



Painted Box

by Wendy Thomson

A few months ago, I started to write on two things people have asked about — pioneering and loneliness. The first was easy but I'm having trouble with the "loneliness"; it's such an elusive subject and hard to pin down. Also, it takes many forms.

There is no "loneliness" here in the sense of not seeing a soul for months at a time. We've neighbours, friends and co-workers the same as back east (almost the same). But although I've made a "niche" for myself, the feeling of being out of place in a friendly land persists.

This feeling of displacement becomes quite strong as I look over the countryside; even while I'm admiring the view, something inside is yearning for winding roads, rolling hills, rail fences, rocks and maple trees.

And when I see a familiar type of rocky hill, or take a turn on the road that bends at a familiar angle, my heart leaps in a moment of misplaced recognition.

This happens with people and cars, too. There are folks here with strong resemblances to Acton acquaintances (Marylin in the Free Press office, Reeve Don Matheson, the sister of Isobel that used to be in IGA, and so on). It's as though they're made from the same mold, one for the east and one for the west.

And speaking of reeves, I got quite a jolt when I went to open a bank account and the name on the manager's door was the familiar one of Erin Township's past reeve, Lloyd Lang.

With the cars, I'll spot an old maroon Oldsmobile and think happily "There's Alma in town", then realize that Alma MIGHT be in town, but it wouldn't be one in Alberta.

Can never go home

There's another aspect of loneliness, one that I took many months to recognize. After we arrived here, part of a tune began running through my head almost constantly; I couldn't recognize it and I couldn't forget it.

By coincidence, in Dr. Joyce Brother's column she was asked about this, and replied (in part) that it might be a tune associated with a particular event, or the words themselves could be important.

And months later, when I finally heard the song on the radio, everything fell into place. The song itself was "24 Hours to Tulsa" and the elusive words to the line that stuck in my head were "You can never, never, never go home again."

I sat and wept because it was true. Acton and I had separated and we were each going our own way. Every issue of the Free Press announced changes to the Acton we hold in our minds — babies are born, people die, buildings burn, and are built, businesses change hands, people retire, others move away.

It would seem so strange to be back, with Frank Oakes, Ray Thompson and Ben Rachlin no longer in business, no bakery, changes in IGA, the hardware, friends no longer there, and so on.

And me? Yes, I've changed. I guess that goes without saying.

The last aspect of loneliness is "homesickness", something that cannot easily be explained or described to someone who has not felt it. The word conjures up pictures of miserable little kids at summer camp, wanting to go home after four or five days.

But it's more than that. It's an unexplainable yearning for places and faces familiar, a yearning that can be physically painful at its worst. I've heard it described as a desperate hunger of the heart. It is.

Oh, I'm not wandering around wringing my hands and making life miserable for all who come near. Far from it. But there are days that are hard to talk about, let alone get through. Last year, knowing that I'd be writing about loneliness sooner or later, I began jotting down feelings every now and then, when I went into a slump.

Rather than polish them all up (as a writer should do), I'll copy them undorned exactly as written.

April '76: I find my mind latching on to familiar things and savouring them. When our new dressers arrived, the big event was digging out the few dresser scarves that had been brought with us by mistake, and carefully smoothing them out, thinking "This one was used in our bedroom, and this one in Beth's..."

Last night I went to the back door and heard the spring peepers' songs filling the night. I could close my eyes and imagine the Esquimesse countryside around me, that very familiar, tangible presence, so familiar I don't need to see it to feel it surround me.

I sound homesick, don't I? August, 1976: When you grow up in a place (from the time I was 20 till I was 37), you grow up to fit it. In building a house, it's shaped to fit you and your personality. No matter what road you're on, there's always somewhere to drop in. As your children grow, you acquire friends that can never be replaced, as you find out too late.

This is alien world where the house seems to battle with me every day, where it's all men's talk about cars, oil, snowmobiles, fences, and cattle.

Very lonely. Over a year since I sat down and had a long serious conversation with another woman. What a backlog of "woman talk is piling up!"

November, 1976: Today my memory fed all kinds of pic-



SATURDAY BREAKFAST AT the Legion was enjoyed by many early risers. Above on the far side of the table sits Grace Thorp of Toronto beside May Vaughan of Islington with Shannon Johnston, 8, of Acton Boulevard and Patrick Johnston age 7. On this side of the breakfast table is Jennifer Johnston, age 4, beside Leslie Johnston.

Greenock members tell of trip to B.C.

The first fall meeting of Greenock W.I. was held at the home of Mrs. Eleanor McKeown, Sept. 6. President Mrs. Mildred Sinclair opened the meeting in the constitutional manner.

Meditation was given "The Legend of the Dogwood", by Mrs. Ann McGeragle.

The roll call "Tell something of interest you did this past summer" was well answered by 14 members. Minutes and financial report of the June meeting were read reminding all it is time to put head and hands back in action.

Correspondence included a card from Mrs. Jas. McCulloch, Australia and a letter from a CCW penpal Mrs. Armatrad, St. Kitts, West Indies.

Mrs. E. McGeragle was elected delegate to the Guelph Area convention held Nov. 3 and 4 at Bingham Park, Kitchener.

One item of business important to subdivision 12 is electing a new board member to replace Mrs. Myrtle Reid. The Senior short course from the Ministry of Agriculture and Food is Quilts. Leadership training is scheduled from Wed. and Fri. Oct. 19-21 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day held at the Arboretum, Guelph University.

Final plans were made for the exhibits in Acton Fair. The group display was in charge of Mrs. E. Wallace, Mrs. J. Johnston and Mrs. F. Allan.

A donation was given towards sponsoring the baby show.

Mrs. M. Sinclair and Mrs. E. McKeown were delegates to the 80th anniversary of Women's Institutes movement in Ontario started by Adelaide Hoodless and Erland Lee. Approximately 1,400 attended. Mrs. Lyndsay Hacket-Pain was the guest speaker, ACWW honorary treasurer Mrs. G. D. Conant, 89 years old, is now the only living person who was present at the first meeting with her mother who became the first branch president.

Mrs. Hacket-Pain's message was Let us keep an open mind by looking out

rather than in.

The resolutions convener-ship was in charge of Miss E. Pearen. She read important highlights from Mrs. Maluski. Resolutions we should keep for each day of the week in Home and Country Winter 1977.

The highlight of the meeting was experiences Mrs. R. Sinclair and Miss E. Pearen shared and told of on their trip to British Columbia, a reciprocal visit with our sister province. On arrival they were presented with burlap carry-all bags complete with a dog wood stencil.

Special baggage tags of B.C. W.I. colours green and gold were given them to see at a

glance they belonged to the group.

They visited Port Nanaimo, home of the famous bathtub races, Tele-Globe earth station, the Centre for telephone world wide, Cathedral Grove with trees 36 feet in diameter—10.98 meters.

Buchart Garden was a paradise. They enjoyed a sea food dinner, a banquet at Duncan and Victoria. They were given a chart including seeds and pictures of the trees that would grow from these seeds, also a tea towel with the BC motto. Everything went well and they enjoyed renewing acquaintances they had made

when South Vancouver Island district came to Wellington Centre in 1975. The local ladies presented a scroll to the district in B.C.

After a most enjoyable evening the meeting closed and lunch was served by Mrs. E. Winter and Mrs. J. Jackson. Mrs. A. Leslie was courtesy convener inviting the ladies to her home for a craft meeting in Oct.

First meeting held by UCW Next week

The U.C.W. held their first meeting of the fall in the ladies' parlour of Trinity United Church at 2.30 Tuesday, September 13. Mrs. Lidkea in the choir opened with poem Inasmuch.

All stood for two minutes silence for a late beloved

Arts, crafts sale

The September meeting of the Acton Arts and Crafts group was held on Tuesday, September 13 at the home of Jean Weir on the Fourth Line, and plans were made for their eighth annual exhibition and sale which will be held on Saturday, October 29th at St. Alban's Parish Hall.

This year's officers are Rosemary Stoehr, president; Del Howse, treasurer, and Laura Dittich, secretary. Members look forward to meeting their friends at the October show.

member Myrtle Lambert. Mrs. Denny had the devotion period and took as her theme Unity of all races regardless of color or creed. She told how the world's day of prayer first started.

Bible reading was from Luke 22 verses 14 to 32. Mrs. Barber read a poem Breaking Bread.

A letter was read from the adopted child. A photo was sent along showing a very intelligent child.

Secretary and treasurer's reports were read which showed a very healthy bank balance for the year so far.

Mrs. Shoemaker's report of sick and shut in's was given. She reported the moving of Mr. and Mrs. George Bowman to their new home in Brantford; they will be greatly missed.

Next roll call was a shower of tea towels and wash cloths. Through the summer 19 home calls and 10 hospital

calls were made. Different projects were discussed for the coming year and decided on. A social time was spent over lunch served by Mrs. Lidkea's group.

Lists of prize winners in competition at the fall fair will appear in next week's Free Press. There will also be more stories and pictures for readers to enjoy.

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