

DARWELL

celebrates

1915-2015

100

YEARS

A COLLECTION OF MEMORIES SUBMITTED BY FORMER AND CURRENT RESIDENTS OF
DARWELL TO COMMEMORATE THE DARWELL CENTENNIAL CELEBRATIONS

1915 - 2015

Darwell Celebrates 100 Years. 1915-2015

This project began to gather stories for Darwell's Centennial Celebration, August 2015. Teresa Olsen and Edie Richardson contacted many people, asking them to contribute their memories of growing up in Darwell or answering the question "How did I end up in Darwell?"

This is the first edition of stories. If you'd like to contribute your recollections of living in the Darwell area, contact Edie Richardson at 780-892-2457 or edie.richie@yahoo.ca

West Cove Story

In 1912 the railway station was responsible for creating another community: Darwell, located between Lac Ste. Anne and Lake Isle.

The naming of this station caused many debates with no resolution, until an enterprising man took out his Hymn book and randomly picked a tune. The tune had the name of Darwall which was later changed to Darwell.

Darwell station became known throughout Alberta as "Hobo Stop" because of a ranch which never turned away anyone asking for shelter. Many men who were out of work rode the rail to Darwell to get food and lodging in exchange for work. As the story goes, many a man wanted by the law found refuge and North West Mounted Police made many trips to Hobo Ranch. Today Darwell boasts a store, garage and school. The ranch has disappeared, but the hospitality of this hamlet still exists today.

And Sixty Years Later.....

Submitted by Malcolm Denington

The years have tended to erase a lot of events – good & bad from my memory, yet I find it rather remarkable how easily one can drift back in time and relive over again some of the experiences of a kid growing up in Darwell.

Routine and recurrent activities – getting up on cold mornings in the winter to light the old wood stove – what prevented us from burning the shack down? – milking the cows... and shuffling off with a couple peanut butter sandwiches to catch the school, "bus". By today's standards of course "bus" would be an insurance agent's nightmare. Ours was two horsepower, had no brakes, no seat belts, and was "heated" by a small wood burning appliance. Another was a state of the art truck with a big plywood box, not unlike a small wooden replica of today's shipping containers.

Teachers in those days must've either been angels or persons in dire need of sustenance, but in retrospect they all had something to offer. We learned to determine square root according to the accepted "paper & pencil" procedure (today, any reasonably competent monkey with a small calculator can do the same much more quickly). Aside from the struggles with Math, English, Social Studies – blah, blah, blah – I recall how we grudgingly stood to read aloud poetry, De Stovepipe Hole, Leetle Bateese, Horatius at the Bridge, Tam o' Shanter, Heather Ale, the Abbott of Canterbury – I can still repeat lines from many of those, but that has never helped me find a job!

Fascinating to me how events, of little consequence at the time, have remained in the recesses of my mind. There was the time Charley Pollock was trying to introduce the class to some of the "social

graces”, and accordingly he posed the question “when someone introduces you to another person, what do you do?”. And Al responded, “you gawk at him”. If the good teacher had been chewing one of his two-for-a-quarter cigars at the time, he’d have swallowed it! He expected “howdja doo” or “pleased to meetcha” – gawking was the more probable response. And during a “Health” class we were asked to define the function of skin. Ted’s response of “it holds your meat together” wasn’t in the book – why don’t I recall what the “book” said?

There was the winter day when Henry Pilypow noted smoke rising from the old coal stove at the back of the room and dispatched John to check it out. There was a small space between the back of the stove and the wall, and there squatted Wilf, sucking on a roll-your-own. I think most of had the “habit” to some degree in those days – teachers too – but we students would generally pile into the “can” at recess to light up. Anyway, John, realizing he had Wilf at a distinct disadvantage, gave him a good boot in the bum and said “can’t see any problem here”.

And the day Art was caught in some delinquent act and was being admonished by Kathleen Wood “Art, what would your mother say to you if....?” And the response...” she’d gimme s*%*...”. Well! I always thought that Mrs. Wood was one of the “angel” teachers and they sure never spoke that way in heaven – or even on earth, outside of the cow barn. Ouch! And our first day of school, Grade 7 when our class moved from the consolidated school to the old Leigh school – Bill said to me “I wish this was the last day instead of the first!”. Why do I remember that? Maybe it’s because it was so close to my own thoughts on that day.

Going to Lake Wabamun in the winter to set nets for whitefish was a routine winter activity. As a rug rat, I was relegated to a fish box on a small sled – so they tell me! Later I can remember Dad and Bernard Hansen setting nets – using a “jigger” to run a lead-line under the ice between two holes about 100 yards apart. It was a bit of an art setting nets, and colder than the hobs..., as I recall.

Going to church on Sundays at the Darwell hall was an occasional event which left a lasting impression, not in terms of any spiritual enlightenment but rather the experience of simply getting to the hall. My brother and sister and I would walk over to the “Darwell road” and nab a ride with Rev. and Mrs. Smith who came out from Duffield with an old Model A Ford. The Model A didn’t offer the comforts of a luxury limousine, and after we picked up Bob and Bessie M., the seven of us pretty much grossed it right out. And then, despite the fact it was Sunday and the objective was a church service, Bob on occasion was “tipsy”. Pie-eyed. I recall that once, after we were all securely squished in and puttering off between the ruts, Bessie said “Reverend, I do hope you’ll forgive Bob, he takes these spells occasionally”. Once, when our family was heading for Darwell with the team and wagon, Bob had taken a “spell” and his Billy-goat, sensing vulnerability, had “treed” Bob in the hay loft. I don’t recall whether Dad saved him....

I had not been back to Darwell for a long time until my wife Kim and I went out a few years ago. The old home place was long gone – leveled by the spring fires, possibly in the 60’s. A lot of trees had been bulldozed to make way for pasture, and I was surprised how difficult it was to envision “what was where” during my early years. A bit of the melted-down frame of the old windmill was really the only remaining reference point. We went into Darwell and stopped at the small café for coffee. I asked the waitress about some of the old-time families and she suggested that I ask the folks at the far table. I asked who they were and she said “Ted Peck and Henry Wilkie”. We picked up our cups, went over to

their table and sat down – without introducing ourselves. And so, we “gawked” at each other until suddenly Ted said “you’re Malcolm!” So, for a brief moment, 50 some years just melted away.

Stanley Lewis Family History 1935 - 2015

(as told by Teresa Anger (Lewis))

Stan was born in Consort Alberta in 1927, the third child of Bob and Janeva Lewis. (McDonald) They moved to the Darwell area in April 1935. They lived on a rented place until the arrival of a granary they’d had disassembled and shipped then reassembled by midsummer on their own place; a raw quarter SE ¼ 5-54-4-5. Dave Watchman travelled with them from Consort and he bought the quarter north of them. He only stayed a short time and sold them that quarter when he left. Being new to the area they had a lot to learn. That first winter they lost 5 horses that followed a trapper’s trail and fell through the ice on the lake. They also lost 13 head of cattle that died of compaction because they ate hay that was cut too late in the year.

Bob and Janeva fished Lake Wabamum, fish and potatoes kept the family going.

Bob Lewis passed away suddenly in 1945 and Janeva with the help of the kids carried on farming.

In 1949 Janeva opened the café in Darwell and Stan took over the farm. He batched for a couple of years and then married Verna Smith in November 1950.

Verna was one of 7 children; her parents were Charlie and Lena Smith. Charlie’s parents were Logan and Maggie. They arrived in the Lake Isle area in 1912 and homesteaded NW ¼ 20-54-55. (Safiolis place) Logan passed away in 1937 and Maggie in 1940. Lena’s parents were Newt and Nora (Wilson) Hixon, they moved from Oregon to the Stanger area.

Charlie and Lena Hixson were married in November 1924. They lived at Logins farm till 1926 then moved to SW18-54-5-5 which is now Barry Fernley’s place. In 1946 they moved and built the house that is still standing just west of the Lake Isle hall. Charlie passed away in 1978 at the age of 76 and Lena passed away in 1996 at the age of 91.

Stan and Verna had 5 children: Trudy, Teresa, Rita, Doug and Viola (Vi).

Stan ran a mixed farm, milk cows, pigs, chickens, horses and range cows, and crops. Things got a bit easier when we got the power in 1965 and in 1967 built a new home from logs cut from our own land, it seems like it took years to prepare that lumber. We used to haul water from the spring when it was -20°F, using a stone boat loaded with barrels, pulled by horses, we were so cold. We milked cows morning and night. I was in grade 2 when I remember milking a cow for the first time; we all had chores to do and did our share. One time bringing the hay wagon in to the yard from the field, we were riding on top, the wagon tipped over and we flew off the top of the stack, the stack missed us!! Crawling into the ice well was always a challenge, you never knew what you might find down there besides milk and butter. A family outing was setting and checking the trap lines (muskrats, mink) with Dad, at Goose Lake then skinning the catch. There was no power, so no running water or flush toilet, just an outhouse. When the fish catch came in, there would be an assembly line set up in the kitchen to get them cleaned and ready to preserve.

Entertainment was Dad playing his musical instruments and us kids dancing and singing along. When the car ran, we'd go to socials at Darwell and Saturday night dances at Lake Isle. Recreation was flooding an outdoor rink and keeping the snow shovelled so we could skate and play hockey. We played softball in summer after field work was done.

Most of us have remained in the area and our family continues to expand.

Trudy married Bob Sperling and had 3 sons: Raymond, Stephen and Wayne. Raymond and Jen (Cowen) have 2 daughters, Sadie and Sophie and Wayne has a stepdaughter, Sofia, with his partner Katie Carter.

Teresa married Allan Anger and had 3 sons: Derek, Justin and Curtis. Derek and Cheryl (Leblanc) have a daughter and a son, Bailey and Ryder. Justin and Bobbi (Ridout) have 2 daughters, Mackenzie and Presley. Curtis is with his partner Megan Jorgenson.

Rita married Brian Trueman and had 3 sons: Kyle, Jeff, and Craig. Kyle and Jackie (Suin) have 2 daughters, Emily and Julia and one son Luke. Rita passed away in 2002, and since then Jeff has been cared for by Trudy. Craig and Brandy (Schulte) have 3 sons, Mason Tucker and Clyde.

Doug married Sharon Napora and had 2 sons, Calvin and Jordan and a daughter, Shaneen.

Viola (Vi) married Donny Ames and had a daughter, Jill, and 2 sons Eric and Tyler. She also has 2 stepchildren, Blain and Megan Butler, Tyler and Ashley (Jorgenson) have one son, Turner.

Doug took over the farm in 1995. Stan and Verna travelled and enjoyed retirement. Stan passed away in 2003, Doug passed away in 2008, and Sharon still resides in the home they built on part of the farm.

No one went far - Trudy and her partner Kelly Johnson live on a piece of property that was part of the original farm as does Viola and her partner Davie Hastey. Teresa lives near Spruce Grove but she also has a piece of the original farm. Verna lived in the original home until she sold to her grandson Kyle Trueman in 2014 then she moved a home to Viola's yard. With a couple of exceptions most of the kids settled down within 50 kilometers.

Allan Anger passed away in 2014 and Brian Trueman in 2015.

Clayton Sawyer Avery

Submitted by Gladys (Aasland) Bacon

Clayton Sawyer Avery of Darwell, Alberta, served with the Royal Canadian Artillery, 12th regiment as a gummer during WW2. The Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery is older than Canada itself. The Regiment, both regular and reserve force gunners have fought in every war that Canada has participated.

Avery was killed in action on the 14th of August 1944. He is buried in the Brewtville-Sur-Laise Cemetery Canadian War Cemetery, France. Brewtville-Sur-Laise Cemetery is a concentration of battlefield burials. There are 2,793 Canadian soldiers buried in the cemetery, 91 of them unknown. Buried here are those who died in the later stages of the battle of Normandy, the capture of Caen, and the thrust southward to close the Falaise Gap. Almost every unit of the 2nd Corps is represented in this cemetery.

Clayton Sawyer Avery was the son of Judson and Martha Avery, and husband to Winnifred Mary Avery: he was 32 years old.

At the going down of the sun in the morning, we will remember them.

Memories of Darwell

Pat (Woollard) Scott. Duffield, AB

I think of the good old times - going to dances. That was at least seventy-five years ago. The first Darwell hall was, I think, a home with a large living room, about where the present hall is today. Always a good lunch with a boiler full of coffee made on a wood stove.

It was a family outing and babies slept in baskets under the benches. No cloak room so you piled your coat on top of everyone else's. Bathroom facilities was a little shack out back. Kay and Bill Mutzeneek and Alex and Frank Anderson had their wedding dances there, Kay and Alex were sisters.

The road south of Darwell winding over the high spots, but the old cars with narrow tires got through. Rev W.O. Smith was minister at Darwell Church. Mrs. Smith played a portable organ which folded up like a suitcase. Rev Smith was the minister at Paul Band reserve, then they moved south of Darwell. He performed countless marriages in that area - even some grandchildren of some parents.

My brothers Ed and Fred Woollard were very good about taking my sister Marguerete and me (if we would press their pants) plus their girl friends Gertie and Murdina Campbell, who later became their wives. At that time, most men wore suits and long coats.

The first hall was built south of the restaurant, I think there were electric lights - maybe they had a Delco- Light Plant. Needing a larger hall, a new one was built at the present site. Sometimes we went to the Darwell Fair which has grown so much with well known entertainers.

Pat is ninety years young and probably the only person living that remembers the original hall.

Gerald Lee

Gerald Lee was the son of Mr. & Mrs. Lee and brother of Ross Lee of Darwell. "Gerry" spent his early years on a farm in Darwell. He took up the trade as a machinist and was employed in Fort Saskatchewan at Sherrit Gordon. Gerry was very active in the local administration area and also served a term as Mayor of Fort Saskatchewan. Along with his dedicated wife Alice, they were also active in many other areas of the community. Gerry and Alice were both well informed of the workings of municipal affairs and were often called on for information.

Gerry was well known as "Mr Fix-it" among those who knew him. When gasoline was rationed during the WW2, he explained how the young men manufactured a false fixture that fit in a regular gas tank opening. The car would be filled with 'purple gas' while the false fixture contained the required 'red car gas'. If authorities stopped them for testing, regular car gas would appear on the testing mechanism. Car gas (tinted red) was strictly rationed during WW2 and the purple tinted farm gas was cheaper and

more readily available for farmers. Drivers of any vehicle could be pulled over for the sampling of gas content in their gas tank.

Gerry could be found picking up broken trikes, bicycles, or any other toy and taken home for refurbishing. He knew his community well and any child that needed a recreation article would be the recipient of this “newly painted” toy or transport product. We have often overheard him saying that he had to hide his “broken findings” under the house as Alice would chide me for ‘hoarding junk’. Alice knew, too, that the ‘junk’ was often seen riding proudly past on the child’s “new” trike. Neighbours too would see a gnarled hunk of metal and wonder what useful item would appear in the yard or household. Berry picking was another recreational area of Gerry and Alice. Gerry suffered arthritis of his knees but persevered the best he could in spite of his burning knees.

Gerry passed away in 1994. His wife Alice passed away in 2007. They are both fondly remembered as fine friends and neighbours at their Skeleton Lake cabin.

Stanley Burton Family

Judy Rose (Kendall)

My, Grandfather, Stanley Burton, left England alone at the age of 18 and came to Canada in the spring of 1910. His sister Mable Shorten owned a farm at Darwell and they told him for \$10.00 he could make a down payment on the quarter section next to theirs and make easy payments after that. Being the youngest of 16 children, his hope of ever owning his own land in England would never have been possible.

For the next 10 years he worked long and hard to clear some of his land and grow grain to feed the animals he bought by working for a neighbour and saving the wages as best he could in order to buy pigs, a cow and a team of horses plus wagon. During this time he built 2 houses; a little 1 room shack that he batched in and, close by, a 4 room house for the family he was to have later. He met and later married Lily Ball in 1919 and in 1920 they began their family with the birth of their first child, my mother, Hazel (Burton) Kendall.

When my mother turned 6 and school age, a proper school building hadn’t been built yet, so she walked with her cousins, Doris and Clarise Shorten, to an abandoned farmer’s shack in the back woods. It was approximately 3.5 miles north west of Darwell.

The fall she started grade 5, there was only one other student - a boy. The school was closed at Christmas that year as a new school was being built on the other side of the district but wasn’t complete yet. She attended school at Lake Isle for the rest of the school year and boarded with the teacher during the week. She was driven 9 miles from their farm every week by my grandfather with a team of horses drawing a sleigh or cutter. The new school opened the following fall and she finished her schooling up to grade 11 there. At that time there was no high school in Darwell, so my grandmother insisted she complete her schooling in Edmonton. Three more children - Cecil, Ethel, and Joyce were born. Only Ethel and my mother did any schooling in Darwell.

By the time my mother finished her schooling in Edmonton, my grandfather had bought a store in Bon Accord and they rented out their farm to a neighbour. They had lived on their Darwell farm for 20 years. My mother had many wonderful memories of growing up in Darwell. While living on the farm my grandfather worked some for the railroad, walking the “old grade” checking for noxious weeds.

In later years my parents and grandparents purchased land in the newly developed West Cove and I was introduced to Darwell and all the stories they told me about living there. Today my parents Hazel and Stan Kendall are buried in the Darwell Cemetery. I'm sure it would have felt like a homecoming for my mom to be buried in the same town she was born in many years ago.

School Bus Days

Submitted by Edie Richardson (McDonald)

In September of 1947 the Darwell Consolidated School was opened. Five one room schools were closed and the students were bussed into Darwell by five busses.

Not the bright yellow busses we are used to, but five very different busses. One horse drawn, two big trucks with a wooden box on the back, inside there were wooden benches and one small window, no communication with the driver, and two panel type vehicles. The panel type had benches long each side so the students faced each other. Eventually windows were put in so the students could see outside. One of the truck busses brought the children from the east, driven by Alec Lackie. The other truck bus brought children from the west, driven by Happy Jones.

The east and west roads had been the rail bed (now HWY 633). Because of that bed this road was always passable, not so the other roads. My father, Gilbert McDonald, drove one of the panel vehicles bringing students and one teacher from the north. Jack Ames, drove the other panel from the south east, a horse drawn van for a while then he bought a panel. The fifth bus was also a horse drawn van and they continued that way for quite a while, this was driven first by Wesley Bruce, then Dalus Peters. During the spring breakup, the busses could drive on the frozen road in the morning, but in the afternoon many children walked home from the main road; some walked two or three or more miles. One spring the water was over the road so deep, it was impassable. The spot would be south of the Trial of '98. Our teacher's husband, Milt Wood, would drive the students to the north edge of the water, then row them, in a rowboat, across to the south side, there they would get out of the boat and get into the bus and continue on to the school. At the end of the day this ritual would be repeated. I don't remember how many days this carried on, probably a week.

Another flooded place was from the bottom of the big hill north of Darwell to about where the bridge is now. The water wasn't too deep so the bus could drive through it if he was careful and drove slow. I think the horse drawn bus could always get through. I went from grade four to grade eleven in Darwell School and never rode to school in a big yellow bus.

Darwell School Fire

Submitted by Rita Bentley (Balfour)

December 9th, 1954 was a scary time for all students attending Darwell School. That was the Day the school caught on fire. It started in one of the new addition rooms and quickly spread. There were no fire engines to fight the fire. The fire was so hot that it also burned the high school, which accommodated the grade 9, 10 and 11 students. Where now do they teach school?

There were many decisions to be made as to what buildings could be used for classrooms. There was the Darwell Hall and the Darwell United Church. They moved in the old Tipperary School. They also used

the Darwell Hall. This still didn't give enough room so they decided to use Lake Isle Hall. Then it became a bussing problem as to which grades were going to be in which place.

The high school students went into the church and Grades 7 and 8 went into the old Tipperary School that had been moved in. The Darwell Hall had Grades 1, 2 and 3 plus Grade 5. It was decided to put two grades into Lake Isle Hall and those two grades were going to be Grades 4 and 6. They tried to distribute the students to the best of which direction they lived from Darwell. It was decided that there were more students in these two grades that lived west of Darwell. There were three students to the west that were in Grade 5 so they decided to have these students move up to Grade 6 and take grade five and six arithmetic in the same year.

Our teacher in Lake Isle Hall was Mrs. Mary Peck. It was an interesting year with it being winter and cold. The hall was cold. It had a pot-bellied stove in it and we would pull our desks around it to keep warm. Of course, there wasn't enough room for all desks to be close to the stove so then we would take turns sitting where it was warmer.

We had the challenges of not having everything that a classroom should have, but it is amazing how you can do with what you have. I can remember us going across the road from the hall and playing in an old straw stack that had been settled there for quite some time. That was the start of us deciding to dig into the sides of the stack and pretty soon we had a doorway and a couple of rooms inside. Picking out small pieces of straw with our hands/mitts took time so that was some interesting times. Interesting mitts too with the straw stuck in them. Without a schoolyard you don't have the facilities, like a playground so you have to make up your own games. I guess that is when you used your imagination.

To my knowledge the school was rebuilt for us to attend the new school the following year.

Darwell School Burns Down

Submitted by Carmen Wiggins

In the autumn of 1954, construction of a new gymnasium was being done on the old Darwell School. On December 9, 1954, workers were putting tar on the roof of the gymnasium to make it waterproof. They were using propane torches to heat the tar. It is believed that these torches started a fire that burnt the school down. All the students were outside for recess when the fire started, so nobody was hurt or burnt. The students were evacuated across the street to the Darwell store while the fire was burning; the fire was so fierce that the windows of the store were so hot that you couldn't touch them! Although they couldn't save the school, they managed to save most of the desks from the fire.

For the remainder of the school year, classrooms were set up in the old Darwell hall, the United Church (which was across from the school beside the store) and at Lake Isle hall, where students went for classes until the new school was built.

Thanks to Mr. Ted Peck and Mr. Norm Satermo for this history lesson.

Growing Up in Darwell

Doreen Barbara Barsi (Dryer)

Growing up in Darwell one of my chores with my siblings was to go get the milk from the Batkes, just north of us. Roger's syrup pails in hand we would head back home full of milk. But like normal children we would be swinging the pails around and around. You guessed it ... there would be a white blotch on the middle of the road too many times to count, and us running back pleading for more. Mrs. Batke always laughed.

Pat and Bob Dryer were my parents and they settled two miles north of Darwell, after meeting and getting married in England during the war. I have one older brother and three younger sisters. I was proud to be the Darwell Queen in about 1961.

I met my husband Dennis Barsi at a dance at Darwell in 1964 and we married in 1965. We were blessed with two children, Michael and Jody. They have given us three lovely grandchildren, two fantastic step-grandchildren, and three amazing great grandchildren. Michael married Lori-Lynn Perrin (who attended Darwell school as well) who had children Jessie-Lyn and Lane. Jody married Kevin Pellerin from Grande Prairie and has a daughter Melissa Elsie and step-son Cody, Rebecca and sons Jack and Parker, and step-daughter Miranda, Clayton, and son William.

Dennis and I lived in Darwell until 1986 but due to work moved to Grande Prairie and made it our new residence. But Darwell will always be home.

Growing up in Darwell

Submitted by Marilyn Alexander (McDonald)

"It takes a village to raise a child" could not be truer than my memories of growing up in Darwell! I was fortunate enough to be one of "the town kids" in Darwell. Of course, that meant you didn't get to ride the school bus, but it also meant I was one of the lucky ones who could go home for a hot lunch, watch the Flintstones and still make it back to the school in time for a game of scrub!

A good part of my extended family lived in Darwell; aunts and uncles, cousins, and my grandparents. Having so many of us right there meant there were always enough of us to have a baseball game on my aunt's lawn after dinner in the summer, and hockey games in the winter. Our first skating rink was affectionately known as "Tommy's Pond". It was really a swamp down on the southwest corner of the four-way stop, but it was large enough for all of us to learn to skate, which most of us did shortly after we learned to walk. We were incredibly excited when the first real skating rink was built. As kids we didn't realize that this rink was only possible because community volunteers stayed up half of the night in the freezing weather flooding the ice for us.

Summers seemed to go on forever! We rode our bikes everywhere knowing we were safe and that our parents wouldn't be worried as long as we were home in time for supper. Our parents knew that family and friends in Darwell were looking out for all of us kids! We knew every vehicle that came into town. In fact sometimes we could even tell who was coming by the sound of the motor!

Few of us had telephones, yet somehow the families in the area always seemed to know when it was a good evening for us to gather for a swim at Silver Sands or Lake Isle. Saturday night was visiting night in our community. We created our own entertainment, and you didn't have to phone ahead to say you were coming for coffee! It was okay just to show up. I have many memories of playing hide and seek and kick the can well after dark as our parents visited in the house!

The Darwell Fair was the highlight of the summer. We would spend weeks planning what we were going to do for the parade. Would it be a float or were we decorating our bikes? The fair was the one time in the summer when we were sure to see all of our friends because everyone came.

Time has passed and we have all grown up, moved, and raised our own families. However, Darwell is still the gathering area for my family. Darwell has become a very busy place and we don't always know who is coming down the road. Yet when we are doing yard work at our family property, friends honk and wave as they pass through. Now it is the grandchildren who get excited about the Darwell Fair and being part of the parade! Our town looks different but the people are still the same. The community still comes together to make it a great place to live. As I said' "It takes a village to raise a child" and I was fortunate to be raised in Darwell!!

Darwell Fires

By Gale Hyland-Reid

My most vivid memory of living in Darwell would have to be the forest fires in 1968. I was eleven years old and along with my sister and little brother, we spent our days stomping out hot spruce needles to prevent our yard from catching on fire. Every able-bodied man was out fighting fire and the older kids would get home from school and would join them.

I remember standing outside at night and watching the flames burn through the tops of the trees and hearing the roar of the fire. So many neighbours came close to losing their homes. I heard that one of the neighbour's place was so bad, that the fire department from another town said there was no use and left; but thanks to Albert Stephenson and his crew they saved that place and many others. And for NO pay I might add.

During this three week span many women were making meals, sandwiches and baking for the fire crews. My mom, Tilleen Hyland, and Verna Lewis, our closest neighbour, would carry 5 gallon cream cans filled with hot coffee and bags of sandwiches into the fire zone at least twice a day. In between times they made meals as the fires were being fought day and night and there were shifts of men that needed a good meal before they went into or came out from the battle. Then more sandwiches were made. After 3 weeks, all homes were saved and the fires were out.

Years later, my mom and Verna were remembering this time and laughing at themselves running through the swamp with those pails of coffee and wondering how they ever did it. Then Verna said "Do you remember how we got all that bread?" My mom said, "well I assume we baked it, because nobody could afford to buy it; but you know what I've always wondered is what on earth did we put between those slices of bread?" and they laughed. Then my dad, Jesse Hyland piped in and said at that time no one had any money, but they'd give you what they had to help a neighbour.

And that's the community I grew up in.

Family Roots

By Eva Spect-Koski

I grew up in Wabamun AB, where my parents Bill & Betty Spect owned the grocery store. One day my brother came home and told me he met a really nice fellow named Lawrence Koski while playing hockey and that I should meet him. My brother thought he'd be a good boyfriend for me. Well, I watched Lawrence play hockey for several months before I had the chance to meet him. He was awesome to watch! Finally, some fellows from the high school I attended, Stony Plain Memorial Composite High School, brought Lawrence over to a dance with them after a hockey game they had just finished playing. I made it my business to be introduced to him. We were both in grade 10 and 16 years old. We ended up getting married 4 years later. We have 3 children: Rachelle, Eve Marie, and James.

Now, my Lawrence has passed on but I live on the homestead that Lawrence's grandparents, James & Ruth Summers owed. This property has been in the family for over 70 years. We bought the property from Lawrence's parents, Ted & Mabel Kosik, just before Ted passed away.

My mother-in-law, Mabel (Summers) Kosik, moved here when she was 7 years old, along with her siblings, Irene, Margret, Marie, Edna, James and Christine (Mary). Her father was a well driller and put in many water wells in this area by the use of horses and pure determination. Mabel told me she arrived in this area by riding in the sidecar of a motorbike along with her mother and another sibling; her father was driving the bike and her sibling was hanging on to him and they drove all the way from Nelson, BC!

My father-in-law, Ted Kosik, arrived in the area to do caterpillar work. He met my mother-in-law when she was just a child - at that time he had no idea that years later they would fall in love and begin a wonderful family that I have had the pleasure to be a part of for nearly 40 years. Ted & Mabel had 6 children: Violet, Lawrence, Wendy, Tom, Sharon, and Harvey.

Lawrence worked with his Dad learning the craft of heavy equipment operation. Early in our marriage we formed our own corporation, L. Kosik Construction Ltd. We have had the privilege of working in Darwell and surrounding communities, developing roads, subdivisions, lagoons, home sites, farm lands and commercial sites, plus building homes and corporate buildings all in addition to volunteering and donating services to our community.

Life has taken me to live in Clandonald, Wabamun, Cherhill, Darwell, Stony Plain, St. Albert, West Cove, and finally back to the family homestead, located on the railroad grade - 4308 Hwy 633! No matter where Lawrence and I lived he came to this homesite nearly everyday of his life - first to live as a child then to work as a man. He loved, loved, loved Darwell and because of friends and family in Darwell we have gotten through thick and thin. I still believe it's the "best little town in the west"! Even though things change, community with others can make a difference, if there is acceptance to face the challenges and a willingness to co-operate and grow into something better.

Congratulations Darwell for facing the challenges and growing into a community along a railroad grade in rural Alberta!

Fond Childhood Memories

Submitted by Rachelle Kosik

I have very fond childhood memories of the Darwell Fair; it was one of the events that I felt was the pinnacle of the summer break. I would pester my mom every year to make sure that I got a little fair book as soon as it came out so I could begin preparing as many possible items to enter into the bench show.

For many summers it was my ambition to win the Junior achievement trophy for the bench show. For months I prepared crafts, collections, works of art, photographs and even stories to try and win more points than any other youth 12 years and under. Finally when I was 12 years old, I won ... ahhhh hooray, at that time the winnings were \$3.00 for a first place ribbon, \$2.00 for a second place ribbon and \$1.00 for third. Can't remember how much I won but to me it felt like the lottery. You can imagine how I had my entries lining the hallway of my parent's home with each entry number labeled on my project. I was meticulous in my strategy to win!

Another fond memory is how my parents started the "Nickle Mine" in 1982 now better known as the Money Pit or the Money Mine. The initial concept was easy: put nickels into a tandem load of sand, dump it at the fair ground and let the children dig through it to find money. At that time my parents (Eva and Lawrence Kosik) were developing their business L. Kosik Construction Ltd. and they used the Nickle Mine as a way to put tons of smiles on the faces of children and to promote their business, but it also gave Dad a lot of smiles.

For me, I had more fun than the average kid who mined through the sand for money – I got to go to the bank and pick up the money with mom then helped throw the loose change into the sand while my Dad loaded the dump truck. Next was the most important part -- off to the fairground we went to deliver the Nickle Mine to a hoard of children who had to be held back while the sand was being dumped.



Rachelle in the Darwell Fair parade

My parents always let my siblings and me dig in the mine too! And, they tossed in more money when we weren't looking just to be sure we found something (just like other parents did – they think us kids didn't notice ...all the parents thought they were "so sneaky". Over 33 years the Nickle Mine has grown into the Money Mine/Pit containing quarters, loonies, toonies, even five-dollar bills.

One can also not forget the parade; many hours over of the years were spent preparing us kids with elaborately decorated bikes from the Little Mermaid themes to cowboys and a bear on a bike. Often one of Dad's trucks was also fancied up for the occasion with too many plastic flower puffs to count -- those flowers were Grandma's favourite

decorative aid. Point in case: here is an image of me dress as a bear in 1984 for Darwell parade.

I love Darwell in my heart it will always be my home, where my dad is; as well as, the place I grew up and learned how to be who I am.

Darwell – A Place of Generations!

Submitted by Chantelle Lalonde

My name is Chantelle Lalonde, and I have lived in the Darwell area my entire life. In fact, I am the 4th generation living on our farm that was homesteaded in 1907. I raised my children there, who are both now 21. Kassity has moved to Edmonton and Kolton lives in the house my grandparents shared (Leona & Eddie Jones). My mother, Cynthia Jones, lives in her house on the property and my brother and his family, Chad, Julie, Jace, and Cali Lalonde, also have a residence there.

What I love most about the area is that it has roots. Its not often you can say that my kids went to my school where my mom also attended. I love to see my kids' teachers, who also taught me and know that they were in good hands (if not we'd both get it!!) I've participated in the fair since I was young at the bench show, poultry show, sheep show and of course the horse show. I loved bringing my horses to the Darwell Horse Show. Both my children also entered the bench show/poultry/rabbit/pet/horse shows and learned a lot.

Growing up in Darwell and going to Darwell School we got to go on Safari. Safari was the best time of my Darwell School life. I LOVED IT!! The freedom of traveling, but under the safe eye of the teachers and parents, we had so much fun. As a bonus, I also got to chaperone when my children went as well and it sure is interesting seeing the other side of the coin. The worrying, the stressing about weather, and of course the whole boy/girl thing!! But I have to say it was a great experience!

Darwell is the perfect place to grow up and grow old. I love my community and wouldn't trade it for the world!

Settling in Darwell

Submitted by John Reynolds

"So what brought you to Canada?" I've been asked. "'The Empress of England' out of Liverpool to Montreal" I answered. "OK smart Alec. Why did you emigrate?"

It was between Christmas and New Year in 1968. The weather was dreary and like money, the days were short. The bills were coming in and the cash was going out, not quite at the same rate. We had some teacher friends around and we were perusing 'The Times' Educational Supplement. Teaching positions were advertised from all over the world. I was particularly interested in Canada. As a boy I collected stamps and was particularly fond of Canadian ones. My grandfather had come to Canada before the First World War and I was fascinated with maps and names like Great Bear Lake, Great Slave Lake, The Rocky Mountains, The Great Lakes, and The Prairies.

We had a kind of contest to see who could send off the most applications. A few weeks later we began to receive responses. I well remember getting a telegram from Peace River offering us positions. Please reply by return telegram! We knew nothing of Peace River, promoted as the 'Land of Twelve Foot Davis'. So we stalled. From the County of Lac Ste. Anne #28 we were advised that the deputy superintendent of schools was travelling to England in March to recruit teachers. Here was an opportunity to meet someone.

An interview was arranged at a hotel in Lincoln for March 15, 1969. After an interesting discussion we were offered positions in Whitecourt. We expressed our thanks and said that we would consider the offer and respond. "When will I get an answer?" we were asked. "In about a week" was our reply. "What!" was exclaimed, "I need to know now." "Well, that's out of the question," we replied. "We haven't even informed our parents!"

"I'll tell you what I'll do" we were told. "I'll give you half an hour to go down to the restaurant and talk it over a cup of tea." That was one of the weirdest thirty minutes of our lives! We decided that since the initial contract was for only two years, we would regard it as a two-year adventure. 'Beware the Ides of March!'

Soon after the initial excitement, the reality of emigrating was upon us. We put our home up for sale and began arranging for disposal or storage of most of our possessions that we could not bring. I wanted to begin the adventure by driving across Canada. So a passage was booked on 'The Empress of England' leaving Liverpool on July 11, 1969. I was confident that the sale of our bungalow would realize enough equity to purchase a new V.W. camper, which was my dream wheels of the sixties. A passage for the vehicle was booked accordingly.

Unfortunately, Britain was in the midst of a deep depression and real estate was not moving. Suddenly, it seemed, we were less than a month from sailing and we did not have a camper or the money to buy one.

The previous year I had won a modest sum of money in a Cadbury's Chocolate Button photographic competition and had used it to purchase my first real car. I put the car up for sale and located an ex-German security van in London. Time was of the essence. I found a buyer for my car but he could not come up with the money until the banks opened on Monday. I had to take a second mortgage on the house for about 200 pounds for the weekend so I could hitch-hike to London to buy the V.W. van! On the way home I discovered the clutch was slipping. I remember as soon as I got home I spent several happy hours in the rain lying under the van installing a new clutch. I then worked around the clock it seemed, to put windows in the van – there were none behind the front doors including the back one! I fitted bunks, cupboards and a stove all in the last few days before we sailed.

We landed in Montreal on July 17th, 1969. The passage was a wonderful change of pace after the previous hectic month. The food was wonderful and most days we crossed a Time Zone so we enjoyed an extra and well-appreciated hour of sleep each night.

Entering the Gulf of St. Lawrence, cruising through the Straits of Belle Isle and on up the St. Lawrence River below historic Quebec City and on up into the port of Montreal was enchantingly exciting! July 17th happened to be St. John Baptiste Day and a civic holiday in Montreal. Nothing was open and here was only a skeleton staff to process 1000 immigrants! Furthermore, there were about forty vehicles to be unloaded and some clown has removed the labels from the keys! V.W.'s were some of the early vehicles that locked the steering when the keys were removed. I was terrified that my vehicle might suffer damage when it was unloaded by crane and forklift. Once we were allowed ashore I was able to quickly identify my keys and was much relieved to discover that everything, and especially the steering, seemed to be okay.

That day the temperature in Montreal was about 98 degrees F (38 Celsius) and the relative humidity was 98 percent! It was sweltering and we had a lot of sorting and loading to do. We also had two young

daughters (2 ½ years and 6 months) and a cat and a dog to attend to! I had arranged to meet an old school friend in Montreal and as soon as we were ready he led us to his apartment. His wife, Sue, had a wonderful salad prepared for us and Anthony enquired if I would like a shower. Do ducks like water? I turned the setting as cold as possible and began to revive. When Anthony's hand poked through the shower curtain holding a cold Canadian I knew I had entered the Promised Land!

We enjoyed supper and reminiscing old times. But soon it was time to set out for our first campground. Cote Ste. Catharine's sits beside the Lachine rapids of the St. Lawrence River. We could hear the roar of the water but could not see the river in the darkness. That night we discovered Montreal mosquitoes! We don't have the pests in England. Consequently, we had no screens on my newly fashioned camper. Mosquitoes love the blood of fresh Englishmen! Our very first drive was to an air-conditioned Woolco where we bought an 8' X 8' tent and a Styrofoam cooler.

My first sight in the morning was the half-mile wide rapids on the north boundary of our campsite. Imagine my astonishment when I turned around and glimpsed a huge ocean freighter gliding along, way above me. Once I reassured myself that my senses were not deceiving me, I observed the vessel belonged to Manchester Shipping Lines and was making its way up the fairly new St. Lawrence Seaway. Anthony and Sue came to see us off and persuaded me to accept a loan of \$200 because they were concerned over our low financial resources!

We headed west for Ontario. Everything was a bit strange and dreamlike but by the time we reached a campsite overlooking Lake Ontario, just outside Oshawa we had established a bit of a routine. In fact, after setting up camp, preparing and eating supper, I decided to take the dog for an amble around the campground. It was a tranquil evening and as I wandered around I was puzzled to see groups of people gathered around what appeared to be blue flickering lights. My curiosity led me to investigate. I was amazed that they were watching TV! My experiences of camping in England did not include watching the boob tube. However, on closer investigation, I discovered the audience was riveted watching the Apollo moon launching when Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldren first stepped onto the lunar surface. It was quite a moment to see; a full moon in the summer evening sky, its image perfectly reflected in the mirror smooth surface of Lake Ontario and to see human activity on the moonscape literally out of this world. It truly was in so many ways the beginning of a new era. It was July 20th, 1969, a day to remember.

Every day we travelled around 300 miles westward. We liked to start early in the day when there was little traffic and the kids were still asleep. We aimed for 100 miles before breakfast. When pulling out of a campsite at dawn onto a deserted highway, it was easy to forget which side of the road to drive on. When there was traffic there was always a reminder but first thing in the morning it was important to avoid a very unpleasant wake-up call!

It seemed like we would never get out of Ontario but crossing Manitoba and Saskatchewan only took a few days and we entered Alberta, our chosen province, and finally Whitecourt, before the end of July. Our original plan was to dump most of our gear in a promised Teacherage and visit Jasper and Banff before school began. But there was no Teacherage and we had little money. We camped on the Hilltop and I got a job labouring for a builder. I was paid \$2 an hour for pouring basements. I had never earned so much money in my life! In England my annual salary was \$1800 per year. At that time a new V.W. Beetle was about \$2000 in the U.K. and if anything, \$50 cheaper in Canada. Gasoline was 39 cents a gallon here and petrol about 1pound (\$2.20) in England! My salary in Canada was to be \$5400 per year. We were in financial paradise.

By the middle of August with school looming, accommodation or the lack of it became serious. Whitecourt was booming and no apartments wanted young children let alone a dog and a cat! I contacted the superintendent who hired us and reminded him of promises made. I suggested that if a solution was not found, and soon, the family would have to return and I would get a job in the oil patch and I would make sure that people would know why! I was told I did not need to talk like that. My reply was, "Quite right. I've already said it!"

Within half an hour he contacted me with a solution. In their bureaucratic wisdom the county had hired two single English lady teachers, neither of whom could drive, to teach in Darwell. They decided to transfer them to Whitecourt, where they would have little difficulty finding an apartment. We would be transferred to Darwell as their replacements. In the exact words of the superintendent I was informed that "Darwell is a God-Awful place. But that I might like it!"

So we departed from Whitecourt back along Highway 43 for Darwell. We turned south on what might have been a dirt road, but was actually a well-rutted mud road. It was around fair time and as usual the district had experienced a sequence of serious thunder storms. The track of the sixties-era V.W. van is not the same as the North American vehicles and I had a serious challenge to keep the wheels on the road.

It had been arranged that we would meet 'Buster' Travis and his wife Della. Buster would show us around the school and Della was a possible babysitter. After what seemed like a long way on what to me was a wilderness trail (I had never driven on a dirt road before) I came to a crossroads and a store. I stopped to enquire where I was and for directions to Darwell! I had not noticed the name 'Darwell General Store' on the front.

A big man wearing cowboy boots and a large cowboy hat took a long draw from his cigar and remarked that I must be one of the English teachers! He suggested that I follow him to his farm about a mile south of what I now had come to realize was Darwell. He introduced himself as Leroy (Buster) Travis and introduced his wife, Della to us. We had been informed that Buster was chairman of the school board. Della had prepared some delightful and very welcome refreshments for us. I do remember Buster eyeing me over while I was trying to make conversation with these strangers. Della was wonderful with the young girls and treated us with friendly generous kindness.

I had no idea that the chairman of the school board was also the local counsellor, and somewhat responsible for the area's roads. I remember in my search for conversation topics I remarked that Ford of Britain had just launched their new Cortina by exclaiming that they travelled 10,000 miles to find roads bad enough to test their new model on. I commented that they only need to drive down the Darwell road to fulfill their wishes. That indeed, did raise a couple of eyebrows! But over time, I must have been forgiven, for we became good friends.

The winter of '69-'70 by all accounts was only average, certainly not as severe as the previous one, according to the authorities on such matters. We were very happy when spring brought longer and warmer days. It was apparent that the small trailer we were in was not big enough for our expanding family. Accommodation to purchase or rent was not available in the Darwell region. I have always had a desire to build my own house, so here was an opportunity to try out my dreams. Ideas, plans, and books were considered and a scheme gradually evolved.

I decided I needed to borrow \$6000 to get a roof over us. The bank manager considered that I needed \$9000! I did not want to borrow that much money. It was finally decided that \$8000 would do the trick. "So what have you got for collateral?" I was asked. "I don't have any" was the reply. "Surely you have got a car?" So I was lent \$8000 on my old V.W. camper that in England needed extra security for a short loan of \$400!! Things were different in Alberta, Canada!!

The superintendent's prediction that I might like Darwell turned out to be accurate. I'm still here! The two years just aren't up yet!

When I think of Darwell.....

Submitted by Teresa Olsen

I have been from the Darwell area for over 35 years. I have many fond memories of events, and people from this area. I was fortunate to be raised in this area, go to school at Darwell, and then raise my own child here and watch her go to school with kids of those I grew up with and be taught by teachers I myself had. She also got to experience some of the cool things I got to as a child: riding the school bus, playing fastball, Darwell Fair, Safari, skating on the outdoor rink, family dances at the hall, and eating with the old-timers at Darwell restaurant. I love that we can share these memories.

My favorite thing to tell people as I grew up was that I was from Darwell where we had three McDonalds. People always thought how cool it was my small town had three McDonalds. Of course, I did fail to mention that they were the Dale McDonalds, the Grandma McDonalds and the Joan McDonalds.

But when I think of Darwell the most vivid thing that comes to mind is Dale & Nora McDonald. From the time I moved to the area when I was a small child, I can remember those two amazing individuals. Whether it be seeing them at the restaurant, the school, or the fair, they always made time for me and anyone else who they came across. Mrs. McDonald was a regular helper at Darwell School when I went there, when I volunteered there for a year and even on occasion when my own daughter was first attending school. Mr. McDonald was always an active part of the Fire Department and always around the fair grounds to watch ball games, help out, and was a regular at the fair.

One of my favourite memories of Mr. McDonald (Dale) was once when I was weed eating down at the fairgrounds and he was doing his afternoon walk about; he stopped to chat. As most know, the Darwell Fair has had a money mine for many years, which remains long after the fair is over. Mr. McDonald recalled how once when he was strolling through the grounds a few weeks after fair, he saw a couple kids digging sadly in the money mine. He said as he approached them they were very disheartened that they had only found a couple nickels and had pretty much given up and were starting to leave the sand pit. Mr. McDonald said he had a \$5 bill in his pocket so he reached in and grabbed it and as he walked by the money pit, he bent down with the bill in his hand and dug around a bit in the sand, then stood up and exclaimed, "oh wow, look what I found a \$5 bill", and then he kept walking away. He said after a few feet, he turned to watch the kids excitedly dash back to the money mine and start ferociously digging for more money. He was always a good spirit, and I can still to this day picture him wandering the fairgrounds with a smile and a friendly word.

When I think of Darwell, I always have fond memories and happy thoughts!

Darwell Memories

Submitted by Heather Perry (nee Campbell)

The Darwell Fair is what I recall the clearest. I have an image of several outstanding moments participating in the Darwell Fair. As a girl I always entered my bike in the parade. The hours of preparation would see crepe paper transformed into a Little Bo Peep or cardboard into a horse and Cowgirl. My Mom was a magician when it came to crafting our costumes and making us feel fabulous for 'The Parade'.

Grandma Overa McDonald taught me how to make baking powder biscuits and that same year, after much practicing, my biscuits beat hers in the bench show. She admitted then, that Grandpa Lysle McDonald had entered biscuits once and had beat her as well. We enjoyed that memory every Fair Day for years.

It was a pleasure to work with Margaret Boyd and volunteer in the hall. We could openly discuss the merits of the entries; the pages of careful elementary school printing and paintings, the fabulous color of the cut flower arrangements, the timeless needlework and quilts, and wonder if we would ever beat Anna Lund's baking.

When you ask about my favorite memory of Darwell, it would have to be the Fair.

Memories of the Darwell Fair

Cynthia Jones

The Darwell Fair always brings back some great memories of my father Eddy Jones. He was instrumental in getting us to enter exhibits at the Darwell Fair with his help and he would give us the money that we won for the exhibits we entered.

About a week before the fair, Dad would scout out the fields for the Grains and Grasses exhibits. Our farm provided most of what he entered but we never grew wheat so Dad would search out neighbouring fields when he was out and about. A day or two before the fair, Dad would load us kids up in his old 1965 turquoise, Datsun truck and away we would go to collect the grains and grasses needed for the fair. We were brought along to stand guard while dad "borrowed" wheat from a neighbouring field that he had found while out and about. My sister Vicky always worried we would get caught so we would keep telling Dad to "HURRY", but Dad never hurried. He would drive to the field in question, very carefully walk in a ways, then cut off his first handful of wheat, ever so slowly, much to our chagrin. He was ever so careful not to trample or mess up the field, slowly cutting a nice, neat, small circle and getting several good-sized handfuls of wheat. And of course, he couldn't get just one good handful, in one spot, no, it had to be at least 3 or 4 nice round circles, in 3 or 4 different spots in the field. Vicky and I would be so scared someone would catch us "borrowing" their wheat. But they never did and after awhile, when Dad was satisfied he'd gotten enough for a good-sized sheaf, we would get to leave and Vicky and I would breathe a BIG sigh of relief. We often wondered what the farmer thought when he would combine the field of wheat and find several small, round circles in his field. Probably thought it was aliens that did it, but I know for a fact it was just our Dad getting wheat for the Darwell Fair.

The Importance of the Darwell Fair

Submitted by Lori Dyck

I first met Lance Dyck at the Darwell Fair in 1973. My Aunt Verla and Uncle Jack Roberts were friends with Jack and Luella Dyck. We also had family living in Darwell, Matthew and Mary Johnson. My aunt said I should come out to the Darwell Fair. It was a good time!

We got up early Saturday morning to attend the breakfast – eggs, pancakes and sausage. Then off to watch the parade. Lance was riding his very well-scrubbed horse and having a great time. Earlier I had seen his extremely well-polished red truck. I realize the importance of the fair. Everything was scrubbed clean. As he was riding with his friend Daryl Carter I could see he was lots of fun and very handsome.

In August of 1976 we got married. We attended the Fair a week before our wedding in “matching outfits”! We got married Friday, August 27th, 1976 so we could attend the Fair Banquet. It was held the Saturday following the Fair. The Fair Banquet was a huge event with prizes, dinner and a band for dancing. Lance wasn’t going to miss it!

Lance’s sister Valerie had made us our “Going Away” suits for our wedding. So once again we were at the Fair Banquet in “matching outfits”!

We joined the Darwell and District Agricultural Society that fall. Our family continues to love the Fair! We have three children: Cody, Casey and Carmen. Lance passed away June 13th, 2012.

Why Darwell?

Cindy Baker

The Baker Family: Dwayne, Cindy (Briathewaite), Carla, Cole and Cody. We were finally ready to purchase our first home. We were living in Mayerthorpe at the time and our search started there. The price in that area was too much of a financial burden so we expanded our search and moved into our home in the Darwell area in September 1988. The kids all started school in Darwell that September.

Our home was originally owned by the Banks family. We lived on a no exit road with Werner & Deb Grundke at the corner. Jim and Marlene Schroeder plus two Potts families were our neighbours.

Why Darwell?

Svea Spicer

I’ve been asked this many times during my last ten years. So why did I move here? I was living a dream in Ontario, owning my own little lake in Muskoka’s wilderness. I had no close neighbours to contend with, only plenty of four-legged ones. But, my son moved to Australia and my daughter and granddaughter moved to Edmonton. Now, here’s the link; my beautiful granddaughter has roots from Lac Ste. Anne, and during visits I learnt of its history. With none of my kids in Ontario, having most of my relatives in Sweden, and the closure of air ambulance due to SARS that ended my employment, I felt it was time for new adventures. I had decided to move to Lac Ste. Anne, and on my (dial-up!) internet, I bought a house in Birchwood Estates. With my Muskoka dream sold, I packed up the cat and pulled my

wagon west. On November 15, 2004 I was officially an Albertan. Of course, it was tough to leave my comfort zone behind, but I have absolutely no regrets. Darwell is a place where people look after each other and support community events year-round. A lot of Darwell and District residents are of Nordic heritage, which in turn makes me feel right at home.

Memories of the last ten years are plenty, especially as a Volunteer Firefighter. I've made new friends, even though I can't always remember who was, or is with whom, or whose farm used to belong to whom. Hopefully, our 100-year celebration will clarify some of the stories I've heard and give me new ones to ponder on.