

PART 2

MARCH 1978

Edmonton, as it is now, held a lot of temptations for girls or boys in their teens.

I can remember that date, July 28th, 1918, when it was Pine Creek's, (now Amber Valley) picnic day, -- an annual affair. The crops, wheat and oats, were beautiful standing shoulder high with long spikes and starting to fill. Everyone was happy, there were visitors from other communities - as well as Edmonton and Athabasca.

It was a gala affair. Refreshment booths, base-ball games, dancing and even horse-racing. But the day was spoiled by two events. Those racing their horses used the Lac-La-Biche Trail for a track. One lad, who was a bit hefty for the horse he was riding, swayed in his saddle and pulled his horse to one side going at full speed. The lad smashed into a telephone pole and hit his head, - he fell unconscious to the ground. The doctor came out from Athabasca and took him to the hospital, where in time he recovered. The picnic continued regardless.

It was a cool day, cloudy and the odd sprinkle of rain. But come evening, the sky cleared, and the temperature dropped below the freezing point. Needless to say, our hope for a bumper crop that year had disappeared.

My Mother said with tears in her eyes, "I thought my children wouldn't have to go to work again, and now this." I think all of us felt the same.

Those who have read my brief article of our family leaving the U.S.A. have thought I should follow it up with the, --When, Whys and Wherefores of my coming to Prelate, Sask. They thought I left the subject dangling in Mid-Air!!

It was in 1970 I started writing that article, now it's 8 years later.

I will be 81 years old coming June 12, 1978. At that age, when one looks back at the past, their memory is not so good. Be that as it may, I shall do my best.

My two older sisters and I worked in Athabasca or Edmonton most of the time. Frequently we would go back to the Homestead for a change. A lot of the younger children had grown up, and their parents had kept up some sort of a religious routine. My Dad's cousin had started at Methodist Sunday School that was held in his home.

When they built a public school, the then Methodist Sunday School, held their classes there. It became a kind of United Church for the different religious groups. So living out there wasn't too bad socially.

My sisters and I on our days off would attend one of those Holiness Churches. When there was an Evangelist in town, - (you know the Billie Graham type), we would make it a point to be there. This type of religion may turn some people off, but it kept us out of mischief.

My sisters and I never really lived out there again. We went back to Edmonton for good. My oldest sister, Mary, finally married one of the local boys and lived in Edmonton.

The following Fall, my Dad and older brother, Reese, went down to Saskatchewan looking for work to supplement the meager earnings of the Homestead. For awhile they worked for a rancher, - 'Miner's Ranch', then they joined a crew of men building a Grain Elevator in Prelate, Sask. It was then that my father and brother met Noah Dallard, my late husband.

He saw them, took them out home for dinner. He made quite an impression on my Dad and brother. The results were, Noah and I started corresponding and exchanging photos. On December the 19th, Noah came to Edmonton for a visit. We got married on the 19th of January, 1920.

We had a very quiet wedding, two of my brothers and my sister, Ivy, and a few friends in attendance. It was a hard winter, - lots of snow and sub-zero weather. My Mother and Dad couldn't get in to the wedding.

Noah and I left the next day for 'Home On The Prairie', - Prelate, Sask. The weather in Alberta and B.C. were in their worse mood. When we got to Calgary, the trains from the West and East were running hours behind schedule.

After sitting in that station for hours and waiting for the train from the West to arrive, we finally boarded the train to Bassano, Alberta. We changed trains at Bassano and got the one going to Empress, Alberta. There we had to stay all night, - if my memory serves me right! The next morning we boarded the Daily train that made a round trip from Empress, Alberta to Swift Current, Sask.

We got to Prelate January 23rd, 1920. One of the first oldtimers I met, was the postmaster Mr. Jack Gaffield, - he was there to put the mail on the train. Noah had left his keys with a neighbour, a friend, Mr. Fred Barclay. He had lit the fires in the heater to warm up the house, and came in to meet us in a 'Cutter'.

It was close to 40 degrees below, and there I was, in a big wide hat that had a plume-like feather hanging almost to my shoulder - an imitation Persian-Lamb coat and a blouse and skirt on, high laced boots, - sitting on my husband's lap in an open vehicle for a one and a half mile ride in sub-zero weather!:

Thanks to blankets, my body didn't suffer too much, but my ears were frost-bitten. That of course, had to be our Honey-moon trip!:

When I think of the way people dress now, - Pant-suits, heavy sweaters and warm jackets complete with comfortable boots and a warm scarf or toque on their head, I know they are far ahead of us in these days.

When I think of the showers bride-elects get, lots of useful gifts, beautiful expensive weddings, and a Honeymoon trip to various far-away places, I think I was born 60 or 70 years too soon!!

Noah's house was a wooden frame building, - one big room downstairs and an attic-like bed-room upstairs. There was also a lean-to kitchen on the north side. The out-buildings consisted of a barn;- a low building of rough lumber, covered with 2' x 4's - and chicken-wire and lots of hay, a chicken-house built in the same way, and on the west side of the chicken-house was the outside privy.

Noah had quite a few horses for his farming operations and transportations. I remember most of his horses were white, with the odd bay or dark grey one. Just imagine! the only coloured man in the district with mostly all white horses! The other farmers had bays and dark greys and sometimes Pintos. I suppose he thought since white was the colour of most of the people around, one had to have something around that was white!

The fact that, in my maiden days I had to work as a house-maid, paid off. Because I learned to keep a clean and tidy house, and cook a fairly good meal. That's something one doesn't learn in a poor big family.

I have seen women who got married and who literally couldn't boil water without burning it and if they couldn't hire a maid, their houses looked like 'A Male-house in Distress!'

In this day they have marriage counsellors, I imagine they teach both sexes to be good husbands and wives. In my day, one had to learn the hard way!

In six years we had four children. Add that to the burden of homemaking and making One-Dollar do the job of Two or Three Dollars, we went through some very difficult adjustments.

Noah farmed three-quarters, - 480 acres. This is a dry district, not too much rain. So he always summer-fallowed one-third of the land, that he always seeded 320 acres, and kept the other 160 acres plowed and cultivated, (summer-fallowed). The fallowed land would retain enough moisture from the rains and snow in winter to insure enough moisture to start the seeded grain in the spring.

He seeded 160 acres on stubble land. You burned the stubble and weeds first, cultivated it and then planted it. If it was a good year, one got a fair yeild, on a dry year one got nothing but weeds on the said land.

After seeding operations, Noah started summer-fallowing. He used a two-bottom disc plow pulled by six horses, hitched in tandem style. There were three horses abreast directly in front of the plow and three horses abreast in front of the first three.

Plowing with horses was a slow business. It usually was harvest time before one finished summer-fallowing! My husband was one of

Noah hired a man who had a big steam outfit complete with cook, bunk-car and crew. They pulled on to our place and threshed one day, then broke down! By the time the boss got repairs and was ready to start again, winter set in! First a cold rain, then snow - one foot deep on the level. They waited for better weather, which never came. So in desperation they decided just before Christmas to dig the stooks out of the snow and thresh them.

As there was no 'Quota-System' in those days, our neighbours with teams and wagons hauled our grain to the Elevator, only a mile and a-half way. Our grain was shipped in car-load lots to the Grain Terminal. There it was graded and dried-it was so damp. It cost 20¢ a bushel to dry, plus the shipping expenses. I don't recall what the price of wheat was then, but since the grain averaged 50 to 60 bushels to the acre, we didn't do too badly.

But it was that crop that helped us to get on with remodelling the house and buying a new car. We were able also to get new machinery including a Holt Combine and a Caterpillar tractor.

Between the 1920 to 1927 period, Noah had hired a well drilled. It cost over One Thousand Dollars, plus a Windmill, but it was well worth it. Because up until then, we had to haul our drinking water from a neighbours who had a well. And of course there were ponds or dugouts for the animals.

the first pioneers in this district. I don't think he ever used oxen and neither did my father, - so I've never seen a team of oxen.

It wasn't really that bad living down here. Some years one got a good crop, others little or none at all. There were droughts, cutworms, wireworms, grasshoppers and some-times, violent hail storms. The hailstorms usually came when the crops were good and just before harvest.

I remember the year the grasshoppers destroyed everything, even the gardens. When they cleaned up the fields, they would swarm in the air. They almost looked like clouds, when one looked towards the sun at them.

In 1927 we had the makings of a bumper crop. The grain in most places, even on stubble, was shoulder high, with long spikes. I believe it was in August there came a heavy down pour of rain with a high wind. The grain lodged or went down almost flat.

At that time combines were just coming out. The odd farmer had one, but the others still used their binders. One had to cut this lodged grain one way, not clockwise as usual.

It was the last of October when the crops were cut and stooked. The farmers, who owned Threshing outfits couldn't cope with the situation, had other Threshing outfits with crews come in from other parts of Canada and also from the U.S.A.

the Doctor came, we took her to the hospital, 40 miles away in Empress, Alberta to the west of us. It was too late. They operated but her appendix had burst. They didn't have the sulphur drugs then, so she died.

One asks themselves, "Why do these things happen?" I shall speak, later on, of another tragedy in our life. My theory is:- God deals with different people in different ways. A Rose is a beautiful fragrant flower. To get the best out of that flower -(the scented attar), one had to crush it. So I accepted these as messages from God.

So I've tried desperately to walk closer with the Lord. Even my husband, who only went to church the odd time, joined the United Church here. He was an ardent worker, was even ordained as an Elder of that church.

I read an article about a Celebrity seen on 'Front Page Challenge', - It seems their family from a long ways back, -- so the story goes- had only boys. But this person and his wife, finally had a girl. She was the 'Apple of their Eye.' When she was 10 or 11, she died of Diptheria. Her father literally cursed God and became an Atheist or Agnostic. So the thing that drives one person close to their 'Maker', will have the opposite affect on another.

In 1937, we had in this part of this county, - the southern part- what we called 'The Black Blizzard'. It was a dry year, - no rain, just dry winds.

The farmers had made the mistake of burning the stubble and worked the summer-fallow too fine, so there was no fibre from

These ponds, sponsored by the government, usually filled up during the runoff from the winter snow.

In the earlier days, before I came down, Noah had to haul all the water from the South Saskatchewan River or springs, 8 or 9 miles to the north. Incidentally in those early days, he hauled his grain, (if he had any) by wagon to Maple Creek or Kindersley, a distance of over 60 miles away, the first directly south of Prelate, the latter north-west across the river. They had to take their food- mostly bannocks and tea;- also food for the horses, -- a four-day trip!

Oh yes! back to the Well!

When the well-drillers came they had a crew of three men. We also had the Threshing crew and grain haulers, - 18 men in all. Our first child, little Jean, was a month old, a breast-fed baby. Imagine my predicament! Luckily there was a family on nearly every half-section. So two neighbour ladies came over and helped me take care of the situation!

In 1928, we had a lovely big barn built, complete with a hay-sling to put the feed in the barn loft. Also a big cistern was built under the harness-room in the barn, with a pump to water the stock in the winter time.

In 1929, late in June our oldest child, Jean, was stricken with appendicitis. We didn't recognize the ailment in time. When

the straw worked into the soil. Consequently the pulverized soil drifted like snow with the high winds. The fields of grain that had managed to reach a height of nine inches were drifted in, and the summer-fallowed fields just blew out of the ground. The ditches along the roads were full of blow-dirt.

We had to shovel the dirt out of our verandahs every time there was a high wind. Sitting in the house, sometimes we had to put damp cloths over our noses to breathe without inhaling dust. That year, nobody around here raised anything.

People from Ontario, Manitoba and B.C. and points north, donated fruits, peanut butter, vegetables, cheese and fish. And the Government assumed the responsibility of shipping it in. They even shipped in feed for the animals and seed grain.

Canadians of all creeds and different races or political beliefs, will close ranks and rise to the occasion when disaster strikes.

In the Fall, Noah took his horses, except one team, up to a farm near Empress, Alberta. They had more rain there, quite a bit of bush and luscious grass plus little streams of running water. He decided to leave them there for the winter. It turned out to be a winter with a lot of deep snow, the horses couldn't get food from the grass and stubble fields. So Noah went up and sold his horses to a Fox Farmer. He used the horses for Fox food.

A lot of farmers left after that. We lived beside the Ferry Road. One could see wagon after wagon with their animals, machinery and household goods going north across the river. One time we saw a man pulling an old tractor with his team. I guess there was no money for gas and repairs.

Noah and others stayed and plugged along with their dreams of making their place a model farm.

He got a hedge of trees planted on both the North and South side of the house, carraganas and other hardy shrubs. In the North garden he put small fruit trees and berries, - crabapples, plums, gooseberries, currant etc. In the South part, he planted a patch of strawberries and the rest was left for the vegetable garden.

We had vegetables and small fruits in large quantities. The strawberries were delicious, much nicer than the ones we get at the stores. But it was long and tedious work, picking and preserving them. I envied the women who bought theirs at the store. (You can't win them all!) We had acquired a few milk cows by then too.

I wanted the children to have Piano lessons. There was a Catholic Convent in Prelate. They used a lot of milk and cream. As they had good music teacher there, I arranged to exchange music lessons for dairy products. The lessons were 50¢ each, and I got 10¢ a quart for milk and 30¢ a quart for cream. (The Good Old Days!)

Our daughter, Phyllis and the two boys, Kenneth and Donald took lessons. But the boys dropped out, - they thought playing a piano was kind of sissy!

Phyllis kept it up. When she finished her Grade 12 in school, she went to Regina for a business course for a year. She went from Regina to Calgary, and after working there for awhile, got married and went to live in Edmonton.

By then the second World War had began. So Kenneth, my oldest boy, enlisted at the age of 19 after he got out of school. He came through the war without a flesh wound, but I think his mind and soul were battle-scarred. When he came back, he finally got one-half section of land, south of Prelate, through the Veteran Land Department.

Just as his farm began to pay off, he marries a widow with four children. Within a year of his marriage, he was drowned in a motor-boat accident at the Prelate Ferry, on the South Saskatchewan River 9 miles north of here. The motor-boat, driven by a friend of his, plowed into the side of the Ferry, hitting the apron. The driver of the boat was an excellent swimmer, but Ken wasn't a good swimmer, so he was drowned, but the driver of the boat escaped.

None of our family witnessed the tragedy. Noah and I were at home, and my son Donald and wife and baby were visiting with a friend at the time of the tragedy. There was no inquest. They called it an accident.

We got the rural telephone in the Twenties. In the early Fifties, we got the rural electricity. We had the house wired, - put in two force-pumps, one a small one for the soft-water cistern under the basement concrete floor, and a deep-well pump for the cistern in the barn. Double plumbing was also installed in the house.

Trenches were dug from the barn to the house and from the sewage lagoon to the house. The trenches were deep enough to keep the pipes from freezing. A man with a back-hoe did the trenching and laid the plastic piping. After that we had almost all the comforts of a city home.

By this time, Noah's health began to fail rapidly. The hardships, hard work and family responsibilities had taken its toll. At the end of the Fifties he had undergone three major operations. The last of which developed into a cancerous condition. In this rundown condition, he got diabetes and high blood-pressure. After being in and out of the hospitals, he died, December 13th, 1968 at the age of 83.

He was quite a man, always a fighter for his rights. Active in his Church, Wheat Pool, Credit unions, Co-ops and Politics. He was an ardent worker for the N.D.P.

Noah used to keep a hired man until the boys got old enough to help a bit. One could get a hired man for \$60.00 a month, plus room and board.

After Kenneth went to war, Donald, our second son had to do most of the work. When Ken came back the boys took over all the farm work, thus leaving Noah to work with his fruits and gardening.

In 1954, Donald married a nice Scandinavian girl, who was working in the Prelate Hospital as a Nurses Aide. They lived in the town of Prelate. After Ken's death, Don had to do most of the work alone. His Dad helped him a bit. So, when his Dad passed, he found the going pretty tough, but he managed with the help of hired help, especially when he was combining the crop.

With the soil erosions and putting in a bit of flax every year, the land needed fertilizer. With fertilizer, chemicals to spray for weeds, chemicals to spray for grasshoppers, chemicals to treat the grain for cutworms and diseases that destroys the seed planted, etc. - plus the cost of the inflated prices of machinery and repairs, that total makes farming prohibitive for a man with less than a larger farm.

One has to have at least one or two sections of land to make it pay these days. So the small farmer's only choice was to rent or sell his land, and go to the urban centers to get a paying job.

Don got a job in Medicine Hat, Alberta. They bought a beautiful home in Crescent Heights, a part of Medicine Hat across the river. He sold one quarter of his land and farms the home place of one-half section. He takes time off from his job to seed and harvest the crop. He does the summer-fallowing over the weekends. So far, he is doing well for himself and family.

I stayed on the farm alone for three years. Then, I bought a small old house in town. And with the help of Prelate's Handy-Man, and with the help of Don and his wife, we made the place nice and cozy.

So with the small farms not being viable, most of the people sold or rented their land to those who could afford to buy. And the family on every one-half section disappeared. Now they are replaced by large four to eight-section farms, operated by big farmers who usually live in the village. And with one or two hired men, go out in the morning to work the land in the summertime, and go to someplace like Miami, Hawaii, etc. etc. for the winter holidays.

Most of the oldtimers have either died or are in Senior Citizen Homes.

The younger ones moved to urban centers and got good jobs.

The results were; - the little school houses disappeared. The large school units took over, bus-sing the odd farm child to schools in town. The churches in some towns closed, especially the Protestant Churches. Most of the business places closed for lack of patronage.

Some of the small towns are almost ghost towns. Even the daily-mixed trains were cancelled. The little Red Station in places has gone.

Farmers use huge trucks to haul their grain to the elevators and fill their Quotas. The balance is stored in granaries. Everyone has cars, so they go to larger cities to do their shopping. This doesn't help the small business man, who is struggling to survive.

There is talk of abandoning the Railroads in some places. The big transport trucks, who haul cattle and other livestock to markets, will eventually do the same with grain.

In Prelate, we still have 3 or 4 elevators left, and there is a freight train every day or so.

When I came down here in 1920, there were 2 cafes, 2 doctors, a drug store, 2 banks, 2 hardware stores, 2 grocery stores, 2 churches, - (one Catholic and one United), a blacksmith shop, and later on - 2 garages. It was quite a thriving little town.

But with the exodus of most of the small farmers, this changed. We had a Hospital, but now there is no Hospital, no Doctor, no drugstore, only one grocery store, (which was closed for one year), but it now is operating again. The Catholic Church is still with us, but they are a hardy breed. The United Church closed. In fact it was finally sold and moved out of town and remodelled into a granary. We still have 2 garages.

The prices of houses in town hit a new low. By the way, I bought this little house, - 7 years ago, for \$550.00, - a little old 2-bedroom bungalow-type with bathroom.

The prices of land escalated. What once sold for \$20.00 per acre, went up to \$150.00 and \$200.00 per acre.

We have a nice big school house that accommodates students from kindergarten up to Grade 12. Some students from other towns and small

communities are bussed into here. It's one of those consolidated affairs.

We have to go to Leader, Sask., 7 miles west of Prelate, where there now are 2 doctors and a Hospital and a little shopping centre.

I hear that what has happened here, also happened in the Amber Valley community. The younger generation went to urban centers where they did well for themselves. Most of them have a good education and a good paying professional job. They have, on an average made good Canadian citizens. There is only a handful of those coloured pioneers and descendants out there now. The whole country is farmed by big farmers with big machinery.

My last winter on the farm was one I shall always remember.

One night a stiff wind came up, and the temperature went down to 30 degrees Fahrenheit. My furnace used propane gas. The gas got low in the 1000 - gallon tank. With the sub-zero weather, the gas ceased to flow. The furnace conked out. Don, who still lived in Prelate, had to come out at 4 o'clock in the morning and put a fire under the tank to warm the gas up, -then relit the furnace.

As soon as he went home, the same thing happened. We phoned the dealer in Leader. But he was out of Gas! So it was 8.30 p.m. the next day before I got my tank filled.

That was a frightening ordeal. Luckily none of the pipes in the house were frozen - (we had hot-water heating).

And now with Don living in Medicine Hat, and my daughter living in Edmonton, I sit here alone and do a lot of wondering, 'ifs' and 'ands'. In the maze of life, we all wonder which way should I have turned. Only God knows. I only know that I have lived a very full life, not placid, mind-you! but with my full share of it's up and downs to make it interesting, to say the least!

Don has three children, one boy who is married, and two girls. Ken had one son. Phyllis has two girls, both married and doing very well for themselves. I have six grandchildren, - and five great-grandchildren, -- two in Albany, Georgia, just about 150 miles from where I was born nearly 81 years ago, -(talk about life coming full-circle!) - and three in Devon, Alberta.

So at my age, there isn't too much to look forward to, but there are

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alot of memories. And to look back
is sometimes painful. Lot's wife
looked back and turned to a 'Pillar
of Salt':

So in conclusion, I will say,---
Yesterday Has Passed, and Tomorrow
Never Comes, Today Is The Day We
Live!---