

# Opinion

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## The longest night is upon us - then dawn

We expect a great deal from Christmas. Since the plaza pumpkins were transformed into Christmas lights two months ago, the malls have been blaring carols accelerating our anticipation.

And it's not just the commercial aspect of Christmas that builds our hopes.

Many of us have a storehouse of poignant memories of times when the spirit of Christmas truly touched them - the delight on a child's face as he fell in love with a new teddy, the ohs and ahs around the dinner table as the steamed pudding was lit, the unexpected call from relatives abroad, the sanctity of a candlelight service.

Memories are ours to



Viewpoint

Jo Ann Stevenson

enjoy anytime, they can't be taken from us.

People who are facing a Christmas alone may find themselves feeling blue if they compare their present prospects with those of the past.

Others may have fallen upon hard times and may be struggling to find ways to look forward to a day which has been lavish with extravagance before.

These people can take heart that they have wonderful memories which are

still very much a part of them. They are in a position to experience some of the little joys that may have been overlooked in the past.

The truth is that Christmas is an internal celebration. It has nothing to do with the surroundings or the trappings and everything to do with going where you live and loving it there.

When you are able to touch that inner place, you'll know how to celebrate that feeling - perhaps you'll create a poignant memory for someone else.

Who was the philosopher who said, "Be the change you'd like to see happen?" Whoever it was, I think they held the key to the kingdom.

This addresses the

majority of people in our readership area who will celebrate Christmas tomorrow, but the many other world religions that celebrate the dawning of light at this time of winter solstice must share in these sorts of feelings around their holy days too.

The longest night is upon us, and at dayspring - a new dawn.

## You're in Bunnock Country

On the off chance that you might one day find yourself toiling down Hwy 17 along the Alberta/Saskatchewan border south of Lloydminster, a word of caution in your ear. Pretty soon you're going to hit the town of Macklin.

Now, you may miss the welcoming sign to Macklin but you'll know you're there all right, because suddenly right through your windshield you will behold a ghostly massive apparition looming up against the Prairie sky. It looks sort of like a grain elevator that's hit puberty. Specifically, it looks quite a bit like a voluptuous female torso.

Except that it's 30 feet high. And it's not supposed to represent a female torso. It's supposed to represent a bunnock. (Pronounced bun-NUCK). The giant structure is Macklin's way of letting travellers know they've entered serious Bunnock Country.

What's a bunnock? A bunnock is a horse's ankle bone. They aren't 31 feet tall. Bunnocks are roughly hourglass-shaped bones about the size of a beer can.

As near as anyone can figure, the game of Bunnock is a Russian import. The story goes that back in the early 1800s, Russian soldiers posted to the desolate tundra of Siberia desperately needed something to while away the hours. They didn't have snowmobiles. They didn't have hockey skates. They didn't have curling brooms.

What they did have is an awful lot of horse bones lying around. (Siberia was at least as tough on horses as it was on men.) The soldiers discovered that horse ankle bones could be stood on their ends and then...

You could use other horse ankle bones to try and knock them down!

Stupid? You bet. But this was Siberia and the men were bored out of their minds. Besides, have you ever checked out the rules of cricket?

Soon the Russian equivalent of the NHL Board of Governors horned in and what had been a mindless peasant pastime became the Official Game of Bunnock. It was decreed that 52 bones must be used. That some bones would be throwers and some bones would be guards and some bones would be sol-

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Basic Black

Arthur Black

diers and that the bones would stand in two parallel rows exactly 32 feet, six inches apart. And that two teams would then lob their bunnocks at each other's row until one team's row was utterly creamed and the game was over.

The Russians passed the game on to the Germans and German settlers brought it across the Atlantic when they came to settle the fertile West.

You wouldn't think such a deceptively simple premise would capture the hearts and minds of Prairie communities, but then you probably haven't put in a Prairie winter either. Truth is, Prairie communities around Macklin took to Bunnock like ducks to a slough.

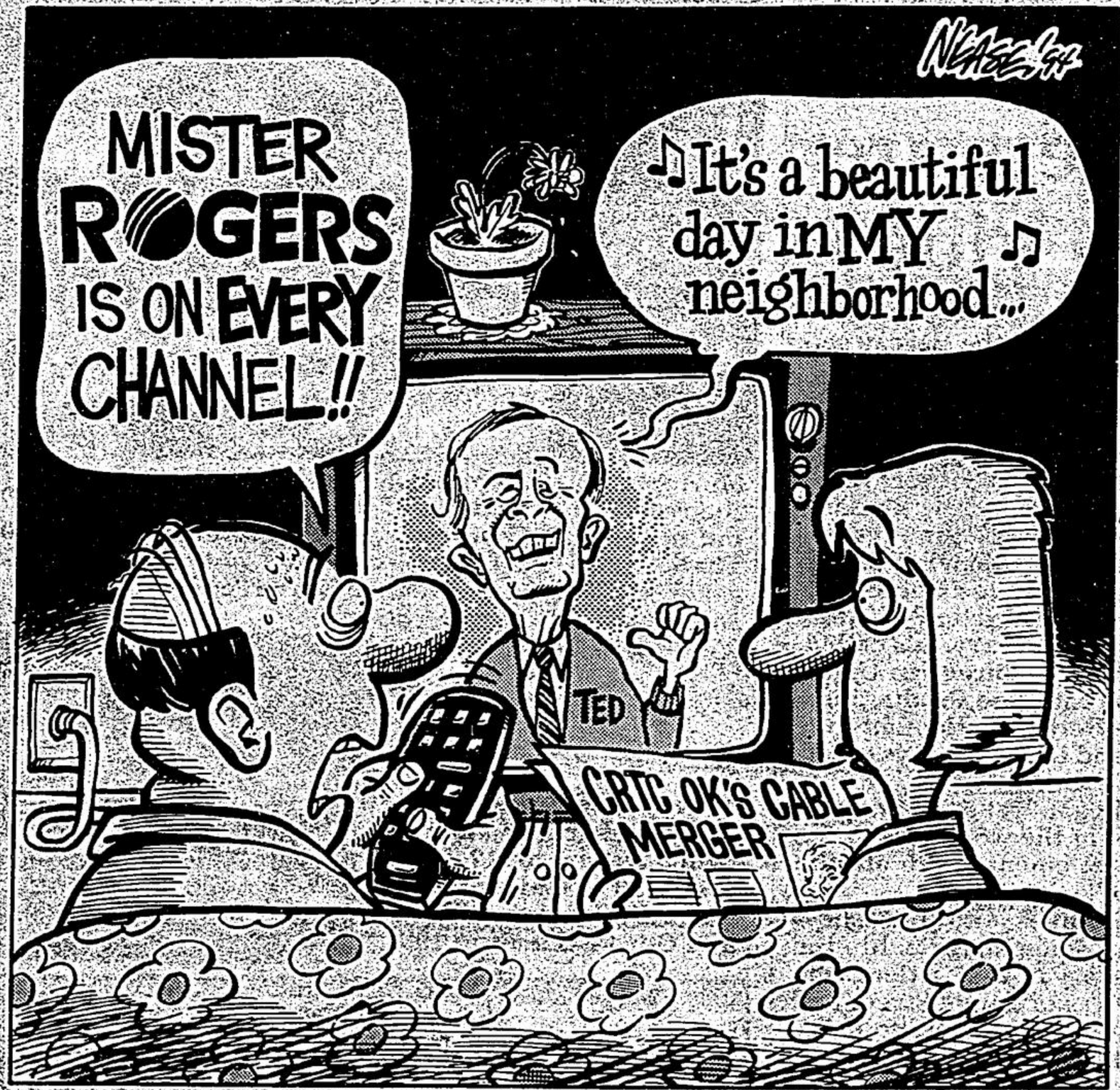
If you want to know just how popular Bunnock is, arrange to spend your summer holidays around Macklin this year. Make especially sure you're in town the first weekend in August. If you can find a motel room to rent, that is. That's the weekend of the Bunnock Challenge. So far, 128 teams have registered for a shot at the Bunnock Championship title. And the \$10,000 in prize money that goes with it.

Bunnock is serious sport around Macklin - and when you think of it, why not?

Bunnock isn't lethal like boxing, or dangerous to your front teeth, like hockey. You don't have to lay out money for expensive gear the way you do for football and baseball. How much can a horse's ankle bone cost?

Bunnock's got a lot going for it. Either sex can play it and it doesn't much matter if you're in kindergarten or the old folk's home. It's non-contact, doesn't need American imports and it's unlikely to attract steroid junkies. As a matter of fact, with baseball dead, the CFL football season over and hockey in limbo, Bunnock is just about...perfect.

Bunnock - Canada's New National Game. Pass it on.



## ADAM

by Brian Basset

