



6 - Seniors
5 - Transportation Disabled
Seniors, gambling
Winter 2002
Grandparents

COMING of AGE

SASKATOON COUNCIL ON AGING INC.

301 - 506 25th Street East

Saskatoon, SK S7N 1A7

A Publication of the Saskatoon Council on Aging

Safe Transportation Helps Seniors Preserve Their Independence

Transportation is a major factor in preventing isolation and preserving independence and quality of life. As we age, we may have to change our driving habits, give up driving or use alternative transportation. Family or friends may drive us or we may use taxis or public transit, including special needs transportation.

The Saskatoon Council on Aging was formed to promote the dignity, health and independence of older adults. From the beginning, it has been aware of the close links between transportation and senior independence and developed partnerships to address issues in this area.

The Council has partnered with the Saskatoon and District Safety Council to promote its 55 Alive driver refresher program. It examines the driving habits of older adults and teaches them how to improve bad habits. The safety

By Lynn Tait

and cost implications of owning and operating a vehicle are discussed, as well as cost-effective and convenient alternatives.

Saskatoon Transit offers both regular transit service, with low-floor buses available on selected routes, and special needs transportation. Through its partnership with the City of Saskatoon, the Council has had input into expanding the special needs transportation criteria to include people with a temporary or permanent disability who meet the criteria. These are

**Special Needs Transportation
Phone Numbers**

Registration 655-4346

Trip booking 665-2500


Customer care line

975-3142

people unable to use regular transportation with safety and dignity.

Family, business and community groups are other important partners in addressing the transportation needs of older adults. Family members often provide transportation and can give gift certificates for taxis and public transit. Taxi companies and community volunteers provide transportation alternatives. Transportation is key to keeping people involved in social, recreational and family activities and able to carry out medical, shopping and other responsibilities. This is perhaps more vital for people in Saskatchewan because the cold winter contributes to isolation, depression and other health problems.

Lynn Tait, Chair of the Council's Transportation Committee, represents it on the city's special needs transportation committee.

inside		Holiday plants Page 2	Drawn to a new career Page 3	Seniors and gambling Pages 4-5	Adventures en route Page 6	"I resolve..." once again Page 8
--------	---	--------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	----------------------------------	--

Keep Holiday Plants Beautiful

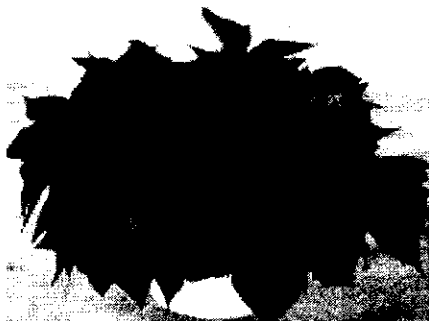
By Erl Svendsen

Plants are a popular Christmas gift but winter is the hardest time of the year to provide a healthy environment for them in your home.

Water your plant immediately and place it in a cool (65-70°F = 18-21°C), bright spot away from outside doors, drafty windows and heat registers. Never allow a seasonal plant to sit in water. Prolong its life by feeding it with half-strength water-soluble fertilizer every two weeks.

Poinsettia are the most popular Christmas gift plants; Christmas cactus, amaryllis, cyclamen, azalea and chrysanthemum are other choices. Poinsettia, azalea and chrysanthemum are difficult to force into bloom a second time in the home, as they require a minimum 10 hours of light per day for 5-6 weeks.

Remember that plants are supposed to beautify your home; when your holiday plant begins to look a little the worse for wear, don't feel bad about throwing it on the compost pile.



Poinsettia: This is THE Christmas plant in North America. The actual flowers are those little green pips sticking up in the centre of the colourful bracts (leaves). Make sure when you buy a poin-

settia that the flowers (pips) are present, and you'll get a healthy, vigorous plant. After watering, make sure the plant drains well before replacing the decorative pot cover, for it would hide excess water. If all goes well, your poinsettia will be blooming and colourful well into January and possibly February.



Christmas Cactus: This is a true cactus, not a desert plant but a tropical rainforest epiphyte. Its needs are few: keep it evenly moist and fertilize with half-strength 20-20-20 from flowering until September. Put it in a cool room in September as close to a window as practical to receive natural light all day, and keep it a little drier than usual (but not wilted). Flower buds should begin in November. Don't turn your plant until the flowers begin to open, or the immature buds may fall off. Resume normal watering and fertilizing at this time. Christmas cactus prefer to be rootbound and don't often require repotting; mine

has been in the same 10-cm square pot for nine years. Kept in the right conditions, your cactus may bloom again in early spring.



Cyclamen: This popular Christmas plant in Europe is beginning to catch on in North America. Easy to care for, it's relatively easy to bring back into bloom. Put it in a cool bright area out of the sun. Keep the soil evenly moist, watering from below and never allowing it to sit in water. In late spring, it will stop growing and no more buds appear on the corm. Allow the pot to dry out and remove the withered dry leaves with a light tug. Resume watering in mid- to later summer when new growth appears. Start using a water-soluble fertilizer and flowers should reappear in the fall and winter.

Erl Svendsen is a technical assistant/graduate student in the Department of Plant Sciences, University of Saskatchewan. The photographs are his.

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 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 Council.

Publications Committee: Rita Ledingham, chair; Jeanette Dean, June Gawdun, Michael Gillgannon, Wendell Stevens
Editor: Jenni Mortin
Scanning: Michael Gillgannon

Some people find later in life that they are drawn to a new career, and make what may be a huge life change. *Coming of Age* begins a series about such people with research scientist **J. Drew Smith's** story of starting over.

“I found I had another calling...”

I was well into my career as a research scientist when I gradually realized that I was called to the ordained ministry of the Anglican Church – much more insistently than working for the Ph.D. often re-

quired for my kind of work. While it was often suggested an advanced degree might help my career, I found I had another calling.

I was well acquainted with the Anglican tradition. I had been confirmed while at school and had sung in several choirs, from treble to bass. I had served as Minister's Warden in an Anglican church in Yorkshire while I was doing research on diseases of turfgrasses for my Master of Science degree.

With my wife and two sons, I came to Saskatoon in 1964 to work on low-temperature diseases of grasses and cereals at the federal Agriculture Research Station. I was also a Minister's Warden at St. Matthew's Church in Sutherland, and when I felt the call to the ministry I was encouraged by my wife, my rector and even my research director.

I did not expect to give up my research work and take charge of a parish, but was prepared to serve as an assistant (worker) priest, outside of work hours. My ministerial training was for several years part-time, at Emmanuel and St. Chad College among young and some more mature postulants, and at night classes at the university.

It was a busy life of long days with much

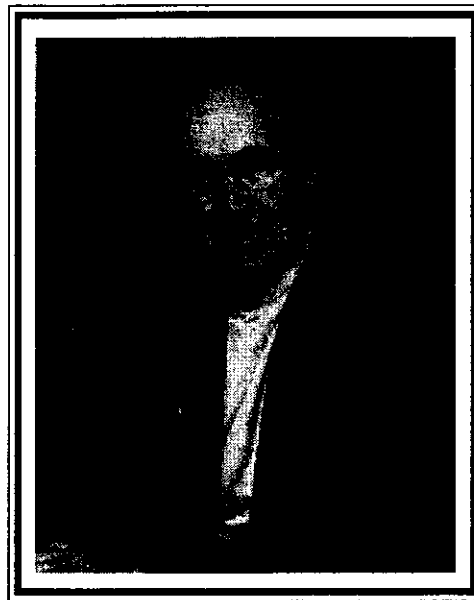
overtime but I was accepted at the Anglican Church Postulants Office, ordained deacon in 1975 and priested in 1976 by Bishop Douglas Ford. It was St. Thomas Day and I was 54.

I did not seek to become the incumbent of a parish, but rather to serve as a worker priest while I continued my research work. That several times entailed collaboration with colleagues elsewhere: at the University of Oregon for six months on a grass disease affecting Alberta grass seed production, at the University of Norway on low temperature diseases of grasses. In 1980, I was at the University of Newcastle in England writing a textbook – and served in a very high Anglican parish in South Shields.

In Saskatoon, I have twice been interim priest of St.

Matthew's. I've been chaplain of St. George's Church at Canadian Forces Base, Dundurn, and Priest-in-Charge of the Rosthern parish, and I continue as an active honorary assistant of St. Matthew's.

Now at 79, I can look back to see how my faith and my work have progressed side by side through most of my life, doubly rewarding. I am forever grateful that I was shown two great truths – of science and of the love of God in Christ. Peace be with you.



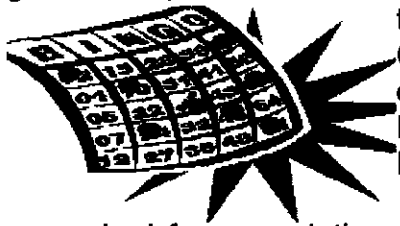
Rev. J. Drew Smith

Seniors who gamble it away

By Jenni Mortin

It was after he gambled away \$85,000 worth of stocks one summer that Joe went to Saskatoon District Health's Problem Gambling Program. He was a binge VLT player – up to \$1,000 a night for three or four nights, and then nothing for a few weeks.

Nancy spent hundreds of dollars subscribing to magazines she never read in hopes of winning the giant sweepstakes. When she couldn't leave her telephone for the family Christmas dinner, her daughter called the Problem Gambling Help Line.



Henry used money earmarked for prescription drugs to buy subscriptions to improve his sweepstake chances. Mary didn't attend her favourite granddaughter's wedding because it was bingo day. Muriel was surprised to find her family had a new second mortgage and fewer RRSPs; VLTs again.

None of these names is real, but the people are. They're among the older adults (55 and over) who have sought help at the Problem Gambling Program of SDH Addiction Services. Clinical team leader Jean Dunlop and counsellor Karen Morrissette believe they're just the tip of the iceberg.

Internet sites show widespread concern in Canada and the U.S. about older problem gamblers, but seniors are reluctant to seek help because of guilt and shame. They're not used to airing a problem publicly.

An official of Toronto's Community Outreach Programs in Addictions estimated last summer that about 42,000 Torontonians 55 and older are problem gamblers. Ms. Dunlop and Mrs. Morrissette can't say there's a proportionate figure in Saskatoon, but they work with clients addicted to every type of gambling.

Video lottery terminals, or VLTs, are the biggest problem in any province that permits them;

Saskatchewan has 3,600. Insert a loonie and in 3½ to 4 seconds you know if you've won or – more likely – lost. Cash machines are usually handy.

Joe, mentioned earlier, played VLTs up to \$1,000 a night. For a person on social assistance or a pension, \$50 once a week could represent as much, Ms. Dunlop points out.

For the vast majority of people, gambling is recreational. For others, it goes much further: they are obsessed with striking it rich, they lose control, they have no time for family events. For some, it's an escape from emotional pain and physical discomforts, "a time-out from life's difficulties," says Mrs. Morrissette.

It can be such a time-out that people won't leave

"their" VLT to go to the washroom or eat, because "it's going to pay any time." It's a gambling myth: the VLT is due to pay off, 10 lottery tickets are better than one.

Part of the draw is the hope of winning, says Ms. Dunlop, but there's also the pleasure – the anticipation of what's going to happen, the environment, the social activity. After one big win, they wait for it to come around again. "Chasing the win," it's called, trying to recapture past losses. With limited earning prospects, seniors may destroy their future financial security.

Scientists believe

that the adrenalin rush caused by gambling results in changes in brain chemistry. If we're betting on the horses, that rush might occur every 20 minutes or so. With VLTs – gambling's crack cocaine – it's every four seconds. Such continued ups and downs may

Senior Gambling Triggers

Money

- Lack of money
- Surplus money
- Thoughts of winning money

Senior issues

- Difficulty adjusting to retirement
- Lack of alternative activities
- Grieving the loss of friends, spouse or youth
- Lack of identity and sense of belonging
- Physical pain, discomfort or malaise

Emotional states

- Boredom
- Loneliness
- Resentment/anger
- Grief/sadness
- Excitement/joy
- Fear

Time/Accessibility

- Too much free time
- Increasing accessibility: VLTs, casino bus tours, magazine sweepstakes, Internet gambling

On the other hand, says senior *Frances Farness-Petit*:

Casinos offer seniors pleasant entertainment

I am one of the many seniors who enjoy the entertainment offered by a casino. I don't go out of my way to visit a casino, but may go to one if I am near it.

I have been to casinos in Winnipeg, Edmonton, Regina, Lloydminster, Prince Albert and Minneapolis. I have found them very well managed with well-dressed, good-mannered employees of all races.

I don't go to a casino with the idea of winning money. I go for fun and have found that some casinos have games that are very enjoyable to play. For instance, Regina has a game called The

Little Pigs, which involves certain spins when five little pigs jump out of a mudhole and a farmer stands by with a water hose. The player chooses a pig, the farmer turns the hose on the pig and washes off the mud, and a bonus amount is shown. Such games are fun to play, not mindless spinning of the reels.

When I go to a casino, I decide how much I intend to spend, usually \$20. I want to have fun. If I win, I am pleased, and if I lose, I have paid for my entertainment. I have spent two or three enjoyable hours and only spend about the same as going to supper and a show.

Gambling it away *(continued)*

actually cause physical alterations in brain chemicals.

They also make the rest of life seem kind of flat.

Many seniors with a problem don't have much gambling history, other than a lottery ticket now and then, Ms. Dunlop says. "But gambling can become part of a possible retirement plan." It's physically undemanding, takes place in a safe environment, and is fun.

For others, like the woman who's played bingo for 20 years, it's a habit of long standing. Two veterans in their late 70s played poker and blackjack during the war. Thereafter, gambling was a pleasant social activity, until it became an obsession. Gambling helped one man forget he'd lost his skills.

Casino bus tours are popular with older adults, Mrs. Morrissette says. Two local bus

companies told her that seniors made up an estimated 75 percent and 90 percent, respectively, of casino tour clients. It's an inexpensive tour, a social occasion, and the amount spent gambling may or may not be significant. But at many casinos, there isn't a lot else to do. And the casino may keep track of what is spent; too little, and you're not permitted on another tour, say the counsellors.

How does the Problem Gambling Program help older adults who seek its help or are escorted



there by worried family members? For some addictions, abstinence is the answer, but this may not be realistic with seniors, says Ms. Dunlop. "Sometimes a goal of harm reduction is more realistic," Mrs. Morrissette has learned, "setting limits."

Both like to work with problem gamblers, who are often more ready to make a change than other clients. They seem to have more energy available to work on their concerns, says Ms. Dunlop, attributing it in part to the neurological effect of drug addiction.

Counsellors do a clinical interview and standardized tests, approaching each client in a biological, social, psychological, spiritual and financial way, focusing on the aspects that are particularly important in each case.

They work out a personal recovery plan after exploring the person's concept of success. For some it might be never gambling again, for others gambling less. Safety nets are set up to help reach that goal, including techniques for managing stress and finances.

Family support is important, and some seniors don't have such support. Others suffer from the gambling habits of family members. "They may be targets of theft by adult children to use in gambling," Ms. Dunlop says. "If they are not stealing, they are manipulating the parent's money."

For the Adventure of it all

When the bus broke down last summer en route from Fort Nelson, B.C. to Whitehorse in the Yukon, the 46 touring members of Saskatoon Community Contacts for the Widowed took it in their stride – naturally.

The four-hour-plus wait added to the adventure, says long-time tour organizer Gladys Wright, 81. And when they had to carry on to Whitehorse in a school bus, why, they had a local driver who “took us to things we would never have found.”

That find-the-silver-lining attitude is typical of Mrs. Wright and the Saskatoon Adventurers, the travelling arm of what is usually known as the Widows Group. They didn’t want to be identified that way on their travels, so picked a truly descriptive name.

Since 1987, when Mrs. Wright began organizing travel with the help of Linda Petrow (then of Travel Cuts, now of Erley Tours), they have made 24 trips, mainly in Western Canada and the U.S. but once to Toronto, Ottawa and Niagara Falls.

Five times they’ve been to Calgary – once to the Stampede, three times to the International Horse Show at Spruce Meadows – “We love Spruce Meadows.” Trips always include dinner theatres, visits to interesting places, good hotels and careful arrangements. No 6 a.m. starts for these travellers – but they’re not necessarily early to bed. In Dawson City last July, they went to the 8.30 p.m. show at Diamond Tooth Gertie’s Gambling Hall, and back for the midnight show – which let them out into bright sunshine.

They’ve travelled three times to Winnipeg, where the Royal Canadian Mint is popular; twice to the Cypress Hills and twice to the Portland, Oregon Rose Festival. San Diego and Anaheim in California, Reno, the Black Hills, Waterton Lakes, Minneapolis, Minot, Victoria – “Older women like travelling,” Mrs. Wright says. “There’s so much companionship on our tours.”



Widows Group travel was always topnotch and that's where Gladys Wright and the others are in this 2001 photo: Top of the World at Dove Mountain (2,911 feet).

Saskatchewan Transportation Company representative. When STC gave up long-distance travel – “and I think it was wrong” – they switched to Antelope Tours. “Linda is very good. She gets in touch with all these people (on the route) saying, ‘What’s around there?’”

The answer might be a guided tour of Saskatchewan’s sand hills, a brewery tour in Denver, riverboat cruises in various cities, an apple orchard near Minneapolis, a Blue Jays-Yankees game in Toronto, a cheese factory in Calgary, the Carriage Centre in Remington, Alta., a trip on the Alberta Prairie Railway at Stettler.

“You name it, we’ve done it,” Mrs. Wright says with a reminiscent laugh.

She’s happy to reminisce about their trips because she has decided to give up the job of arranging them. It’s more difficult because there are no local touring bus companies now, and she feels she’s done it long enough.

She’s a born organizer – she was deeply involved in Girl Guides in Britain before coming to Saskatoon in 1981 and carried on here – but she’s decided to rest on her laurels, and remember the laughter and the fun.

Children bring joy to senior homes

BY JENNI MORTIN

Special care homes aren't what they used to be. Their doors open wide to welcome community people eager to build relationships with the senior residents, and staff encourage such links.

Take, for example, Oliver Lodge on Faulkner Crescent, where 100 volunteers visit regularly. "Bringing the community in is part of our mission," says Joan Hugg, Director of Recreation and Volunteer Services, "and many formal partnerships have been established."

The regular visits by children from several neighbourhood schools and two day-care centres are particularly welcome. "Children are therapeutic for seniors," Mrs. Hugg explains. "They help fight the plagues in long-term care - loneliness and boredom."

During one fall week, pre-schoolers and Grade Threes came to spend time with "Grandmas." (Everyone's a "Grand-ma", explains Wylma Orosz, a retired teacher who leads some programs.) The goal is to bring youth and children to the seniors to have fun together and develop relationships - though bonding is hard since different children come each time and the seniors may forget them.

Every two weeks, Children from Next Generation Day Care at Mayfair Public School come to play with Grandmas. Often they bring games and toys, but on Hallowe'en, they decorated cookies together with orange and

green icing and jelly beans, raisins and chocolate chips. It was serious business, because they were going to eat the cookies afterwards, with juice.

Gladys Henley, a vibrant 98, was an eager participant. She loves the children's visits. "I just live from one time to the next," she said.

She finds children today more outgoing than those she taught in Sunday School, and that's good. "It's such a difference. They get a chance to talk and be part of the family, while as kids we were to be seen and not heard. I think their mothers would have to be on their toes to watch them."

Two days later, seven students from Clarissa Komarnicki's Grade 3 class St. Edward School came for exercises with 12 Grandmas, and it was a wonderful sight. Seniors sat in a big circle with youngsters in front of them, encouraging them to move arms and legs in time to volunteer pianist Jean Arndt's lively music. The children's gentle care was obvious.

"They fight to come," teacher-aide Lizette Strautman said. "The seven who came last time are jealous they couldn't come today. It's a nice way to learn responsi-

bility, and develops very good awareness for the kids, awareness of the elderly and their capabilities and how we can help them socially and physically with exercise." It's a particular treat for children with no grandparents.

Even seniors passing by brightened at the children's presence. A visit in August by mothers and young babies pulled 45 of the 80 residents out to ooh and ah. It's all part of what Mrs. Hugg calls recreation in a therapeutic way, "the main focus of our job."



Exercising across the generations is fun! Muriel Marlatte and Gertrude Jerred swing with their partners from their wheelchairs, and in front, Brady Wells is smooth with Bertha Hibbert.

Photo by Wylma Orosz

Seniors needed for 'Adopt a Grandparent'

To be matched to a child in Council's newest program, call Toni Chasmar at 652-2255.

8 ABOUT THOSE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

By
Michael
Gillgannon

Let's see now. There must be something good about January.

People complain about the cold, the ice, the wind, but it's really much worse on, say, Neptune. At 2,000 kilometres an hour, the wind on the ice planet will blow the sugar out of the coffee in the blink of an eye. Not that there would be time to blink before being frozen into a plank of blubber. Minus 223 degrees does that to a person.

So now we have something to be thankful for. We live on Earth, not Neptune.

And since we are already well advanced into the cruelest month, it's about time we gave ourselves a break and started throwing out those hastily organized New Year's resolutions.

Let's look at a few examples:

1. I resolved to study the difference between good and bad cholesterol in order to make informed decisions in the pursuit of a healthful diet, but I read that Cheezies bag backwards and forwards and didn't learn a thing.

2. I resolved to quit flinching every time somebody says "healthy" when they mean "healthful," but the flinching continues. It could be a medical problem caused by bad cholesterol. There are other, similar, triggers: "further" and "farther," "good" and "well," "which" and "that." Don't get me started.

3. I resolved to force everyone to apologize to me for contributing to my rotten childhood. Why throw this resolution out? Because I suddenly realized I didn't have a rotten childhood. It wasn't structured, like so many are these days (school, band, hockey, tai chi, violin, Boy Scouts, homework, lather, rinse, repeat) but it was actually rather pleasant now that I think about it a few decades later.

4. I resolved to think kind thoughts about corporations that blame Sept. 11 for recent downward twitches in their earnings graphs ("Profits fall 10% to \$1.4 billion") and then fire a few dozen or a few hundred or a few thousand of their employees in order to make their investors happy. My failure to see the logic behind this approach is an obvious defect in my conceptual frameworking paradigm. I'll work on it. I really will.

5. I resolved to laugh off the threat of ultraviolet radiation, but then I read about electromagnetic radiation being bad news for cattle that spend a lot of time near high-tension wires, about radioactive basements being bad news for the people upstairs, and about life in general being the major cause of death. I wonder: Is paranoia bad for you? Or just a healthy, I mean healthful, way to cope with life? Somebody should write a book.

Michael Gillgannon is on the Publications Committee.

Council Partners with Local School, Calls for Mittens, Toques

The Saskatoon Council on Aging has entered into a formal partnership with Bishop Klein School. We share in projects from creating our cookbook, *Cooking Through the Ages*, to inviting the school choir to sing Christmas carols at the Saskatoon Community Service Village, where our office is located.

When it turned colder, we realized that many of the students leave home inappropriately dressed for the weather. This is where anyone can be part of the partnership. If you knit or crochet and frequently

wonder what to do with items you've made, why not consider donating them? Toques, scarves and mittens are always needed at the school and all donations will be appreciated. While they are needed during the winter, this is something that can be done year-round.

You can drop off your contributions at the Council office, 301-506 25th Street East, or at Bishop Klein School, 1121 Northumberland Avenue. If you have questions, please call Ria Bilawchuk at 652-2255 or Rachele Akerman at 668-7280.