

the painted box

by Wendy Thomson



Every Friday night, this summer, my phone rings and an operator's slightly nasal voice asks if I will accept a long-distance call from Mr. Thomson.

Yes, Gord is off guiding on trail rides in the mountains again, and I'm batching it.

There was a long pause at this point in my writing as I considered whether "batching" was the appropriate word. If husbands who are left on their own in a temporary bachelor state call their way of life "batching it", what is a woman's equivalent?

After much thought, all I could cup with was "temporary spinsters must spinst

the newspaper here, have been going through an enormous amount of film, and other similar unexciting pieces of information.

Things have been going smoothly around home with no broken legs like last summer and the few problems that have arisen, I don't want to bother Gord with anyhow, as there's nothing he can do about them from 300 miles away—except worry.

Last Friday, though, Gord listened while I blithely said things were great and everybody was well, then he asked "But...?"

He knows me too well to buy the "no problem" bit, so I told him the truth—"Well, I put my back out."

"How did you do that?" "Looking at the milk."

Well, you can guess the reaction, but that's exactly what happened. I got up one morning, stepped over two

cats winding around my feet, opened the frig to get them some milk, and while I was standing bent over, deciding whether to give them skim or whole milk, there was a loud pop in my back and I couldn't straighten up!

I felt ridiculous. I hadn't even been lifting anything or standing crookedly!

And I guess I looked a little ridiculous too, walking around all bent over. I felt better once I sat down, seeing as sitting is a bent-up position on its own; and therefore it was no problem to drive into town to the chiropractor to be popped back into place.

But it didn't end there unfortunately. Even though I was repositioned, the pain stayed with me for a few days and I spent much of the time with an icepack stuffed down the back of my jeans.

That caused a bit of a problem one day when I had to

go into Drayton Valley. On arrival, I found that the pack had leaked, and I was rather wet. Most of the time was spent trying to keep my back to the walls of the stores.

I mean, how do you explain something like that?

"Yes, I am a little wet, but I had a baggie full of ice cubes stuck in my jeans..."

You can see how I have trouble explaining things to Gord. Much of what I say sounds so implausible.

Even long distance, I can see him shake his head, and settle back to hear the rest of the story.

Next week I suppose I'll be telling him how I took my ice cubes and sun cot to work with me to curl up with baggie on coffee breaks.

But right now, excuse me... my baggie's leaking again.



WHAT IS IT? Two sturdy poles and a strong wire have been installed near the wading pool at the park. Give up? It's the apparatus for the waterball competitions at the fair. A ball will be strung to the wire, and competing teams will

attack it with fire hoses. Teams of firefighters from Acton, Rockwood, Georgetown and Milton are expected; women's teams welcome. Spectators had better bring their raincoats. It's a new feature for the fair this year.

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