

# VIEWPOINTS



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## 2004, Where did it go?

Well, here we are at the end of another year. I'm not sure about you, but to me it seems as if the year went by far too quickly. Then again, I think I probably say that every year. Time flies by when you're busy and 2004 was no different in that respect.

This was a year of many ups and downs. The agricultural sector of our economy seems to have born the brunt of the hardships that hit the country and, in particular, the western provinces. It started out looking as though farmers might get good, or even bumper, crops in the spring and early summer. Those hopes fell by the wayside as the rains continued. Add in the BSE crisis and there goes the rest of the farm income.

It wasn't all doom and gloom for our area: May saw Meadow Lake OSB hold their grand opening. Other than the fire in early December, the plant has run smoothly for over a year, injecting welcome dollars into our economy.

Sporting achievements were many in 2004. We hosted a very successful edition of the Scott Tournament of Hearts Provincial Ladies Championships early on in the year. Many of our minor sports teams had successful seasons and for the first time in 17 years we were treated to some very entertaining high school football. The Spartans may not have won a championship in their first season, but they gave a full effort and gained a lot of fans and support from the community. We look forward to the 2005 season.

Politics is still politics, no matter what happens. 2004 saw the federal constituency represented by a new face. We hope Jeremy Harrison will be able to bring some new benefits to our region. Only time will tell the story.

2004 had something for everyone, good or bad. All that's left to say is, it's over. With any luck at all, 2005 will be a bigger and brighter year for all of us. From the staff at the Progress to all our readers and advertisers, we wish you the very best and look forward to serving you in what will be our 75th year.

Happy New Year!



### Dispatches

by Noemi LaPinto



## Doing business in a small town

I am a city person, but far from born and bred. I was born in British Columbia, and my hippie parents and I traveled to New Brunswick when I was a year old. We lived in a log cabin in the middle of the forest, without electricity or indoor plumbing, in a community so small and rudimentary, it makes Meadow Lake look like Paris, France. I have very happy memories of that place.

By the time I was five we moved to Montreal, and since then I have lived in cities. City life has its advantages, some of which are still too close to my idea of normal for me to properly describe, (ask me again in a couple of months.) One of the reasons I decided to move was because my daughter Sadie, who is five, had never seen the sunset without a building in the way. Or started a morning without traffic jams. I started thinking it might be fun for her to live in a place where the snow wasn't brown. In November, I sent off an application for the position of Editor in Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan. Ron Tetz wrote me back. The transition period between that phone

call and my arrival was far from smooth, but the upshot of it all is that Ron met us in Saskatoon on December 28th. And here I am.

The first thing I noticed about this place is that everyone talks to you. In the city, sheer numbers impose a kind of unwanted intimacy on people, so you don't talk to strangers too much. If you did, you'd never stop. At the bus stop, in elevators, on the subway and on sidewalks you may walk by or stand next to hundreds of strangers a day. Who has time to get to know all of them? So you develop the habits of silence in public places. But from the first, people here are coming up to talk to me. Which is good, actually, because I feel like I am on Mars. Even Hong Kong, with its high rises and taxi's, urban sprawl and overpopulation, wasn't this different.

But this morning I learned that friendliness can have unexpected results. My first day in Meadow Lake, I took Sadie and the puppy to the restaurant next to my hotel for breakfast. The dog is four months old, and unused to being away from me. She reacted badly to

being tied to the couch in the lobby- yelping and yowling, hiccuping and howling as only a small dog can. Which earned her a special place tied to the gum machine in the entranceway. Which didn't seem to lower the noise level much, as the folks in the restaurant were only too painfully aware. Finally, a woman named Bonnie Cockrum offered me her car as temporary lodging place. Sadie and I had breakfast, and then Bonnie offered us a ride to the Progress headquarters. I was still staring at her in amazement when she opened her car door to see that the dog had showed her displeasure in a most disgusting, not to mention messy, way. Bonnie gagged, and I

almost died of embarrassment. Ten minutes later I was sitting in her car on fresh newspaper, cursing at the pooch and at good samaritanism. So far, it looks to me like the Montreal way of ignoring each other is better. This friendliness stuff can get messy. Bonnie's sister Lorraine had a good laugh, and as introductions go, it was definitely memorable. I only hope it isn't an enduring theme. After all, as the new editor at the Progress I am in a position of some authority, and it just doesn't do to spend all my first meetings with people cursing up a blue cloud and scrubbing fecal matter off their property with paper towels. At any rate, I look forward to meeting y'all.

### Letters to the Editor

All Letters to the Editor must be signed and include a daytime phone number. The Meadow Lake Progress reserves the right to edit for brevity, clarity, libel, accuracy and good taste. Any letters submitted without a telephone number for confirmation purposes will not be considered for publication. All letters reflect the opinion of the writer, and are not necessarily the opinion of the Meadow Lake Progress.



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