatchewan has an impressive history of effective appointees to NACA, among them the late Madge McKillop of Saskatoon, Wilma Mollard of Saskatoon (a founding president of the Council on Aging) and Bernice McDougall of Regina. Each province has one representative, appointed by cabinet for a two- or three-year term and responsible for bringing to the Council's attention the concerns of his/her region and helping place these in a national perspective through discussion, research and publication.

Age is now common currency across Canada in people's discussions, in the media and in private and government reports. How are Canadian seniors doing? Will future seniors differ from current ones? How will today's trends translate into tomorrow's challenges and opportunities? What will this mean for individuals, families, decision-makers and society as a whole?

To take stock of seniors' situation today, NACA published late in 1999 a 70-page booklet that is fast becoming a touchstone, going beyond fiscal and budgetary analysis to identify the real issues of an aging society. ***1999 and Beyond: Challenges of An Aging Canadian Society*** highlights major issues of aging and addresses their challenges so decision-makers will establish the best policies for today's seniors and, ultimately, all Canadians.

Among the immediate challenges are health, pensions, employment, tax policy, industrial development, labour market, status of women and of First Nations and Inuit people, housing and transportation. To address these issues, NACA is asking the federal government to develop an aging agenda and play a strong leadership role with the provinces and territories, the private and voluntary sectors to achieve concrete results.

While all the challenges are important to an aging society, for me an immediate priority is to strengthen and reform the health care system to provide access to the right care in the right place at the right time. Developing a strong home care system is an urgent priority.

Bubs Coleman is serving a two-year term on NACA, and sits on its communications committee. A long-time Saskatoon resident, she retired in 1994 as communications co-ordinator for the Mendel Art Gallery. She can be reached at 652-9044.

For information about NACA and its publications (all free):
National Advisory Council on Aging
Jeanne-Mance Building, Address locator 1908A1
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1B4
Website: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/seniors-aines>

Seniors, too, can learn CPR and save lives

By Barbara Norum

It may sound like a contradiction, but by taking a CardioPulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) course you may reduce the odds of ever having to perform CPR, says Lynn Digney, RN, an instructor-trainer in CPR for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan.

In most cases, there are signs of a heart attack long before the heart stops beating (cardiac arrest). Being able to recognize the signs of heart attack or stroke and knowing how to take action quickly are vital links in the Chain of Survival*, and part of the CPR course.

"Many people don't realize that 70 per cent of heart attacks occur in the home," Ms. Digney says, "and chances are it will happen to someone we know. It's especially important for seniors to

learn to recognize and react; this is the age group most at risk."

She says seniors are sometimes reluctant to take a class because they think it requires a lot of time or too much physical exertion, but it only takes four to eight hours to learn these skills. Courses are geared for various

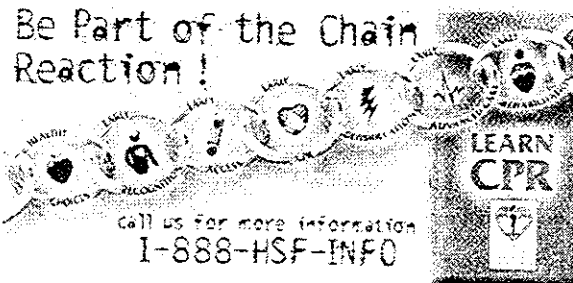
a manual and GST. To register, call 955-5555.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation encourages people of all ages to learn the vital CPR skills and become a part of the Chain of Survival*.

In all programs, Ms. Digney says students learn how critical the time factor is. "If a person can at least recognize the signs of heart attack or stroke, they can strengthen the Chain of Survival* by getting somebody with training to help the victim."

For those unable to attend a program, the Foundation offers print and video resources. Our Heart Saver Video Kit is now available for \$7 plus taxes.

Barbara Norum is Cardiac Care Program Co-ordinator for the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Saskatchewan (1-888-473-4636)



age groups to make sure the physical demands are suited to the participants.

A special CPR program for seniors is being offered by Kelsey Institute on March 20 and 27 from 1 to 4 p.m. The \$50 fee includes

Walking in Saskatoon Malls

Winter need not stop healthy walking exercise, for city malls open early and welcome walkers. Some ask you to register, but it is not compulsory.

Market Mall

Open: 6.30 a.m.

Distance: almost half a mile

Registration: customer service kiosk

Numbers: about 250

The Mall at Lawson Heights

Open: 7.30 a.m.

Distance: 2,075 feet on main stretch

Registration: no

Numbers: about 30 regularly

The Centre

Open: 6.30 a.m., to 9.30

Distance: a bit over 1 kilometre

Registration: guest services area, food court gift, walking record at registration, gift at 1400 km

Numbers: 75 registered

Midtown Plaza

Open: 6.30 a.m.

Distance: two city blocks

Registration: no

Numbers: not known

Confederation Mall

Open: 6.30 a.m.

Distance: one-seventh of a mile

Registration: administration office or lottery kiosk

Numbers: 86 registered

The Last Word Is Yours

Editor.

In your Spring 1999 issue, Mary Helen Richards, in an article entitled "Goodbye to the Car," estimates the yearly cost of maintaining a car as follows:

Plates	828
Package policy	233
Gas/oil/wash	600
CAA membership	78
Licences (2)	50
Maintenance	300
TOTAL	\$2,089

Mrs. Richards acknowledges that these figures exclude depreciation. I suggest it would be well to include this item, since it is a substantial part of the whole.

A used car salesman gave me a ballpark figure of 15% as first-year depreciation on a new car. So if the car cost \$20,000, depreciation would be \$3,000, one and a half times the total calculated above.

As a senior driving less than 6,000 km per year, I decided to buy a used car -- a four-year-old Toyota Corolla, a model supposed to have good resale value. Now, after nearly six years and 31,000 km, I estimate depreciation at \$1,200 per year.

This is a substantial saving in comparison to a new car, but still by far the largest item if included in Mrs. Richards' calculation.

G. Bert Mather
Saskatoon

Editor.

On Monday night, November 15th, I attended a ceremony in Regina where seven seniors, including two of our Saskatoon citizens, were presented with awards for their outstanding contributions to their communities by the Provincial Advisory Committee for the International Year of Older Persons.

I was surprised that this was not mentioned in the IYOP article in the Fall 1999 issue of *Coming of Age* and hope you will recognize these people in a further issue.

The seven people are:

Therese LeClaire, Saskatoon

Dr. Freda Ahenakew, Muskeg Lake Cree

Nation

Norman Roebuck, Yorkton

Wally Coates, Regina

Jeanne Morgan, Prince Albert

Clarissa Hilts, Moosomin

Susan Conly, Macklin

These are all people who continue to be active volunteers even though they have reached their retirement years. The Honourable Flora MacDonald, Co-chair of the Canadian Committee for IYOP, was guest speaker.

I enjoy your publication very much, keep up the good work.

Margaret E. Bouclin
Saskatoon

Update

Council on Aging Is Named to City Transportation Committee

The Saskatoon Council on Aging has been appointed to the city's new **Special Needs Transportation Advisory Committee**, which will advise city council about the transportation of persons with mobility impairments.

Telechat, the telephone visiting project started by the Council, now operates from **Saskatoon Services for Seniors**, 668-2762.

Subscriptions to **Coming of Age** keep coming in, in response to the offer in the Fall 1999 issue. So far, 20 people have bought \$5 annual subscriptions.