



This is us

the Blais family 1919 - 2017

# Foreword

In early 2015, I began the task of scanning Mom and Dad's photo albums. We wanted them all digitized so our family could easily access them. As I was opening each book, I was reminded of so many fantastic memories with the Blais family. Then, I found a photo from 1982 when we all got together for a reunion. It was of Grandma Rosalie reading a card in front of all her grandchildren with tears in her eyes. This photograph planted the seed. Seeing



her reading something each of us wrote to her and the emotional response it evoked meant it was time. We needed to capture our family's collective memories soon.

Aunt Alice inadvertently

watered the seed when she sent out a perfectly timed email in 2016 asking the family for fun ideas for our upcoming family reunion in July 2017. I chimed in with the idea of a family album. It was time!

After an email to everyone in the family and an enthusiastic response across the board, the project was a go. Please look at the family tree on pages 4 and 5 to see exactly how many people this involved. It's incredible!

The next step was figuring out how to format the book. If it wasn't fun and engaging people wouldn't want to participate. I came up with the idea of an informal questionnaire. That way each family member could write in their own voice. And I wanted to make sure each family member sent photographs to capture their lives through their own eyes. And the seed began to sprout...

Trying to figure out how to get Grandma Rosalie to answer questions without raising suspicions was going to be a challenge. Aunt Susie had interviewed her a few years back asking a series of 50 questions, so we had a good start for some of Grandma's basic information. During a game of Rummikub over Christmas 2016,

I decided to dig a little deeper and recorded a conversation with Grandma. I told her I had some questions to ask and rolled tape. While I got a few great answers out of her, the information just wasn't enough. Enter Aunt Rita! Through tireless research, and with the help of *all* the Blais brothers and sisters (especially Mary Ann), she built the beautiful history of her mother and my grandmother.

We also needed to tell Grandpa Emile's story. This was a difficult task as, sadly, his personal narrative couldn't come directly from him. Again, with Rita's organizational skills and the help of her brothers and sisters, his story was told. I have to say, I knew very little about Grandpa Emile other than the usual lore we grandkids have all heard. But now I can look into his eyes in the photographs on his pages and truly feel like I know my grandfather. What a gift!

This project wouldn't be in your hands without the generous support of Peter. Early on in the project, I received a call from him letting me know he wanted to fund the entire printing budget to ensure every family member received a copy. To say I was blown away is a definite understatement. Thank you so much Peter. Your generosity is greatly appreciated.

I have to personally thank every one of you for your dedication to this project. It has been more work than I could possibly have imagined, but your organization and the respect you've shown me is greatly appreciated. Every one of you has sent messages thanking me for all the work I've done. It sure feels good!

And lastly, I need to personally thank Aunt Rita for all her help on this project. She worked meticulously to ensure every detail was perfect. Her positive attitude was infectious and she always kept me on track. And thank you to our editor, Julie Sengl, who provided the extra set of eyes we needed.

Thank you everyone, and get your Kleenex boxes ready. This one's gonna be a doozie!

I love you all.

Daniel (July 7, 2017)

# Acknowledgement

We gratefully thank and acknowledge Daniel Blais, whose inspiration was to record the history of his grandparents, Emile and Rosalie Blais, and their children and families.

The beauty and significance of this book is a reflection of the hundreds of hours Daniel spent designing, consolidating and editing all of our stories and photographs.

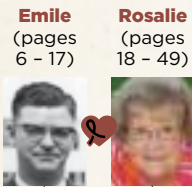
You, Daniel, have made real what the rest of us could only dream of. You have given us a treasure—a gift of the heart, and we are forever and ever grateful.

Your grandfather, Emile, must surely be looking down from heaven saying, “This is my grandson: a man of honour and integrity, thoughtfulness and kindness, enthusiasm and fun, exuberance, warm-heartedness, creativity and talent. He is a hardworking man who cherishes family. This is my grandson in whom I am so pleased.”

# Dedication

I dedicate this book to Grandma Rosalie:  
the best mother, grandmother and great-grandmother anyone  
could ever ask for. You have no idea how loved you are.

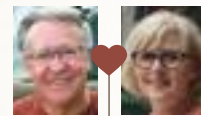
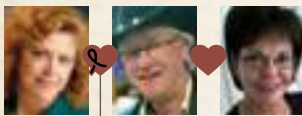
# The Blais family\*



**Alexander**  
(pages 50 - 55)

**Second child**  
(page 20)

**Dennis**  
(pages 100 - 107)



**Emile**  
(pages 58 - 65)

**Gayleen**  
(pages 56 - 57)

Son died in childbirth

**Bette Lynn**  
(pages 108 - 111)

**Sherry**  
(pages 66 - 69)

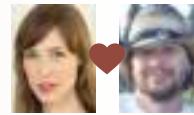
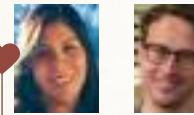
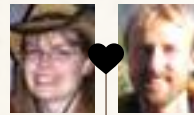
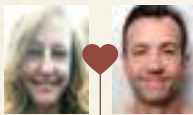
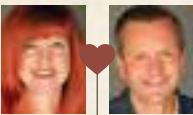
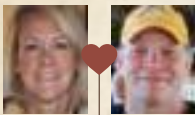
**Nicolle**  
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**Angela**  
(pages 88 - 91)

**Christopher**  
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**Daniel**  
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**Andrea**  
(pages 128 - 131)



**Craig**

**Challoner**  
(pages 80 - 83)

**Randall**  
(pages 92 - 93)

**Kerry**

**Zulema**  
(pages 114 - 115)

**James**

**Aidan**  
(pages 70 - 71)

**Amy**  
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**Ginger**  
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**Max**  
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**Chae**  
(pages 94 - 95)

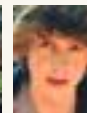
**Tawni**  
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**Julian**  
(pages 116 - 117)

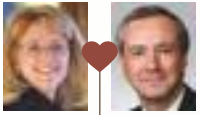
**Morgan**  
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**Althea**  
(pages 120 - 121)

**Mia**  
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**Mary Ann**  
(pages  
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**Thomas**  
(pages  
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**Renée**  
(pages  
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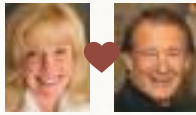


**Thomas**  
(pages  
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**Joshua**  
(pages  
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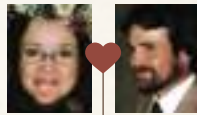


**Rita**  
(pages  
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**Peter**  
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**Susan**  
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**Neil**  
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**Chelsea**  
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**Leon**  
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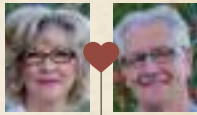
**Cassie**

**Alice**  
(pages  
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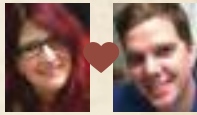
**Larry**  
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**Deanna**  
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**Garth**  
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**Bryn**  
(pages  
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**Mason**  
(pages  
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Legend

-  Married and common-law
-  Divorced
-  Widowed

\*Current to May 2017

# Emile Blais



Date of birth: **November 16, 1919**  
Place of birth: **Ste-Foy, QC**  
First name: **Joseph**  
Middle names: **Onésime Emile**  
Nickname: **Joe**  
Date of passing: **January 21, 1971**

Only Emile could accurately share his favourite stories and memories. With this in mind, we, his children, humbly offer what we ourselves gratefully witnessed and/or heard.

## History

The Blais brothers moved to Canada from France in the mid-1600s. They had a family farm for generations bordering on the St. Lawrence River in St-Foy, outside Quebec City. Dad's earlier years were spent on the farm where times were sometimes very difficult. One winter, all they had to eat was turnips, which explains why Dad would never eat turnips as an adult. In the early spring they tapped maple trees for syrup. In the 1930s, Dad's father sold the family farm, moved to Quebec City and invested in taxi cabs. They became a family of taxi drivers. The University of Laval now sits on a portion of the family farm land, and the family home is still standing. One of Dad's brothers later purchased a residential lot on the original homestead property. It had become prime real estate by then. He paid a hefty price for the land and built a home there.

## Significant life event

Emile was only 9 years old when his mother died in childbirth. He was the eldest in a family of 7 children, although one brother died at the age of 2 and the last baby died at birth along with his mother. We think Emile must have been very relieved when his loving father refused to follow tradition by separating the children and sending them to live with other families. Consequently, it became Emile's responsibility to care for his siblings and report on the quality of the hired caregivers.

When a kind, nurturing woman was found, cupid appeared and Emile's dad married her. Together they had 8 children bringing the family total to 15. Emile had a deep love and appreciation for his wonderful stepmother. Theirs was a very busy home, founded on strong Catholic values and traditions.

## And then came Rosalie

Meeting Rosalie must have been Emile's highlight. When stationed in Congress, he asked the parish priest to introduce him to a French Catholic family. With La Mère's permission, the parish priest brought Emile to the LeTilly farm where he met Rosalie. Three months after their first date they were married.

## Immediate family memories

Emile and his brother-in-law Emile LeTilly (Tuffy) were kindred spirits. They were both very involved with the Knights of Columbus and the Columbian Squires. They spent many evenings and weekends together planning, organizing and mentoring. When they played and relaxed, rum and Coke was their favourite drink.

Emile deeply loved his daughter-in-laws, Amy and Bette Lynn, and was thrilled that his sons married the best. He was ecstatic when Sherry arrived and he became a grandfather.

## Hobbies or pastimes

Emile was a very happy, passionate man with a positive attitude and a great outlook on life. He loved God and really lived his Catholic faith, attending Mass every morning. Emile worked diligently to build a Catholic school which he felt was critical for the growth and development of his children. He organized the fundraising for the school, supervised the building, hired the oblate sisters as teachers, served as Chairman and Treasurer of the School Board, and spent every Sunday afternoon keeping the financial records in order.

Family was everything to Emile. He loved Rosalie and openly displayed his affection for her and his seven children. He was a hugger and would take great pleasure in cuddling Rosalie from behind when her hands were busy in pie dough or other tasty treats. There would be squeals of laughter and delight. He also loved La Mère and all the family that would regularly come to visit. He was very hospitable and enjoyed hosting many dinners with family and friends. Mom was never a drinker and didn't appreciate too much alcohol. Occasionally Dad would overdo it, but it didn't take Mom long to forgive him when he would sheepishly come home with a bottle of Chanel No. 5.

There was nothing Emile enjoyed more than standing next to a piano and singing. He was frequently invited to be the vocalist at weddings, funerals and special events. The highlight for many was hearing him perform in the church choir at midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. He often sang *Ave Maria* and *O Holy Night* as solos.

Emile was the preferred speaker at public events and often spoke for the Knights of Columbus. Many sought his wisdom and counsel. He was eloquent, humourous, charming and so charismatic. And we're not biased!

Emile was responsible for bringing Dale Carnegie to Assiniboia and was one of the instructors. Consequently, his bathroom mirror (and there was only one bathroom for 10 people) was often adorned with encouraging words like "think positive," "keep smiling" and "never ever say 'I can't.'"

## Fun facts about Emile

In his early years, Emile entertained others and shared his passion for music by singing on the radio. When Emile sang in church you could have heard a pin drop. Everyone would be captivated and often moved to tears.

Emile was a very passionate man and that passion was often evident in his reactions; especially when he was upset. The strength and power of his voice definitely caught everyone's attention.

One of Emile's proudest accomplishments was the work he did with the Columbian Squires, a leadership development program for young Catholic men, aged 10 - 18. He and Emile LeTilly were so excited as they witnessed these young men develop into confident, strong leaders. Emile received a special citation from the Pope because of the work he did. The signed certificate was framed and proudly hung in his bedroom.





Emile was very involved with the Knights of Columbus, a charitable organization of Catholic men whose principle goal is to help those in need. He held office for the Assiniboia Council as well as the provincial, national and international boards.

Children absolutely loved Emile and would run into his arms as soon as they saw him. Their little fingers were always allowed to reach into his shirt pocket where he would have a box of Chiclets chewing gum to share with them. There would be lots of giggles and hugs.

Although Emile was raised in Quebec City in a French family, he quickly learned to be fluent in the English language. When he spoke English, it was without a French accent.

## The Canadian Air Force

Emile was extremely intelligent. He studied accounting at the University of Laval on a scholarship. Sadly, his education was interrupted when The War broke out. Emile joined the Canadian Air Force, but his less-than-perfect eyesight prevented him from going overseas. Instead he stayed back and trained men to fly for the British Air Force.

## In Honour of Emile

Even though he had suffered two earlier heart attacks, Emile's death was sudden and tragic. On the evening of January 20, 1971, he was

at his brother-in-law Emile's (Tuffy's) house working on one of their many projects. Bending over to put on his winter boots, he lost his balance. Unable to break his fall, he fell down the stairs, landed on his head and suffered severe head trauma. He was transported to Regina by ambulance and died shortly thereafter on January 21, 1971.

When we arrived at the church for his funeral, there were hundreds of people gathered outside. Some of us wondered why they weren't indoors. To our absolute amazement, we soon discovered there was no room. The church was already overflowing. Dressed in their formal tuxedo attire with their hats and swords, the Knights of Columbus Colour Guard lined both sides of the aisles of the church. Many had travelled from all over the country to participate in celebrating this incredible life.

Our home was flooded with offerings of food, flowers, prayers and cards. Because of the overwhelming desire for family and friends to recognize all that Emile had contributed to his church and community, a beautiful hand-carved altar was built in his memory and still stands as the main altar of the Church in Assiniboia.

Life can be so fragile. Although Emile left us far too early, his legacy lives on, inspiring us to love God, to love each other, and to strive to make our world a better place. Think positive. Keep smiling. Be happy.



Emile's mother

**Mary Boivin** was born on February 17, 1898 in Ste-Foy, QC and was the daughter of Joseph Boivin and Julie Blondeau. She was the mother of Emile, Henri, Cécile, Jean-Paul, Rita and Alberte, who died at a very young age. She died in childbirth along with her 7<sup>th</sup> child on July 3, 1929.



Emile's father

**Onésime Blais** was born on April 26, 1896 in Ste-Foy, QC and was the son of Jean-Baptiste Blais and Eliza Cloutire. He died on December 18, 1971.

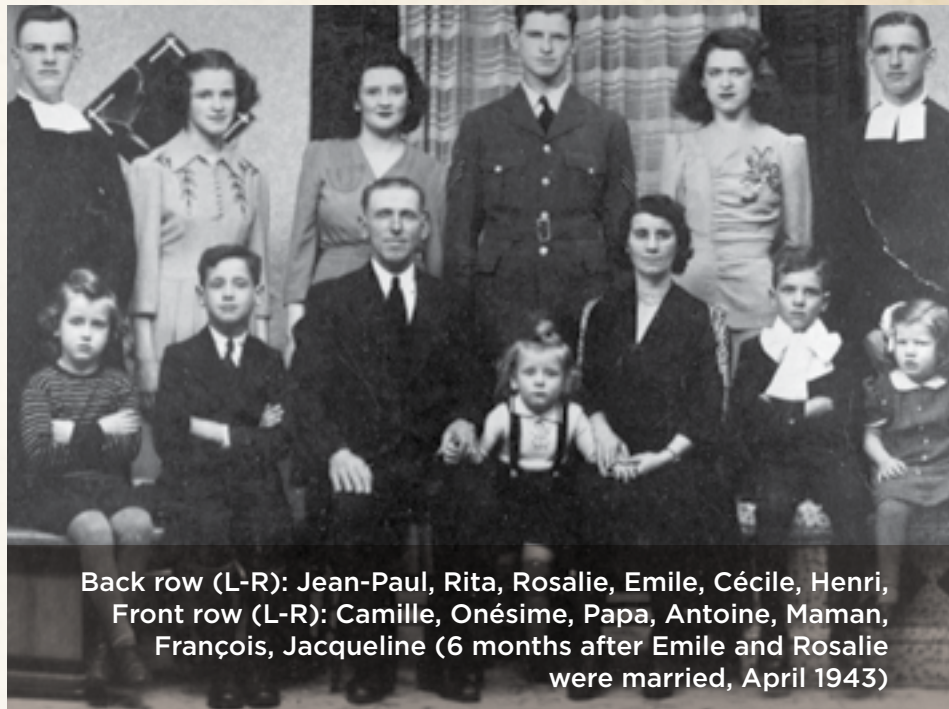


Emile's stepmother

**Bernadette Denis** was born on August 19, 1910 in Ste. Catherine de Portneuf, QC and was the daughter of Joseph-Emile Denis and Rose-Anna Denis. She was the mother of Onésime, François, Camille, Jacqueline, Antoine, Armand, Jean-Claude and Denis. She died on January 27, 1970.



Emile's parents



Back row (L-R): Jean-Paul, Rita, Rosalie, Emile, Cécile, Henri,  
Front row (L-R): Camille, Onésime, Papa, Antoine, Maman,  
François, Jacqueline (6 months after Emile and Rosalie  
were married, April 1943)

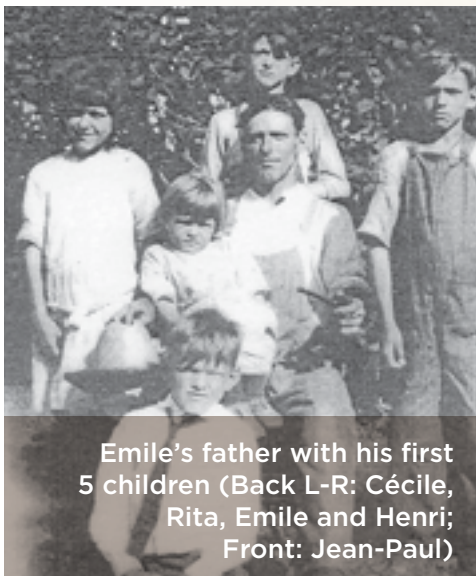


Emile's mother and father  
with children, Henri, Cécile  
and Emile (1924-25)



A family trip to Quebec City in 1946 to visit Emile's parents and family. Emile, Rosalie, young Alex, baby Dennis joined by Alex and Marie LeTilly. Parish priest, Father Boudreau travelled with the family as well to visit his own family who lived out east.

Alex and Marie LeTilly are front row at each end. Young Alex is on Grandma's knee. Emile (holding Dennis) and Rosalie are in the centre back row. Father Boudreau is sitting in front of Rosalie and Onésime Jr.



Emile's father with his first  
5 children (Back L-R: Cécile,  
Rita, Emile and Henri;  
Front: Jean-Paul)



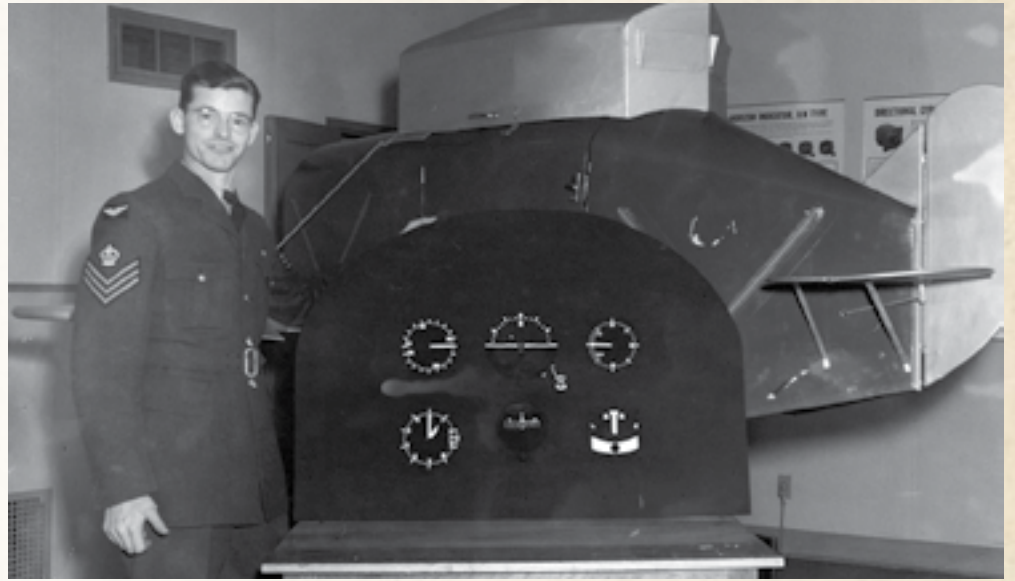
Back row (L-R): Rita, Camille, Liliane, Jean-Pierre, Jacqueline, Jean-Paul, Irma, Emile, Rosalie, Cécile, André, Claire, Onésime, Thérèse, François, Henri, Front row (L-R): Jean-Claude, Papa Onésime Blais, Denis, Armand, Maman Bernadette Denis (1963)



Claire, Denis, Henri, Claudine, Jean-Paul, Camille, Gwen, Jacqueline, Normand, a friend of Jean-Claude, Jean-Claude, Onésime, Myriam, Rita, Irma, Cécile (1996)



Emile in the Link Flight Simulator

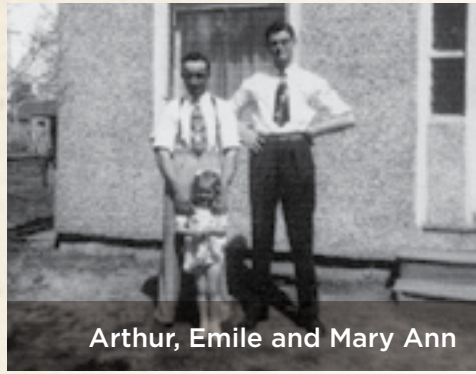


The courting years



October 26, 1942

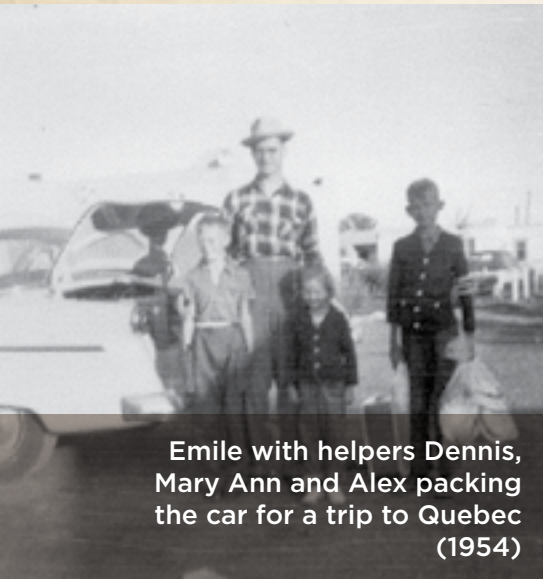




Arthur, Emile and Mary Ann



Emile, Rosalie and baby Alex



Emile with helpers Dennis, Mary Ann and Alex packing the car for a trip to Quebec (1954)



Emile and Rita



January (1956)



January (1957)







Emile LeTilly, Chabot, Gary Chad, James Rocke and Emile, members of the Council of the Knights of Columbus in Assiniboia (1958)



Emile in his Knights of Columbus tuxedo (1958)





Singing



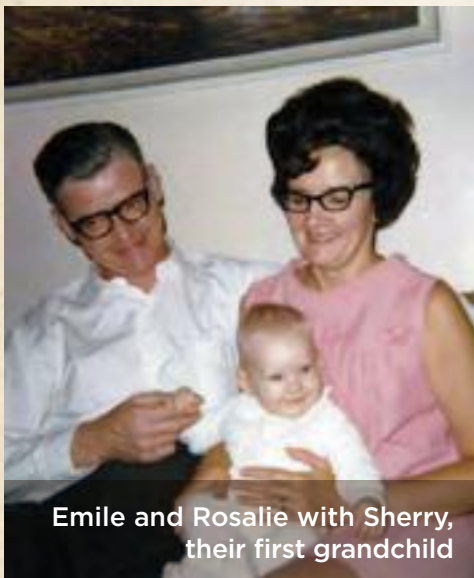
The founding fathers of the Assiniboia Roman Catholic Separate School







Packing the car for another family road trip



Emile and Rosalie with Sherry, their first grandchild



Emile in a hospital bed after a heart attack in Regina, SK on Christmas Day (1969)



Christmas Day (1969)



Emile's last Christmas.  
He died less than a month later.



A TRIBUTE  
published in the pages of  
THE ASSINIBOIA TIMES  
ASSINIBOIA, SASK.  
JAN 27 1971

**Memorial Obituary**



*Entered into Eternal Rest  
Thursday, Jan. 21, 1971*

Funeral service for Emile Blais, 50, was held in St. George's Roman Catholic Church, Monday, January 25 with Father Lucien Rodrigue officiating. Interment followed in Mount Hope Cemetery with Ross Funeral Home in charge.

Emile Blais was born in Quebec City and attended school and university there. He joined the Royal Canadian Air Force in 1940 and came to the Assiniboia E.F.T.S. base, where he was instructor in the link training section. While stationed at Assiniboia he married the former Rosalie LeTilley in 1942. They resided at Yorkton, Claresholm, and Trenton, returning to Assiniboia in 1946. He then was employed with Glauser's Department Store and later opened Glauser's Hardware as manager and co-owner.

He was a member of the Assiniboia Council of the Knights of Columbus, and Father St. Germain Assembly of the fourth degree. He was also a member of the Assiniboia branch of the Royal Canadian Legion and took an active part in community affairs, being recognized also as a vocal soloist.

Surviving are his wife, Rosalie of Assiniboia; two sons, Alex of Brandon, Dennis of Calgary; five daughters, Mary Ann and Rita of Saskatoon, Susan, Alice, Deanna at home; also two grandchildren, his father, Onesime of Quebec City; seven brothers and three sisters.

The Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus Color Guard attended funeral. They were presided by Saskatchewan District Master, Sir Knight Felix Becker of Weyburn and Faithful Navigator of Father Saint-Germain Assembly, Sir Knight Rod Tailion of Assiniboia. The Sir Knights forming the Color Guard were the following: Victor Ducharme, Carl Clem and John Karst, Markus Koller, Simon and Lucien Leduc, William Marcenko, Ab Meagher and Casey Topola all of Assiniboia. Leonard Beaudry, Nap Brisebois and Ray Piche of Gravelbourg, Paul Binette, Gaston and Marcel Carigham, Raymond Chabot, Charles Gauvin, Rene Lallier and Gerard Tourigny of Ponteix, Aime Brisebois of Ferland, Paul Hannah and Puis Zerr of Mankota, Joe Bellefleur, Leonard Bourdage and Ray Campagne of Willow Bunch. The twenty-eight member Color Guard of the Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus was one of the greatest in number ever to be held in Saskatchewan.

Honorary pallbearers were John Ruffel, Saskatchewan State Deputy of the Knights of Columbus, Bill Argan, Past State Deputy, Al Poirier, State Administrative Secretary and four members of the Assiniboia Separate School Board, Ron MacLean, John Kessler, Eugene Clermont and Joe Pilsner. Acting pallbearers were Paul Bergeron, Norman Bergeron, Eric Letilley all three nephews and Clarence Muffenbeier, Gerry Payant, Brian Karst, three former Columbian Squires.

Also in attendance were a group of Columbian Squires from Ponteix.

# Rosalie Blais



Date of birth: **May 25, 1922**  
Place of birth: **Assiniboia, SK**  
Family name: **LeTilly**  
Nickname: **Rosie**

## Favourite childhood memory

I loved playing sports at Montcalm School.

## Favourite memories of my parents

My parents came over by boat from Brittany, France and were introduced by Mom's brother, John Hamonic. The Hamonics (my mom's family) settled in Manitoba. The LeTillys (my dad's family) settled in Saskatchewan. I never met my Grandma or Grandpa LeTilly. When Grandma LeTilly died, Grandpa LeTilly married Leontine Le Dortz. When Grandpa died, Grandma Le Dortz alternated living with our family and Uncle John LeTilly's family.

## Memories of my mom, Marie Hamonic

Mom came from a wealthy family in France and her parents gave Dad the money to buy Saskatchewan farm land. Even though she could secretly understand a lot of English, she chose to speak French. Mom was very strict but also very kind. She was an excellent cook and made the best fried chicken, and molasses cookies. With only a Grade 2 education, she taught herself to read. At night, Mom read aloud to Dad and Uncle John LeTilly from *La Presse*, the French newspaper from Quebec. (Uncle John lived just across the road from us.) I used to fall asleep listening to her read in her nice soft voice. I remember her prayer book and wedding and farmhouse photos.

My dad was always healthy and strong and I don't remember him ever being sick other than just before he died. My mom was in the hospital in Gravelbourg for a very long time with diphtheria. It was very contagious so we couldn't visit her. My dad wasn't his jolly old self and missed her so much. She returned home very frail and took a long time to recover.

When Dad died, the family decided that Mom should live with Emile and me so we moved into Mom's home. Mom absolutely loved Emile and treated him like a son. He loved her too. She lived with us, and then me, until she moved into a nursing home at 95. She died shortly thereafter at the age of 96.

## Memories of my dad, Alexandre LeTilly

My dad was such a kind man that everyone loved. People often took advantage of his kindness, but he didn't seem to care. I named my first son Alex after him, and they are very much alike. All the hired hands wanted to work for Dad because he was so nice and fed them well. He knew the owner of the grocery store and would purchase the leftover produce that was just about to spoil for a discounted price. Mom and I would cook up a storm and everyone loved our cooking. Dad never went to school so could not read or write. He would often travel to St. Victor (about 12 miles away) by horse and wagon to get coal for heating. He would leave in the dark and return in the dark, and sometimes it was so cold he would have icicles hanging from his moustache. I felt so sorry for him and did not like to see him go. He took such great care of his family, and I loved him so much. Often after work he would sit in his rocking chair so tired. I would comb his hair and he would fall asleep. We both loved that.

## Memories of my family

My mom was a wonderful cook and very clean. Our clothes were washed often and our shirts were the whitest of whites and very neatly pressed. She used a big heavy iron that she would rest on the stovetop to heat up. Although we were not wealthy by any means, we always had lots of food because we were farmers. We raised cattle, chickens, turkeys and pigs, and were wheat farmers. We had an outhouse, a hand pump for water, and a wood burning stove outside in the backyard among the trees where we did all the canning. One year, my mom and I canned 500 quarts of fruit, pickles, chicken, beef... it went on and on. Grandpa Hamonic would sit on a stool beneath the trees and help us out by cutting kindling for the stove. We stored our meat and vegetables in a shed kept cool with straw and blocks of ice from the slough.

We had a party phone line which meant everyone could listen in. My dad was the first one in our town to have a radio and we listened to *Lux Radio Theatre*, *Gang Busters*, *Ma Perkins* and *Fibber McGee and Molly*. The neighbours would often come over to listen. We were also the first ones in our area to have a car.

On Sundays we played baseball with our neighbours on a large pasture by our house. While we were playing, Mom would often kill chickens, pick potatoes and vegetables from the garden, and cook up a feast for everyone. Mom and Dad were very generous and the neighbours loved them.

Mom would often take us for picnics at Montcalm School. For a treat she would pick up white bread, ham, processed cheese, lettuce and mustard for making sandwiches. We thought this was the best! So yummy!

## Childhood memories

Every week I would get an allowance. I enjoyed spending it mostly on movies and candy like lollipops, jawbreakers and gum. My daily chores included weeding the garden and picking off the beetles by hand, washing dishes, helping with the cooking, churning butter and separating cream. Mom sold butter and eggs to people in Assiniboia. The parish priest always received these things for free.

I walked 3½ miles to school. On the way home I would play. I was a bit of a tomboy, very athletic and good at high jump and track and field—especially running. After a competition, I would return home with a chest full of ribbons. I also loved to act and draw. My best subjects were spelling, geography and French, and I was really good at memorization. My worst subject was history. Early on I attended Weybridge School, a Protestant school 3½ miles north of the farm. Later I went to the Catholic Montcalm School which was 3½ miles south. I was taught two French classes a year at Montcalm School. I never studied beyond Grade 8 because I would have to be billeted out to attend Assiniboia High School. This was very expensive so not an option.

I liked to play hopscotch and do cutouts from the catalogue. I remember receiving a little toy rabbit for Christmas one year. It would jump if I pressed its foot. Great fun! We had a little outside dog named Brownie. My friends were Madeline Leruyet (my bridesmaid), Jeanne Simard and June Lowes. I loved Christmas and remember gifts of Christmas oranges, crayons and colouring books, and a feast of delicious food!

Joe and Irene Himbeault lived nearby. They didn't have any children and often came for Sunday dinner and to play cards. About every six months, Irene gave perms to Louise and me. They were

nothing like the perms we have today. She had all these coils that would hang from the ceiling. She would wrap our hair in rollers and then she'd pull the coils and set them on the rollers. Heat would go through the rollers and set our hair. It was quite an ordeal and many times she would burn my skin! Hairstyles were all curly back then and I would dress up in my brown dress with two different collars. I always loved to dress up.

Yvonne had naturally curly hair and looked like a little doll, so no need for a perm. She was very lovable. I spoiled her and treated her like my little pet.

It was instilled in us that God was number one in our family. We prayed the rosary every night and always said grace before meals. We travelled to St. George's Roman Catholic Church in Assiniboia every Sunday by horse and buggy, then later by car. We always sat in the same church pew which was considered ours since we paid for it every year. Nobody else would dare sit in our pew!

I was 8 or 9 the first time I ever went to a movie and I genuflected before I sat down! I was so embarrassed when I realized what I had done. Showing reverence by genuflecting was the custom before entering a church pew.

One time we had a cloud of caterpillars that invaded our farm. We immediately ran indoors. The caterpillars completely covered the house and the ground and ate absolutely everything. Not a potato was left in the garden and the trees were bare. They left a huge mess on the windows and on the house and then they moved onto the next farm.

When I was about 8 years old I remember the dust storms of the Dirty 30s. There was nothing but dust everywhere for years and there was no planting because nothing would grow. Sometimes during a daylight storm, the dust was so thick the sky was dark and it would blow so hard the whole house would shake. Mom would take us into the dirt-floor basement to protect us and calm us down. The air was so dry we could hardly breath. We always managed to have lots of food but many people in town were starving. Then one day it started to rain and everything was okay again.

Then WWII started which had a very big impact on me as a child. We would hear the news on the radio of the bombings and the gas chambers, and I was terrified that Hitler would come to Canada. My brother Alex went to war. The only good news about the war was that the unemployed men finally had jobs.

## Memories of Emile

During The War, Emile became a pilot in the Canadian Air Force but was grounded due to poor vision. He became a Link trainer to the British Air Force and was stationed in Congress, SK where he lived in the barracks. He attended the Catholic Church and became friendly with Father Labreque, the local parish priest. I first laid eyes on Emile singing in the church choir and discovered he was dating Claire Tessier. I thought, "Is she ever lucky." I was dating a few different guys at the time but no one I was excited about. They were all too serious and I liked to have fun.

Father Labreque, who Grandma had for dinner often, asked if he could bring a couple of military men from Quebec. Of course, Mom said yes. I was only 20 years old and thought Emile was so handsome. He reminded me a lot of my dad. We laughed and had a lot of fun at that first dinner. Emile called the next day and the next day and the next day. He was very kind, romantic, funny and intelligent. He was very clean, a nice dresser and an amazing singer. I always wore nice shoes and he liked my legs! We would often meet at church and when I heard him sing my heart would melt.

We were on a double date with Alex and Norma. While sitting in the back seat of the car, Emile said, "You are going to marry me you know." We were married three months later.

We had a huge wedding at Montcalm School. Marie made us a three-layered wedding cake. Our first night was spent sleeping at Mom and Dad's farm and then we hitched a ride to Saskatoon with Father Labreque where we spent 3 nights in a hotel. We returned to Assiniboia with Father Labreque. We had no money and lived with the priest in the church rectory for the first few months, where I cleaned, cooked and took care of things in exchange for free rent.

Then we moved into an apartment above a clothing store on the main street of Assiniboia. We had a wood burning stove that I was not used to and I almost burned the place down. I became pregnant with Alex 3 months later and was sick throughout most of my pregnancy.

Emile was promoted after Alex was born and we then moved to Claresholm, AB where he continued to train pilots. After a few years, Emile was again promoted and we moved to Yorkton, SK. By then I had lost our second child in childbirth. When I was pregnant with Dennis, Emile was again promoted. He was relocated to

Trenton, ON for work, but I was too pregnant to travel. Emile went on ahead without me. But Emile loved Saskatchewan and he loved being close to my family. That's what prompted him to leave the military.

We moved back to Assiniboia and he started working for Mr. Norm Glauser, teaching Edna Fraser new accounting procedures. He subsequently took over the accounting and in 1946 became manager of the furniture store in the basement of Glauser's Department Store. This store eventually became the Red and White Store. In 1950, Mr. Glauser sold shares to Emile and the other managers. Marshall-Wells Hardware Store was opened in 1952 when Mr. Glauser purchased a new building and Emile became the sole manager.

I loved to listen to Emile sing especially my favourite song *O Holy Night* on Christmas Eve.

## Memories of my uncles and aunts and grandparents

Dad's brother, Uncle John LeTilly, lived across the road from our farm. He had kids but they were pretty wild and Mom would not let us hang around with them. Grandma Le Dortz would spend time with both families.

Uncle Pete Hamonic, Mom's brother, was married to Aunt Beatrice. Before he was married he lived in St. Victor in a very small house. He would come to Mom's farm and Mom would wash his clothes. He was special and always very kind and good to all of us kids.

## Memories of relatives

I was born into a family of 7 children and I also raised 7 children. Five of my siblings lived in Assiniboia.

My sister Louise and her husband Art lived on a farm with a huge garden where we loved to pick fresh peas and corn. She was always cracking jokes and laughing.

Florent and my sister Marie also lived on a farm and Marie used to make beautiful wedding cakes.

My sister Helen and her husband Clint lived in Australia. We didn't see her as much, but she maintained close contact with all of us.

Marion and my brother Emile (Uncle Tuffy) lived in town and Uncle Tuffy was one of my husband Emile's closest friends. They were in Knights of Columbus together and spent many a night partying. Alex and his wife Norma eventually took over Mom and Dad's farm.

We often spent Christmas with Dally and my sister Yvonne and her family. After dinner, our children would put on a concert for us, with programs written out by hand. We would even begin by singing *O Canada* and end by singing *God Save the Queen*. We would laugh and laugh.

My grandparents, the Hamonics, eventually moved from Manitoba to Assiniboia in a house across from the church. When Grandpa died, Grandma Hamonic moved in with us.

## Significant life events

Marrying Emile was the highlight of my life. Losing him ... no words. Moving in with Tom, Mary Ann and Renée was also a major highlight for which I will be forever grateful. I was very happy living with them. Moving into Chartwell Retirement Home was a huge change. My newly refurbished ultra-modern apartment with a most spectacular view is amazing. Father Ron Dechant celebrated Mass in my new suite. What a gift!

## Favourite stories about life today

I love our family gatherings and reunions. My birthday celebrations have been amazing, especially the party at Manteo and then the brunch at the Grand with family and friends. All my crafts were on display. I felt so loved and appreciated.

Driving in a limo on my 85<sup>th</sup> birthday is a celebration my friends still talk about. We shared champagne and poked our heads out of the top of the limo and cried out, "It's my birthday!" We laughed so much.

Travelling to Mesa all by myself to spend the winter months in my own home was also fantastic. I did that for 7 years.

## Hobbies or pastimes

I love making cards and laughing, so watching sitcoms are part of my daily routine. Receiving the Eucharist and praying are also important, and I enjoy watching the religious channel on TV.

I love to bake and had a dream of having my own bakery with Marie and Louise. I've made cinnamon buns, raised donuts, brownies, poppy seed buns, pies of all sorts and raisin cookies. Every Christmas I would bake hundreds of assorted cookies and goodies and present them as gifts to neighbours, friends and senior homes. I loved to set a beautiful table with my lavender rose china and Royal Doulton crystal, and cooked endless meals for friends and family.

In my earlier years, I created lots of different items like crocheted quilts and doilies, painted glassware and a wonderful assortment of Christmas decorations.

I also love to play cards of any kind: cribbage and Rummikub would have to be two of my favourites. When I was younger I also loved to bowl, especially lawn bowling, and I was really good at it. I was also a bit of a pool shark! At age 94 I even beat Larry. I was also a pretty good golfer for about 5 years.

## Fun fact about Mom we might not know

I have a real spirit of adventure. When I married Emile, I thought we would be moving to Quebec to be with his family and I was looking forward to that. I was surprised when he wanted to stay in Assiniboia to be close to my family.

I took the Dale Carnegie course and won a pencil for the best speech. The speech was about the difficulty I have with people who are stingy. I also spoke about an orphanage I visited with Aunt Rita in Quebec City. It broke my heart and I had everyone in tears as I spoke.

I was also President of the Catholic Women's League for 4 years, which made me very proud, and I served on the Parish Council in Kelowna.

## Current and past occupations

Before marrying Emile, I mostly cooked for the farm workers. Once I was married, I was a homemaker until Penny (Dad's only staff member at Marshall-Wells Hardware Store) became sick. I filled in and loved it, and Emile loved having me there.

After Emile was gone, my brother Alex purchased Mr. Glauser's portion of the store and we became partners. After the store was sold I worked for Mo Nekurak for 5 years in a men's clothing and shoe shop. I loved that too and so did the customers! I also sold Sarah Coventry jewellery at house parties for some time. After one year, I was offered a promotion, but I didn't want to travel.

After moving to Kelowna, I worked at Bloomer's Florist. That didn't last more than 6 weeks because I thought I would be on the cash register and knew nothing about flowers. I then moved onto Dalmys Clothing store for a very short time.

I thank God for my family and I pray that He will continue to bless and protect each and every one of you.



- 1 **Grandpa Joseph Hamonic**  
(1860 - 1947)
- 2 **Hilaire Hamonic**  
(1900 - 1925)
- 3 **Leontine Hamonic**  
(nee Le Dortz)
- 4 **Grandma Jean Hamonic**
- 5 **Marie Vincente Hamonic**  
(1865 - 1938)
- 6 **Robert Hamonic**
- 7 **Grandma Marie LeTilly-Le Dortz** (1856 - 1940)
- 8 **Marie A. LeTilly**
- 9 **Marie LeTilly**  
(nee Hamonic)  
(Rosalie's mother)
- 10 **Alexandre LeTilly**  
(Rosalie's father)
- 11 **Grandpa Joseph Le Dortz**  
(1864 - 1932)



Marie (nee LeTilly)  
Hamonic at  
18 years old



Grandma Marie  
(nee LeTilly)  
Le Dortz



Alex and Marie LeTilly  
(November 29, 1915)



Jean and Leontine  
Hamonic  
(November 29, 1915)



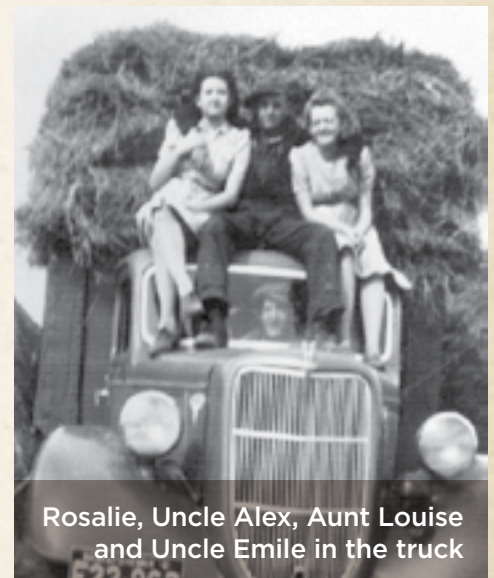
Alex and Marie LeTilly



Rosalie and Aunt  
Louise eating  
bananas (1941)



Rosalie and her  
brother Emile (1941)



Rosalie, Uncle Alex,  
Aunt Louise  
and Uncle Emile in the truck

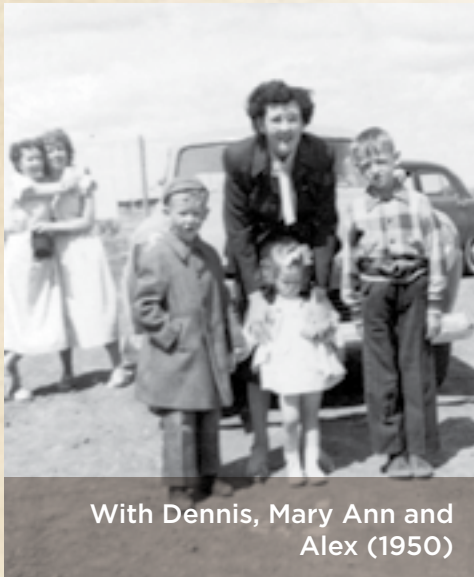




Rosalie with her new boyfriend Emile (1941)



October 26, 1942

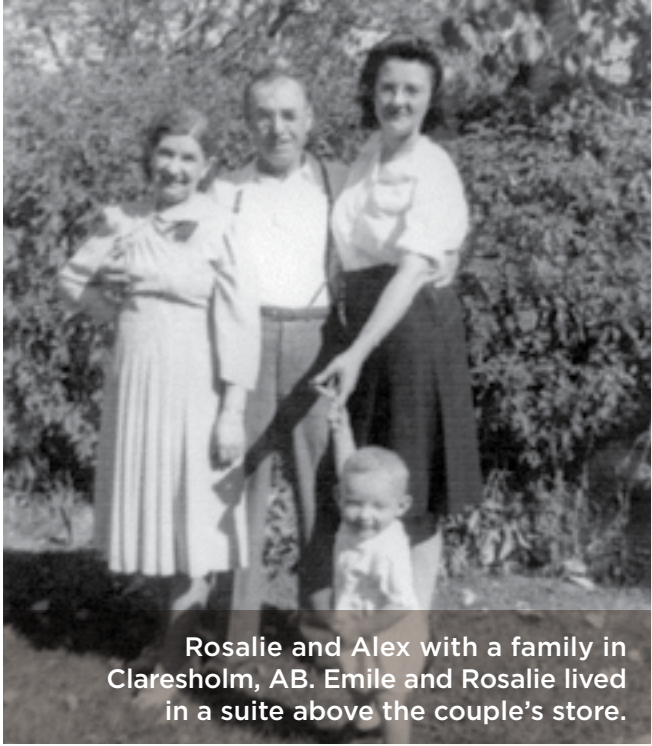


With Dennis, Mary Ann and Alex (1950)



Marie, Louise, Yvonne, Helen and Rosalie (1953)





Rosalie and Alex with a family in Claresholm, AB. Emile and Rosalie lived in a suite above the couple's store.



Rosalie and Mary Ann



Christmas (1955)



Alex, Rosalie, Mom and Dennis in Sainte Anne de Beaupre, QB (1954)



Christmas (1958)



1970



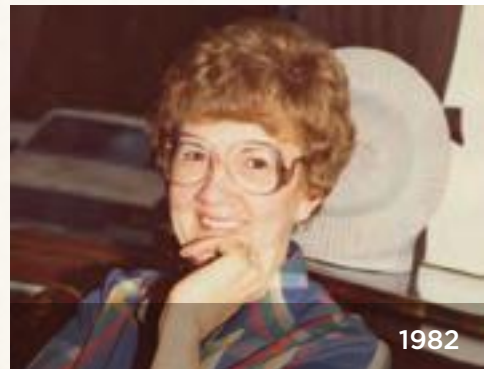
Dennis and Bette Lynn's wedding (1971)



Susie and Neil's wedding (1980)



1979



1982



Blais family reunion (1982)



Blais family reunion (1982)



Aunt Beatrice and Uncle Pete (1984)



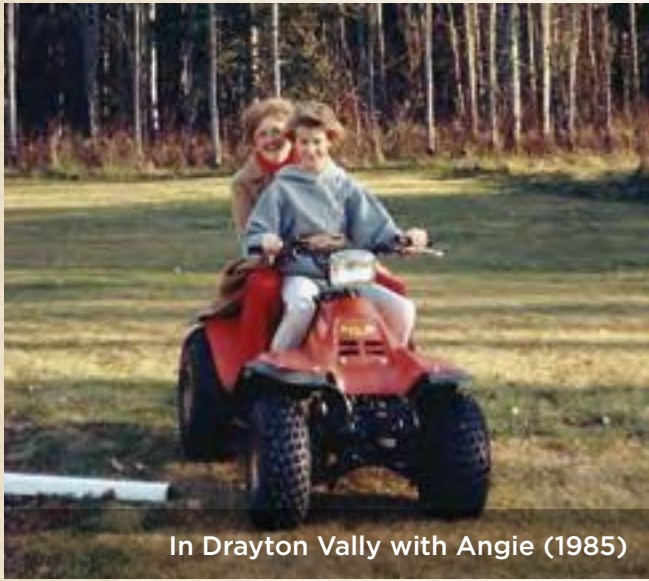
Renée's First Communion



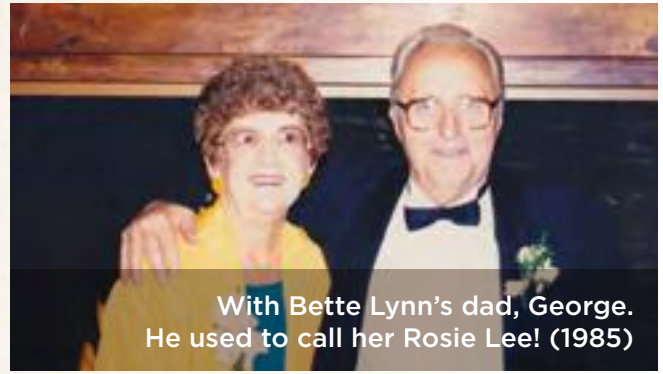
With sisters Marie, Louise and Mom



With Yvonne and Mom



In Drayton Vally with Angie (1985)



With Bette Lynn's dad, George. He used to call her Rosie Lee! (1985)



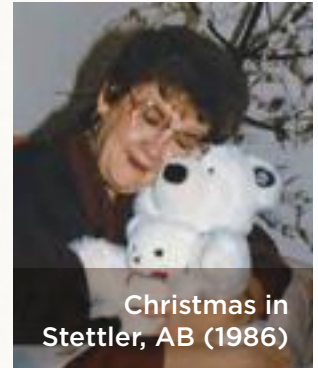
Saucy Grandma! (1985)



Mara Lake, BC (1985)



Salmon Arm, BC (Summer 1985)



Christmas in Stettler, AB (1986)



Blais family reunion at Mara Lake, BC (1985)



1986



Kelowna, BC (July 1986)



Carmel (May 1988)



Christmas in Hawaii



Rita's 38<sup>th</sup> birthday (1989)



Fairmont Hot Springs, BC (1989)



LeTilly family reunion (August 1989)



LeTilly family reunion (August 1989)



Where Rosalie grew up



LeTilly reunion



San Francisco (June 1990)



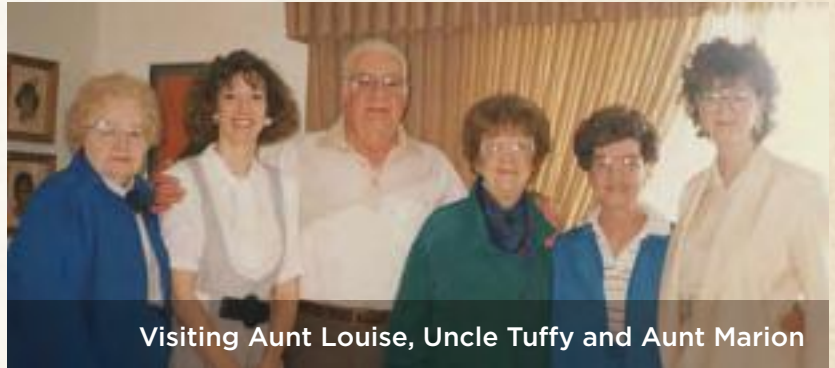
Christmas in Stettler, AB (1990)



1990



Easter in Vancouver (March 1991)



Visiting Aunt Louise, Uncle Tuffy and Aunt Marion



Aunt Rita visit with The Nylons in Penticton (May 1991)





Christmas (1990)



Chris' Grade 12 Grad with Aunt Rita (1991)



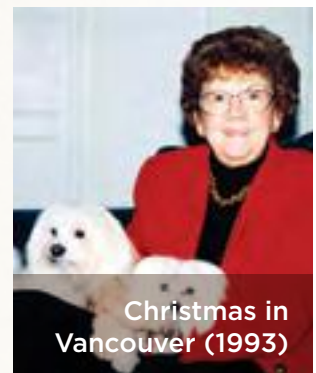
Christmas (1991)



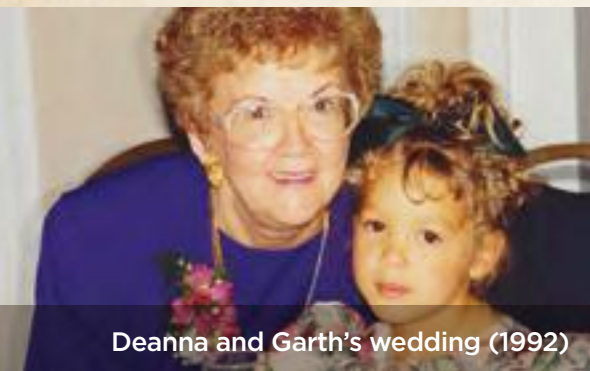
August 1992



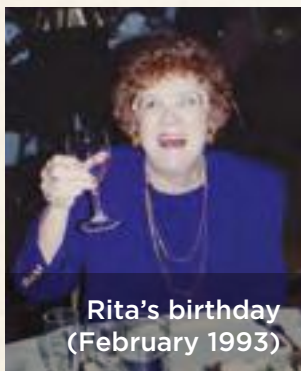
Sisters Louise, Rosalie, Helen, Yvonne and Marie at Alex and Amy's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1992)



Christmas in Vancouver (1993)



Deanna and Garth's wedding (1992)



Rita's birthday (February 1993)



Rita's birthday (1993)



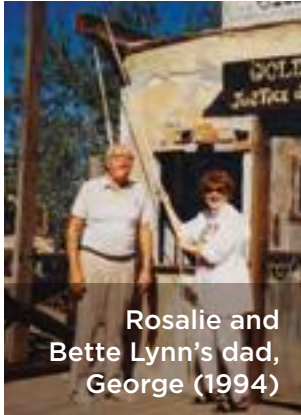
Rita's birthday (1993)



Rita's birthday (February 1993)



Thomas Spirit boat cruise (July 1993)



Rosalie and Bette Lynn's dad, George (1994)



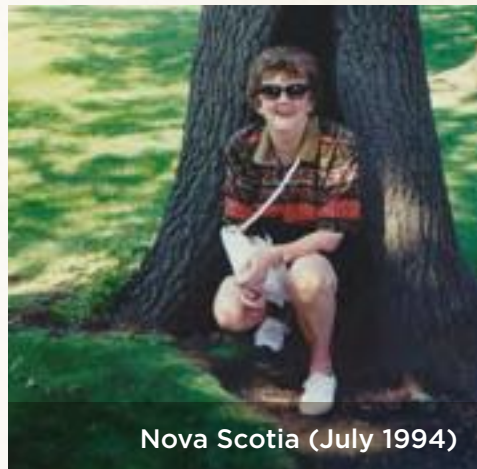
1994



1993



Nova Scotia (July 1994)



Nova Scotia (July 1994)



With Stephanie Paulowicz, Amy Blais' mother



New Year's Eve in Maui (1994)



Christmas in Assiniboia (1994)



Cooking school in Tuscany (1995)



Pisa, Italy (1995)



Rita's wedding day (June 17, 1995)



Thomas Spirit cruise with Mom and Blais girls (2006)



Arizona (March 1996)



Dennis and Bette Lynn's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1996)



Dennis and Bette Lynn's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary (1996)



Chris and Kerry's wedding (November 1996)



1996



1996



Peter and Rita's anniversary celebration (January 1997)



1996



Sisters Rosalie, Helen, Louise and Yvonne in Arizona (January 1997)



Sisters Rosalie, Helen, Louise and Yvonne dinner at Rita's (January 1997)





Helicopter ride in Arizona (1997)



Blais girls' reunion (September 1997)



With Helen



Blais girls' reunion (September 1997)



Visiting with Olga Sutherland in Arizona (March 1997)



Andy's grad (1997)



Blais girls' reunion (September 1997)



Arizona (1998)



January 1998



Riding a Harley in Arizona (1998)



Arizona (March 1998)



Christmas in Arizona (1998)



Christmas in Arizona (1998)



Christmas in Arizona (1998)



Christmas in Arizona (1998)



Whistling in the kitchen (1998)



Christmas in Arizona (1998)



Christmas in Arizona (1998)



Christmas in Arizona (1998)





With Louise



With Helen, Clint and Louise



With Louise



Christmas (1999)



At Dennis and Bette Lynn's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary (2001)





Haynes Lake (Summer 2000)



80<sup>th</sup> birthday party (2002)



Birthday dinner



Las Vegas (January 2001)



Todd Thomas Foundation fundraiser (January 2001)



80<sup>th</sup> birthday party (2002)



80<sup>th</sup> birthday party (2002)



80<sup>th</sup> birthday party (2002)



80<sup>th</sup> birthday party with Helen (2002)



Renée's wedding (2002)



85<sup>th</sup> birthday (May 2007)



85<sup>th</sup> birthday (May 2007)



Blais family Caribbean cruise (January 2007)



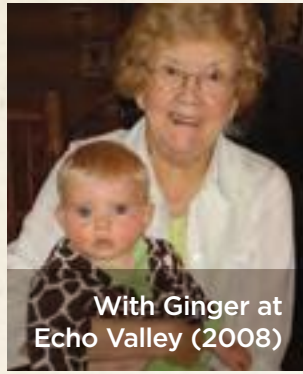
Blais family Caribbean cruise (January 2007)



Echo Valley family reunion (2008)



With Ginger (2007)



With Ginger at Echo Valley (2008)



Echo Valley (2008)



With Elvis at Echo Valley (2008)



Echo Valley (2008)



Echo Valley (2008)



Echo Valley (2008)



Echo Valley (2008)



Thomas Spirit paddle boat (July 2003)



With Donna at Echo Valley (2008)





Rosalie's birthday (2009)



Rosalie's birthday (2009)



With Joshua (2010)



Dennis visiting Kelowna (2009)



2010



December 2010



Family reunion (2011)



Family reunion in Kelowna (2011)



Rita's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party (April 2011)



Thanksgiving (2011)





Birthday (2012)



2012



Alice and Larry's wedding  
(June 23, 2013)



April 2014



Mary Ann's 65<sup>th</sup> birthday (2014)



Birthday (2014)



Rosalie's birthday (2014)





Christmas in Kelowna (2015)



Christmas in Kelowna (2015)



Christmas (2015)





Ali's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday at Sparkling Hills (March 2016)



August 2016



Father Ron said Mass in Rosalie's new home! This was one of the highlights of her life.

# Alexander Blais



Date of birth: **September 13, 1943**  
Place of birth: **Assiniboia, SK**  
Middle names: **Joseph Emile**  
Nicknames: **I was called Fuzzy. When I was in school, it changed to Blazer.**

## Favourite childhood memories

I grew up at a great time and had a fabulous childhood, having freedom to do what I wanted whenever I wanted. I just had to show up for meals. We had to make our own fun building stuff to play with. We'd play Cowboys and Indians and we'd make guns by finding boards and nailing triggers and sites on them. I would hunt up and down the back lanes with Allan Sutherland looking for stuff to build a fort and we'd sleep in the fort all summer. I remember Dennis and I going to the Olympia Theatre Saturday afternoons with our 25¢ allowance. The movie was 12¢ and they were always Westerns. We would slap our asses all the way home... ride 'em cowboys!

Our family spent lots of time with Grandma and Grandpa LeTilly, and the house was always full of people. One of my early memories was at Grandpa Hamonic's funeral with the open coffin in the living room for three days.

With seven kids, Mom would collect a nice family allowance cheque from the government every month. With that money, she would buy stuff for the house like a new fridge, stove, washing machine or furniture.

I remember Mom always baked on Wednesdays. I would come home after school and there were always treats like fresh donuts, cookies, pies and bread. The place smelled like heaven. In those days, milk was delivered by horses. We never had a garden so we would get fresh veggies and eggs from Mrs. Kuffner from Maxstone Saturday mornings. We always had food on the table but not much else. A special treat at Bergerons for breakfast was coffee with crackers, sugar and fresh farm cream. It was delicious. Years later I tried making some and it was just not as good as it was back then!

I remember Saturday mornings listening to radio shows like *The Lone Ranger and Tonto*, *The Cisco Kid* and *Poncho*. There would be a fight if anyone made a sound.

Sunday was always a special time. We would go to church in the truck. I remember there were 10 of us, including Grandma, so we'd have to ride in the back of the truck. In the summer, it was okay, but in the winter it was not so good... we would have to make two trips. After church, Dad would go to someone's house or he would have people over for beer and tomato juice. It would always be a short visit, then we'd have brunch. Dad would go to work Sunday afternoons and do the books at the store.

Sunday supper was always special with roast beef, chicken or pork. Those were the days of lots of meat. After the dishes were cleaned up, we would go to the store and watch TV. In those days, we had to have a tall antenna to get reception from CKCK TV in Regina. Glausers Department Store, beside Marshall-Wells Hardware, was three storeys tall so we had the tallest antenna in town. We didn't have enough money to buy a TV but Dad sold them in the store. We would watch *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *Father Knows Best*. We were lucky to be able to watch one of the first TVs in town.

I remember walking to school in the winter following the honey (toilet) wagon pulled by horses. Can you imagine the smell? Dad paid the Honey Man Charlie Swift extra to go into the basement of the house to get the five-gallon toilet pail. Once, Charlie was coming up the stairs and the bottom of his pail broke open. You can imagine the mess! It was winter time and the window screens were stored under the stairs. I came home from school for lunch and there was Mom gagging as she carried out the screens. I helped her but had to go back to school after lunch. Lucky me!

## Favourite memories of Dad

Dad always seemed to be working. He would come home for dinner and then he'd be gone again. I recall going with him a few evenings when I was about 8 or 9. He was switching old coal furnaces for oil ones. It was a big job taking out old dirty fireboxes, replacing the heating units and then running duct work to the rooms. I would help him get tools and what not.

After the War, there were shortages of everything, including money. Once a month, on a Friday evening, Dad would bring home fish and chips wrapped in newspaper from Tom's Café. What a treat that was! We never ate meat on a Friday in those days.

Dad had two heart attacks that landed him in the hospital. When he had his accident, we were living in Brandon. I was in Esterhazy when I got the call that Dad was in the Regina Hospital. I drove to Brandon, picked up Amy, Sherry and Nicolle and headed straight to Regina. He was already gone when we arrived. What a sad time for all of us. He was only 50 years old.

One of the greatest regrets I have in life is that I never told him I loved him. I miss him still today. I wish he would have been here to meet his grand and great-grandkids, and to see what we all have accomplished.

## A funny memory of Mom

When we were bad (which almost *never* happened), Mom would chase us with a wooden paint stick to give us a licking. We would hide under our bed so she couldn't reach us. She would eventually give up and threaten to tell Dad. Sometimes she did and that would be bad for us. It was all part of growing up and learning life's lessons. We would hide the paint sticks under the fridge, and then when Mom did spring cleaning, the sticks would show up again!

## Favourite memories of the family

Family gatherings, which included the Blais', Bergerons and LeTillys, were always fun. On Sunday afternoons in the summer we often picnicked at Montcalm School. My favourite picnic lunch was fried chicken and potato salad. The men would drink beer. We would hang out in the old one-room schoolhouse and play ball, horseshoes and have races.

For Christmas, we always had big family dinners and the house would be full of cousins, aunts and uncles. There had to be 40 - 50 people. Dad used to toast his family in Quebec with a big gallon jug of wine that he'd pass around. He would toast his mom and dad and each of his 12 siblings. After dinner, the adults would play games. I remember laughing so hard at the pranks they played on one another.

## Holidays with the family

I don't remember going on many holidays with the family, but every summer Dad would borrow or rent a car from Dunrite Service. Our next door neighbours, the Sutherlands, had 10 kids and their dad owned the Dunrite station where they sold Studebaker cars. After church on Sundays we would head to Moose Jaw with our family and the Sutherlands on the dusty gravel highway. We would stop halfway at an old schoolhouse for a picnic of fried chicken, apple pie and Kool-Aid. Then, we'd go to the wild animal park. On the way back we would stop at Con's Corner and get ice cream for a treat.

Another holiday was driving to Quebec City with Grandma, Mom, Dad, Dennis, Mary Ann, Father Labreque and me. Grandma won a new Ford car in a lottery and we drove it to spend time with Dad's younger brothers. They were the same age as Dennis and me. I remember stopping at St. Joseph Cathedral in Montreal and kneeling on every step and saying the rosary. If I remember correctly, there were 365 stairs.

As a young boy, I was afraid of being on bridges. Crossing the St. Lawrence River bridge was terrifying for me. I would lay on the floor of the car and cry. The same thing would happen when crossing the creek on the way to Gravelbourg. What a baby!

In the summer, Dad would drop me off at The Knights of Columbus Boys Camp at Lac Pelletier. I spent the week sleeping in tents, went to Mass every morning and had lots of fun exploring, boating and playing in the water.

## Favourite memories of La Mère

After Grandpa LeTilly passed away we moved back into Grandma's house. We called her La Mère. When Dennis and I got into trouble and were sent to our rooms without supper, she would sneak food up to us. I used to say the rosary with La Mère in the evening while listening to the Gravelbourg radio station in her bedroom. La Mère always made sure I wore a chain and cross that had been blessed by the priest, and if I ever broke it, a new one would appear. It's something I still wear to this day.

On a hot summer day, La Mère would send me to town to get her a cold cream soda. She would only speak French to us, which I still can speak a little of today. The last time we saw La Mère was at the first LeTilly reunion on the homestead. She passed away shortly thereafter. It was another sad time.

## Favourite memories of cousins Vic and Paul and my friend Allan

During the summer months, I spent lots of time on the Bergeron farms, playing a lot and working a little. Picking stones was not fun but killing chickens was a hoot! Cousin Vic and I even built a guillotine to chop their heads off. We'd ride pigs and even had our own rodeo. We'd drink Aunt Marie's homemade wine, and set thick dry weeds on fire to make smoke in the piles of straw. It's amazing we never burned the barn down.

I remember one time when cousins Paul and Vic came and stayed with us, we got bored and decided to put paper and dry grass into the outhouse behind our house and set it ablaze. We had a big tomato juice can full of water to put on the fire in case it got out of control. It lit up quickly, so I ran to the house to fill the can and Mom asked, "What do you need that for?" I said, "Oh nothing." She followed me straight

to the burning outhouse. The outhouse burned down, the cousins were sent home and I was in big trouble with Dad!

I remember when my buddy Allan was sick and didn't go to school. I decided I wasn't going either, so I hid beside the fuel tank behind the house. I sat there for what seemed like a long time and decided it was lunchtime and went into the house. Well, it wasn't lunchtime and Dad was called. I was in big trouble again and went to school without lunch.

As a little guy, I had a tricycle. Next to our house was a big steep hill that we would slide down in the winter. One time, Vic was pushing me down the hill on my tricycle and I fell off and broke my arm. The first time I took Gayleen to Assiniboia, I was telling her about this big hill beside our house and how much fun we had on it. We laughed our heads off when we saw how that big hill was actually really tiny!

Another time, Allan was pushing and I was riding the tricycle on the sidewalk. In those days, the sidewalks were made of wood. I fell off onto broken glass and cut a major blood vessel in my wrist. Blood was squirting everywhere. Lloyd Sutherland and Dad wrapped it in a towel and drove me to get stitches. Dad almost fainted and had to leave the room.

## School days

I found it very difficult to concentrate and was terrible at school. I think I had dyslexia which they didn't know about back then. Also, I couldn't see the chalkboard. I had really bad eyesight and didn't get glasses until Grade 6. The worst days of my life were report card days. Father Vachon would sit in front of the class and read out everyone's marks. It was a painful and embarrassing time. I was held back in Grade 9, and I don't think I passed Grade 10. I never did finish school, choosing instead to go work at Dad's hardware store. I always believed because I wasn't smart that I had to work twice as hard as anyone else to get ahead.

## My Rock and Roll career

I was in a band called The Cordells when I was in school. I played drums, Cousin Vic played base, Cousin Paul was on rhythm guitar, Brian Hoffos (Mary Ann's old boyfriend) played saxophone, and Jean played lead guitar. We played mostly The Ventures covers and learned 6 or 7 songs in preparation to play at our first school dance.

There was a snowstorm that night and no one could leave until the snow stopped. So we played the same songs over and over! We played a few more gigs until Jean moved away.

I was then contacted by a local band called The Polkadots. I sat down for a practice with them and they hired me that weekend as their new drummer. We played almost every weekend all over Southern Saskatchewan. We played weddings, cabarets and even a couple graduations. I was married then and it kept us in beer money.

My career as a rock and roll drummer ended when Amy and I moved to Moose Jaw.

## Hobbies or pastimes

I was always involved in something besides work. As a kid, I joined clubs like Cub Scouts, Air Cadets and Columbian Squires. For Amy and I, clubs like Knights of Columbus and Kinsmen Club were a big part of our social life. We would work hard on projects, then play hard and party like crazy! I'm still doing this today.

A few highlights from my charitable work:

- Co-chair of Rotary Thunder in the Valley for 5 years raising \$1,000,000
- Chairman of a Drayton Valley fundraising committee for Field House raising \$2,000,000
- Chairman of the Drayton Valley Community Foundation for 7 years, increasing our endowment funds from \$400,000 to \$4,000,000. I still sit on the Board.
- Committee member of the Drayton Valley 100 Bike Race Ride
- Involved in the Rotary Club in both Drayton Valley and Gold Canyon, AZ
- Past Chair of the Canadian Retail Hardware Association
- Receiver of the Paul Harris Rotary medal, the Alberta Sentinel medal from Ralph Klein, and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal from the Governor General.

## Work and personal life

My first job was cleaning windows at the drive-in movie theatre. I would bring my pail, window cleaner and rag, walk to the drive-in, fill the pail with water and go around and clean car windows for tips. I usually got 25¢. When I was a little older, Mr. Hoffos hired me to work the front gate.

The next job I had was working at Dunrite Service with Allen Sutherland. I was 13 or 14 years old at the time. From Monday to Friday after school, Allan would drive a panel truck and together we would pick up deliveries from three stores in town and drop off groceries. On Saturday mornings we would pick up the mail from the train station and deliver it to the post office. When the Eaton's and Sears catalogues came, the mail bags were the heaviest. We had to drag the bags over two or three railroad tracks to get them to the van, then to the post office. We would deliver groceries for the rest of the day. Winter time was the busiest because no one wanted to go out and shop. Sundays, after church, we would pump gas until 5:00. I got paid \$6.00 a week! I think stores were closed Wednesday afternoons, so I may not have worked that day. Otherwise, I worked every day of the week.

With the money I made working, I was able to buy my first used bike from Connie Istrady. It cost \$20 and had balloon tires and wide handlebars. Having a bike meant more freedom to roam. We would ride our bikes to Willows Dam in the summer and fish for perch.

Twice, I tried working with Dad in the hardware store. The first time was after leaving school, and the second time was after I got married to Amy. He talked me into coming back. We were just not compatible, or maybe I was not mature enough.

After I left Assiniboia, Amy and I lived in Moose Jaw, Shaunavon, North Battleford, Brandon, Saskatoon and finally Drayton Valley. We didn't see much of the family in those years; maybe just once or twice a year.

In 1978, Dennis and I bought the Link Hardware store in Drayton Valley from Milton Haug. We worked together for a couple years and then Dennis moved to Stettler and started his own Home Hardware Store.

We had a house rented in Drayton Valley and a week before we were to move in, the house was sold. We put everything in storage and moved into the Matador Motel until we could get into an apartment. It took three months. The motel was right next to the Burger Baron and we could smell the grease from the cooking. I think it rained every day for those three long months. Amy was stuck in this tiny stinky space with our three little ones, upset that she had quit her nursing career in Saskatoon. Of course, Dennis and I were working our butts off. The whole family worked in the store: Amy did the books and the girls worked after school, Saturdays and

on the holidays. Saturday mornings the girls and I would go to the store to sweep the floors, clean the sidewalks and windows. Then we'd go to the White Bull Café for breakfast. I think I instilled the work hustle into their worlds. I'm very proud of each of them. They are great mothers and we never have to worry about our grandchildren.

I always felt that in business, every two or three years one should do something to stay motivated so as not to become complacent. The downtown store had grown, and Dennis had put pet supplies in his store and was having fun with it, so we followed suit. We then opened the Top Forty Music store down the street. Dennis started selling Water Pure and Simple and was doing great with that, so away we went with it. We then had the opportunity to buy the Revelstoke Lumberyard. At that time, we were in 5 locations: Home Hardware (the garden centre, and the lumberyard with a warehouse and lumber storage yard), Water Pure and Simple and Top Forty Music. Not very efficient. In February 1995 we began looking at building a new store that would put everything under one roof.

It was at this time Amy got sick. We were to go to a lumber convention in Mexico, but she wasn't feeling well so went to the doctor. I was in Edmonton picking up a new lumber delivery truck when I received a call from Dr. Murphy. He was sending Amy into the Cross Cancer Hospital. What a shock! Life changed in a hurry.

After her first treatments, we decided to drive out to Vernon to see Sherry and Craig's new house. On the way home she said she had a feeling that things were not going to turn out for the better. Amy lost her battle to cancer and passed away July 17, 1995. Losing someone that you love is very hard. I felt terrible for the girls losing their mother. As hard as it was, life had to go on.

Away I went focusing on work and keeping busy. The new store was built and opened in the Spring of 1997.

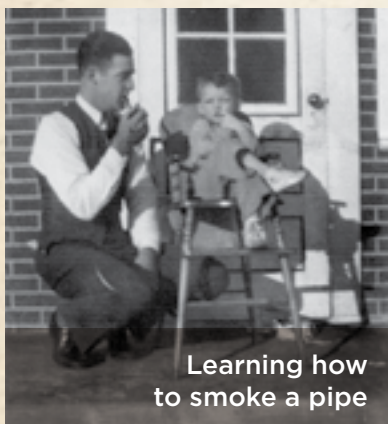
One cold November day, I went to get my eyes checked and looked into these beautiful brown eyes of the person giving me my eye exam. I knew Gayleen, but not socially, so I called a buddy that knew her. He said all the right things so after a couple weeks I called her for a date. I said something like, "I feel like a teenager calling on the first date." At first she said no! I tried again in a couple weeks and the rest is history.

I always say that the Good Lord blessed me with finding love twice. Gayleen was the only woman that I dated after Amy's passing. We dated for a couple of years and lived together for a few more.

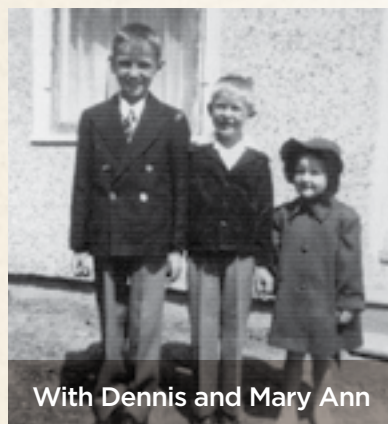
We were in Hawaii for a lumber convention when I proposed to Gayleen. When we arrived, I suggested we get up early the next day to watch the sun come up on Diamond Head Mountain. So we got up at 5:00 a.m. and went up to the top of the mountain. I may have shed a few tears during my proposal. Big surprise!

I have been extremely lucky to have travelled, trekked, hiked and biked all over the world. Travel Advisor had a list of 250 things you have to see in the world and I've been blessed to see 97 of them. Hopefully I'm not done yet! Gayleen and I always say we will watch TV when we get old!

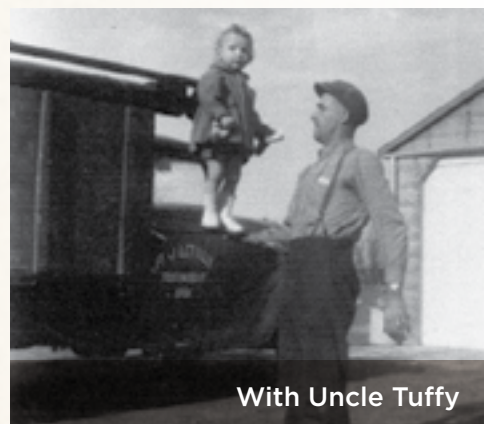
The Good Lord has looked after us with good health and the ways and means to get things done! We are truly thankful.



Learning how to smoke a pipe



With Dennis and Mary Ann



With Uncle Tuffy



In Mexico with Gayleen, Dennis and Bette Lynn



Peru with Marty



Hiking in Arizona



Fishing in Hall Lake, SK



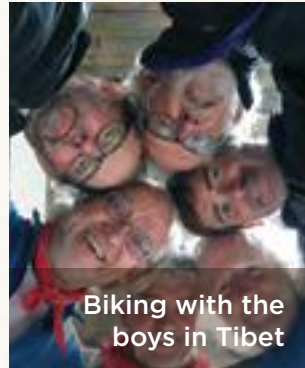
Hiking in Ireland in a G-string



Biking in China with Mike



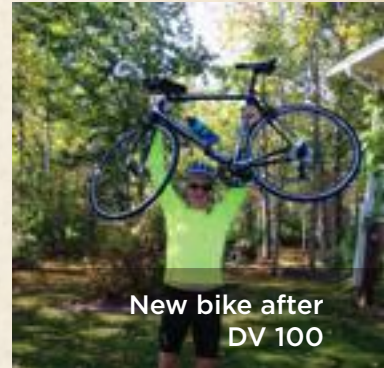
Biking in Tanzania



Biking with the boys in Tibet



Trekking in Butang



New bike after DV 100



Hot peppers in Cambodia



Trekking in Patagonia, Chile



Having fun in Morocco



# Gayleen Blais



Date of birth: **June 19, 1953**

Place of birth: **Nordegg, AB**

Family name: **Vig**

Middle name: **Rose**

## Ten things I love about Rosalie

I love her hugs.

I love her laugh.

I love that she loves to play games.

I love her creativity.

I love her energy.

I love that she loves to have fun.

I love her enthusiasm.

I love her gratefulness.

I love her positivity.

But, most of all, I love that she passed all these wonderful traits on to her seven children through genetics, teachings and, mostly, by example.

I love the fact that we all benefit from the wonderful family that she created.

Thank you Rosalie. I love, love, love you!

## Favourite memory of Rosalie

In July 2000 at the Amy Blais Golf Tournament, we had a house full of people. Rosalie was helping me in the kitchen. Actually no, I was helping her in the kitchen! At 9:30 p.m. I suggested she sit down. She was, after all, 31 years older than me, which at the time I thought was old! Her reply was, "I, my dear, will sit down when you sit down!"

## Fun fact about me

I was born a coal miner's daughter! However, that did not guarantee a singing voice—not even close.

I love travelling the world with Alex. We go on one adventure after another. In order to balance my life with this fun, crazy, energetic guy, I also love my yoga. Life is good!



Hiking in Jasper



Hiking Grand Canyon with Rita and Peter



Biking in Angkor Wat, Cambodia



Biking in Spain



Camel ride in Morocco



Snowshoeing New Year's Eve



With my sons, Randy and Scott McQuaig



My grandkids Connley, Jaelene, Mikayla and Kolton



My grandkids Haylee and Kyler



My brother Harley, me, my sisters Kelly, Faythe and Karmyn with our mom

# Emilie “Amy” Blais



Date of birth: **May 25, 1948**  
Place of birth: **Linz, Austria**  
Family name: **Buron**  
Middle name: **Florentine**  
Nickname: **Amy, Emilia Florence  
Nightingale, Emilia Florentino**  
Date of passing: **July 17, 1995**

## Favourite memories of our mom

**Nicolle:** A story that I always loved to hear Mom share was from when she was younger. She and her sister Lotte would spend the summer volunteering at the nursing home where her grandmother worked. One day, Mom was asked to take a gentleman out for some fresh air. This particular fellow was in a wheelchair so Mom proceeded to wheel him out of the building and down a steep ramp leading to the community grounds. She didn't realize that when one is assisting someone in a wheelchair down an incline, one needs to wheel them down backwards. She would paint the picture of her attempting to take the gentleman down the ramp and losing her grip and watching the wheelchair and its occupant rolling down the steep incline out of control! She always laughed when she shared that story. Luckily the fellow was safe and unharmed!

**Sherry:** Perhaps not a *favourite* memory, but certainly one she shared with us frequently over the years. It is the story about collecting eggs as a child. Mom's family had an ornery rooster and she was terrified of him. When she and Lotte went to get eggs, they would bring a stick or some form of weapon to fight him off as they hurriedly grabbed the eggs. The funny thing is my family had a super mean rooster, aptly named Voldemort, and my kids had the same traumatic experiences. Oh well—it builds character!

## Favourite memory of Amy and Emile

**Alex:** When Dad was recovering from his heart attack, he phoned Amy to come over and have a rum and Coke with him so he could enjoy her company and not have to drink alone.

## Favourite Blais family memories

**Sherry:** I know Mom loved to tell the story about shopping at the Army & Navy with Auntie Rita, and marvelled at how far they had come!

**Alex:** When Alice and Holly came to Moose Jaw to visit during the summer they were drinking water from the lake. Amy teased them and told them the water was duck water and was full of duck poop. The girls freaked out of course and Amy laughed and laughed!

## Favourite memories with her family

**Nicolle:** Some of my most favourite memories of Mom centre around the Christmas season. Mom loved everything about the holidays and that time of year brought her such joy that it was in the air—literally! I am referring to the wonderful aroma of Christmas baking which would start at least a full month before the holiday season. She would bake and fill an entire chest freezer with butter tarts, chocolate rolls, pecan puffs, shortbread, seven-layer bars and more. Then she would tell us it was off limits! Of course, the entire family would sneak the treats and to this day, my favourite way to eat Mom's butter tarts is frozen. Go figure!

Back to joy in the air. I remember many times pulling up to the acreage house and getting out of the car and hearing Christmas music playing. I would open the front door and Mom's favourite album, *The Muppets Christmas* would be at full volume. Much to Max's dismay, I share Mom's love of that album and have it on repeat throughout the holiday season. I know that Mom would be thrilled that the tradition continues!

Of course, Mom loved to decorate the house; so much so that we had two trees! One would be for all the family memorabilia and one was what we called the "designer" tree.

Christmas Eve was always a seafood feast followed by rum and eggnog by the fire. We'd read *The Blais Book of Shame* which consisted of reading a page reflecting on each year of the family happenings, and we'd burn a piece of that year's Christmas tree in the fire.

We would proceed to midnight Mass and come home tired and hungry. Then we would enjoy one of Grandma Paulowicz's famous cabbage rolls and Mom's homemade buns before we were off to bed.

On Christmas morning, we would open our stockings and enjoy breakfast, but then Mom would insist we clean the entire house, have our showers, and get dressed up in our holiday best before we could open presents. Mom would sit with a cup of coffee and a cigarette with a look of sheer joy as we opened our gifts. She always ensured we knew she spoiled us equally. I have yet to meet anyone who gets as much pleasure out of gift giving as my mother did.

Mom would prepare the traditional Christmas meal making special effort to always include Grandma Blais' famous meat pie for Dad.

Christmas really was Mom's favourite holiday. The joy that she brought to this time of year through the traditions she created truly was magical. I cherish all of the memories we have and am so thankful that we had a mother who put such effort and love into creating such magical memories for us.

## Hobbies or pastimes

**Nicolle:** Mom was a stylish lady who loved shopping for clothes, jewellery and shoes. One of my favourite times with Mom was during our frequent shopping trips to Edmonton. We would visit the entire time we were shopping, shop till we dropped, have a great meal and then visit the entire way home. It was the best to have that dedicated time with Mom. There were more than a few occasions where we would arrive home and be double fisted with bags of new clothing. If Dad pulled into the driveway, we would scurry to hide the bags.

**Sherry:** I recall her love of talking on the phone. In fact, to this day Angie, Nicolle and I will call each other at work and say, "So what are you doing?" and then laugh. Mom would call us at work and expect us to spend an hour on the phone with her. She did love to talk on the phone and I sure miss those conversations. She was a Zen master at multi-tasking while on the phone. Once at Easter, she was talking on the phone to her sister Lotte and playing Rummikub with all of us at the same time. She kicked our butts! Father Bob, our parish priest and friend, was there and he was so mad!

**Alex:** We took a golfing trip with Father Bob to the interior of BC and our first stop was in Kamloops. I remember it being incredibly hot. Throughout our golf game we would drive our golf carts through the sprinklers on the course to help cool us off. Eventually an employee of the golf course approached us to advise us to reconsider doing that as the sprinkler system used recycled sewer water! We laughed like crazy, then ended our golf game immediately to get to the hotel and in the shower!

## Fun fact about Amy

**Nicolle:** When Mom would do something, she would do it 110%! If she got inspired to do some baking, she would literally bake 10 pies and cover the kitchen countertops with them. If she needed to sew something, she would take over the entire dining room table and sew for days. She sewed so many great Halloween costumes, including matching clowns for me and my friend Lisa, a bumble bee, Pinocchio, etc. We knew if we needed anything to be sewn, we needed to get it done then or it could be months before we would see the sewing machine out again.

## Past occupations

**Alex:** After Amy and I got married and had children, she worked a variety of jobs. The pattern was she would work for 6 months to pay off the Visa bill and then quit to stay at home with the kids.

**Sherry:** Mom had a job as a telephone operator. Remember, this was a long time ago and it was common to call the operator to ask for a telephone number, what the local time was, etc. She worked on a switchboard in a room full of other women in Moose Jaw. Because it was a relatively small town, the operators would sometimes get to know the people that called them. Mom had a caller who was smitten with her and he would call her all the time. He even asked her to marry him!

**Nicolle:** Mom also worked at the office at Home Hardware. Dad was the softie who would let people open accounts and cash cheques, and then Mom was the pit bull bill collector. I recall she and Dad went golfing in a small town outside of Edmonton and Mom remembered someone from that town had bounced a cheque at the store. So she asked the bartender at the golf course if he knew the guy and where he lived. After the round of golf, Mom went and found him and got her money!

## Memories of Amy

**Alex:** My cousins Paul and Vic said there were two cute blondes that went to Maxstone Church. So the next Sunday, away we went! Paul had dated Amy, and Vic dated her sister Lotte. They noticed me because I stood up and banged my head on the low ceiling in the loft at the church. I got Amy's number and called Amy for a date. Bingo! I was in! I drove

my two-door hardtop, yellow and black 1957 Dodge car to pick her up in Scout Lake where she lived. The town was 30 kilometres south of Assiniboia on a gravel road. When I picked her up, I had my windows rolled down with music blaring. I had to look cool, right?

She was still in Grade 12 going to Rockglen High School and I was her escort at her graduation. I was in love!

During summer holidays, she would go to Winnipeg to stay with her Grandma Pauline. The summer after she graduated, I took some vacation days and drove to Winnipeg to see her. When I got there, I found out she had a boyfriend there too! She ended up coming back home to work at Sask Tel as a telephone operator. We got back together.

**Nicolle:** Mom was always so engaging with people and could talk to anyone from any walk of life. She and Dad had a large group of friends and were very socially active in their community. I remember some of the great parties they hosted, but a standout was a Hawaiian luau party with a full roasted pig, costumes, decorations and all. Their annual New Year's Eve parties were the place to be. Summer barbeques always had a feast of food. There were so many fun events and I remember Mom always made everyone feel welcome.

**Sherry:** My recollections of their parties were that they would carry on well into the wee hours of the morning. At around 2 a.m., Mom would just get up and go to bed. She did not care if there were still guests or if the party was still in full swing. The morning after, the girls and I would come downstairs and eat the cold pizza and drink the flat pop.

**Dennis:** Bette Lynn and I travelled to Toronto and St. Jacobs, ON with Alex and Amy many times over the years while we were involved with Home Hardware. We would go out for dinner every evening to the best restaurants. Amy had the ability to pick the absolute best items on the menu. I, on the other hand, would always regret my choice and would sit there salivating over what she had ordered. In time, I finally came to the point where when the waiter asked what I would like to order, I would simply point at Amy and say ditto. I never regretted it! We had so much fun together back then. Amy told the best stories.

Amy and Bette Lynn had their hands full trying to keep Alex and me under control. We always got a little carried away with the

fun and merriment. Amy would try different dishes wondering what the ingredients were and she'd say, "I can do that." Back home she would duplicate those dishes to a T. Amy was one fabulous cook. We all miss those fun times together, especially her laughter.

**Rita:** When I think of Amy, I think of laughter. She laughed often and easily. Peter had a surprise birthday party for me that was heavy on the *surprise*. The theme of the party was Bag Lady because I do love bags of all sorts and sizes. Each guest presented me with a bag and accompanying story. Some shared their story with the rest of the guests. Amy's presentation of an old, beat up plastic Army & Navy bag was by far the funniest. We laughed our heads off. We used to have so much fun scouring the aisles of the Army & Navy Department Store in Saskatoon, shopping for deals.

**Alice:** I was thrilled when Alex married Amy because Amy's little sister Holly was my best friend. I think we were 11 when they married. For two summers, Amy invited Holly and I to stay with her and Alex for a month. First it was in Moose Jaw, then in North Battleford. We had a great time and Amy made sure that we did. We went swimming every day. After I graduated from high school I visited often. I have so many wonderful memories of sitting at the kitchen table with Amy and a pot of coffee. I could talk with her for hours. She was well-read and very intelligent. She seemed to be able to discuss any topic and was so interesting. She was always very good to me.

**Deanna:** I remember visiting Drayton Valley when Sherry, Nicolle and Angie were teenagers. I was still living in Saskatoon and loved to sleep in. When I got up, Amy made us all French toast with whipped cream. Before we even sat down to eat, Amy and the girls started throwing whipped cream at each other. Naturally there was lots of shrieking and running around. Amy just cleaned up the kitchen and carried on.

**Daniel:** I wish I had an opportunity to get to know Amy as an adult. I was in college when she died. I remember her being an incredibly wise woman. When she got sick, I would call her every few weeks to check in on her. She always took my calls and we had great talks. To this day, I wish I could just pick up the phone and talk with her. One other thing: when Amy was in the kitchen she would hang a tea towel on her shoulder. I've since picked up this habit and think of her every time I do it!

## What I miss most

What I miss most about Mom... I have so much to say

I think of this great woman almost every day

Is it the smell of her Rothmans King Size Cigarette

Or her wish for grandbabies who had not arrived yet

Is it her small, dry hands with big diamond rings

Or the food she cooked and the joy it would bring

Is it our shopping trips to West Edmonton Mall

Or hiding the bags from Dad so he wouldn't see it all

Is it the pink housecoat with tissue balls in the pocket

Or when she wore the necklace with her heart locket

Is it when she would tease Dad and he would pinch her bum

Or her enjoying a favourite drink, coke with white rum

Is it seeing her strut her stuff in her fancy fur coat

Or on the dance floor with Dad when she seemed to float

Is it when she'd introduce me as her "baby" to others

Or watching Dallas on TV cuddled up under the covers

Is it her very high heels clicking across the floor

Or our White Bull coffees when we worked at the store

Is it her amazing laughter, what a beautiful sound

Or the comfort of knowing she was always around

What I miss most is all this and a million more

Her love made me flourish so in life I now soar.

**Angie**



Banff (1972)



Holding Andrea (1979)



1979



Christmas (1980)



Drayton Valley (July 1988)



Christmas (1988)



Christmas (1986)

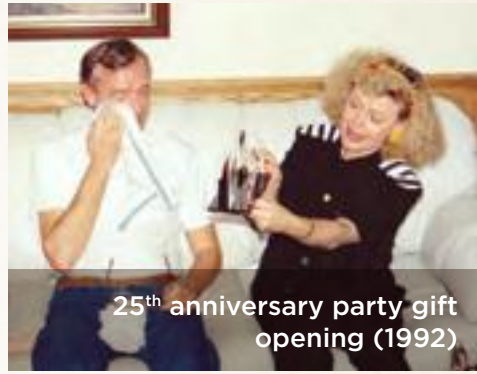




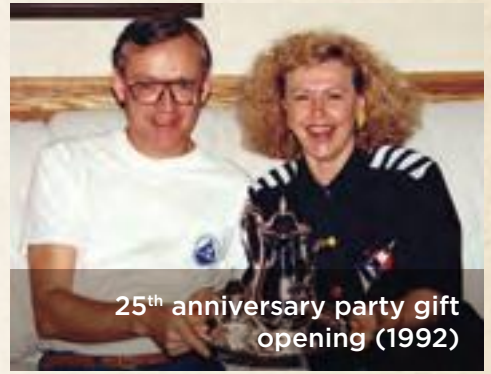




25<sup>th</sup> anniversary party (1992)



25<sup>th</sup> anniversary party gift opening (1992)



25<sup>th</sup> anniversary party gift opening (1992)



Rita's birthday party (February 1993)



Rita's birthday party (February 1993)



February (1993)



Amy's Army & Navy bag lady speech (1993)



Sherry and Craig's wedding (July 1995)



Amy Blais Memorial Golf Tournament (July 1997)

# Sherry Demetrick



Date of birth: **March 9, 1968**  
Place of birth: **Shaunavon, SK**  
Family name: **Blais**  
Middle name: **Lea**  
Middle name: **Sher and Sher Bear**

## Favourite childhood memories

My childhood memories are almost exclusively happy ones. I had great parents and fabulous sisters. What more can a gal ask for? We lived on acreages for a lot of my childhood and my best memories are being outside in the bush, playing with my sisters or friends and, of course, our dogs. I remember playing in a muddy water-filled ditch in front of our house. Nicolle's rubber boots got suctioned into the mud and she could not move. I pulled her out but her boots stayed and slowly sunk into the muck. I remember Nic and I speculating how far down they would sink, and becoming convinced it was actually quicksand and that we had dodged the bullet by not being sucked up whole and buried alive in that ditch. Living on an acreage provided so many opportunities for fun. Dad made sure we had snowmobiles and quads that we could ride around on.

When we all went to Phoenix for Christmas at Rita and Peter's a few years ago, Craig and I went out on ATVs in the desert along with my sisters and their husbands. We had a guide that told us that whomever was the slowest driver would have to go first because he did not want to lose anyone in the desert. Nicolle said she was the most timid rider so she drove her ATV directly behind the guide. We ripped around for a while and stopped for a break. Angie got off her ATV and said to Nicolle something along the lines of, "Hey Grandma, pick it up a notch. You're driving too slow!" The guide laughed and said that typically it took the whole morning to get to this point in the tour and we had done it in 20 minutes! We took a group photo and we all had dirty faces with the outline of our goggles. Seriously, the most fun ever.

## Favourite memories of Grandma

I truly don't even know where to start! Sometimes she came with us on family vacations, including trips to Disneyland and Hawaii. She rode all the hairy-scary rides in Disneyland and we had an absolute blast with her. I've always found it hilarious what a huge flirt Grandma is.

In Hawaii, we went on a tour of a macadamia nut farm and they served us lunch. There was a bowl of fruit and Grandma grabbed an orange. She started trying to peel it but appeared to be having difficulty. She was sitting by a fellow about her own age and she started banging the orange on the edge of the table like she was trying to crack an egg. The gentleman

offered to peel it for her and she proceeded to shower him with praise for his strong hands and how good he was at peeling oranges. My sisters and I were watching all this in awe. The fellow's wife was *not* happy.

Another time we were in West Edmonton Mall just before Christmas and my mom was in a men's store trying to buy Dad a winter coat. The salesman was roughly the same height and build as Dad so she had him try on the coat. Mom asked Grandma Rosalie if she liked the coat and without skipping a beat, Grandma replied, "Well I don't know about the coat but I sure like what is in it." The salesman was a young fellow and he turned beet red. I still chuckle whenever I think about it.

More recently, I think my best memories are going to Grandma's place for a quick visit. She is always busy with her crafts or activities and always has a smile on her face. Her positive attitude and her amazing health are really an inspiration.

## Favourite memory of Grandpa

Grandpa died when I was very young and I only have one small snippet of a memory of him. I remember him chasing Grandma around the living room pinching her. He was laughing and she was squealing. It was very cute.

## Favourite memories of my aunts and uncles

When I was a teenager, I remember thinking that Rita and Deanna were the absolute bomb. They had careers, apartments, fabulous clothes, dated cute boys and, oh my God, they were the coolest! They still are.

I have a vivid memory of being in Assinaboia and going to the pre-school with Alice. On the walk there we saw a baby bird that had fallen out of the nest onto the sidewalk and died. She let us look at it—like *really* look at it, which was so fascinating to us. We were poking it with sticks and although it may sound gross, for a kid, it was enthralling. Alice also helped me look after the twins when they were infants and was a lifesaver!

Nicolle and I spent a few weeks with Susie and Neil one summer. We lived like little hippy children and loved every minute of it. Also, when the twins were born, Susie sent Amy a doll that my mom had given Chelsea when she was young. It was such a lovely gesture and we still have that doll.

Mary Ann came and unpacked my kitchen when we moved into our house. We all know Mary Ann and can easily envision how perfectly she put everything away in the exact right spot. It was so much work and was so much help to me.

Last summer, Dennis brought Grandma to Vernon to watch the girls compete in a horse show. She had never seen them so I was over the moon happy and thankful that they could come. It was so sweet of Dennis to bring Grandma out for the day.

## Favourite memories of my cousins

Unfortunately, because we are spread out all over the place, we don't spend nearly enough time together. I will say that I thoroughly enjoy following my cousins on social media. I know some people think social media is the bane of our existence (and I agree with that on a lot of levels), but through Instagram, Facebook, etc., I have gotten to know my cousins so much better. Like Chelsea is an amazing baker. And somehow Danny gets front row seats to virtually every concert in town. I love it. So now we just need to get everyone on board!

## Favourite memories of my family

My favourite memories of my own family are the Christmas gifts our kids buy for Craig and me. Dad and Gayleen were in Vernon to spend Christmas with us one year when the twins were about 6 years old. They took them shopping and let them pick out gifts for us. It was so interesting to see what they chose. The following year Dad and Gayleen were not with us so Mary Ann, Deanna, Grandma and Garth took the kids and they did this for a few years. It was a lovely tradition and every year the kids chose such thoughtful gifts. One year Aidan bought his dad chips and me chocolate. He knows what our favourites are! Amy bought me an angel pin and some hockey gloves for her dad because she noticed his had holes in them. Ginger bought her dad a razor and some shave cream because she hates it when he has a stubbly face. Ginger bought me an angel pin too one year that was almost identical to the one Amy had chosen when she was that age. They put so much thought into the gifts and it always makes me cry!

## Favourite memories of my nieces and nephews

Again, because we live all over the place, we don't see the kids as much as we would like to. Every visit is an attempt to pack as much quality time in as possible. I do love the story about Ginger and Amy converting Chae into a meat eater by telling him the chickens running around our yard were delicious! So far Max has not fallen for it though! I also love the snapchats that Tawni sends me in all the cute filters.

## Significant life event

I find my life is divided up into sections defined by events. Like my high school graduation and birth of the kids. I will be trying to remember something and think, "Now was that before I graduated?" Mom's death is perhaps the biggest one. Everything changed after she died. It's still hard for me to talk about. I am crying like a baby as I write this and it has been over 25 years. It's a cliché, but I really do miss her every day.

## Hobbies or pastimes

Right now I am at a time in my life where I am so busy with work, kids, housekeeping, etc. that I seriously don't have any hobbies or pastimes. I recognize that in the greater scheme of things, this is a short period of my life that will not last forever so I am embracing the chaos and not worrying too much about the other stuff. When I do have a free moment I love to read. I also really enjoy paddle boarding on our beautiful Okanagan lakes and hiking in the summer. I also

love to throw parties. I go absolutely overboard on the kids' birthday parties. I think sometimes the decorations and elaborate cakes are more for me than them!

## Fun fact about me

I am terrified of moths, and am not a huge fan of their close cousin, the butterfly. When we were kids Angie used to keep a dead butterfly in the sock drawer and torment me with it. Good times!

## Current and past occupations

My career started out at Home Hardware. I started work at the store when I was 13 years old. I worked 2 days a week after school plus every Friday night and every Saturday. When I was a teenager, I did not have a curfew. However I had to be at work at 8 a.m. come hell or high water, so I had to plan accordingly. That meant either getting home at a reasonable hour and feeling fine on Saturday, or staying out till the wee hours and having to suck it up on Saturday. Life is all about choices right?

As I raise my own kids, work ethic is one of the biggest things I try to instil in them. I believe that you don't have to be the smartest or the most talented person in the joint, but if you work hard you will do okay in life. After a 12-year 'maternity leave' I returned to work. Right now I am the financial administrator at a non-profit society that provides services for women and children who are victims of abuse. Working for a non-profit can be challenging at times as resources are slim, but it is nice to go to work each day and do something that really is a benefit to my community.





U of A graduation



Arizona (2014)



Fall 2013



# Aidan Demetrick



Date of birth: **May 27, 2002**

Place of birth: **New Westminster, BC**

Middle name: **Victor**

Nickname: **Aidan D**

## Favourite childhood memory

Going to Hall Lake. I liked going fishing, seeing the other cabins (the burnt up ones), the bear claw marks, the old outhouse and the bear cave under the cabin. Oh, and I really liked flying the plane. The pilot let me fly the plane. It was so fun.

## Favourite memory of Great-Grandma

We went to her house and she gave us chocolate. I like going out for lunch with Grandma Rosalie.

## Favourite memory of Uncle Garth

Uncle Garth used to take me Christmas shopping for my mom and dad and my sisters. He helped me find what the girls like.

## Favourite memories of my cousins

One time Chae and Tawni came to stay here and we played baseball. I liked hitting the balls. In Arizona, Max and I went in dune buggies and we went very fast. I liked going fast and I liked the desert.

## What I love most about Dad

I like going to hockey games with my dad. We get to go to the scouts room and eat dinner there. I get to watch with my dad and his friends, and eat popcorn.

## Significant life event

I am in high school and I get to ride my bike to school. I really like to ride my bike. Mom won't let me ride it to school in the winter.

## Hobbies or pastimes

I like eating food, playing video games and riding horses too, sometimes. I really like to ride my bike. I go to the store to get milk for my mom, but it is heavy.

## Fun facts about me

I like to work out. I also know all the names of the NHL teams and the junior hockey teams. I know all the names of every wrestler in the WWE. My favourite wrestler is Randy Orton.

## Current occupation

I am a student. I do chores. I have to vacuum, do the recycling and garbages, and help my dad do real chores on the farm. I drive the tractor and fill the buckets with grain. My sisters and I have chickens. I feed them. I also give them scraps. I also wash eggs and sell them. It's kind of hard work but not really.





# Amy Demetrick



Date of birth: **May 27, 2002**

Place of birth: **New Westminster, BC**

Middle name: **Olivia**

Nickname: **Aim**

## Favourite childhood memory

My favourite childhood memory is ambushing my dad with water balloons after he got home from work and having a huge water fight with my family in the summertime.

## Favourite memory of Great-Grandma

I remember being at a family reunion and having a big game day with challenges and races. Grandma Rosalie was the judge and it was so much fun! In the end she chose a winner but wouldn't tell *anyone* who the loser was because she felt too bad! Back then I thought it was kind of weird that she wouldn't say who lost, but I was 5 so, whatever. But that time really stuck with me and as I got older I realized she didn't want to hurt anyone's feelings and was just being a kind, considerate person (unlike me at that age). I hope one day I can be as kind and caring as my Grandma Rosalie.

## Favourite memories of my aunts and uncles

Every time I go Christmas shopping with my aunts and uncle, I have an amazingly fun time. Even though we haven't done it the past few years, I still remember those outings with a lot of joy.

## What I love most about my cousins

I love how, even though I don't see my cousins very much because they live far away, when we see each other we pick up right where we left off and it's like we weren't apart for more than a day.

## What I love most about my family

I love how even though I'm sometimes mean to my family, mostly Aidan and Ginger, they still love me a lot!

## Significant life event

Literally nothing has happened to me. I'm boring.

## Hobbies or pastimes

I love to sit down and relax with a good book and some hot chocolate in the winter, and to horseback ride in the summertime.

## Fun fact about me

I cry when I get really hungry.

## Current occupation

I run an egg business with my brother and sister and that's it.



# Ginger Demetrick



Date of birth: **November 2, 2007**  
Place of birth: **Vernon, BC**  
First name: **Gabrielle**  
Nickname: **Gingersnap, Ging, G**

## Favourite childhood memory

I loved going on all the rides in Disneyland. My favourite ride was the *California Screamer*.

## Favourite memory of Great-Grandma

I love when we go to Costco with Grandma Rosalie. She takes us around and we eat all the samples while Mom is shopping.

## Favourite memories of my aunts and uncles

I loved going to Mexico with my aunts, uncles and cousins and Grandma and Grandpa. We got to drink Pink Panthers and swim in the ocean. I loved when we played with sea animals and we made an enclosure for them in the reef and they were really cool.

## Favourite memory of Max, Amy and Aidan

When Max, Amy, Aidan and I were at Hall Lake, we played Demon Child and I was the Demon Child!

## What I love most about my family

My favourite thing to do with my family is camp on the boat. We stay overnight. We sometime have a fire on the beach. We catch minnows and swim.

## Significant life event

When I was 5 years old I fell off my pony and broke my arm. I had to get surgery and stay overnight at the hospital.

## Hobby or pastime

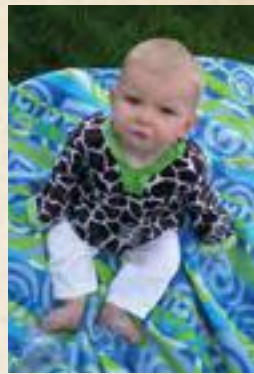
I love to ride my pony. I have two ponies. One is named Pog. Her real name is Pot of Gold. And I have another pony named Fairy. Pog is the one I broke my arm on. But it was not her fault.

## Fun fact about me

The arm that I broke is super strong and I can beat everyone in arm wrestling.

## Current occupation

I have chores. I have to collect eggs. I also have to feed the dog and cat.



# Nicolle Blais



Date of birth: **June 12, 1970**  
Place of birth: **North Battleford, SK**  
Middle name: **Dana**  
Nickname: **Nicky Picky (my nickname growing up apparently due to being a picky eater), I get called 'Nicky' a lot as well as 'Red' due to the hair.**

## Favourite childhood memories

When we were younger, every year we would go camping to the various BC KOA campgrounds. I recall one evening, we were all enjoying a campfire and I saw something out of the corner of my eye and screamed at the top of my lungs, "Skunk! Run for your life!" I have never seen my family move that fast as we all screamed while piling into the camper/trailer laughing hysterically. The following day we found out that the skunk was the campground friendly ambassador and was harmless. The joys of our annual summer vacations and our many ski holidays warms my heart and I am so thankful that Mom and Dad took the effort to make these happen for us.

## Favourite memories of Grandma

One of my favourite memories of Grandma Rosalie was when we were lucky enough to have her join us on a family Christmas vacation to Hawaii. On New Year's Eve, we attended a live theatre show and mid-way through, Grandma got up out of her seat and began dancing and hooting and hollering in the isle. She was full of life, passion and joy! I remember joining Grandma in the fun, dancing away in the isle. What an incredible life lesson that she taught me at that moment—embrace life, have fun and don't take yourself too seriously. Of course, Grandma has shared that lesson time and time again by her approach to life—always with great class but also lots of fun. What an incredible lady!

## Favourite memory of the Blais ladies

A favourite memory is when the Blais ladies had a weekend getaway in the Rocky Mountains. We played games, enjoyed great meals, and had a ton of fun. One highlight was when we did face masks on each other and walked around with faces full of therapeutic mud for the evening. It's all about beautification right?

## Favourite memory of Cousin Chris

When my cousin Chris and I were young, Bob and Doug McKenzie were a couple of popular comedians. When the families would get together, Chris and I would put on a skit

showcasing our talents. Our skits featured Chris and I acting as Bob and Doug McKenzie with the toques, beer bottles, cigarettes, and the thick Canadian accents, 'ehs' and all!

Over the years we have had so many wonderful family reunions doing fun things together and I am always so thankful to have such a wonderful family. Simply put, the Blais crew rocks!

## Favourite memory of my family

A favourite family memory was when Dad, Sherry and Angie came to visit to welcome baby Max into the world. During the visit, they filled a chest freezer with dinners—my saving grace for months! It was so wonderful to have them in our home, spending time with Max, taking over the kitchen and being there, as always, to celebrate with me during one of the most important moments in my life.

## What I love most about my family

### **My rockin' hubby, Challoner**

I love Chal for his intelligence (crazy recall ability), his wicked sense of humour (eastern European impressions), his work ethic (applies himself to a level of perfection) and his style (he rocks the T-shirt, jeans and Vans). I love that he's detail oriented and a clean freak (thank goodness). I love his athletic ability and his encouragement to try new things like snowboarding, mountain biking, trail running and more. I love his artistic abilities. I love that he's a romantic and does many nice things for me (I never wash my vehicle). I love him for his unwavering dedication to our son. I love that he is a good sport and is up for all things Blais family inspired (well sort of). He is my best friend, lover and quite simply, brings out the best in me.

### **Our beautiful son, Max**

I loved the baby years when Max would cuddle up and sleep in my arms. I loved the toddler years when, each evening, he would collect his Elmo doll and a book, and climb onto my lap. His chubby little hands would be holding a bottle while we read a nighttime story together. I loved the early school years when he fell in love with Halloween and would obsess for months about visiting the Spirit store. We would arrive on opening day and he would be too frightened to go in! I loved the preteen years when we would visit California and he would pull me out into the freezing

ocean where we would spend hours swimming, jumping and diving the waves together, each of us giggling with glee. I love the newly arrived teen years and even though he occasionally "ditches" Mom and Dad for his friends, he still wants to hang out and spend time with us. We play board games like Rummikub. He is trying to give Grandma Gayleen a run for her money! We go to the park to play soccer, golf (he is dangerous with his putter!) and skateboard. I should note that I love that he has the patience to teach me this sport.

I love that Max is so kind hearted, talented, intelligent and creative—he has the Stiles artistic gene! He has a great sense of humour and enjoys making people laugh—he has the Blais gene too! I love that he has an air of confidence about him which I know will serve him well in life. As we have watched Max grow and mature, I am so proud of the young man he is becoming and look so forward to sharing in many more special moments in the months and years to come. I love our boy!

## Favourite memory of my nieces and nephews

A favourite memory that I have of all of the kids is when they were working together to create a birthday surprise video for Grandpa Alex. They were so cute making their plans, videoing each other and being very secretive the entire time. The best was when they unveiled the video during a family party celebrating Grandpa. Everyone was blown away with what they created—most importantly Grandpa Alex!

## Significant life event

When I was hanging around at various spots in Edmonton, I kept noticing this good looking fellow. One evening, I was finally introduced to Chal! We had such a great time hanging out and talked into the wee hours of the morning. The next day, he called me and asked if I wanted to go see a movie with him. I told him I was planning on watching *60 Minutes*, but if he wanted to come over, he was welcomed to join me. *60 Minutes?! Seriously, I was a senior before my time! Little did I know that those chance sightings would lead to the most incredible love and life full of adventure. I thank my lucky stars that Chal agreed to watch *60 Minutes* 21+ years ago, and that he will still watch it with me. That's what I call long-term commitment!*

## Hobbies or pastimes

I absolutely love being active outside with Chal and Max. I love jogging, hiking or trail running, golfing, swimming, bike rides, boogie boarding, snowboarding and skateboarding. I will admit, hanging out poolside with a fruity beverage isn't bad either!

## Fun fact about me

I love public speaking. Give me the microphone and you will be hard pressed to get it back any time soon!

## Current and past occupations

My first job was working at Dad and Mom's Home Hardware store. At the time, I was not impressed with having to work, but I now know

the many valuable life lessons that I learned by having that opportunity.

During college, I had a few jobs. I worked as a waitress at Earl's (I was not a good waitress), a coffee shop (before smoking was banned—yuck!), and Nutrilawn (I still recall the glamorous uniform—not!).

During my last stint of schooling, I did a practicum at VIP Adult Day Program and was hired prior to the practicum expiring. From there I went to work with The Manor Villages and Statesman as an Activity Coordinator. Over the 20 years of working with the company, I filled a variety of roles from Building Manager to President. I now work as a Chief Operating Office for the US company. My favourite part of my career is the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the seniors that we serve as well as the great people that are part of our employee family and team!



Calgary (2003)



Kelowna (2003)



Phoenix (2011)



Telluride, CO (2012)



Canyons Village at Park City (2014)



Scottsdale (2016)



Kauai (2011)



Warrior Dash race in Florence (2011)



The Pointless Sisters in Echo Valley (2008)



Las Vegas (2014)



The Manor Village holiday party in Scottsdale (2014)



At a wedding in Assiniboia (2015)



Celebrating Dad Weekend in Phoenix (2008)



Cave Creek, AZ (2014)



McDowell Mountain Park (2014)



# Challoner Stiles



Date of birth: **October 16, 1969**

Place of birth: **Edmonton, AB**

Middle name: **John**

Nickname: **Chal**

## Favourite childhood memories

Some of my favourite childhood memories were made spending time at my grandparents' lake cabin in Sandy Beach, AB. It was a small rustic cabin that my grandparents built with help from their children (my father, uncle and aunt). There is a great photo of them as kids straightening bent nails for use in the construction of the new cabin. This was pretty indicative of the cabin as a whole, complete with wood burning stove and side-by-side two seater outhouse. (I don't remember ever using it with anyone else.) Add a damaged boat hull that my grandfather purchased, repaired with fibreglass, painted, added a mercury motor with pulleys to a car steering wheel, then upholstered a bench seat in marine grade leopard skin and *Panic* was born.

The lake itself may not have been much of a lake as far as lakes are concerned, but I have many great memories surrounding my family and our time together there. From waking up to the smells of breakfast, to bonfires, playing in the woods and water skiing as much as I could by canvassing all the adults to drive the boat. Sometimes we would find leaches on our legs on the drive home—always a sign of a good time. Not to mention some of the parties my grandparents hosted and the entertainment the adults provided. Great fun to be around as well.

## What I love most about Rosalie

I might be alone on this but... what I most love about Rosalie is her positivity and love of life.

## Favourite memories of the Blais aunts and uncles

My first meeting of the Blais extended family was in Kelowna at Tom and Mary Ann's home for Christmas in the mid-90s. I believe most of the aunts and uncles were there. As I was sitting down for the Christmas feast, I placed my hand on the folding table and at that moment one end collapsed. Along with my dropping stomach, I watched all the beautifully laid place settings slide by on their way to the floor. What I remember most clearly (aside from the crashing) is a decanter of red wine gliding down the table cloth on its way to join everything else on the white carpet. Everyone rushed in and began cleaning up the mess and offering consolation on what had just occurred. That night, I learned what a great group of people the Blais family

is. First, with all pitching in to recover quickly and have the meal go on as planned, but also by being so gracious in not making a fuss while still managing to make me feel welcome. All during a moment I would have liked to disappear. I also learned that salt will remove red wine from a white rug, for the most part.

Another thing I've learned about the Blais family is their profound love of family performances and skits. Continuing with the Christmas theme, several years later I again found myself with the extended Blais family; this time in Phoenix. In keeping with uncomfortable situations, I would be remiss not to mention the performance of the *Half Monty* by Alex, Craig, Randy and myself. While there was some trepidation on our part (I think Alex was ok with it), Rita assured us that it was a great skit. I don't know about great, but dancing in my underwear in front of the in-laws was certainly memorable. Performance anxiety aside, and with some of the cast embracing it more than others, we got through it. Fortunately, it seemed to go over well with the crowd even though the applause was on the light side.

## What I love most about my mother

My mother is one of the most positive and tenacious people I know, and I love her for it! When I was 10 years old she was in a car accident causing severe brain trauma and leaving her body paralyzed on the left side. From not being expected to live and in a coma for months, to re-learning to speak over the decades, she only focuses on what's good and is a model of perseverance. That story has its own book.

## What I love most about my nieces and nephews

When we are able to see them, what I most love about the nieces and nephews on both sides of my family is all of their different personalities. I also love that they connect so well with Max. He is always beyond happy to spend time with them and enjoys their company so much.

## Significant life event

As far as significant life events, I can't think of much that would surpass having my own family. I will go back to the reason why I'm filling in these pages. I first met Nicolle Blais through mutual friends in an Edmonton pub over 20 years ago. We have built a life together and

have a cherished son. I was fortunate to meet and spend time with her mother Amy. Nicolle and I have shared many adventures big and small. I blew the speech at our wedding and she rarely reminds me. I love being in her presence. I must say that she is an inspiration to me in the way she looks at the world and interacts with those around her. I'm sure a large portion of this comes from her parents. I see these traits in my son as well. I'm pretty sure most of it's not coming from me! The best thing about my life is living it with Nicolle and Max.

## Hobbies or pastimes

I've always enjoyed skateboarding, skiing, snowboarding and being pulled on anything behind a boat. This, coupled with a passion for being in and around the water, led me to take up surfing in earnest at the age of 40 (while living in the desert). Surfing is the most challenging board sport I've tried. From the physical paddling to the more important challenge of building experience in reading waves in an ever-shifting environment of tides, swell and how that meets the various bottom contours of sand and/or reef. But really, I just love the experience of being out in the ocean, whether I'm doing well or not (often the case).

## Fun fact about me

I went to San Diego for a long weekend in my early 20s. I wound up staying, and spent the next 4 months restoring all the exterior woodwork, etc. on my Uncle Clint's boat while living on it.

## Current and past occupations

I am currently a driver, pool boy, landscaper, cook, exterminator, personal shopper and sometime photographer.

My first job was delivering The Edmonton Examiner newspaper in Grade 5 or 6. I then transitioned to shovelling snow and cutting lawns in the neighbourhood. Next, a job at Wendy's starting at \$3.30/hour as a dining room cleaner, then fry guy, then burger griller before turning in my resignation 3 months later. The 50% discount on food was great, but the environment was not for me. My boss did say I could have been crew chief one day.

I spent a summer or two working for my Uncle Bill for \$5.00/hour as a labourer on a custom home development, mostly cleaning up the

homes and job site between the various trades. It was oh so dusty but I liked it and I could walk to work since it was close to our house. I had had to take Edmonton Transit to Wendy's.

I enjoyed my next gig working at ICG Gas Station with a good group of guys pumping gas and propane in the evenings after school and on most weekends. In no time at all I became cashier and got the keys to open and close the station. During the summer months, one of the guys was quite entrepreneurial and ran a lawn cutting and house painting business. Some of us worked for him before our evening shift at the station began.

When high school ended I kept on full-time with this for a while before moving to Banff and working on the Gondola at Sunshine Village for a winter. The best part of that job was that I often worked a split shift from 6 a.m. - 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. - 6 p.m., leaving 4 hours in the middle of the day to ski or snowboard. The worst part was some of those cold, dark, early mornings (shortly after 5 a.m.) so familiar in a resort town like Banff mid-winter.

When Sunshine Village closed for the summer, I went back to Edmonton and worked for my Uncle Bill at a new business that made bathroom tub door and shower enclosures. With three employees in the shop, I did the shipping and receiving as well as cutting aluminum and glass, sandblasting designs in glass, packaging doors and installing doors on site when the shop closed.

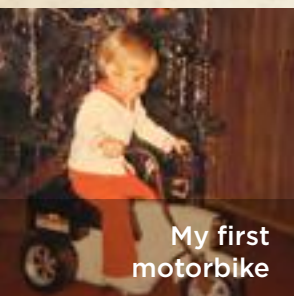
With Northwestern Utilities I worked as a seasonal helper on a gas line repair truck. In the off season, I travelled to Fiji, New Zealand and Australia and worked at an orchard picking peaches and pears. I sold balloons in downtown Melbourne. I returned to Northwestern Utilities in the spring. I worked there for a couple years while at Grant MacEwan College.

I moved to Calgary and applied at the Alberta College of Art & Design (ACAD). I worked as a shipper, loading trucks for consumer distributing, and as a bicycle courier in downtown Calgary before starting school at ACAD. During school, I worked in the stockroom of a Christmas store, unpacking boxes and repairing Christmas ornaments—true story.

Craig Demetrick helped me out with a *dreamy* job at the Lucerne meat plant. I was an order picker and packed trucks with store pallets.

In second-year college, I began as a photography assistant and did darkroom work processing film and printing for wedding, fashion and commercial photographers. I began shooting some of my own jobs as well.

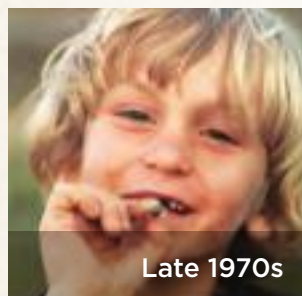
I graduated from ACAD and continued working as a photography assistant. Then we moved to Toronto to assist in a large advertising photography studio. We returned to Calgary where I did commercial photography of my own, including advertising, editorial and design work.



My first motorbike



With my sister, Shea (1970s)



Late 1970s



With my mom at my Grad (1987)



Early 1970s



1972



Our wedding day  
(October 2, 1999)



Calgary (2005)



Zion National  
Park, Utah (2016)



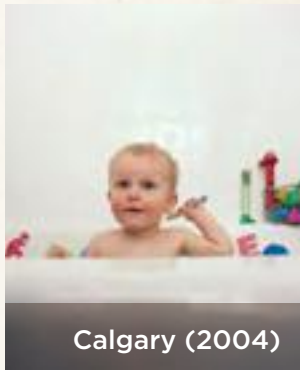
Universal Studios (2016)



2016



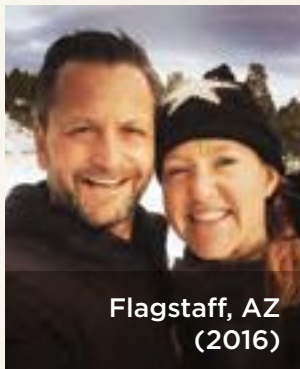
Costa Rica (2015)



Calgary (2004)



Kauai (2016)



Flagstaff, AZ  
(2016)



Costa Rica (2015)

# Max Stiles



Date of birth: **July 22, 2003**

Place of birth: **Calgary, AB**

Middle name: **William**

Nickname: **Maximus**

## Favourite childhood memories

Going to Grandpa Alex's cabin at Hall Lake was the highlight of my life! Having the opportunity to spend time with Grandpa, my dad, Uncle Craig and my cousins was the best. Some of my favourite parts of the trip were taking baths in the freezing cold lake water, fishing and catching a lot of fish, eating Grandpa's desserts (especially the flaming bananas), and shooting Grandpa's gun. I had fun talking with my cousins at night in the bunkbeds, building

some cool forts, taking fire ashes and painting our faces so we looked scary, and just hanging out with my cousins! It was just the best!

## What I love most about Great-Grandma

What I love most about Great-Grandma Rosalie is how incredibly positive she is. She is always happy and I really like that!

## What I love most about the Blais family

I always love going to family reunions, seeing everybody and doing activities. I also love getting to hang out with all my cousins. What I love most about my family is that everyone is so nice and caring. We all love each other and get along well.

## Favourite memory of "Aunty" Dennis

A favourite story that I have is when I was younger I called Uncle Dennis, 'Aunty Dennis' by accident. Everyone thought that was very funny and so I still call him that and it always makes us laugh!

## Favourite memories of my cousins

**Demetrick cousins:** I was able to stay with them for a week on my own and I really liked going on Uncle Craig and Aunty Sherry's boat. The best was when I got to go on the raft on the back with my cousins. We were trying to hold on to see how long we could last and it was super fun. I got to ride with Ginger and Amy while Aidan was cheering us on the whole time. We also got to have timbits and we all really like those. It was really sad the one time when Aunty Sherry threw the last timbits over the side of the boat!

**Miller cousins:** I had a lot of fun with Chae and Tawni during our family reunion and we were catching frogs together.

## Favourite memory of my immediate family

My favourite story was when we all went to Kauai, Hawaii and we hung out at the beach, had Lampard's ice cream (Mom wanted to go

there every day), and explored caves and went snorkeling. We saw so many turtles, cool fish and corral and it was super cool.

### Significant life event

A big deal to me was building the quarter pipe with my dad. We worked for a whole day in the garage building it together and then we were excited to skate on it together. I really liked it because it was something we did together. We now skate on it together a lot and I am learning new tricks on it.

### Hobbies and pastimes

I really love to skateboard. I really like to hang out with friends and also to go to parties. I also love swimming in the ocean, but my favourite is skimboarding in the waves.

### Fun fact about me

I am not a cat person. They freak me out with the claws and their beady eyes...

### Current and past occupations

My first job was last summer when I worked in the dining room at a senior retirement community that my mom manages called The Manor Village at Scottsdale. I helped in the dining room by setting tables, pouring water and coffee, serving the seniors, delivering menus and helping out in any way that I could. My first day on the job I got ice cream so it was pretty good.



Calgary (2004)



Our dog, Lucy



Cornmaze in Vernon (2016)



Tacos with Grandpa (2014)



Phoenix (2014)



Scottsdale (2014)



Hall Lake (2015)



Hall Lake (2015)



Hall Lake (2015)



Mexican Hat, Utah (2012)



Coldstream, BC (2014)



Grandma Carmen visiting me in Phoenix (2010)



Zion National Park, Utah (2017)



School buddies at Castles & Coaster in Phoenix (2016)



Grandpa Alex's birthday weekend celebration in Coldstream, BC (2014)



Scottsdale (2014)



Grandpa Alex's birthday weekend celebration in Vernon, BC (2014)



Car Show in Scottsdale (2016)



Encinitas, CA with friends Tegan and Teran (2015)



Coldstream (2014)



Halloween in Phoenix (2014)



Halloween in Phoenix (2016)



Kauai (2011)



# Angela Miller



Date of birth: **February 22, 1972**  
Place of birth: **Moose Jaw, SK**  
Family name: **Blais**  
Middle name: **Rita**  
Nickname: **Angie, Ang, Moo Moo, Sue Sue, Gazakalackabeezu**

## Favourite childhood memory

In 1980, I had a sweet dog named Spunky who was very pregnant. One afternoon she returned home with her belly gone and puppies hidden away. Sher, Nic and I stalked Spunky until we saw her crawling into a huge brush pile. All that puppy love was buried under tons of tree trunks and branches. It was quickly decided that I had to crawl into the brush pile as I was the smallest. Terrified and excited I took on this monumental task. One by one I carried each pup out of the pile and into the hands of my delighted sisters. It was so euphoric! I was a hero and had puppies crawling all over me! Favourite childhood memory #1.

## Favourite memory of Grandma

Whenever Grandma Rosalie would visit us she would spend hours tickling my hands. We would cuddle up on the couch and watch TV and she would just gently tickle my hands. It was heaven! She just kept going and going. I remember sometimes her hinting that her arm was getting sore. Anyone else would have dropped out of the tickle marathon but not Grandma. It's funny how something so simple can mean so much. I love you Grandma!

## Favourite aunty memory

I was 4 years old and our family was living in Saskatoon. The memory is so hazy as I was so young, but I remember there was loud music, laughter and so much excitement. Alice was dancing with me and swinging me around. We were in the basement of our house and although there were lots of people there, I only remember Alice and her smiling face. It was not until recently that Alice put all the pieces of this memory together for me. She shared that while Alice and Deanna were babysitting us they had a house party. It must have been a stellar party for it to be one of my first, primary memories in life! Party + dancing + laughter = Blais auntsies.

## What I love most about and favourite memories of my family

What I love most about **Randy** is everything! I love that we are so deeply connected and often know what the other is thinking. Randy will come down the stairs and I'll tell him what he needs to know before he asks for it and vice versa. This gift comes from 30 years of knowing and loving each other.

My favourite memory with Randy was when we backpacked around Costa Rica for three months. From the massive snake that slithered into the water while we swam, to our special tree house in the jungle, getting attacked in the night by red ants, our first time surfing, the tour guide who was a murderer, *Hotel California*— I could go on and on. Those three months were packed with a lifetime of adventure and the unexpected. Then we got the ultimate surprise, I was pregnant! One adventure ended and another began.

I love that **Chae** is so happy, sensitive and compassionate. He is just the sweetest boy and has a heart of gold. His empathy towards others is exceptional and he continues to amaze me with his kindness. I love his gentle spirit and his passion for baseball. What a gift it is to enjoy his sweet nature and easy going personality. I am so proud of my little man.

One of my favourite memories of Chae was of us snorkeling in Mexico when he was 8 years old. It was a beautiful day and the ocean was so warm. There were turtles grazing at the bottom of the ocean and it was magical. I could hear Chae's screams of excitement from the snorkel when he would spot one. I stopped watching the turtles and just watched Chae. The joy he was experiencing in that moment was perfection.

I love that **Tawni** is both reserved and quiet but also feisty and hilarious. She is so strong and it has earned her the nickname *Tough Tawni*. I love that Tawni is fiercely loyal and although she has new stuffies with sparkly eyes and perfect fur, she still favours her old stuffies that the dog has chewed. She loves to make others laugh and I love her crazy tricks. Tawni has a beautiful heart and spirit and I am so proud to be her mom!

My favourite memory of Tawni was when she cut her hair off for Locks of Love. She wanted to donate her hair to make wigs for sick kids. I was so proud of her and thought, "Wow!" If this is the kind of thing she's doing at 8 years old, imagine what the next 8 years will bring. Tawni never looked more beautiful than after her hair cut. A proud smile and big brown eyes shining so bright while she held up her hair donation. Such a special memory and a loving little girl.

What I love most about **Mom** is the great mother she was. Being a mom is such a rewarding but challenging role and now that I have my own kids, I know how hard she worked to give me a fantastic upbringing. Her own childhood was no fairytale, but she did everything in her power

to ensure mine was. Our time together was too short, but I am so thankful to have had her as my mom. All the love she gave has allowed me to be the parent I am today.

Once a month for years I travelled with Mom from Drayton Valley to Edmonton to get my braces adjusted by an orthodontist. The road trip was the best. We would listen to music and share stories and ideas. After our orthodontist appointment we would go to West Edmonton Mall for a shopping frenzy. At lunch I would always order the mushroom soup and she would end her lunch with a coffee and a Rothmans cigarette. She would always have me hide our shopping bags from Dad when we got back home.

My favourite memories with **Dad** are our hiking trips; not one specifically but all of them. It was a guarantee that he would moon us and I would see his white ass cheeks at some point on every hike. Once we reached the summit, we would celebrate; exhausted, arms raised in the air, jubilation, hugging and relief that we had finally made it. Then the moment always turned spiritual, with tears and amazement at the beauty of the world and our surroundings. What a connection to each other and the universe I felt. Those moments on top of the mountain with my amazing dad are hands-down my favourite memories with him.

My favourite memory with **Gayleen** was when we stayed at *The Hotel California* in Costa Rica. There were armed guards patrolling the grounds and the owner kept reminding us that he was Italian. He also had pictures of himself with celebrities and political figures in the foyer. It was all very weird. Gayleen and I imagined he was part of a drug cartel or something illegal. We did check out unscathed, but I will always wonder what the real story behind that man and place was. Lots of laughs with Gayleen on that trip for sure.

## Favourite memories of my nieces and nephews

My favourite memory of **Amy** was taking care of her when she was a newborn baby. I spent a week with the Demetrick Family after Amy and Aidan were born. One afternoon, baby Amy and I cuddled on the couch and had a power nap together. I remember studying her perfect face and little rosebud lips and marveled at her beauty. Such a special moment to bond with my amazing baby niece. Her beauty, both inside and out is incredible. She is an amazing young lady and I am so proud of her.

My favourite memory of **Aidan** was when I schooled him on how to headbang to heavy metal. We rocked out to AC/DC and my neck hurt afterwards. (I wanted to impress him with my skills.) How we laughed and I was beyond excited that my amazing nephew loved heavy metal! Aidan has my heart and is such an amazing young man.

My favourite **Max** memory is searching for sea creatures on a beach in the Mayan Riviera. We spent the better part of the morning scouring the rocks for signs of sea life. I remember his adorable, tanned face, and how he would hold the creatures and reassure me that there was nothing to be afraid of. Max has such a gentle spirit and is ridiculously amazing.

My favourite memory of **Ginger** was when we had to herd the pigs to their new home. We were all excitedly chasing these pigs into their new pasture when one or two got zapped by the electric fence. Ginger was so upset that her pigs were getting shocked. The pigs were totally fine and were very happy with their new home. It was so exciting for this city girl to be herding pigs with this blonde beauty leading the way. Ginger's compassion for her pigs and all animals warms my heart.

## Significant life event

I had always struggled as a student and failed Grade 8, which was devastating to my self-esteem. I hated school and was terrible at it. A few years after barely graduating high school, I found my passion and enrolled at Grant MacEwan University. Not only did I get straight A's in all my courses, I received letters from the Dean in recognition of my outstanding grade point average. If only those nuns from St. Anthony Elementary School could see me now! I started to regain confidence in myself and my capabilities. It was a pivotal point in my life.

## Current and past occupations

Randy and I opened our family business, The Batting Cages, on October 1, 2017. I have never worked harder, sacrificed more, slept so little or hustled harder in my life. The greatest gift was realizing that I can walk through the fear and on the other side is a dream come true. The response to our new business has been incredible and our hard work is paying off. To see Chae and Tawni working and contributing to the family business is deeply satisfying and the hope is this will inspire them to chase their dreams.

Three years ago, I took over as teacher for a failing program called Green Circle Preschool. It is a preschool founded in the 60s by a group of hippies who taught students under a dome solarium and promoted the love of nature. Over the years, this inspiration was lost and it became like every other preschool out there. With a volunteer executive team we brought the original dream back to life and created a Lessons Through Nature Program. Our enrollment has skyrocketed over the last 3 years and I still happily teach little humans in the forest every morning.

I worked for Alberta Family & Social Services for over a decade before I had my babies. It was a constant battle against child abuse, child prostitution, drugs, violence, gangs, poverty and a deeply flawed child welfare system. We kicked some serious ass, testified against gang bangers, walked the worst neighbourhoods, and advocated for the kids that were forgotten and unwanted. This job was so rewarding and exciting. The resilience of the human spirit is truly magnificent.

In 2004, I left the workforce for 10 years to raise our beautiful babies, Chae and Tawni. To be a stay-at-home mom and care for these little human beings during their formative years was such a blessing. It really is the most important role of my life. They are such amazing kids and it is an absolute gift to mother them. I'm beyond grateful for these two amazing children and all the love.





# Randall Miller



Date of birth: **April 21, 1971**

Place of birth: **Cabri, SK**

Middle name: **Glen**

Nickname: **Randy, Rand, Paddy**

## Favourite childhood memory

My absolute favourite childhood memory is from when I was 8 years old. My dad was working in Drayton Valley and once a month we would make the trek from Devon to Drayton Valley on the Greyhound bus to visit. On a Saturday morning I woke up and was given a \$10 bill to go to the arcade. On my walk downtown I stumbled upon the local pet store, and once inside could not believe my luck. There were purebred German Shepherd puppies for sale for only \$10. There were two left and I quickly fell in love with the female puppy that was nibbling on

my fingers. I paid the lady my \$10 and proudly went on my way. I took my new buddy to the park to play, making sure not to return home until I knew the store had closed. When I walked in with my new friend in my arms, my parents were not impressed. After many tears, and because we were moving to Drayton Valley soon, my parents decided to let me keep my puppy. Sheba was with me for 16 incredible years and I think about her all the time. On my wedding night I dreamt that Sheba was on my lap and I gently stroked her head. I have no doubt that my childhood friend had come to say hello and wish me well.

## What I love most about my family

From the wild girl with the big blonde hair, to the loving wife and mother I know now, my love for **Angie** has grown and changed over the last 30 years. One thing that has never changed is Angie's ability to make me laugh. From her valley girl impersonations to fake crashing her car into road markers, she has always made me smile. I love that whenever we go somewhere and there is a group of children, eventually they surround this amazing woman. Children are drawn to Angie like rats to the Pied Piper. I love that Angie went without so many of the finer things so that she was able to stay at home and raise our children. I love that Angie saw a little 16-year-old punk with tattoos who was living on his own in a rundown one-bedroom apartment with no real direction, and she still loved and believed in him. I love the mother she is to our children, and the warm, patient, forgiving nature she possesses.

**Chae** is my handsome, easygoing little boy. I can honestly say I have never met a kinder, sweeter, happier little guy. He finds the good in everyone and does not have a mean bone in his body. Chae is always concerned about how other people feel and never leaves anyone out. If the world had more people like Chae, it would be a much better place. He loves to try new things, faces every challenge head on, and works so hard at his baseball and pitching (he has a wicked change up). One of the best things in life is playing catch with my boy.

I love staying up late on Saturday to watch Saturday Night Live together.

I think one of my favourite memories of Chae is when he was just learning to walk. He would get so excited to go outside and trek through the snow, trying to catch the snowflakes on his tongue. His little cheeks would be glowing red from the cold but, as soon as we would turn to start going

home, he would immediately sit down and cry. He loved his walks in the winter wonderland and would stay out for hours if he could.

I love how Chae loves to sleep in, like his mom, and always wakes up with a smile on his face ready to face the day.

**Tawni**, or *Tenacious T* as I call her, is so brave and determined. She's tough as nails yet such a little girl. She carefully lays out her clothes coordinating her outfits as well as The Fashion Police. She cooks the most incredible chicken suppers and her baking is delicious. She loves drawing and crafts.

Tawni also runs lemonade stands to raise money for the Humane Society. She can't stop herself from crying when World Wildlife or SPCA commercials come on TV, but don't let the tears fool you! Challenge her to a wrestling match, or watch her cliff dive or smash some baseballs. You don't get the nickname *Tough Tawni* for your pedicures.

My favourite memory of Tawni is camping at Meadow Lake, SK. A snake somehow ended up on our boat in the middle of the lake. I had just caught a fish and had put it in the back of the boat by the motor. I sat and continued fishing until little Tawni pointed to the back of the boat and said, "Daddy, snake!" Without looking, I said, "No Tawni, that's a fish." She pointed and said, "Daddy, snake!" At this point I was a little concerned about her ability to comprehend. I turned to the back of the boat to find a large garter snake coiled up on the rear seat with its head up swaying back and forth. Now everyone in our family knows of my fondness for snakes! I fearfully grabbed the fishing net and managed to get the snake out of the boat and into the water. Tawni never lets me forget our snake-on-the-boat incident.

I love how Tawni likes to wake up early, like her dad, and have morning talks at the table. She always makes me laugh with her witty sense of humour.



With my dog, Sheba



# Chae Miller



Date of birth: **November 8, 2004**

Place of birth: **Edmonton, AB**

Middle names: **Alexander George**

Nickname: **Baby Chae, Chae Man,  
Chae Chae, Chimmy,  
Chimmy Chonga, Ching A Ling,  
Chae Man Hey Man**

## Favourite childhood memories

When I was 5 years old there was a fuzzy black and yellow caterpillar on our tree in our backyard. Every day in the summer, I would go to the backyard and he was always there.

Another one is when I caught two pop flies at the Provincials in Calgary. My team was cheering and high-fiving me. My coach gave me a hug and I was so proud.

## Favourite memory of Great-Grandma Rosalie

Grandma Rosalie is always nice and funny and I like her cards. I think she should sell her cards because she could make a lot of money.

## Favourite memory of my grandparents

When Grandpa and Grandma facetimed us and told us they were taking us to Disneyland.

## Favourite memories of my aunties

**Aunty Sherry:** My favourite memory is when she made me crêpes and showed me how to do it.

**Aunty Nicolle:** Aunty Nicolle is special because she saw me when I was born.

## Favourite memories of my family

**Dad:** I love that we both like baseball and he gives good tips and instruction.

My favourite memory of Dad is playing baseball with him.

**Mom:** I love that Mom is friendly and she makes me feel happy.

My favourite memory of Mom is camping at Gull Lake and Mom chasing us through the forest at night with a hockey mask on.

**Tawni:** Tawni is nice and she says, "Hee hee haw," a lot. Tawni is silly and that is what I like most.

My favourite memory of Tawni is playing tag. We played it every day.

## Significant life event

I was having an off day at baseball practice. I missed every pitch for two times up to bat. I was sad and frustrated but fought through it. It was my best practice ever.

## Hobby or pastime

I like to play baseball.

## Fun fact about me

I got my ear pierced when I was 10 years old.





# Tawni Miller



Date of birth: **April 19, 2007**  
Place of birth: **Edmonton, AB**  
Middle name: **Margaret**  
Nickname: **Tin Tawn, Win Wan, Won Tawn, Tiny Tawni, Tough Tawni, Tenacious T, Boo Boo, Boobie**

## Favourite childhood memory

My favourite childhood memory was camping and roasting marshmallows at Sylvan Lake. We squirted each other with water guns, found a spider in the shower and laughed so hard.

## Favourite memories of Great-Grandma Rosalie

My favourite memory of Grandma Rosalie is making crafts with her and my cousins in Kelowna. We went tubing and it was fun.

## Favourite memories of my grandparents

When Grandma and Grandpa sent me clues in the mail, then surprised us with a trip to Disneyland. I liked going on the rides.

## Favourite memories of my aunties

**Aunty Sherry:** When I was at her house, Amy and I slept in and everyone was outside. Amy and I went to eat breakfast and Aunty Sherry gave us a cupcake for breakfast.

**Aunty Nicolle:** When Aunty Nicolle made a treasure hunt for me and my cousins in Mexico. It was a lot of fun.

## Favourite memories of my cousins

**Amy, Aidan and Ginger:** When we all played *Town* together. Chae and Aidan were rock stars and wrestlers, Amy and I were students, and Ginger was the teacher. Amy pretended to be a bad student and was sassy to the teacher on purpose.

**Max:** I liked when Ginger and I kept taking Max's hat off and he was chasing us.

## Favourite memories of my family

### Dad

He has a big heart for animals and is kind. He is an old soul. Daddy gets my sense of humour and I like everything about him.

My favourite memory of Dad was in Saskatchewan. We were fishing and Dad caught a fish. I saw a snake on our boat and told him. He was not facing the snake so he said, "No, it's a fish." So I told him again it was a snake and he said, "No, it's a fish." Then he looked and saw the snake. My dad's worst fear is snakes.

## Mom

My mom is kind and works hard. She is really nice to everyone and is good with kids. I like everything about her.

My favourite memories of Mom are when we have our special mother daughter dates at Busters Pizza. She sneaks me treats and I like when we do crafts together and paint my nails.

## Chae

Chae is nice and he plays baseball with me. He is an awesome brother. I like everything about him.

My favourite memory of Chae is when we play tag together. We take our socks off and put spit on our feet so we can be faster.

## Significant life event

When I got Sissy, my first favourite stuffed animal, and when I got my baby blanky, an afghan knitted by Grandma Stephanie.

## Hobbies or pastimes

Playing baseball, fast-ball, the guitar and doing crafts.

## Fun fact about me

I sing to Chae when we are alone.







# Dennis Blais



Date of birth: **February 15, 1946**

Place of birth: **LaFleche, SK**

Middle name: **Joseph**

Nicknames: **Big Den or Blue**

## Favourite childhood memory

Protecting my sisters was always a priority. Mary Ann had a date with what I thought was an unsavoury character. I sat on the back steps waiting for him to pick her up, my 22 rifle in hand (unloaded, of course). When he turned into the backyard in his 49 Ford Coup (which was customized and pretty awesome I might add), I jumped up waving the gun in the air. Apparently I scared the heck out of him. He slammed the car in reverse and took off.

## Favourite memories of Mom

I always remember Mom as being so sweet and loving. As my siblings know, I was a handful—always being a brat and pushing things to the limit. Mom would always try to be so firm. One day, when I was 14, I finally pushed Mom to the limit with my shenanigans. She took a wooden spoon and threateningly started chasing me. This I found hilarious since, at 14, I already towered over her. I abruptly took the wooden spoon from her and proceeded to chase her around the kitchen table. We were both laughing hysterically.

Another funny memory of Mom was the time she turned orange! Mom was always obsessed with her health. I remember her buying a commercial juicer from a friend of the family who travelled around selling them. She juiced cabbage, celery, apples, oranges, carrots, dandelions, tomatoes, strawberries and pretty much anything in sight. She did everything to the extreme and eventually became allergic to tomatoes and strawberries from overdoing it. The funniest part was when she got into carrot juice. Her skin actually turned orange from drinking so much of it. Everybody thought she had jaundice. It was hilarious!

## Favourite memories of Dad

I remember Dad favouring the girls. All they had to do was cozy up to him and he would melt. I always thought he was hard on Alex and me. Looking back now as an adult, I think Dad was doing what he could to shape us into the incredible men Alex and I are today. Ha! I remember Dad coming up to me after the commencement exercises of my Grade 12 graduation. As the valedictorian, I had given what I thought was a heartwarming thank you to the parents. Dad was touched by it, gave me a big hug and told me how proud he was of me.

Dad was always very kind and considerate. I remember when he had the 57 Chevrolet Bel Air station wagon he would drive us to school every morning and pick us up in the afternoon. We would stop at Aunt Yvonne's and pick up Jason, Gloria, Gail, Betty, Perry and eventually Jackie. There were usually 10 to 13 of us packed in there. It was unreal in the winter when we had our winter clothes, school books and lunches. As the years went by and I got older, it wasn't cool to be seen getting a ride with your parents, so I gave up my spot as the younger kids came on board. That was one cold walk

in the winter—over a mile. Grandma would knit us wool socks, mitts and scarves. I often wondered how I was able to father 3 children. I damn near froze my balls off back then!

Dad was also very active in the community, especially with the Knights of Columbus. He eventually became the Grand Knight representing the province of Saskatchewan, and travelled to Boston to represent the Diocese. I became one of the first members in the province and was on the initiation team. We travelled all over the province initiating new circles into the group. On one occasion, we went to North Battleford. Uncle Dally offered to fly us in his airplane. We were pretty excited! It got really foggy over North Battleford airport and we were forced to land on the highway. Uncle Dally contacted the RCMP and they set up road blocks so we could land. As we were making our approach, in the fog with very poor visibility, a Pontiac came out of the mist. The wheels had just touched the pavement. Dally, being a crop sprayer, reacted quickly and pulled the nose up just in time. I distinctly remember the expression on the man's face as we pulled up. His eyes almost popped out of his head! Dad, who was a flight instructor during WWII, was totally impressed with Dally. I, on the other hand, thought a change of underwear was appropriate.

I remember how happy Dad was when he first met Bette Lynn. We weren't engaged yet, but he was really impressed. He could see the wild one in the family was finally going to settle down. It was on our second visit after Blin and I were engaged that Dad and I had our warmest, most special time together. It was the first and last time Dad and I had a real man-to-man conversation. It was like I had finally grown up.

Dad was an extremely intelligent man. We talked about a variety of things, mainly the choices one makes. I wanted to know why he stayed in Assiniboia. The cities offered so many more opportunities. His response was, "A home is what you make of it." He raised seven children and had a good life. He had no regrets. With that, we shared a few beers and one of his famous barbecued steaks. That's the last time I saw Dad. I think he would have been proud of all seven of us. It was a good thing that Alex and I followed in his footsteps into the hardware business.

## Halloween

Dad was instrumental in having the Assiniboia Roman Catholic Separate School built in our town. As the years went by, they added an auditorium. It was under construction the year of the now infamous Halloween prank. Alex, Allen Sutherland, cousins Paul and Victor Bergeron, Dennis Fafard and I decided to do what any small town boys would do: cause a little havoc in the neighbourhood on Halloween night. We took a bunch of cinder blocks and stacked them up to form a solid wall, virtually closing off all the entrances to the school.

Now, feeling pretty smug about accomplishing this huge project, we decided to hoist the bicycle racks up on top of the school. Two guys were on the roof pulling and two on the ground pushing. Just as the last rack was being lifted up, a cavalcade of vehicles, led by Dad's old green half-ton truck, came screaming around the corner. Everybody scattered leaving Victor and Dennis Fafard on the roof trying desperately to pull up the last bicycle rack.

The rest of us ran across the street to hide within a forest of tall evergreens on Mr. Wood's acreage. This area was also being developed and we dove over huge piles of dirt and hid under the branches as Dad and the rest of his entourage came searching for us. They were so determined to find us, they didn't notice Victor and Dennis on the roof. They got away unscathed. Unfortunately the rest of us were stuck on the damp, cold ground for what felt like an eternity. I just remember the sound of Dad's squeaky brakes as he drove back and forth searching for us.

I'm not sure if Dad ever knew we were the culprits as it was never mentioned. We were good!

## The prairie fire

I remember going out to the prairie close to our house in Assiniboia with Hillary Ambrose. Mom made us a nice picnic lunch. Hillary and I had a stash of small firecrackers that we thought would be fun to set off in the small clumps of grass on the prairie. We set most of them off and decided it was time for lunch. And a fine lunch it was until we started smelling smoke. We jumped up and saw that the prairie was on fire!

Aunt Yvonne had knit me this really nice sweater with beavers on the back. It was pretty awesome to have one of these back in the day.

Desperate to put out the fire, I used my sweater to smother the flames. It didn't work. The Fire Department arrived with sirens blaring and finally got the fire under control. It was the land right next to the graveyard so they were really concerned about it spreading.

Needless to say I went home with my tail between my legs. My nice sweater no longer had arms and the brown beavers and green leaves had turned to a black and grey charred bundle. I remember Mom being really upset and sending me upstairs to my room to wait for Dad. When I heard the sound of his squeaking brakes, I climbed out the bedroom window onto the porch roof and jumped off. It wasn't the smartest move as I ended up chipping my tooth. I took off hoping to avoid confronting Dad.

When I finally came home, Dad wasn't impressed. I remember him giving me a good talking to about it, but that was it. I later heard Mom and Dad talking about it. In the end, I heard them snickering. Looking back, it was pretty funny.

## The old flour mill

There was an old Robin Hood flour mill a few blocks away from our house. This was our sanctuary, castle and hideaway. We spent hours in there playing hide and seek. It was huge and full of old equipment. All the windows had been broken long ago, and the building was condemned and waiting for demolition. We were mortified to find out it was going to be torn down. A few days before the cranes and heavy equipment arrived we decided to help them along with the destruction. There were a bunch of us there that day: Eddie Robinson, Leo Kline, Gordy Rosen, Ross Kuntz, Clarence Muffenbier and Gilbert Delorme, to name a few.

There was a mezzanine two or three storeys up from the main floor of the tower. A huge piece of equipment sat up there and we thought it would be a great idea to push it over the edge. It was heavy and took us a lot of time and effort. When it finally fell, the sound was deafening and dust flew everywhere from the building. I think the whole town heard it. The Fire Department came to see what had happened. We managed to scramble out before they arrived.

Man, were we filthy! It reminded me of the Little Rascals movie where the gang was covered in black soot. All you could see was our eyes and our white teeth. When I arrived home, Mom and Dad were not impressed.

## My first bike

I bought my first bike from Connie Estrady. He was a local guy who bought and sold used bikes. He used parts from all different brands to make up complete bikes. The problem was, if anything broke you had no idea what brand it was, so finding replacement parts was a nightmare.

In any case, getting a bike was like gaining my freedom. The world was my oyster with lots of exploring and adventures to look forward to.

There was a pack of us who used to hang together. We'd set up ramps and go flying through the air. It was a bit dangerous but great fun. We got so good at it we decided to put on a show. We printed up flyers and went around town handing them out. The *Daredevils* would be performing. Come one come all for only 5¢! The highlight was to be Gilbert Delorme flying through a wall of fire. Gilbert wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer and we talked him into flying over the ramp into a wall of burning beer boxes.

At the show, things went really well. We all did our thing flying up and down those ramps, making a great impression. Of course, the crowd went wild when the beer boxes were set afire. Tensions mounted as we all cheered Gilbert on. Away he went flying over the ramp. He hit the pile of burning boxes and the crowd went wild. He flew through the air with a burning box on his chest between his arms. We all heard his bloodcurdling scream as he flew off his bike in mid-air—his shirt on fire. We all scrambled to his side throwing dirt on him to put out the fire. He was okay but very shaken up. Gilbert sure looked goofy though without eyelashes and eyebrows.

Once the word got back to Mom and Dad, again I was in big trouble!

## The spider

As many of you know, I hate spiders. One day I rolled up the blind in our bedroom to discover a huge spider had spun a web over the entire window. This was in the days when we had storm windows with three little portholes along the bottom. The spider was right in the middle of the window. Without hesitation, I grabbed my pellet gun and shot it. I blew out both windows in the process. But hey, the spider was gone!

This wasn't the smartest thing I've ever done. Needless to say, once again Dad was not impressed. He had to repair both windows. My reputation as the in-house brat would stand.

## The burning bedspread

I used to like playing with firecrackers. One day, I was sitting in my bedroom and decided it would be fun to light a firecracker, put it in a little box, close the lid, run downstairs and open the box under Mom's nose after it exploded. She would gag from the smoke, call me a brat and life would be great again. So, I did it! Grandma was there as well and everything went according to plan.

I went back upstairs to my bedroom and opened the door. My bed was on fire! I had dropped the open lighter on the bed and run downstairs to pull off my stunt. Fortunately, I was able to put the fire out. It was our old chenille bedspread that got the worst of it. I cut off the black edges of the blanket and made it look like the bedspread had been torn up. It was old and Mom had mentioned getting us a new one. The heavy canvas-like blanket under the bedspread was slightly charred, but by turning it over no one could tell it had been scorched.

The plan was I'd talk Alex into saying we tore the bedspread while wrestling on the bed. I would wash the blanket the next day when Mom and Dad were gone to work. No one would be the wiser. What actually happened was Mom got up the next morning and washed our bed! Caught again!

## The attic

Alex and I shared a bedroom upstairs across the hall from Grandma LeTilly's room. The old house wasn't very well insulated. I remember lying in bed at night scratching the frost off the wall by my bed.

Grandma's room was the same. She had a small door in her closet that went into the attic. We used to sneak up to the attic with boxes of Jello and Christmas oranges when no one was around.

One day, Dad, Uncle Art and Uncle Alex decided to insulate Grandma's room. We were in trouble now. No one ever crawled up into the attic! They tore off all the plaster and wooden slats and discovered the insulation consisted of just newspaper and sawdust. They also discovered a pile of empty Jello boxes and dried up orange peels. Caught again! Thankfully everyone laughed really hard—especially Dad!

## Television

Back in the day before TV, I remember Alex and I would sit on the couch on Saturday mornings listening to *The Lone Ranger and Tonto*, *Lash Larue*, *Gene Autry*, *Roy Rogers* and *Dale Evens*. Westerns were our favourites.

When black and white television was introduced, Dad sold them in his Marshall-Wells Hardware Store. We would all go down to the store on Sunday nights to watch the *Ed Sullivan Show* and *The Wonderful World of Disney*.

Mom and Dad would get us each a chocolate bar and a bottle of pop, and we'd curl up on the floor and think we'd died and gone to heaven.

Eventually, Dad brought a TV home. Mom and Dad insisted we have our homework done in the evenings before we were allowed to watch it.

One evening, *Soldiers of Fortune* was on. It was our favourite show. Our homework wasn't done so we weren't allowed to go downstairs to watch, but we were desperate. We had a square register in the floor of our bedroom. Back then, there were no heating ducts to each room. The furnace was in the basement with a large grate above it that rested at the foot of the stairs. The heat would rise from the floor and spread very unevenly throughout the house. Alex and I would take turns shoving our heads down the hole where the heat grate was. We would almost tear our heads off switching back and forth to catch a glimpse of our favourite show.

Mom and Dad were always concerned about us keeping up with our homework. This, of course paid off. As you all know, Alex and I went on to become great scholars!

## Pete Johnson

I had a little red wagon that I pulled all over town collecting beer bottles and pop bottles. I would take them over to Pete Johnson's old, rundown shack a few blocks away. He used to buy and sell bottles. The shack had a porch on the front and if I went inside, I would almost fall over from the stench. Pete wore old blue jean coveralls that he never washed. Everyone could smell him coming from a mile away.

The walls of his shack were covered with cases of beer bottles. I could hardly get inside. All he had in the dark, dingy kitchen was a table and four chairs with a potbelly stove in the corner. Pete would sit at the table and play cards and drink beer with his buddies.



On one particular day, I arrived with a wagon full of bottles that Pete helped me unload. I told Pete I'd run home to get a second load of bottles. When I got back, Pete wouldn't pay me for the first load I brought because he said he couldn't remember me delivering them. I was some upset, but what could I do? I told Dad about it but there wasn't much he could do either. It was my word against Pete's. Dad said it was a lesson learned and I should have gotten the money from the first load right away.

A few weeks went by and I was out with my wagon going by Pete's place. I noticed the front door was open but no one was around. It was time for a little revenge. I slipped into the porch and filled my wagon with his beer bottles, knocked on the inside door and told Pete I had a load of bottles for sale. He paid me and I left. Lesson learned: don't mess around with Big Den!

## Christmas

Christmas always brings back fond memories. Being in retail, Mom and Dad were always exhausted on Christmas Eve. We, on the other hand, were excited, hyper, and couldn't sleep with the thought of all the presents awaiting us. Alex and I would sneak out of our bedroom, crawling on our bellies past Mom and Dad's bedroom to the awaiting treasure trove. At 3 o'clock in the morning, Dad screamed, "Get back to bed!" It startled us so badly I almost wet my pants as we scurried back to bed. Not long after we managed to get past their bedroom door to find a Crokinole board under the tree. We spent hours playing this game. I got so good at it I became the high school champ!

## Favourite memory of my cousins

Aunt Louise and Uncle Art were awesome and always welcomed us into their home and fed us amazing meals. Uncle Art was a real character and loved to pull pranks on just about anyone. On one occasion, when we were well into our teens, Alex, Victor, Paul and I decided to pull a prank on Uncle Art. Art raised turkeys on the farm. We decided to steal one, but to tell him we had stolen it from his neighbour and archrival Mr. Shawnberg. We returned with this huge turkey in hand and Art thought it was hilarious. Aunt Louise made us a beautiful supper, all the while Uncle Art going on and on about us putting it to his neighbour. It was at that point we told Art this was, in fact, one of his turkeys. We got him good! He laughed so hard he almost fell off his chair.

## Significant life event

Memories of meeting Bette Lynn for the first time always make me smile. Our good friend Gordy Peters kept calling me to go out for a drink with him and his wife Carol. There was someone very special he wanted me to meet. This was a very trying time financially for me. I could only afford to go out every second weekend. I kept telling Gordy I couldn't afford to go, but he was persistent. I finally relented and was pleasantly surprised. The sparks ignited immediately and Bette Lynn and I were inseparable from that point on. We went to Blin's parents' home after leaving the Carriage House Bar, as I knew her dad George from before. George was a real character and I truly miss him and Blin's mother Trudy. George was sitting in his recliner when we arrived. I proceeded to sit in his lap and tell him I was in love with his daughter. He laughed hysterically, got up, poured us a drink and the rest is history. Blin's mom Trudy told George that their daughter truly would marry that fine young man some day.

## Hobby or pastime

Cars, cars, cars! I love going to car shows. Barrett Jackson in Scottsdale is my favourite.

## Fun fact about me

I was never a scholar and spent a lot of time doodling in class. Once, I drew a picture of Christ that the school principal was quite fond of. She asked me for it so I gave it to her. She framed it and hung it in her office. She later asked me if I would paint the scenery for the Christmas play. She provided me with a sheet of poly 8 feet high and 16 feet long. It was the backdrop of the night before Christmas with the three wise men, their camels, the manger, a donkey, a cow, a lamb and a goat. It took me weeks to complete and was, by all reports, pretty good.

## The worst job I ever had

The most horrible job I ever had was cleaning Uncle Art's pig pen. Uncle Art had been really sick and hadn't cleaned his pen in weeks. Cousin Vic and I decided to take on the task. I remember the smell pouring out of that pen when we opened the door. It literally took my breath away. I immediately turned green and vomited. It took a while, but we eventually were able to go in and start the clean up. It took us most of the day, but we finally got the job done. I can't ever remember enjoying a shower as much as I did on that day.

## Current and past occupations

My retail career started in Calgary working for K-Mart, eventually ending up in Canmart Shoes, a K-Mart affiliate. After more than nine years, I was offered the opportunity to be Regional Manager of Western Canada. I was already away from Bette Lynn and newborn Chris three weeks out of the month. I couldn't see being away even longer. It was time to make my family the priority.

I resigned from Canmart and opened Link Hardware in Drayton Valley with Alex. We worked together for four years during which time Link Hardware merged with Home Hardware.

My family and I then moved to Stettler and opened a Home Hardware store which expanded quickly. We bought and demolished Jimmy's Hardware beside us to allow for more retail space, and eventually purchased land behind the store to make room for a garden centre.

In the early 80s, I joined nine other local business men to buy The Alberta Prairie Steam Train, a world renowned tourist train carrying passengers to various central Alberta locations. I served on the Board of Directors as Vice President for many years. I am still a shareholder and Board member.

With the help of Mom and Alex, I was elected on the Home Hardware Board of Directors. I went on to spend 20 years on the Board. It was one of the greatest experiences of my career.

In the middle of this, I opened Stettler Crafts & More, a store which Andrea managed. It was

during this time I spent four years on the Board of The Canadian Craft & Hobby Association. Sadly, after seven years, we closed Stettler Crafts & More. Michael's came to Canada and killed its competitors.

In 2003, we bought the IGA building across the street from our original Home Hardware location, renovated it and put on a huge addition doubling our retail floor space. We had four profitable years in this location and successfully saw continued growth in spite of Walmart's invasion into our market. I then decided it was time to retire.

A few career highlights from my time with Home Hardware:

- Winner of two Retailer of the Year awards and six Excellence in Merchandising awards for the province of Alberta
- First hardware store to add a pet department—a very successful venture
- First hardware store in Canada to install a Water Processing Plant capable of producing 1,000 gallons per day
- Our store was often chosen as a go-to model store for any dealers wanting to expand
- I appeared on a training video on merchandising, store expansion and planning program

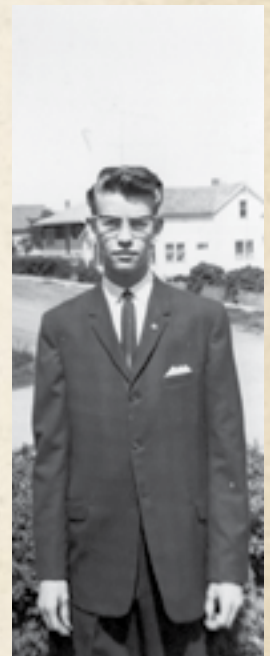
I am now retired. I'm searching for a new purpose, but if I don't find one, I'm just fine with that. Life is not only good, it's great!

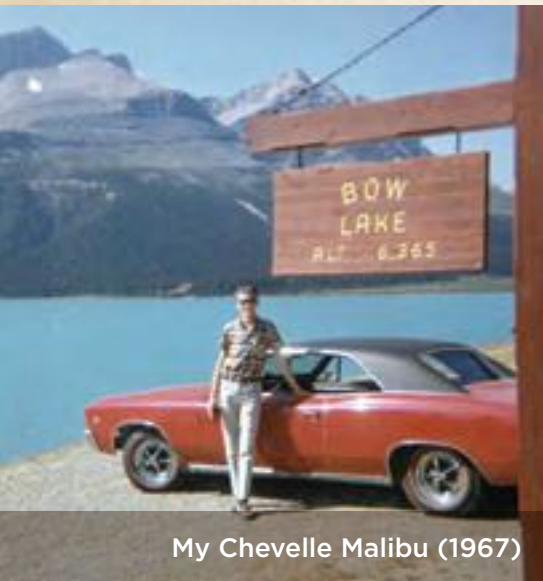


Alex, Mary Ann and me  
(July 1950)



With Aunt Yvonne and  
Uncle Dally (1968)





My Chevelle Malibu (1967)



1970



Proud Dad with Chris (1973)



With Danny (1977)



With Andy (1983)



Christmas (1991)



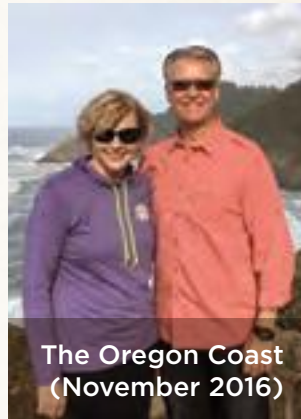
Retirement (2015)



June 2016



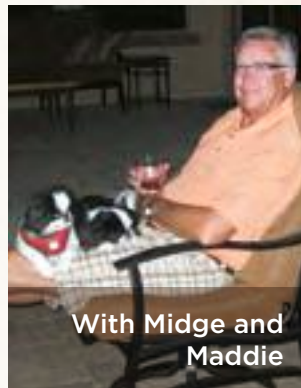
On a Caribbean cruise with friends Gwen and Allan Holmes



The Oregon Coast (November 2016)



30<sup>th</sup> anniversary (2001)



With Midge and Maddie



In Peru for Chris and Zule's wedding (July 2012)



# Bette Lynn Blais



Date of birth: **April 2, 1948**  
Place of birth: **On a farm near Pierson, MB**  
Family name: **Hart**  
Nicknames: **Blin, Blinda Baby (as my dad called me) and Blinda Girl (as my mom called me)**

## Favourite childhood memories

I remember dancing to Grandpa Jake Hart's fiddle playing; running around the hills of Birtle pretending we were on horses; swimming in the Birdtail River; picking saskatoons along the bush trail to the river, and having our nightly wood tick checks from our moms.

When I was little, I prayed for a sister named Susan. At 9, I finally got a Carol Ann instead of a Susan!

## What I love most about Rosalie

I love her enthusiasm and how she loves me as a daughter in law! I have the best mother-in-law.

## Favourite story about Emile

I only met Emile twice. One time was at Christmas. There is a photo of everyone, including Dennis and me. He was very kind to me and I think he liked me! He thought his boy was growing up.



## Favourite memories of the Blais aunts and uncles

Clint and Helen were extremely good and generous to us when we were first married. We spent many weekends at their place as we couldn't afford to go out. We were very close to them both.

Aunt Louise, of course, was so special. She had cinnamon buns or other delicious baking on hand any time we came to visit. She always made us feel welcome.

We would drop in on Uncle Tuffy and Aunt Marion when in Assiniboia, and one time they came to Drayton Valley to visit us. Dennis made Ducane barbecue chicken and they thought that was the most amazing thing they had ever tasted! It was *dee-lishious*.

I didn't know Aunt Mary as well, but she was always very kind to me. Aunt Yvonne too. I did not know Uncle Alex well at all, but from all I have heard, he had a wonderful sense of humour.

## Significant life events

When my dad had cancer, I was very fortunate to be able to spend nine weeks with him while he was in the Foothills Hospital in Calgary. He was to have 30 radiation treatments for his cancer and he made it to number 29. It was one of my saddest times to see him deteriorate like that, but he was sharp until the end. I visited him on his last day. I rubbed his back, combed his hair and tucked him in to sleep.

I was not there when my mom passed away. She decided when to go on her own time.

## Current and past occupations

I am happily retired!

In high school I worked at the Birtle General Hospital as a nurse's aide. I also worked at the Regina Exhibition as a waitress serving hamburgers and fries.

I worked at St. Pauls Hospital in Vancouver for three years as an LPN, then decided to go back to Winnipeg to get my RN as they were offering a one-year course upgrade. I stopped in Calgary to visit my mom, dad and sister, and met Dennis Blais! I never made it to Winnipeg! I received my Mrs. degree instead of an RN.

I couldn't find full-time work at a hospital at that time so I worked for Sears in the toy department. My mom worked for Sears at that time too. I think she found me the job.

I finally found full-time work at the General Hospital in Vulcan, Alberta. We were engaged at the time, but in order to get the job I had to say I had no plans to get married. I lived in the residence at the hospital and met some great gals. Dennis and I had a long distance romance. He could come to Vulcan Saturday nights only and had to drive back to Calgary in his car that had no heat. That was a very cold winter!

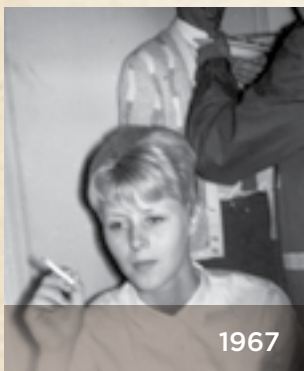
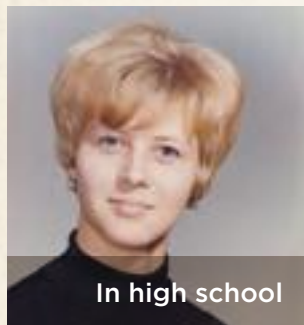
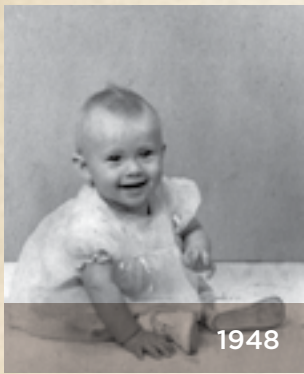
After we were married, I did get a job at the Holy Cross. The position was casual, which meant I worked wherever they needed me. Labour and Delivery was my favourite and Pediatrics was very special.

When Dennis was transferred to Oshawa, Ontario, I had to give one-month's notice. So, I moved back in with my parents while he was in Oshawa. That was a very long, hard month. I got a job at the Oshawa General in surgery and worked three shifts, mostly evenings and nights. Dennis worked long hours at K-Mart so he would be getting home and I would be going to work. I worked there until I was pregnant with Chris and we moved to Ottawa.

When we got transferred back to Calgary, I worked at a doctor's office in Mayfair Place for Dr. Hunt and Dr. Watts. Chris went to a daycare school. I worked there until I was pregnant with Danny.

After Danny was born I worked two days a week for the doctors until we moved to Drayton Valley.

When I found out I was pregnant with Andrea, I decided to retire from nursing. I was a full-time mom until we moved to Stettler.

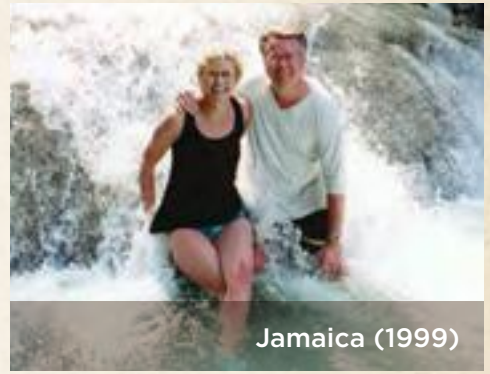




Our budgie, Roger (1986)



Portrait with Tiki (1989)



Jamaica (1999)



March 2000 in Phoenix with sister Carol and my dad, George



2002



Rosalie's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday (2002)



On Peter and Rita's yacht holding a paper airplane (July 2001)



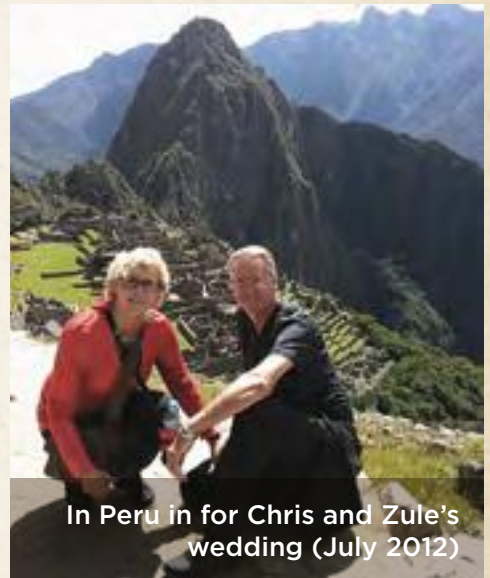
In Phoenix with Midge and Maddie



2010



With Georgie (2016)



In Peru in for Chris and Zule's wedding (July 2012)



# Christopher Blais



Date of birth: **December 6, 1973**

Place of birth: **Ottawa, ON**

Middle name: **Robert**

Nickname: **Blazer**

## Favourite childhood memory

Hunting tigers with my Pap (George Hart).



## Favourite memories of Grandma

Where to begin?! I love her enthusiasm and zest for life. She has the most amazing sense of humour and positive attitude. I think my best memory is when I introduced her to Zule and she embraced her for the first time. Then after the warm hugs, Grandma promptly beat us at Rummikub.

## Favourite memory of Uncle Alex

I absolutely love the memory of Uncle Alex decked out in full-on Mexican garb for the margarita faceoff at the last family reunion in Kelowna.

## Favourite memory of cousin Nicolle

I loved performing Bob and Doug Mackenzie for the family with Nicolle. Beauty, eh?



## Significant life event

Marrying the love of my life, Zulema, in Lima, Peru, and having my parents attend the ceremony.

## Hobby or pastime

I love, love, love to play board games with my family.

## Fun fact about me

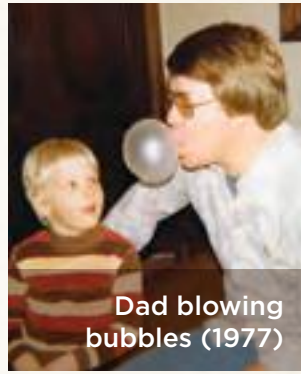
I wrote a song and performed with The Jagatha Christies at Sled Island Music & Arts Festival in Calgary.

## Current and past occupations

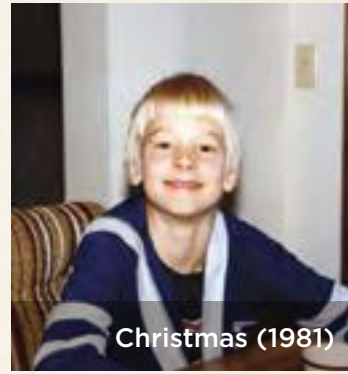
I'm currently a Technology Learning Leader at Buffalo Rubbing Stone School in Calgary, AB. Past jobs include being a stay-at-home dad, working at Ford Credit in collections, and working for Dad at Home Hardware.



Having drinks with Pap (1977)



Dad blowing bubbles (1977)



Christmas (1981)



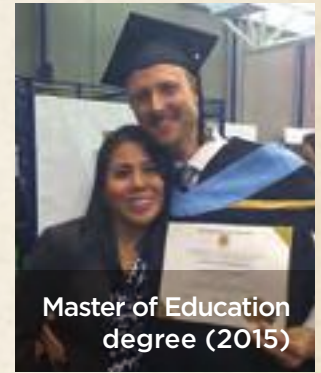
Grade 12 grad (1991)



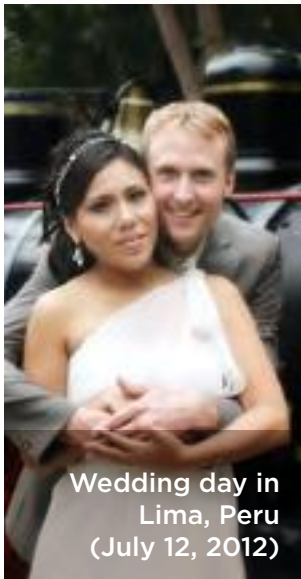
Sipping Italian beer in Cinque Terre, Italy (2015)



Christmas tequila tasting (2015)



Master of Education degree (2015)



Wedding day in Lima, Peru (July 12, 2012)



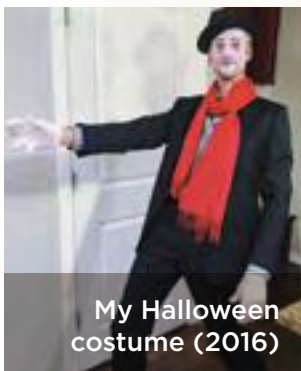
Coliseum in Rome, Italy (2015)



Our first photo together in Lima, Peru (July 2010)



May 2015



My Halloween costume (2016)



Fall 2016



January 2017



January 2017

# Zulema Blais



Date of birth: **September 23, 1980**

Place of birth: **Lima, Peru**

Family name: **Espinoza Pardo**

Nickname: **Zuli**

## Favourite childhood memory

When I was 4 years old, I remember my trips to the beach with my family. My dad built pools for me in the sand that I used to swim in. Each time the waves came in, they would wash them away, so my dad rebuilt the pools as many times as I wanted to go in. To me, they were huge but I'm pretty sure they were tiny little holes.

## What I love most about Rosalie

I love when I hear her laughing. The first time I met her, she was with open arms in Mary Ann's house. She smiled a lot.

## What I love most about the Blais aunts and uncles

I love to hear all of the Blais aunts and uncles talking because they are so fun. When the Blais women are together, I love to hear them because they are loud and funny.

## Significant life event

When I met Chris, especially when we spent our first day together on Saturday, July 16, 2011. It was something special that I have never felt before. I was surprised it was with someone who I had never met before. I wasn't very fluent in English, but our connection was very strong.

## Hobby or pastime

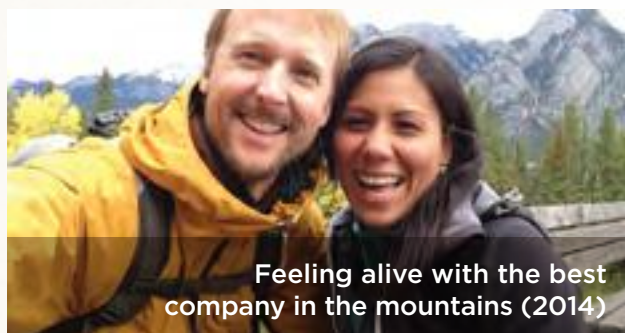
I love spending time with my family going to the mountains.

## Fun fact about me

When I first came to Canada and started learning English, one of Chris' good friends was teaching me bad words and I kept repeating one of them without knowing what it was.

## Current and past occupations

I'm a stay-at-home mom. In the past, I have worked as an Environmental Specialist for Nickpoint Environmental Services, an Environmental Auditor for the Peruvian Government, and for Petro Peru.

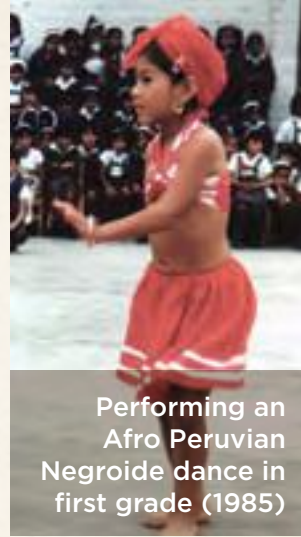




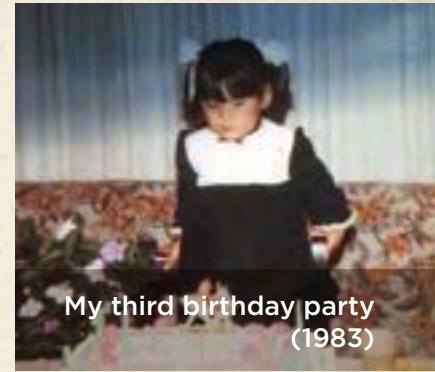
6 months old



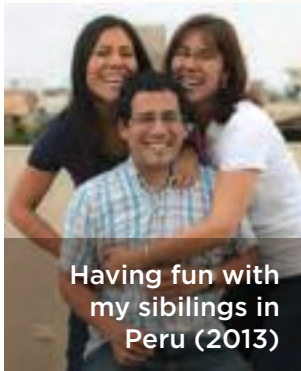
My baptism (1981)



Performing an Afro Peruvian Negroide dance in first grade (1985)



My third birthday party (1983)



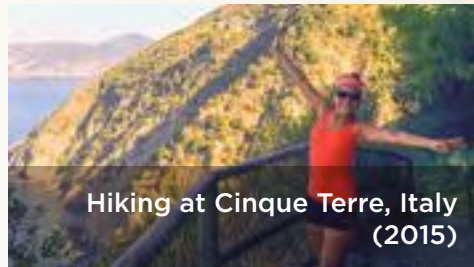
Having fun with my sibilings in Peru (2013)



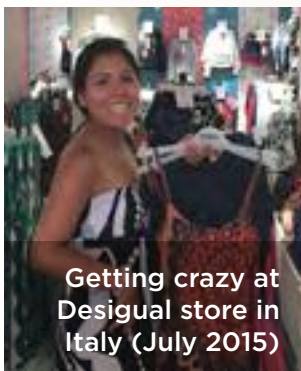
With friends from University (September 2015)



With my parents on New Year's Eve waiting for Mia's arrival (December 2017)



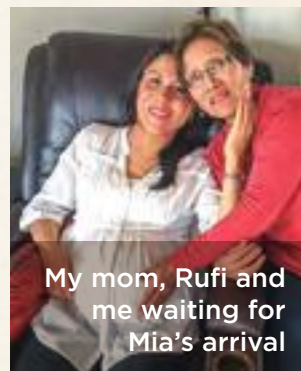
Hiking at Cinque Terre, Italy (2015)



Getting crazy at Desigual store in Italy (July 2015)



Switzerland (2015)



My mom, Ruffi and me waiting for Mia's arrival



January 2017

# Julian Blais



Date of birth: **February 3, 1998**

Place of birth: **Calgary, AB**

Middle name: **Avery Balshaw**

Nickname: **Jules**

## Favourite childhood memory

Friends of ours were babysitting me when I was six. When they told me it was time for bed, I protested by snatching an orange and exclaiming loudly, "Fine, but I'm taking this orange!"

## Favourite memory of Great-Grandma Rosalie

Playing Rummikub and getting destroyed by her.

## Favourite memory of Uncle Danny

Uncle Danny has a unique candle ornament that he brings out at Christmas.



## Significant life event

Graduating from Grade 12 was the first major gateway into adulthood. It was a big defining moment because in high school and the rest of schooling prior, I didn't really have any direction for myself. Moving forward after high school, I felt I could do something I actually wanted to do.

## Hobby or pastime

I like kayaking.

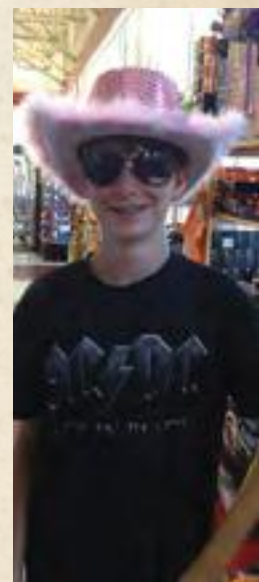
## Fun fact about me

I am petrified of butterflies and moths.

## Current and past occupations

I am a student in Graphic Communications and Print Technology at Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT). I am currently working for the Calgary Stampede.





# Morgan Blais



Date of birth: **October 12, 1999**  
Place of birth: **Calgary, AB**  
Middle name: **Alexandre Balshaw**  
Nickname: **Capitan**

## Favourite childhood memory

That time when I went to Dairy Queen and had a hamburger for the first time. I said, "I can't believe what I was missing out on!"

## Significant life event

When I built my computer.

## Hobbies or pastimes

I like gaming with my friends and talking over voice chat.

## Fun fact about me

I've been in three different drama productions: Grades 5, 6 and 9.

## Current and past occupations

I'm a Grade 12 student at Winston Churchill High School in Calgary, AB.







# Althea Blais



Date of birth: **February 13, 2003**

Place of birth: **Calgary, AB**

Middle name: **Anne Balshaw**

Nickname: **Thea**

## Favourite childhood memory

I remember singing at my school talent show.

## Significant life event

I played the role of Bonnie Blogger at my school play in Grade 6—one of my first roles in a play.

## Hobby or pastime

I love drama and singing.

## Fun fact about me

I am completely intolerant of all spicy food.

## Current and past occupations

Grade 9 student at F.E. Osborne Junior High School in Calgary, AB.





With Grandma and Grandpa's dog, Maddie



# Mia Blais



Heading home from the hospital



Newborn at Foothills Hospital

Date of birth: **January 4, 2017**

Place of birth: **Calgary, AB**

Middle name: **Mikayla**





With my two grandmas



With my Grandpa Tito and Grandma Rufi



# Daniel Blais



Date of birth: **June 26, 1977**  
Place of birth: **Calgary, AB**  
Middle name: **Joseph**  
Nicknames: **Danny, Dan the Man (Pap, my grandpa, called me this) and Danny Long Legs (from when I was a kid)**

## Favourite childhood memory

I remember Andy and I would buy candy with our weekly \$1 allowance at The Red Rooster, the local convenience store in Stettler. It drove Mom crazy because we were such sugar fiends and she wanted us to eat healthy food. We could get 100 penny candies! I remember when chocolate bars went up to 50¢ and we would say, “What a rip off!”

## Favourite memory of Grandma

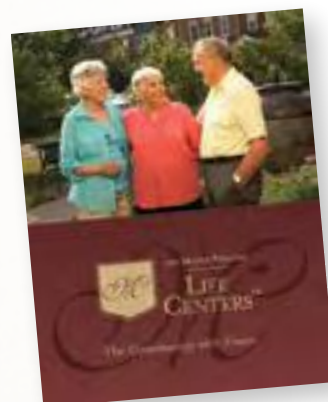
I have had some really fun recent visits with Grandma now that Mom and Dad are living in Kelowna. I will call her from their place and say, “Are we playing Rummikub or what?” and she gets all excited and says, “Okay, come get me!” We have so much fun.

## Favourite memory of Aunt Alice

Years ago, and I don’t remember why, Alice and Grandma were staying in Stettler while Mom and Dad were away. Andy and I visited from Calgary a couple times while they were there. The four of us had so much fun. For whatever reason, Alice and I would stay up into the wee hours (way later than everyone else) talking about our lives. We’d both been through some pretty major life events at the time and helped each other work through things. We really bonded and I’ll forever cherish those times. We’re due for another late night talk, Alice!

## Favourite memory of Cousin Nicolle

Nicolle contacted me quite a few years ago to help design some collateral for The Manor Village. It started with a logo and eventually branched out to a presentation folder, inserts, brochures, posters, calendars and several other pieces. She’s always been fun to work with and extremely organized. No surprise there—she’s a Blais! Whenever she has been in Calgary and has time to squeeze it in, she’s taken me for dinner with colleagues. It’s so fun catching up with her, especially when she swears. “Oh, doodle!” is my personal favourite.



## Favourite memory of my family

Summer holidays were always the best! One clear memory for me was from our family summer vacations. Mom and Dad always wanted us to eat healthy meals in real life, but when we were on summer holidays, we got to eat junk cereal, as we called it. Chris, Andy and I gorged ourselves on Frosted Flakes, Corn Pops, Fruit Loops and whatever we could get our hands on. Look how blissed out we are in this photo!



## Favourite memory of my niece and nephews

When Julian, Morgan and Althea were younger, we were swimming together. I told each of them I'd give them \$100 if they would do a dare. At first, the dares were easy, like they'd have to jump off the edge of the pool or dunk their heads under water, but as the game progressed, the dares became more ridiculous. I think one was if Morgan would put a brown recluse spider in his shoe, he'd get \$100. Where we'd find a brown recluse spider was beyond us and the fact that a bite from one of the world's most deadly spiders would have killed him made it all the more absurd and hilarious. As they did each dare, or said they'd do one, I'd say, "Hundr'd bucks!" I think I owe Morgan something like \$1,400. He still reminds me but he'll never see a red cent of it! I don't remember what I owe Julian or Althea but they can forget it too! I'm such a good uncle.

## Significant life event

Adopting my dog, Olive, was a game changer for me. We had dogs as kids, but owning my own has been amazing. When she was 3 years old, she fell ill with a mystery illness. She spent weeks in emergency vet hospitals and was eventually

diagnosed with hepatitis. It was a horrendous ordeal. Her vet gave her a year and a half to live, but she's still going strong with help from medication. Almost losing her really solidified our bond. I once heard, "Animals love us in ways people can't." It's so true.

## Hobby or pastime

Seeing live music is my absolute passion. I go to a ton of shows and I always try to get the best seats. I treat seat searching as a part-time job, sometimes searching for months until the best seats come up. A few shows on the top of my list were Tina Turner, Fleetwood Mac, Morrissey, Erasure, Bob Dylan and Mary Margaret O'Hara. And I've always got another one coming up!

## Fun fact about me

Stevie Nicks is my queen. Once in Vegas, during one of her last songs, she was walking along the edge of the stage shaking her fans' hands. I reached out, held her hand and excitedly said, "I love you so much!" With a look of complete indifference, she said to me, "Okay." I still chuckle when I think back on that one.

## Current and past occupations

I've been a freelance graphic designer since 1999. I had a job working for an agency for literally 2 weeks and was like, "That's enough of this!" and went solo. It's been a great career. Being self employed is stressful but absolutely rewarding.

Right after college, when I was struggling to establish my design career, I worked part time in a flower shop. It was so much fun. The owners and I became lasting friends. I miss those days and still remember the names of lots of flowers when I see them.

When I was a kid, I worked for Dad at Home Hardware. I would price new product in the stockroom, merchandise shelves and fill those big blue water bottles. During the summers when I was in college, I would go back to Stettler and work in Dad's garden centre. I learned my strong work ethic from my dad.

## Favourite quote

"Worrying is like wishing for something bad to happen." I only like the quote. By no means do I follow its message!



I've had a bad attitude since the day I was born. When you see it...



Summer holidays with Grandma and Pap in Salmon Arm, BC



The Children of the Corn (1982)



The Enchanted Forest (1985)



My skin was at its most radiant in 1983.



Christmas in Stettler with Alice and Pap (2002)



2003



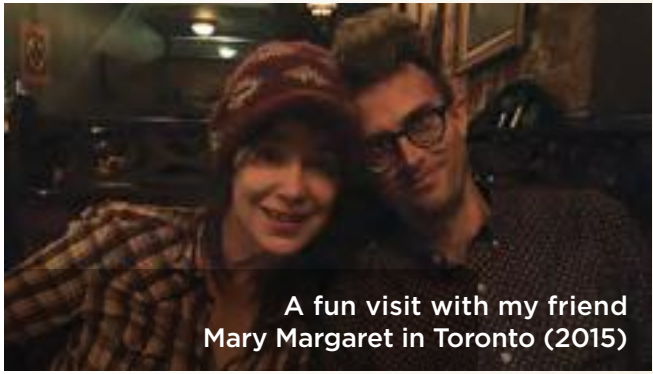
Sippin' whiskey at Glennifer Lake (2014)



Mother's Day (2013)



Visiting Gup at Mayfair Care Centre (2013)



A fun visit with my friend Mary Margaret in Toronto (2015)



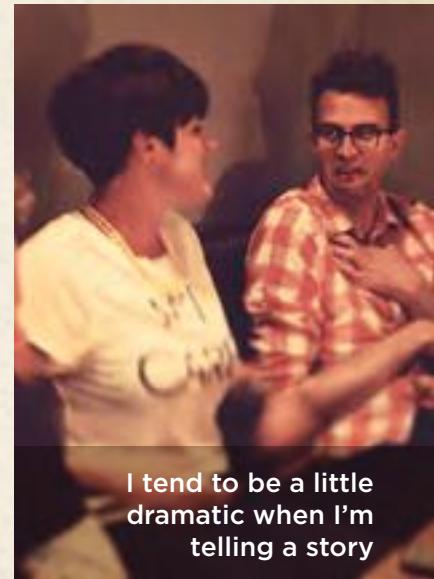
Posing with my dog Olive from when my apartment was featured in *Avenue* magazine (2014)



With friends in Toronto (2016)



I married George Clooney in 2006. The divorce was amicable.



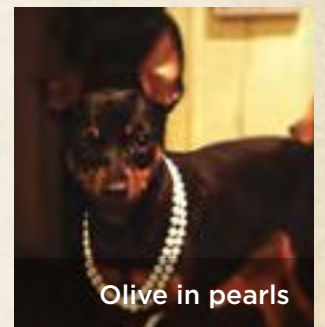
I tend to be a little dramatic when I'm telling a story



One of our many fun trips to Phoenix to visit Mom and Dad



I won front row centre tickets to Tom Petty in 2014. This photo was used on his Instagram.



Olive in pearls



At a meet and greet with Mick Fleetwood in Calgary in 2014. Fleetwood Mac is my favourite band.



Real subtle Grandma! (2016)



# Andrea Blais



Date of birth: **May 11, 1979**  
Place of birth: **Drayton Valley, AB**  
Middle name: **Dawn**  
Nicknames: **Andy, Andy Pandy and Andy Pandy is a Candy (my grandpa, Pap's nickname for me)**

## Favourite childhood memory

I am a huge animal lover. I loved the pet department at Home Hardware when I was a kid. I even started working in that department when I got older. Sometimes we were able to take home critters and care for them over the weekend, which I loved but I'm sure Mom was happy to see them go back to the store!

## Favourite memory of Grandma

Grandma is one of the funniest people I have ever met! I love her sense of humour and her contagious laugh! I loved it when she was able to join us on our summer holidays when I was growing up. I will always treasure those memories of us playing cards and laughing together—something we still do, which is so great.

## Favourite memory of my aunts and uncles

When we were at Echo Valley Ranch for the family reunion in 2008, James and I received some terrible news that our house was on fire. We were having such a great time getting caught up with everyone. It had been a while since we had all been together. We had to leave early to deal with the tragedy back home. Our amazing family was so incredibly supportive during that time that I still get emotional when I think about it. I am and will always be forever grateful.

## Favourite memory of my cousins

I remember thinking Alex's girls were just the coolest growing up. I was just a little pipsqueak and was pretty shy and intimidated by their coolness. I guess not much has changed because I still think they're the coolest!

## Favourite memory of my immediate family

My favourite family memory was when we all went to see Kenny Rogers together. Danny got us incredible front row centre tickets. We were a little late and when we got to our seats Kenny jokingly kind of scolded us and asked, "What time did you think the show started?" The crowd laughed and for the rest of the show it felt like he was performing just for us. He immediately singled out Danny and thought

that he had been dragged to the show by one of us and wasn't really a fan. So he pulled out a wad of \$10 bills and asked if Danny could name any of his songs. For each song Danny named Kenny threw one of the bills at him. He was surprised that he knew so many and was starting to run out of bills, so he put the rest of the cash in his pocket and went on with the show. Throughout the performance he kept addressing Danny by name to check in and see how he was enjoying the show. James also had a special moment when Kenny moved his stool over to where James was sitting and sang *The Gambler* directly to him. Near the end of the show, he thought that Danny was a deserving fan and threw the rest of the money at him along with a signed t-shirt. But, I think I was the real winner of the night because he threw me a signed tambourine! It was the best concert I have ever been to and it was so amazing to share such an incredible memory with my family.



## Favourite memory of my nieces and nephews

It's difficult to get everyone together with our busy schedules, but one tradition that we have started is getting together for pho. There's a great Vietnamese restaurant we meet at and it's always nice to spend time with Althea, Morgan, Julian, and now Mia! We always seem to have lots to laugh about and I hope we are able to carry on this tradition.

## Significant life event

The most incredible trip I have ever been on is when James and I went to Africa. We have a good friend who was living in Tanzania at the

time, so we went to visit her at her home in Dar Es Salam, and then drove to Arusha where we stayed for the night. The next morning we started off on our incredible safari through the Serengeti. It is an amazing way to experience the habitat—kind of like being in a zoo but you are in the cage, which is how it should be. We woke up really early every morning so we could watch the sunrise while we had breakfast in the truck. One morning it was amongst a herd of zebras and the next morning we watched a pair of cheetah siblings on the lookout for a herd of antelope. They took off and attempted a hunt but were unsuccessful, which I was glad for because I wouldn't have wanted to see that. The next day we drove to the Ngorogoro crater which wasn't quite as exciting because we had already seen all of the big game in the Serengeti. Then it was back to Dar Es Salam for a night and then off to Zanzibar. The architecture was amazing and it was great to walk the streets of Stone Town and see the spice markets. It really was an incredible trip—so much beauty but a lot of poverty. We have a lot to be grateful for.

## Hobby or pastime

I love to dance! It's good for the soul!

## Current and past occupations

Currently I am self-employed as a jewellery designer and metalsmith. My first job was working for Dad at Home Hardware. Then I managed Stettler Crafts & More for a couple of years after high school. When I first moved to Calgary I worked in a salon doing makeup and customer service. I ended up keeping this as a part-time job for the next 12 years. When I was 23, I got a job working reception at an architecture firm and also helped out with some accounting work. Once I started my BFA at ACAD I was able to give up the reception part of the job, but kept doing accounting work part time while I went to college. After college, I picked up odd jobs to make ends meet while getting my business started. I worked part time with the visual team at Holt Renfrew and did some admin work for James at his company GuildOne.



With Pap,  
Mom's dad (1979)



1981



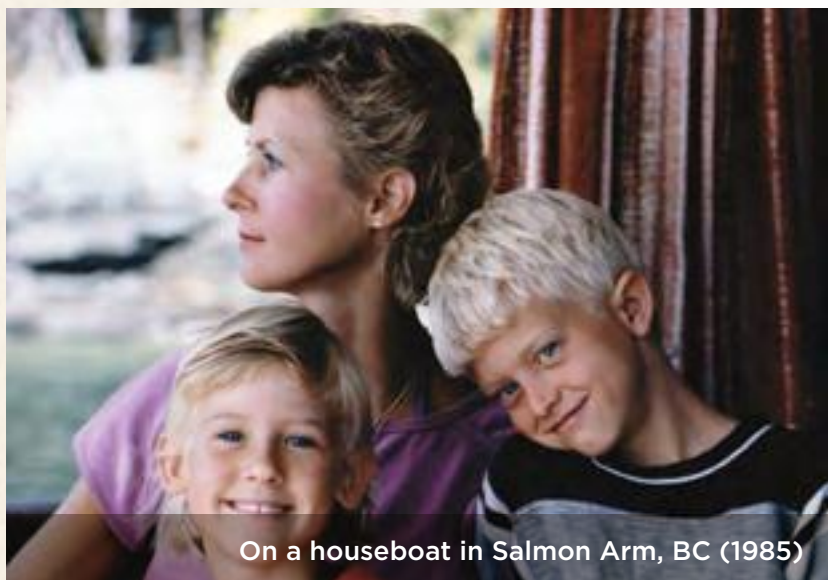
November 1979



With Great-Grandma LeTilly (1981)



My aunt, Charlie's wedding  
(October 1984)



On a houseboat in Salmon Arm, BC (1985)



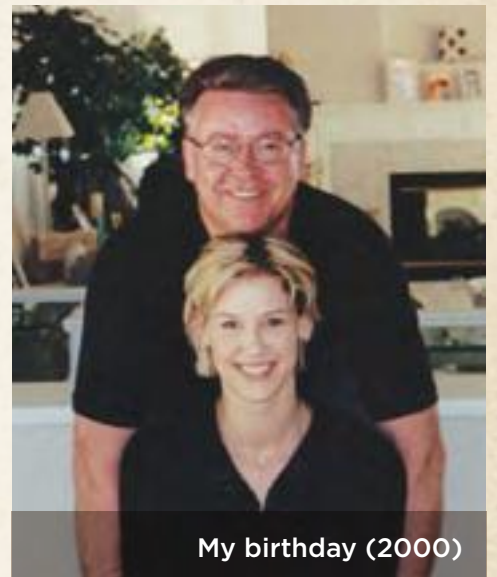
My birthday (May 11, 1983)



1981



Christmas 1984



My birthday (2000)



James, Rita and Danny at the Echo Valley family reunion

# Mary Ann Smithwick



Date of birth: **April 15, 1949**

Place of birth: **Lafleche, SK**

Family name: **Blais**

## Favourite childhood memory

My very first memory ever was when I was three years old. Mom was in the kitchen canning, and I wanted to help. Being a good mom and wanting to keep me safe and away from the boiling water and hot jars, Mom gave me a bucket of water with a scrub brush and asked that I clean the front stairs. Very clever. I remember doing my absolute best to clean those dirty steps. I think that was the beginning of my need to clean everything!

## Favourite memory and what I love most about Mom

What I love most about Mom is her gift of faith and all of the time she spends praying for all of us and our friends. I remember as children, Mom would often gather us in the living room to kneel and pray the rosary. A candle would be lit and often we'd bring out a small statue of Mary. As a child, I took great comfort in knowing that we were supporting those for whom we were praying. And that feeling always stayed with me. Now, my favourite moments with Mom involve taking her the Eucharist and praying with her: special moments where Mom most deeply reflects her beauty and grace.

Mom is so very, very resilient. The move into Chartswell Chatsworth Retirement Home was extremely difficult and painful for her. She was so sad it just broke my heart. However, in a short period of time, she embraced her new life and found a new mission to bring joy to those around her. Many of the residents she is surrounded by are sick, confused or lonely. Mom is reaching out to them offering a listening ear, a hug, lots of compassion and empathy. I am so proud of my mom. She is a ray of sunshine, a vessel of warmth and kindness, an angel of joy. Way to go, Mom!

## Favourite memories of Dad

I was always very proud of Dad and his standing in our church and community. He was a well-respected leader, passionate about building a Catholic school and promoting healthy values and beliefs. Dad went to Mass every morning. Then he would return home for breakfast and call us out of bed with, "Wakey wakey. Everybody up." Of course, his beautiful tenor voice was amazing. Sometimes when I sit very still, I can hear him singing *Ave Maria* or *O Holy Night*. What a blessing.

When I was in Grade 11, I went to Lumby with my class on a retreat. With the help of Sister Agathe, I completed all the forms to join the order of Oblate Sisters. I was becoming a nun! When I later shared my intentions with Dad, he suggested I not rush into anything. He also added that it was easier for him to picture me as a comedian like Carol Burnett on stage, than to see me being happy as a nun. I think Dad spared me some very difficult years.

## Significant life event

When I first met Tom, I can honestly say he took my breath away! He really was a godsend, and so similar to Dad. The fruits of our love blessed us with our beautiful daughter, Renée. Her love with her husband, Tom, awarded us a precious grandson—Joshua. The chain of life. Beautiful and glorious!

## Favourite memories of my aunts and uncles

We seldom visited with Dad's family because they were all in Quebec. However, Dad's sister Rita definitely stood out. At age 16 she entered the convent where she lived a very protected and secluded life as a nun. Uncle Henry, on the other hand, served as a brother in Africa for over 50 years. He did mission work in little villages, travelling on foot until the family bought him a bicycle, and later, a scooter. During his first years, the living conditions were painfully rustic. I remember him sharing the story of his coworker who was killed by a crocodile while bathing in the river.

Of course, Mom's family surrounded us so we saw one another often. Aunt Louise was amazing. We would visit her on the farm where she would send us out into the garden to help ourselves to fresh peas and carrots. All we could eat! No limits! I also remember plucking chickens with her. Yuck! Not my favourite. Too smelly. But somehow whatever you did with Aunt Louise seemed fun.

## Favourite memory of my cousins

I did a lot of babysitting, especially for Aunt Yvonne and Uncle Dally. I spent so much time there, Uncle Dally said he might have to give me part of his farm. Not likely. Back then I was paid 20¢ an hour; 25¢ after midnight. The great thing about Gloria, Jason, Gail, Perry and Jackie is that they were so sweet and well behaved. I just loved them.

## Favourite memories of my immediate family

I love that our family makes an effort to get together regularly. We've had some extraordinary reunions with lots of fun and games. The weekend adventures to Sparkling Hill with my sisters and Mom were very special. Anything

hosted by Peter and Rita always stands out. Their generosity in gifting all of us with this album is so amazing, as well as the incredible amount of work that Rita devoted to editing and verifying accuracy in many of the stories. Thank you, Peter and Rita, for once again sharing with us the fruits of your generosity and goodness.

I am particularly grateful that Renée has embraced everything that Tom and I cherish most deeply. She even has a strong connection to my grandma La Mère whom she only knew during her early years. Shortly before La Mère died, Tom, Renée and I visited her to pray the rosary with her one last time. At that point, she was no longer recognizing anyone and seldom spoke. When I saw her, I held her precious little face in my hands and told her who I was. To my delight, she lovingly returned my gaze and said, "Je sais. Mary Ann." I placed her rosary in her hand and her little face lit up while tears flowed freely down her sweet cheeks. She was radiant and smiled as we all worked our fingers through the rosary beads with which she was so familiar. It was our last time with La Mère and I was so grateful that the three of us together shared what was for all of us a very profound experience. I loved my grandma with my whole heart and soul. As a child, I shared a bedroom with her. We would eat popcorn in bed and she always shared her favourite mints. Before sleeping, we'd often pray the rosary—in French!

## Favourite memories of my nieces and nephews

Our 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary celebration was over the top! And the biggest surprise was the performances involving my nieces, nephews and siblings. Of course, it was the first time we saw Sherry and Nicolle perform their rendition of *I Got You Babe*. Unbelievable! The Sister Act routine was hysterical. Chris, Danny and Andrea dressed as nuns along with Susie, Alice and Deanna! Hilarious! Even Dennis and Alex performed for us! That so much effort was put into our celebration meant more than words could ever express.

I am also very grateful to Sherry for coordinating the beautiful Christmas gifts for Mom. Fun for the whole family when we get to read Mom's thank you emails! And also, thank you to Danny for creating this incredible memory album. For this we will be eternally grateful.

## Hobbies or pastimes

Prayer and attending daily Mass give me my deepest joy. I also have a woman's study/prayer group which I meet with regularly. Healing prayer ministry is very close to my heart. Tom and I are currently working with one of the graduates of Freedom's Door. I never ever thought Tom and I would be doing this ministry together. I also enjoy intimate dinners with family and friends. And weekends at Haynes Lake are glorious! Off the grid and clean air! Yeah!

## Current and past occupations

I've been a salesperson, a telephone operator, bank teller and manager of Financial Services for a trust company. Now I delight in being a grandma.

## Fun fact about me

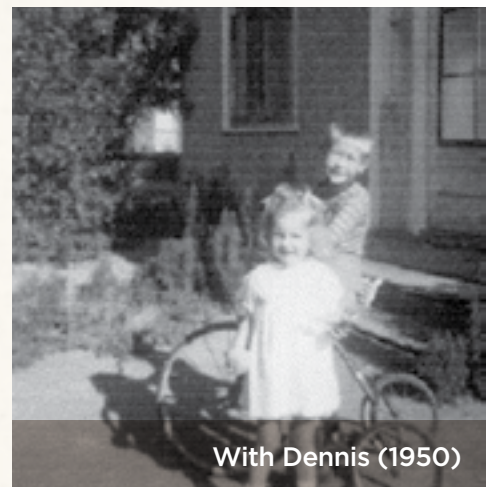
I really enjoy going into the lake water even when it's really cold! I've taken a dip when there is snow on the ground and everyone else is in ski jackets. It's so invigorating and makes me feel very alive!



With Dad's half-brother Onésime (1950)



With Rita



With Dennis (1950)



My precious daughter (1975)



Family reunion



Wedding day



Cabin games



60<sup>th</sup> birthday



Winter fun at the cabin



Mother's Day - four generations



60<sup>th</sup> birthday dinner



New grandparents



Kung Fu



New York



# Thomas Smithwick



Date of birth: **October 22, 1948**

Place of birth: **Saskatoon, SK**

Middle name: **Wilfrid Peter**

Nickname: **Tom**

## Favourite childhood memories

My favourite childhood memories are of being up at my family's cabin at Wakaw Lake. I loved the fishing, waterskiing, swimming, running wild and free, and spending most of the summer barefoot and in a bathing suit. Sweet childhood freedom.

## Favourite memories of Rosalie

I have many thousands of memories of Rosalie, beginning in July 1971 when I went to Assiniboia with Mary Ann to visit her mother and sisters for the very first time. The welcoming was warm, full of laughter and excitement. The food was excellent, and the chatter was plentiful and inviting. I remember going to a dance on Saturday night at the Catholic school gym with many of the extended relatives, and doing the polka and the chicken dance for the first time with Rosalie, who I might add had great legs and was an awesome dancer.

I also remember playing cards with Rosalie over many years after I would come home from work and before we had dinner. Whenever Rosalie lost, which was very often indeed (at least as I recall it), she would tell me she loved me with a sarcastic tone.

## Favourite memories of Emile and Uncle Tuff

I never met Rosalie's husband Emile as he died three months before I met Mary Ann, but I did get to know him through Mary Ann's description of him as a very loving and caring father. I did, however, get to know the other Emile, namely Uncle Tuff, who was Emile's best friend and Rosalie's brother. Uncle Tuff was always so gracious and friendly to me as he welcomed me as a suitor of Mary Ann. He repeatedly invited me into his home, and his wife Marion cooked meals, served drinks and they acted as wonderful hosts. Before Mary Ann and I were engaged, Uncle Tuff challenged Rosalie to a bet (being a bottle of Canadian Club) that Mary Ann and I would be engaged before Christmas. Rosalie took the bet and she lost.

## Favourite memories of Aunt Louise

I also have sweet memories of Aunt Louise. We would always go to visit her whenever we were in Assiniboia. Even if we arrived at her house unannounced, she would immediately pull out a cooked turkey, ham, all the trimmings and homemade pie so that we could have a little snack as we visited.

## Significant life events

My life has many significant events and most of them are extremely positive and life changing such as meeting my life mate, partner and wife, Mary Ann.

Another major event was Rosalie moving into our home and sharing love with us for 35 years.

Another significant decision was the return to my childhood Catholic faith at age 30 and then having the ability to share it with Mary Ann, Rosalie and Renée.

Moving to Kelowna immediately after marriage was a very good decision.

Being involved in many community volunteer events has made my life full and given me the kind of perspectives that would not otherwise have been available to me. Mother Teresa said, "We are not asked to do great things, we are asked to do little things with great love." I believe following this valuable life mantra brings about a life full of significant events.

## Hobbies or pastimes

Being involved with the suffering men of Freedom's Door has been an important and life-changing interest and passion.

## Current and past occupations

I have been a hot tar roofer, bricklayer's helper, cook at Smitty's Pancake House, vacuum cleaner salesman, warehouseman, nightclub bouncer, politician and lawyer. I am currently retired, meaning that I have traded in my summer tires for ones with heavy treads and studs so I can keep going through the mud and snow.





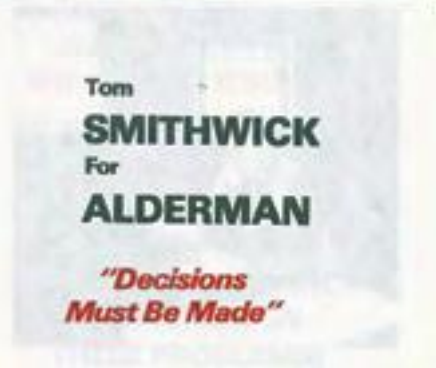
5<sup>th</sup> birthday (1953)



1967



Hunting



The Smithwick family



2010



Halloween



60<sup>th</sup> birthday (2008)



Egypt



Cooking at the cabin



Maui (2009)

# Renée Burzuk



Date of birth: **March 1, 1975**

Place of birth: **Kelowna, BC**

Family name: **Smithwick**

Middle name: **Jenine**

## Favourite childhood memory

I met Princess Diana when she came to Kelowna in 1988. When the mayor was escorting her around the park, my dad, who was on City Council at the time, suggested I stand by the red carpet. The mayor brought Princess Diana to me and introduced her to me. I curtsied. No words exchanged, but still exciting! (Side note: Earlier that day, my dad was one of the few people she actually conversed with.)

## What I love most about Grandma

What I love most about Grandma is her commitment to daily prayer, her faith in God, her infectious laugh, her love for family, and her competitive spirit. Since Grandma moved in with my family when I was seven, we created many, many memories. One of our favourite memories happened several times. When my parents went away, Grandma and I would do a “happy dance” and then go buy Oreo cookies. Grandma was more like a sister to me. We would wrestle on the bed trying to push each other off and pin one another down. We had so much fun. Another memory I share with Grandma happened at Mass. During the consecration, I must have been looking around. She gently touched the back of my head to remind me to bow my head. I think of that moment fondly and appreciate the lesson she taught me about reverence.

## Favourite story about Grandpa

Grandpa Blais died before I was born, and yet, I still have a strong connection to him—a spiritual connection. I talk to him and ask him to pray for me. Years ago, my parents had a ring made for me. The centre of the ring contains Grandpa’s Knights of Columbus cufflink. Sometimes when I am facing something challenging, I will put on the ring and ask him to pray for me. The ring reminds me that he is praying for me and God is with me, and those things make me feel stronger. I so wish that I had met him. I think he would have been an amazing Grandpa.

## What I appreciate about my aunts and uncles

**Alex:** Generous, genuine and welcoming.

**Dennis:** Intelligent, loyal and hospitable.

**Rita:** Generous, positive, happy and organized. You are so good with Joshua. It means a lot that you take time to pay special attention to Joshua when you are in Kelowna. And I am grateful for the many family dinners you host for us.

**Susie:** Fun, loyal and faithful. I am so grateful for the “adoptive mother” bond we share. I cherish our talks and special times together.

**Deanna:** Considerate, selfless, intelligent and hard-working. I remember the many times you included my whole family in special celebrations. Thank you.

**Alice:** Awesome cook, entertaining and loving. I so appreciate the one-on-one time we had together when I visited you and Larry in Edmonton. You are a gracious host.

## What I appreciate about my cousins

**Sherry:** Terrific storyteller, great at making events special, and a leader.

**Nicolle:** Positive attitude, joie-de-vie and active.

**Angie:** Loving mother, good listener and sincere.

**Chris:** Fun, great dancer and kind. I remember having a blast two-stepping with you at Alex and Amy's wedding anniversary. It was so much fun. And we did it again at Alice and Larry's wedding.

**Andrea:** Artistic, friendly and gentle.

**Daniel:** Family-oriented, artistic and generous. Thank you for making this amazing family book happen.

**Chelsea:** Servant-hearted, loving and faithful. Before Neil and Susie took you home, you lived with us for a few days. During that time, I bonded with you. When it was time for them to leave, I held you in my arms and rocked you. I could hear the grownups asking where we were, and I didn't say anything because I didn't want you to go. Soon they found us in the family room. With tears rolling down my face, I said farewell. I love you, Chelsea.

**Bryn:** Positive, great with animals, and fun.

**Leon:** Humble, gentle and adventurous.

## What I love most about my immediate family

**Mom:** You are humble, prayerful, kind, compassionate and loving. My favourite memory that we share is when we put on our beach tops and went out in the pouring rain and played volleyball with the beach ball. We got soaked and had so much fun.

**Dad:** You are generous, servant-hearted, an outside-of-the-box thinker and hard working. My favourite memory that we share is when we went on our boating trips together. Having that one-on-one time with you was so special.

**Mom and Dad:** You are both hospitable and helpful. Growing up, I saw you host many fabulous dinner parties, invite strangers to special occasions, provide a refuge for people

who needed healing, and host many overnight guests. Your ability to provide a comfortable, welcoming, peaceful home is unsurpassed. Thank you for being such a good witness of God's love, care and generosity.

**Tom:** My suitable helper. You are a good provider, funny, gentle and easy-going. My favourite time with you was when we spent 3.5 weeks in Hawaii—so relaxing and just plain amazing!

**Joshua:** My precious son. A gift from God. You are intelligent, athletic and thoughtful. My favourite memory with you is when we went to LegoLand. We had so much fun as a family. Your joy and excitement over the hotel room and the rides was infectious.

## What I appreciate about my nephews and niece

As an only child, I do not have any nieces and nephews in the Blais family. However, I have two nephews and one niece from Tom's family. I love that they have a tight bond with their parents and each other, and that they have a great relationship with God and desire to do His will. My favourite memory of them is when Tom and I took them to the cabin for a night without their parents.

## Significant life events

I am blessed with several significant life events.

- Attending Cursillo, a Catholic retreat, brought me to a much closer relationship with God, for which I am forever grateful. Nearly 20 years later, I still participate in a follow-up group.
- Meeting my husband, Tom, the man of my dreams. The story of how we met is too long to share here, but how it all played out was so amazing and fun and beautiful.
- Adopting Joshua and finally becoming a mother after so many years of yearning was an absolute blessing.

## Fun fact about me

In my early 20s, I went to Quebec for a summer French immersion program. After the schooling, I went to Quebec City and stayed with Great-Aunt Sister Rita in the convent. One night, Great-Uncle Onésime hosted a family party to welcome and introduce me. I hadn't met most of them as they were second cousins and great-

aunts and uncles. Most of them only spoke French. Good thing I had just been immersed in it. Part way through the evening, someone came up to me and said, in French, “Who are you anyway?” I laughed and explained that I am Mary Ann’s daughter and Emile’s granddaughter. (Side Note: At the party, we played games. It was loud and fun just like at our Blais family gatherings.)

## Current and past occupations

My main occupation is wife and mom—not paid, but extremely important! My part-time, paid job is Diocesan Safe Environment Coordinator for the Bishop of Nelson—basically it is abuse prevention. Past jobs include office manager, legal assistant, runner for my dad’s law firm, babysitter and calendar sales at a kiosk in the mall.



Four generations (1975)



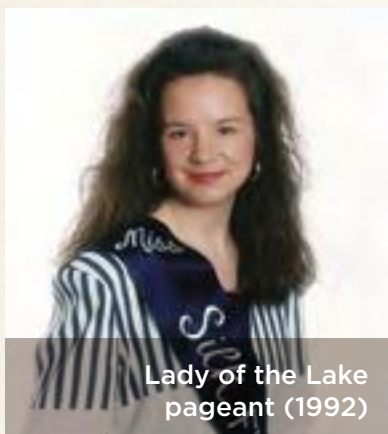
Fastball (1987)



With Chelsea (1990)



Great-Grandma (1983)



Lady of the Lake pageant (1992)



Governor General medal (1998)



Butchart Gardens (1987)



College volleyball (1994)



1998



Dream accomplished (2000)



Family picnic (2009)



New mom (2010)



Christmas (2010)



40<sup>th</sup> birthday (2015)



2015



Reliving the 80s (2016)



# Thomas Burzuk



Date of birth: **May 26, 1972**

Place of birth: **Toronto, ON**

Middle name: **Otto**

Nickname: **Tom, Tonto**

## Favourite childhood memory

When my family was sitting around the dinner table, my parents asked, "What should we do?" I said, "Let's go to Florida." They responded, "That's a great idea!" The next day we packed up and went on a road trip.

## Favourite memory of Rosalie

The first time I took Grandma for a ride in my Mustang, she kept saying, "Woo, woo! Go faster!" I love her spunk, energy, love for family, and her strong spiritual values.

## Favourite memory of the Blais family

Less than a year after I married Renée, the firestorm hit Kelowna. The next thing I knew, my in-laws, Mom, Dad, Grandma and Alice moved in! Mom and Dad had to cancel their plans to be on the Thomas Spirit with family. We decided they shouldn't miss out on the cruise so... Renée got Mom and Dad out of the house. Alice and I blew up a rubber dingy, placed fish stickers on a blue tarp in the backyard and prepared appetizers. When Mom and Dad returned, Chef Alice and I, Captain Tom, welcomed them aboard *Tom's Spirit*. A few days later everyone returned to their homes. Our house was quiet, and the energy was never the same.



## What I love most and favourite memories of my family

**My mom:** Servant-hearted, compassionate and kind.

**My dad:** Hard-working, determined, courageous.

**My brother, AJ:** When we were teenagers, Dad, AJ and I restored an old Mustang.

**Mom (Mary Ann):** Loving, caring, prayerful, generous, very supportive.

**Dad (Tom):** Servant-hearted, generous, kind, community-minded and all around awesome guy.

**Renée:** Caring, honest, sensitive, hard-working, prayerful, always taking care of the family.

**Joshua:** Smart, fun, loving, sensitive and always wants to play.

## Significant life event

Meeting Renée for a blind date after travelling from Montreal—flying standby in wintery weather (making travel very challenging).

## Hobby or pastime

I love programming—coding robots to automate foreign exchange trading and programming macros (little programs) to automate things in Excel and QuickBooks.

## Fun fact about me

I get excited about new technology. I used to play rugby. I like sailing.

## Current and past occupations

I am the Director of Financial Administration for the Roman Catholic Bishop of Nelson. I am also the CFO for Vineyard Developments. In the past, I worked in finance at Canadian Airlines and then Air Canada. Going way back, I worked for Telus and for a moving company during the summers between school.



Wedding Day (October 13, 2002)



Easter 2014



Me and my brother, AJ (1974)



Maui (2007)



1978



My first car (1993)



Graduation (1990)



CFA designation (2010)



Grandma's 80<sup>th</sup> (2002)



My family – Violet, John and AJ Burzuk (2009)



New puppy, Brady (1999)



2010



Latin dance (2009)



AJ's family (2008)



2015

# Joshua Burzuk



Date of birth: **February 27, 2010**  
Place of birth: **Victoria, BC**  
Middle name: **José**  
Nickname: **Baboo  
(only Daddy calls me that)**

## Favourite memories of Great-Grandma

Great-Grandma and I shared special moments sitting together on her patio swing. Great-Grandma would tell me stories about when she was little. I remember her telling me that she kept warm on the way to school by heating bricks in the wood stove and then putting those bricks in the carriage. She also told me that when she played baseball, they used cow patties for the bases.

## Favourite memories of my great-aunts and uncles

**Alex:** Pretends he is the Cookie Monster and sticks things in his nose, which makes me laugh.

**Dennis:** Sticks things in his nose and then eats them, which makes me laugh. I don't think he really eats them.

**Rita:** Plays with me every time she comes to Kelowna, which is so special. Gives me great presents.

**Susie:** Babysat me. We had fun playing together.

**Alice:** Played video games for the first time in her life—just to spend time with me, which made me happy.

**Deanna:** Created an Easter egg hunt in her house for me two years in a row, which was exciting for me.

## Favourite memory of my cousins

I have three first cousins, Jarrett, Brandt and Payton. When they came to visit last summer, they took me to a movie, which was exciting for me because I got to go out with other “kids.” I like wrestling with the boys.

## Favourite memories of my immediate family

**Mom:** Mommy loves me a lot. She takes me to the EnergyPlex and even wrestles with me. We like to go sledding. We play at the park.

**Dad:** Daddy is fun and loving. He plays with me a lot (hockey, soccer, cards, wrestling). He helps me get ready in the mornings.

**Grandma:** Grandma is kind, gentle and fun. We laugh a lot together and I love that. She plays imagination games with me. We do lots of sleepovers and make crafts. We go to movies.

**Grandpa:** Grandpa is creative and easygoing. He takes me to the pool and the park. We make awesome stuff out of cardboard boxes and other scraps. He picks me up from school twice a week. As we drive home, he makes up stories for me.

## Significant life event

My baptism was a special day. Over 200 people attended to celebrate. We had quite a party (which I slept through).

## Hobbies or pastimes

Playing soccer, baseball or hockey with Mom or Dad in the basement. Watching TV. Playing video games. Going to the EnergyPlex indoor playground. Going to the cabin. Playing with our dog, Brady.

## Fun facts about me

I am good at doing math in my head. I like rock climbing; I can climb the hardest rock wall at the EnergyPlex. I am interested in dinosaurs. I am a fast runner. I am lucky at games; I roll doubles a lot. My family says that I have a good imagination.





2010



Baptism (2010)



2012



Crafts with Great-Grandma (2012)



Horse ride in the park (2013)



2010



Easter (2012)



Yay for chocolate! (2012)



Always stop and smell the flowers (2011)



2014



Easter (2016)



The cabin is fun!  
(2013)



Gingerbread tradition (2015)



Holding a joey (2013)



First fish caught  
with Grandpa  
(2013)



2015



Marty McFly for 80s Day  
at school (2016)



# Rita Thomas



Date of birth: **February 28, 1951**

Place of birth: **Assiniboia, SK**

Family name: **Blais**

Nickname: **Ritz**

## Favourite childhood memory

When I was about 10 years old, I asked for a bike for Christmas. Dad told me that he couldn't afford a bike so I forgot about it. On Christmas Day, we opened all of our presents and were cleaning up the wrapping paper mess. I looked up and suddenly there was a beautiful brand new bike propped up in front of me. I soon discovered that brothers Alex and Dennis worked after school and saved their hard-earned dollars to help pay for my bike. Can you believe it? I get teary-eyed every time I think of this.

## Favourite memory of Mom

Peter and I took Mom to Canyon Ranch, a luxury spa outside of Tucson. They offered a variety of exercise activities that included morning hikes, yoga, stretching, weight training and many others, as well as nutrition and cooking classes. They basically had something happening every hour starting with the 6 a.m. hike. Mom was all in for everything all day. I'll never forget seeing her at the very front of the pack of hikers wearing the perfect little hiking outfit, laughing while everyone marvelled at what great shape she was in. She was so darn cute and we were so proud of her.

## Favourite memories of Dad

I idolized my dad and to this day, I still get choked up when I think about him. His death really rocked my world. After second year university, I decided to take a year off to hitchhike across Europe. Dad strongly discouraged me, however, I was determined to see the world. The day before my departure, Dad died and Mom was left with 3 young girls to raise: Susie, Alice and Deanna. I decided to spend that year in Assiniboia with the family which is one of the best decisions I ever made.

My first memories of Dad are from when I was really tiny. He came home for lunch every day and then lay on the couch for a little snooze. I would climb up over top of him and snuggle up in his arms while he slept. He always snored but I didn't care. I just loved the cuddling!

His car was always jammed with as many passengers as possible when he drove us to school every morning. He had one favourite eight track tape called *Honky Tonk Piano* that he would turn on. He whistled all the way to school while we clapped our hands and danced in our seats. What a cool way to start out day!

For a special treat, he would drive us to Moose Jaw for an A&W Teen Burger and root beer float. On the way home, we would always stop on the side of the highway to watch the airplanes. He loved those airplanes!

Dad was a staunch Liberal and encouraged us to get involved in the Young Liberals. I remember campaigning and having lots of political discussions at the dinner table.

He and Mom were real contributors to the community and encouraged us to get involved in giving back which is why I joined Candy Stripers. I received no special accolades for doing this since it was simply expected in the Blais household.

## Favourite memory of Aunt Louise

I used to stay with Aunt Louise at the farm every summer. I so enjoyed listening to her tell funny stories of the things she did as a kid. Her face would light up and her whole body would jiggle as she laughed. She got such joy in reliving the memories and made all of us laugh too.

## Favourite memory of my family

The family reunions and special celebrations are all highlights for me, but the one that stands out was my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday. I crack up every time I think about Alice pretending she was me in a skit she did. It included a health gadget that was a headband with these goofy golf balls on a wire that rested on your head acting as a sleeping aid. I don't think I've ever laughed so hard!

## My 'Recipes for Life' book

Working on my latest book, *Recipes for Life*, with Daniel is one of my life's most enjoyable experiences. I was locked into a contract with a very experienced, highly recommended designer and we simply were not compatible. I called Daniel to come to the rescue and he knew exactly what I wanted, came up with some fabulous ideas and got the job done quickly and perfectly. The transition was seamless. He was the consummate professional and so much fun to work with. To add icing on the cake, I contacted Chal to provide some cover shots and he was every bit as wonderful. You have to love our family! If you see a copy of my book, you'll know why I'm so proud of them!



## Significant life event

Meeting Peter was the most amazing life-changing event for me. I thank God for having him in my life every single day!

## Hobbies or pastimes

Connecting with nature: hiking, biking, skiing, or even simply walking totally regenerates me. Being physical is the best ever and if I can do it with family and friends—even better!

I also have a real passion for learning new things. This includes many different areas, but health would be my all-time favourite. I could squirrel myself away with great learning tools for days at a time and never surface. I also love attending conferences and listening to webinars. Big surprise, right? The ultimate is sharing my knowledge with others and helping make their lives better.

## Rita, the biker chick

One of the first gifts Peter purchased for me was a 1250cc Harley Davidson Heritage Softail motorcycle. There were not a lot of female riders back in 1988, and this definitely was not on my bucket list. I took lessons, put on my big girl panties and soon realized it wasn't that big a deal. Shopping for leather outfits was the best part! It also fulfilled Peter's fantasy of hanging out with a biker chick!

## Fun fact about me

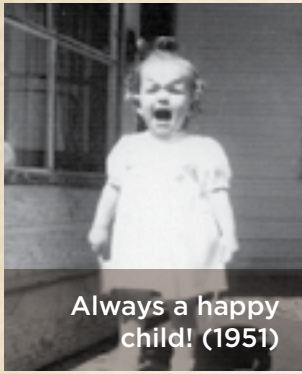
I'm known to my travelling buddies as the bag lady. They make fun of me... but guess who they come to when they need food?

They also recognize that Peter is a high-maintenance kind of guy. When I leave him unattended, I usually assign one of them to take care of him. At one point, I left him with our friend Bonnie and, would you believe he was disembarking from a bus and twisted his ankle under her watch! She was devastated and it's now a long-standing joke that we've gotten lots of mileage out of.

## Current and past occupations

When I was in high school I sold candy and ice cream in the local ice cream shop in Assiniboia. Imagine me selling junk food!

I've held several jobs over the years, but the job I enjoyed the most was a personnel consultant... and it led me to meet Peter. I met and interviewed people all day and matched up employees with employers... loved it. I'm currently a certified health nut and like to write books about it.



Always a happy child! (1951)



Don Taylor's Calgary ranch (1988)



Biker chick (June 1989)



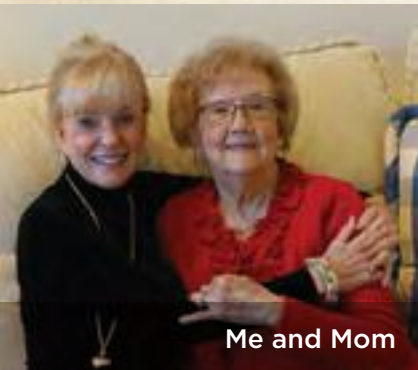
Scuba diving (1987)



New Year's Eve wearing the same dress I wore when Peter and I first met (1988)



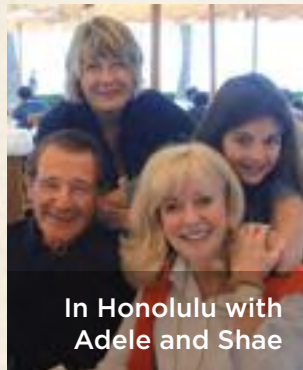
New Year's Eve (1994)



Me and Mom



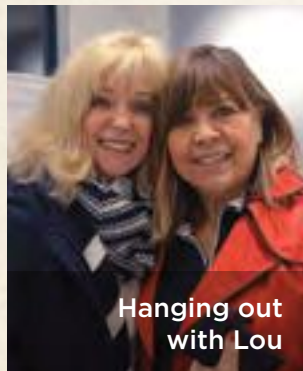
Peter's 78<sup>th</sup> birthday dinner at Mary Ann and Tom's



In Honolulu with Adele and Shae



Peter and I love long walks on the beach earthing



Hanging out with Lou



We love to laugh



Biking with friends in Vermont for Peter's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday



European cruise with Jamesie



We love celebrating with our wonderful staff



Leigh Erin, my mentor and close friend



Erin Holm, my *Recipes for Life* co-author and dear friend



Visiting Argentina with our cruising buddies



Hiking with Renie and Dee



Biking with our friends in Italy

# Peter Thomas



Date of birth: **September 14, 1938**

Place of birth: **London, England**

Nicknames: **I don't really have a nickname although Rita often refers to me as *cutie pants* or *honey bunny***

## Favourite childhood memory

I used to love riding my bike while singing country songs from artists like Web Pierce (*There Stands the Glass*) and Hank Snow at the top of my lungs. Waiting on the side of the road for me when I got home was my loyal dog Skipper.

## Favourite memory of Rosalie

She's such a positive ray of sunshine and lights up any room she walks into. One of my favourite memories was watching her dance up a storm at my 65<sup>th</sup> birthday party with my long time buddy Michael O'Brian. Michael marvelled at her amazing dancing capabilities (and legs), and her never-ending energy.

## Favourite story about Emile

I unfortunately never met Rita's dad, but I've certainly heard many wonderful stories, like how they built a new altar in his church to honour his memory; and how he brought Dale Carnegie to Assiniboia; and how he started Squires; and how he organized the funding and building of the Catholic School in Assiniboia. He sounds like quite a guy and I wish I had had the privilege of meeting him.

## Favourite memory of my grandfather

I recall with great pleasure the stories I used to hear about my grandfather who left home only to return five years later with a few scars and bullet wounds. Rumours circulated that he rode with Jessie James. When I got older and researched the actual time these stories were supposed to have happened, I found that historically the times were dead on.

## Favourite memory of my cousin Ray

When I was about nine years old I stayed with my cousin Ray at the Hobbema Indian Reservation for the summer. His dad was an Indian agent. When I returned home I had a new appreciation for my life.

## Favourite memory of my mother

A favourite story of my mom is the two of us travelling together from London on the Queen Mary. I was seven years old. She was so happy

to be moving to Canada with hopes of a new life with her new husband Bob and someone to help take care of her son.

## Favourite memory of my nieces

I'm very proud of my sister Adele's daughters, Michelle and Chantel who are both attending university. Michele just graduated in 2016 and has been accepted into law school.

## Significant life event

My world was forever changed with the loss of my son, Todd. However, through that tragedy I became a more compassionate human being and created LifePilot. Rita and I travelled the world for 10 years teaching others about living a life in alignment with ones values. I learned to make something good out of something bad.

## Hobbies or pastimes

I am similar to Rita in that I love connecting with nature. I have a few other passions that include classic cars, Elvis and country music. I also love all aspects of my business life, whether it be real estate or franchising or whatever.

## Fun facts about me

I have flown a helicopter, jumped out of an airplane, raced cars, dove with sharks, swam with sea lions, and have had lots of other crazy adventures. You might say I've had a full life.

## Current and past occupations

My first entrepreneurial venture was selling blueberries on the side of the road when I was about eight years old. I'm an entrepreneur through and through and have been involved in a number of franchises like Century 21 Real Estate, Massage Heights, Mystic Tan, Dogtopia, Uniglobe Travel, Triex and Mr. Build. I've also done several real estate developments including the Four Seasons Hotel in Arizona, and I've written numerous books: *Never Fight With a Pig*, *Be Great* and *Business Ground Rules*, to name a few.

I've been involved in several charitable ventures and the one I'm most proud of is serving as chairman emeritus of the Entrepreneurs Organization. They currently have about 11,500 members in 13 countries.



Hiking on the beach with Thomas Spirit in the background



Hot air balloon riding with WPO friends in Cappadocia



Jet skiing with Rosalie



Riding rapids in the Grand Canyon



With Todd and Liane  
(Christmas 1989)



With Shae



Zambians at Kampani Lodge in Africa



With Tasha



Jaipur Rambugh  
Palace arrival



Enjoying the Shew San Daw  
Pagoda views in Bagan



With Trent



Swimming with dolphins



One of many Elvis events we've attended



In Thailand



Living my car passion



In Cairo



Zip-lining



Life is a great ride!



# Susan McCann



Date of birth: **December 21, 1953**

Place of birth: **Assiniboia, SK  
(Assiniboia Hospital)**

Family name: **Blais**

Middle name: **Louise**

Nicknames: **Susie, Spider Legs, Fifi and  
Twiggy**

## Favourite childhood memories

At my first school concert, I sang a solo. After the applause I asked the audience if they wanted me to sing another song. They obliged me and then Sister Rose Marie escorted me off the stage. As the fifth born, I just never missed an opportunity for attention.

As kids, we spent hours playing cutouts. We would make our own using the Sears catalogue. We cut thin strips from the pages to make the walls which we set up on our long bedroom dresser. We also cut out furniture and people. Life was simple!

## Favourite memories of Mom

Mom was renowned for her baking. At Christmastime, the south porch (which served as a makeshift walk-in freezer), was filled with trays of baking that she delivered to the priest, convent and many others. Grams was part of the action, sitting on the kitchen stool and stirring whatever Mom passed her way.

Mom taught us to be generous. She really reaped from this when Dad passed away. We had so much food delivered to the house that we had to store some in the backyard shed. Dad's family from Quebec was amazed. Yet another perk of small-town life!

## Favourite memories of Dad

I so regret not having Dad's voice recorded, but am so thankful I can still hear it. At the separate school, we had a mixed choir and, for special occasions, our dads joined us to provide bass and tenor parts. I remember seeing Dad in the back row and feeling so proud he was my dad. Luciano Pavaroti had nothing on him.

I also loved seeing Dad laugh so hard he would have to wipe his eyes with his hanky.

## Favourite memory of Aunt Louise

I had many sleepovers at Aunt Louise's and Uncle Art's farm. Often it meant a ride out on the school bus, which was a real bonus. One day, we found some old bricks in the ditch and decided to make a fireplace in the garage. Of course we had to try it out, and soon we were running to the house for pails of water. Thankfully, we didn't burn the place down! So, for that round of play, we were both builders and firemen.

## What I love most about my family

I love how well our family honours Mom in so many different ways. Worthy of note, Mary Ann and Tom have excelled at this, providing Mom with a beautiful place to live and thrive for many years.

## Favourite memory of Chelsea

During Chelsea's first track and field meet, the whistle blew and all the kids took off running down the track. Chelsea's best friend fell and when Chelsea realized it, she went back and reached out her hand to help her up. It just melted my heart. She has always had such a compassionate heart. This is what winning looks like in God's kingdom.

## Favourite memory of Leon

Leon was about 3 years old when we hosted a McCann Thanksgiving supper. They are a very proper English family. We were all quietly eating our meal when Leon piped in with, "I sure would like to hear Grandpa Art fart sometime." There was dead silence for what seemed like forever to me, and then someone snickered and laughter broke out. Being with Leon means having some good laughs—something we can never get too much of. He is a gem!

## What brings me joy

Adding Chelsea and Leon to the family has been my greatest joy. Chelsea is a lot like Neil and Leon is a lot like me, which keeps things interesting. Raising them has been my greatest blessing and my greatest challenge. Love you forever, kidlets!

## Current and past occupations

I took a Certified Nursing Assistant course in 1975 and worked as a nurse for only about five years. I loved it and I know that caregiving is part of my destiny. Then, I became Neil's wife and farmhand. I drove grain truck for a lot of years until we got semis and I refused to get my 1A.

I recently took a three-day volunteer training course for palliative care. I felt so alive and look forward to putting this to use.







# Neil McCann



Date of birth: **August 4, 1954**

Place of birth: **Bengough, SK  
(Bengough Hospital)**

Middle name: **Vincent**

Nicknames: **Moose**

## Favourite childhood memories

The farm I grew up on is a mile from town and the skating rink. In those days the road was blocked most of the winter. We would walk to the rink, skate for two hours and walk home. My dad would lead the way and us kids would file behind. As a small child of 5 or 6, those moonlit, crisp nights made a lasting memory.

The school we went to was a two-storey building with the classrooms on the second floor and the gym and washrooms in the basement. During the breaks the kids pretty much had the run of the basement. My mother taught high school when I was in grade school. One day she asked me what the whistling was all about. I didn't tell her, but the older kids would whistle the tune of *The Friendly Giant*, a kids TV show, to call Jerome the Giraffe when Mom was coming down the stairs. I guess they thought she had a long neck.

The summer I turned 19, I hitchhiked to the west coast twice and to the Maritime's once. I lived in Sackville, NB for two months waiting for a job on a lobster boat. The fisherman's son came home and I didn't get the job. However, when I was on P.E.I. at a hostel, I sat around a campfire with Cat Stevens. He had a small band with him who played banjos and bamboo flutes.

## Favourite memory of my dad

Dad wouldn't buy me a motorbike when most of my friends had one. He bought me a bicycle instead. I wasn't much appeased by that, so his solution was for the two of us to build a motorbike together.

## Favourite memory of my Uncle George

My Uncle George was a real character. He was reeve of the Rural Municipality (RM) for years and liked to party with the equipment salesmen.

At George's 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary party, I said to him, "60 years is a real accomplishment. Do you have any words of wisdom?" He responded, "It took the last 40 to get over the first 20!"

## Favourite memory of my cousin Eddy

My dad and his brother farmed together when my cousin Eddy and I were young. That meant we worked together on the farm. Ed was a bit of a deviant and led me into lots of shenanigans. One time we found out if you hold a frog's mouth open you can shove another frog down its throat. Then we put that one inside another one until we had 5 frogs in one.

## Favourite memory about my immediate family

The most cherished thing about my immediate family is we all kind of grew up together. Couples become parents and kids grow into adults. Then they love you back as much as you love them.

## Hobbies or pastimes

From the first time I went downhill skiing at age 27 it's been a real passion. I love sailing as well.

## Current and past occupations

In my early twenties I was a carpenter. Then I was in farming for 40 years. Now I am recently retired.

## Fun fact about me

I was a certified figure skating instructor.

## Memories of the Blais family

I was a quiet, shy farm boy at a school dance in the big town. Fortified with false courage, I brashly said to a schoolmate, "Hey Rube, I like your taste in women." No other statement has had more impact on my life.

Susie and I started dating in Saskatoon in 1976 and I was soon introduced to Rosalie and the household of La Mère, Alice and Deanna. La Mère liked me, but I had a harder time selling myself to the others. Maybe it was just the dog, Fino, that didn't like me.

Rita, along with Alex, Amy and their daughters were all living in Saskatoon at that time. Through Rita, I met Ross Rooke, who I eventually went into business with. Rosalie came to Saskatoon for Christmas around that time. It was my first experience of a Blais Christmas—tourtière,

cabbage rolls and baking. I was amazed how Rosalie entered into all the action and fun. That was one of the first life lessons I learned from Rosalie and her kids: fun!

After Susie moved to the farm, we spent many weekends at Rosalie's house in town. I would get in late from hockey practice and find a note from Rosalie telling me where to find goodies. My second life lesson from Rosalie was hospitality.

I remember the time Dennis and Bette Lynn had the whole family for Christmas in Stettler. We were storm stayed for two extra days. That was extreme hospitality!

Another moment that stands out for me was when we were at Amy's funeral. The family was lined up to file into the church. I watched Uncle Tuffy take Alex aside. He was imparting something to Alex. I don't know what he was saying but I got the impression there was such intergenerational integrity in those two men.

How about extreme generosity? Peter and Rita have treated us all to some wonderful adventures: the reunion at Echo Valley, the siblings on a cruise, the boat, this book.

Mary Ann and Tom have been pillars in this family and their community: Freedom's Door, the church and helping their families through many issues. I can't count how many times they have hosted my family and me over the years. I can't express my gratitude.

I divide the family into two groups: the older ones and us younger ones. I have been around the younger ones a lot more.

Deanna lived in Saskatoon when we were there. We partied with her and her crowd. Garth and I were part of the same group in Assiniboia back in the party era. We played hockey together and all that entailed. We went on numerous ski trips together, and shared a memorable fishing trip up north.

Alice was in Assiniboia when we moved to the farm. She was just as crazy then as she is now! We had many adventures like skating on Willow Bunch lake. She was with us in the Philippines when we were on a missions trip there. She also lived with us for a while before she moved to Kelowna.

The interesting thing is Rosalie is involved with us all equally. She shines her light of joy and love amongst us all, including the now adult nephews and nieces and all their children. She is such a great example of joy in life. Her legacy will endure for a very long time.







# Chelsea McCann



Date of birth: **July 27, 1988**

Place of birth: **Kelowna, BC**

Middle name: **Elizabeth**

Nickname: **Chels**

## Favourite childhood memory

I had a secret place where I would go to think. I would sneak across the gravel road to the line of trees facing our farm, and sit and watch the horizon, read a book, or dream.

## Favourite memory of Grandma

Growing up, Grandma would always involve me in whatever she was doing, whether it was playing Canasta with friends, baking, pressing flowers, going to Mass or making cards. She always took time to explain the process to me, and invested in my growth as a human being. I always knew that I was of importance to her, recognized and loved. That has never stopped, and I know it never will.

## Favourite memories of my aunts and uncles

With so many aunts and uncles, it's hard to make this a short answer! I remember water fights with uncles Dennis and Alex while growing up. I remember spending time with Aunt Rita and Uncle Peter on their yacht, and with Uncle Tom and Aunt Mary Ann at their cabin. Then there's Aunt Alice's almost theatrical reactions to everything in life!

Any time I get to spend with family is wrapped in love and full of laughter and memories that would be hard to forget. I've had heartfelt conversations, watched and participated in skits to commemorate any and every occasion, and have eaten expertly executed themed dinners. We don't do anything on a small scale!

## Favourite memories of Bryn

Bryn was my closest cousin since we grew up within an hour of each other. We have always been able to let creativity and craziness flow when we get together. We used to try and dig tunnels from our respective acreages so that we would be able to visit each other easier. Not surprisingly, the 40-mile distance kept us from completing our childhood goal.

## Favourite memories of my immediate family

Suppers in the field during the harvest season followed by a ride in the combine—there is truly no other experience like it!

## Significant life event

That would have to be listening to my intuition and moving to my current city. Sometimes what seems like a small event to others can be the most significant to you. Moving to a city where I had no family and few acquaintances or friends was a big step for my introverted self. I removed the safety net of my introverted bubble, and it was the best move for me in hindsight. It can be good to take a chance!

## Hobbies or pastimes

I love anything creative! Painting, baking (especially beautiful cakes), listening to music as well as playing it are at the top of the list.

## Current and past occupations

I manage a bar and am an intern in a leadership and development program. By trade, I am a hairstylist and still enjoy cutting and colouring hair as a part-time endeavour.





Alice and Larry's wedding  
(June 23, 2013)

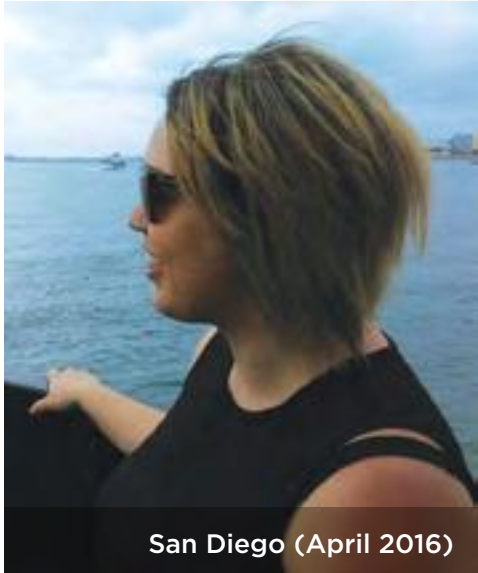


With friends Kristy and Alisa  
(2014)



Malibu (February 2015)





San Diego (April 2016)



Christmas (2016)



Camping (July 2016)



# Leon McCann



Date of birth: **May 26, 1994**  
Place of birth: **Moose Jaw, SK  
(Moose Jaw Union Hospital)**  
Middle names: **Dalton Leonard**  
Nicknames: **Boo Boo**





With my girlfriend, Cassie Jo Tjeltheit  
(born on February 11, 1997  
in Moose Jaw, SK)



# Alice Sales



Date of birth: **May 13, 1956**  
Place of birth: **Assiniboia, SK**  
Family name: **Blais**  
Middle name: **Jeanne**  
Nicknames: **Al, Big Al, my favourite is Ali**

## Favourite childhood memory

It has to be the Christmas concerts that we used put on for our families every year. We got together with the Hoffos family every Christmas. We were seven kids and they were six. Rita started the tradition. She gathered us kids together about two months before Christmas and we would plan skits, songs, and whatever we could think of that might be slightly entertaining. We made programs for each person in the audience (parents, grandparents and older siblings). We had costumes, props and even sang *Oh Canada* to start off the event. It was torture to have to wait until we ate our turkey dinner and cleaned up the kitchen. I remember all the excitement and anticipation of being able to share what we had prepared. I was in Heaven being able to perform for an audience. As you've probably noticed, I have not outgrown my love for being on stage.

## Favourite memories of Mom

I love the traditions that Mom created to make Christmas so wonderful and magical for us. When you consider the fact that she worked full time and had seven kids, she spent every evening for probably two months baking all kinds of fancy cookies and slices that filled the deep-freeze. I can still picture Grandma sitting on her stool at the stove, stirring the filling for some fancy slice. We would be so excited but couldn't eat any of it until Christmas Day. On Christmas Eve, we sat around the dining room table and rolled cabbage rolls. Following that came the making of popcorn balls. Then we would go to midnight Mass where Dad always sang *Oh Holy Night* and *Ave Maria* as a solo.

Mom must have spent most of Christmas Day in the kitchen. She would make a beautiful fancy brunch and then a big turkey dinner that started off with shrimp cocktail, then the usual turkey with all the trimmings as well as cabbage rolls, tourtière (meat pie) and fancy jellied salads. We'd finish it off with pumpkin and pecan pie for dessert. Of course Mom used all her good china. I'm in awe at what she was able to accomplish. Every year we looked forward to repeating each tradition.

My favourite thing about Mom is her zest for life. She's amazing!

## Favourite memory of Dad

He had a kind heart. I remember one very cold winter morning, he was driving his station wagon full of kids to school. Dad spotted what looked like a homeless man. To our horror and disgust, he stopped the car and offered the man a ride. He stunk and had gobs of snot hanging from his nose. Dad treated the man with kindness and respect. That gesture had a large impact on me.

## Favourite memories of my siblings

It's hard to pick just one. We have had so many great times together. I do want to tell the story of how my family was there to look after me when my health failed shortly after arriving home from the Philippines. I developed chronic fatigue syndrome and post traumatic stress disorder. I couldn't take care of myself. I spent three months at Mary Ann and Tom's. They provided the most loving atmosphere to rest and heal. I then lived with Neil and Susie on the farm for six months. The peacefulness of farm life and the joy of being part of their family contributed to my continued healing. Rita began to support me financially so I could gain some independence. I moved to Kelowna to be near family. Mary Ann and Tom provided the finances for me to receive counselling to overcome the trauma that I experienced in the Philippines. Rita and Peter continued to support me financially as I became able to work part time. I felt bathed in the love of family. I felt so terribly broken from all that I had been through. Rita spent hours with me building up my self-confidence. It was like she brought my spirit back to life. She's the one who gave me the confidence to believe I could find a wonderful man to marry. I did find the most wonderful man, and I am the happiest that I've ever been.

## Favourite memories of Chelsea and Leon

All of my nieces and nephews are special to me, but I will choose memories of Chelsea and Leon. When I lived with them on the farm, they became very precious to me. We had such fun skating on Willow Bunch Lake, building snow forts, and eating dinner out in the field during seeding and harvest. Leon and I loved to torment each other. The memories are almost endless, as is my love for them.

## Significant life event

There have been many, but I will pick the year that I spent living in the Philippines helping young girls out of prostitution. It was the most difficult year of my life and, at times, the most rewarding. Mostly I think I was crazy to do it. My physical and mental health have been affected by it. It's been 18 years since I've come back and I still struggle with my health.

## Hobbies or pastimes

I have always loved to dance. If I could live my life over again I would be a professional dancer. I also love to read, hike, swim and snorkel. Oh, and I love public speaking. I know that's weird.

## Current and past occupations

I am a housewife and am loving it. I have had a few careers. I spent three summers working for the Kelowna Boys Club. We would take a van load of boys camping each week throughout BC and Alberta. My weirdest job was when I worked on the oil rigs in Northern Alberta and BC as a cook. It was kind of crazy. We would fly into remote places that had trailers set up for us, deep in the bush. My longest career was running two different preschools. I loved teaching all those adorable three to five year olds. When I developed health problems after returning from the Philippines, I changed careers again, working as a personal chef for families. I taught a few cooking classes and loved it. I've always loved to cook.

## Something else I'd like to share

To give you a better idea of who I am, I should mention that when I was about 22 years old, I had a profound spiritual experience in which I gave my heart and my life to Jesus Christ. Shortly after that I went to Bible College and received my Bachelor of Religious Education. I then devoted the next 25 years of my life to serving God in whatever way I could. After 25 years, I became disillusioned with Christianity and lost my faith. It was a heart-wrenching experience and, apart from my dad's death, the most difficult thing I've ever gone through. I have since learned to respect those who have a faith of any religion. I'm still searching for what works for me.





Dennis reading bedtime stories Rita, with me on her knee, Mary Ann and Susie (1959)



Camping with the Kelowna Boys' Club, where I fell in love with the beauty of nature.



One of the many special memories with Chelsea and Leon, on the farm.



Hanging out with the group of girls and their children, in the Philippines. I lived with them and helped them out of prostitution.



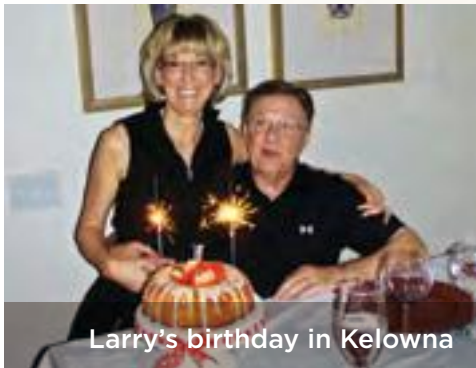
Enjoying a hike in the great outdoors.



The happiest day of my life  
(June 23, 2013)



Performing for Mary Ann on her 60<sup>th</sup> birthday.  
I'm in my glory, performing for an audience.



Larry's birthday in Kelowna



Haynes Lake (my happy place)



Victoria

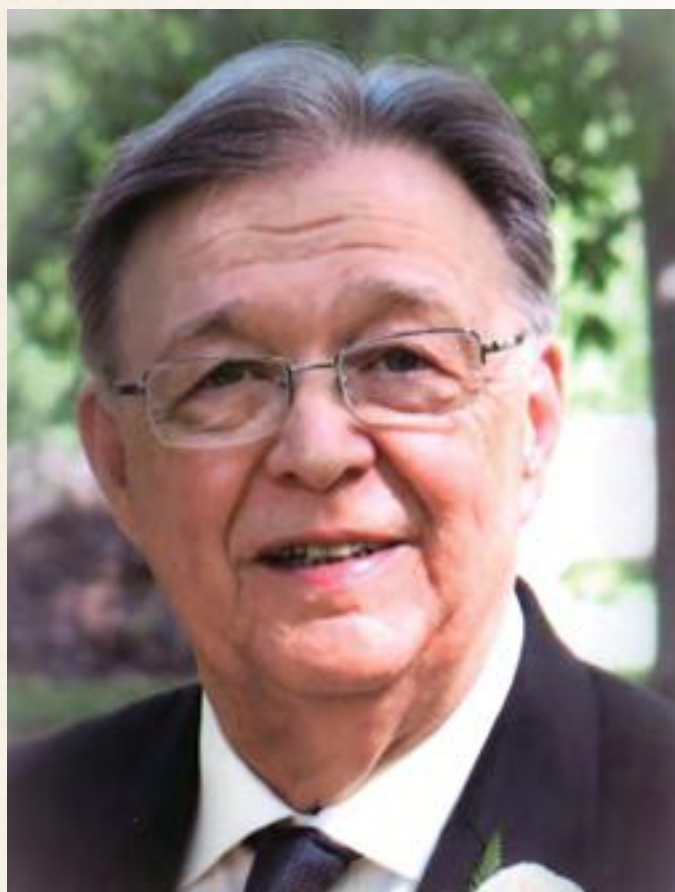


Mom's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. We framed some  
of her greeting cards to decorate the table.



I loved the 15 years that I lived in Kelowna  
when Mom and I became buddies.

# Larry Sales



Date of birth: **September 27, 1944**

Place of birth: **Toronto, ON**

Middle name: **Wayne**

Nicknames: **Buzz**

## Favourite childhood memory

I was about three years old and having dinner with my parents and grandparents. Dessert was pumpkin pie with whipped cream in a can that you'd shake and press sideways on the spout. I believed I was old enough to shoot the whipped cream on the pie. Sitting on Grandad's lap, I tried to spray the cream on the pie but lost control of the nozzle, getting it all over Grandad's chin and clothes, and all over me. He laughed and hugged me until we were both covered with whipped cream. Of course, Grandma was furious, which made us all laugh even louder. This was the beginning of a wonderful and warm relationship with my grandad.

## Favourite memory of Rosalie

At the 2012 family reunion in Kelowna, we were playing team games in the park. Rosalie was standing on a picnic table, organizing and keeping score with her clipboard and pencil. My first thought was, how did this beauty of 90 years get up there, and what would happen if she fell? Nobody else seemed at all concerned so I hung around the table ready to catch her if she fell. Then it occurred to me, what part of me would break, trying to catch this 120 pound goddess? Later, she gracefully stepped down from the table, and I realized that I had no reason to be concerned.

## Hobbies or pastimes

In my younger years, I loved playing competitive sports, including hockey, baseball, football, golf, tennis and swimming. Although I was never a top player, I was good enough to play for great teams with some of the best players. When I became a firefighter, I had the money and time to play more golf and, as the years went by, golf became my favourite. I was blessed to spend seven summers at Jasper Park Lodge (JPL) as my home course. I plan to play a lot more in my retirement years with the goal of one day shooting my age.

## Significant life events

When I was 22 years old, I decided to leave the prestige, security and early retirement from being a firefighter to go back to school at the University of Western Ontario. At the time, this was my significant life event.

That winter, The CN and CP went on their annual trek to eastern Canadian universities to hire staff for their resort hotels. I applied to be a bartender and was hired to be a dining room waiter. The job paid \$127 per month plus room and board. The room was shared by either four men or four women with a community washroom on each floor. These residences were patrolled regularly by the CN police and many staff would lose their jobs if they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. We dined at a staff facility called The Beanery where the food was unusually good. We were given free transportation by train (coach class) from Toronto's Union Station to the mountains of Alberta. This three-day journey was to be the start of the many parties and friendships we would have over the next seven years. We worked long hours, six days a week, and enjoyed both the work and play.

The next summer, I returned as a room service waiter. We delivered meals, drinks and ice by bicycle, and were well tipped for our fast delivery—and even better tipped for our entertaining spills. For the next four years, I had the privilege of taking care of the guests of Point Cabin, which included Royalty, political leaders and prominent industry leaders. Later, I managed room service and the bars, and my final job was to be the chef and maitre d' of the barbeque pit.

Some of the JPL staff were nomadic world travellers who had skills and talents needed by hotels, and for them, resort hotels were both fun and profitable. When we heard their stories, many of us decided to see the world. In 1969, I spent the winter in Europe and North Africa, and in 1971, the last year of the Vietnam war, I travelled through India, Nepal and southeast Asia. But that's another story.

Working at JPL gave me the opportunity to play one of the world's great golf courses, to make pack trips (on horseback) into remote fishing sites, and to hike through virgin mountain wilderness. Every day, we woke to the changing personalities of Pyramid Mountain or Mount Edith Cavell and a dozen other mountains and their reflections in Lac Beauvert. Over the years, I convinced many friends, university roommates and family members to come to work at JPL. Many found their life partners, some had families, and some made it their home.

My brother Dan came to JPL when he was 16 and too young to work legally. Somehow he was hired without paperwork, and by the time this was discovered, he was 18 and legal. When he graduated from University, he decided to make Jasper his home and went to work for the railway in town. Along the way, he fell in love with and married Clare Everest at Point Cabin. They had two sons, Jordan and Tyson and the family has always made me and my family feel welcomed. Sadly, Danny had a cycling accident in the summer of 1998 and passed away in late 1999. He was truly loved by all who knew him.

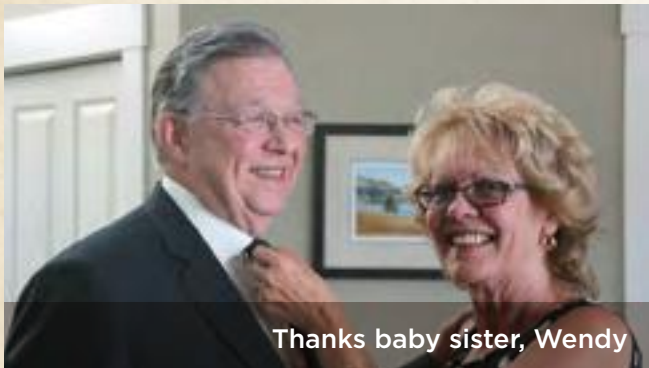




Our wedding party (Ali's sister Deanna and my son Evan)



Evan speaking at our wedding



Thanks baby sister, Wendy





Visiting cousin/big brother Bill in the Niagara region



My paradise - Jasper National Park



Posing at Niagara Falls



# Deanna Delyea



Date of birth: **December 25, 1959**

Place of birth: **Assiniboia, SK**

Family name: **Blais**

Middle name: **Rose**

Nickname: **Dee**

## Favourite childhood memory

One of my most precious childhood memories was spending Christmas with the Hoffos family and doing skits. We would practice after school for hours and then on Christmas Day we would perform for the adults. We would even create a program and hand them out. Alice and Gayle

loved Carol Burnett so they recreated many of her skits, and *Laugh In*, with Susie as Goldie Hawn, was always a big hit. Susie and I visited with Aunt Yvonne recently and she said it was a Christmas highlight for her as well.

## What I love most about Mom

Mom is so friendly and compassionate. She will speak to anyone and really tries to make people feel good. Now that she is in a retirement home she is an absolute ray of sunshine for the staff and residents. She sits with residents that are sad, invites them to her room if they aren't feeling well, and teases them when she thinks they need a laugh. She is an inspiration to us all.

## Favourite memory of Mom

When we were in Assiniboia for Susie and Neil's 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, it was the Canada Day weekend so there were many outdoor activities happening on Main Street and lots of people milling around. We ran into lots of people that Mom hadn't seen in several years. We met up with an older lady named Marj Erfle. When Mom saw her she said, "Marj—you're still alive!" and after a pause, "Me too!" They had a good laugh over it and a nice visit. Only Mom could get away with saying that to someone.

## Favourite memories of Dad

Dad would take us on a family vacation every summer. One of the highlights was going to Regina Beach where the Marshall-Wells salesman, Arnie, had a cottage. It was so much fun to hang out at the beach and have Dad with us. We would ride in the back of the station wagon on blankets, looking up at the clouds and eating junk food. We all got car sick at least once, but Dad still took us every year. Dad also took us to Moose Jaw or Regina before Christmas for a Sparkle Tour that was a favourite part of the season.

## Favourite memories of Aunt Louise

Aunt Louise was one of my favourite aunties. She made us feel welcome in her home and she always had fresh baking. Picnics at the Bergeron farm meant a day of excitement. We could pick and eat as many garden peas and carrots as we wanted—and we didn't have to wash them! One day Alice and I were asked to help with the potato harvest. The soil was

rich with nutrients and the potatoes were huge. I dug up a mound and underneath was an earth worm about a foot long. Alice had just dug up a potato the size of my head and when I ran over to her with the worm in my hand she freaked out and threw the potato at me. Luckily she missed, but of course, I kept chasing her with the worm. What a brat I was!

## Favourite memory of my cousins

Growing up I spent a lot of time with Betty Lawson (Hoffos) and Brigitte Jacob (Bergeron). We played Barbies for hours—even when I was supposedly too old to play with them. Betty would regularly come over on the weekend and we would play Church. There was a bench in our bedroom closet and we would pretend that it was a church pew. Grandma loved it and would often give us each a dime or a quarter so we could buy candy.

## What I love most about my family

What I love most about our family is how much we love each other and how much fun we have together. We're a crazy bunch and I wouldn't change a single thing.

## Favourite memories of my family

I spent many vacations visiting Kelowna and staying with Mary Ann and Tom. Playing in the pool and going out on the lake were always highlights. I fell in love with Kelowna during that time and am so grateful to the Smithwicks for putting up with me all those years. Now we get to hang out at Haines Lake, one of my favourite spots, and enjoy the great outdoors. Thank you Mary Ann and Tom!

Bryn has always loved animals. Because she was an only child we were fairly accommodating. She had Sadie, a yellow lab, followed by Benson, and of course a steady stream of cats and kittens. On top of that she had fish and two degus (rodents). After attending a 4-H event, Bryn decided she had to have a bunny. Garth and I were very firm in our rejection of the idea. We absolutely did not want a rabbit. One morning we got up to a house full of stuffed rabbits, pictures of rabbits, stories about rabbits, scattered about the house in every room. Needless to say she wore us down and ended up with Molly, a very sweet black and white miniature rabbit.

Garth's weakness is sweets. I am so proud of him for giving up sugar (most of the time). His mother told me a story about how she had made a pan of

cinnamon buns for an event one evening. When Garth got home from school he ate the centres out of every one. She was laughing when she told me, but I'm sure at the time it was not very funny.

## What I love about my nieces and nephews

I love how the nieces and nephews have inherited Mom's creativity. Each and every one is gifted in some way, and many have passed that on to their children. I also so appreciate how much each of them loves Mom and wants to spend time with her.

## Favourite memories of my nieces and nephews

Some of my favourite memories of Bryn's childhood involved crafting with Chelsea and Susie. Chelsea is so creative. She could spend hours making things out of toilet paper rolls and Kleenex boxes, and was a whiz at using the glue gun. A favourite travelling game we played was to make up a story. The first person would start and then pass it on to the next person who would elaborate until it was the next person's turn. Chelsea and Bryn were hilarious and never at a loss for words. Chelsea was like a big sister to Bryn and they spent many hours playing together. I am so grateful that our kids got to grow up together.

## Significant life events

My wedding day was one of the most special days that I have ever experienced. Marrying the man that I love and being surrounded by our family and closest friends was such a special time. Every memory about that day was perfect. I can't believe that we're almost at the 25-year mark. It just keeps getting better and better.

Life would simply not be complete without our Bryn Marie. Being a mother is the most rewarding and incredible gift I have ever been given. Being Bryn's mother is the greatest blessing of all. We are so grateful that Bryn has brought Mason into our lives. He is a very special young man and we are so happy for them.

## Favourite pastime

My favourite pastime is reading. I always have a book on the go and like to read for a few minutes before I turn off the lights.



## Fun fact about me

When I was in elementary school I belonged to a singing group called *The Happy Time Singers*. The Choir Director and Pianist loved Anne Murray so arranged for us to take a bus to Regina and attend her concert. We all wore long dresses and got to meet her back stage before the concert. It was the first concert I had ever attended and I was feeling very important after meeting the star of the show. When we got to our seats, I pushed my seat down and fell right on my butt. I didn't realize the seats automatically popped up. As I lay between the seats I learned a very valuable lesson—don't take yourself too seriously!

## Current and past occupations

My first job was babysitting and I spent many evenings and two summers looking after kids and reading romance novels given to me by one of the mothers. When my babysitting days were over I started working at the Olympia Theatre selling tickets and concession items. I smelled like fake butter and popcorn for most of my high school years. In Saskatoon I worked as an Assistant to the Vice-President of Finance for a company called Canpotex. Around that time I went to visit Rita in Vancouver and Peter offered me a job. Garth and I had just started dating so I turned down Peter's offer—just in case! Well it was clearly the right decision and lucky me! I ended up married to Garth *and* working for Peter so I got the best of both worlds. Now that I am working with Peter and Rita I can say it has been one of life's blessings. I am grateful every day that I am part of the Thomas organization.





Anniversary picnic at a winery



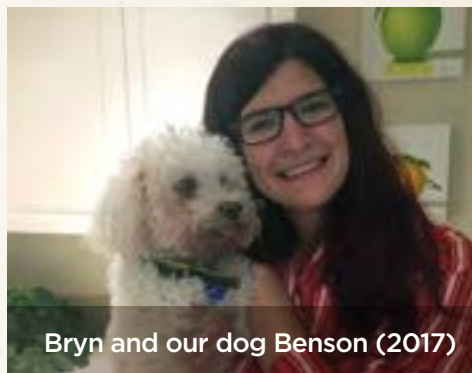
Susie's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday



My 50<sup>th</sup> birthday party



McCann Christmas



Bryn and our dog Benson (2017)



With Kathy, Norm, Deb and Myles

# Garth Delyea



Date of birth: **July 16, 1953**

Place of birth: **Moose Jaw, SK**

Middle name: **Allan**

Old nickname: **Wolf**

## Favourite childhood memory

Going antelope hunting with my dad. We camped out in the grassland prairies of south-west, Saskatchewan. It is where I learned how beautiful our prairies really are.

## Favourite memory of Rosalie

When my family first moved to Assiniboia (I was 11), Shelda and I would buy our mom's Christmas gifts from Rosalie at Marshall-Wells because we trusted her to pick out something nice for Mom.

## Favourite story about Emile

As I said at our wedding, I regret very much that I never had the opportunity to meet him.

## Favourite memories of my family

Celebrating Christmas in Mom and Dad's basement with the whole family and many friends. It lasted all day. We ate, drank, opened gifts and lived large. There were no dull moments.

## Favourite memories of my cousins

When we were 5 - 7 years old, my cousins Brian, Don and I would stay at Grandma and Grandpa Boyton's farm at Old Wives Lake in the summer. It was like we had gone to Neverland with Peter Pan.

## What I love most about my family

I love being around my sister Shelda when her three kids are visiting with their kids. Watching them all grow up is such a gift.

## What I love most about my nieces and nephews

I love the fact that all of Shelda's children are so completely unique. Brandy—steady, Diana—unpredictable, and Wayne—everything is possible!

## Significant life event

*Life* is the event as I watch in awe how amazing my life is. From growing up with the best Mom and Dad, to meeting Deanna and falling in love with her, to having Bryn, and losing Mom and Dad. On it goes and I continue to be in awe.

## Hobbies or pastimes

I get my greatest joy from adventure, whether it's a great hike, meeting a new friend, tasting new food or coming up with a new idea. I love finding out what's around the next bend in life's road.

## Fun fact about me

I am constantly inventing things. Maybe someday it will pay off. For now it just keeps me a little crazy!

## Current and past occupations

I own and operate a weight loss clinic and manage my farm. Previously, I owned a farm equipment dealership and auto franchise.



Wedding photo with my parents



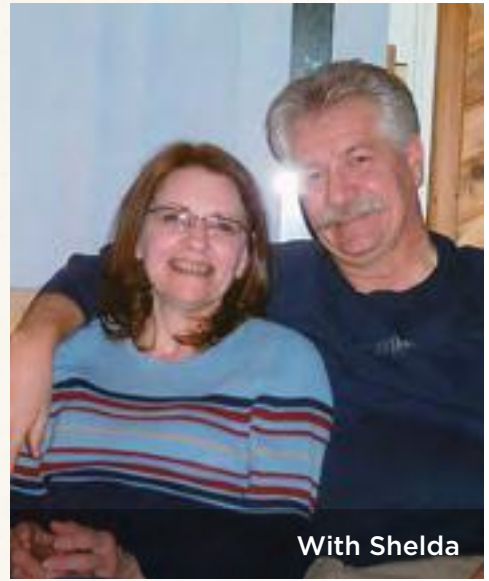
Delyea family Christmas



The Roaring 20s



On the farm



With Shelda



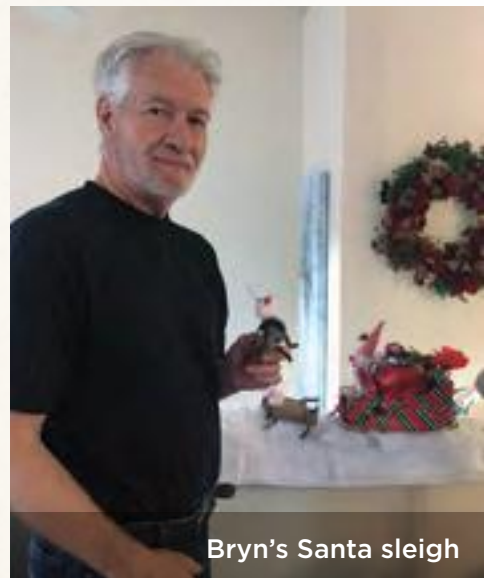
With Lana



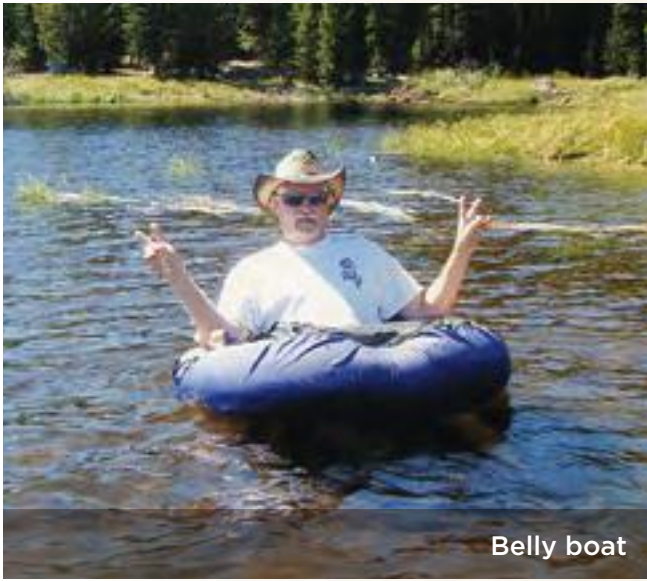
Dominican Republic



Hiking with Stan



Bryn's Santa sleigh



Belly boat



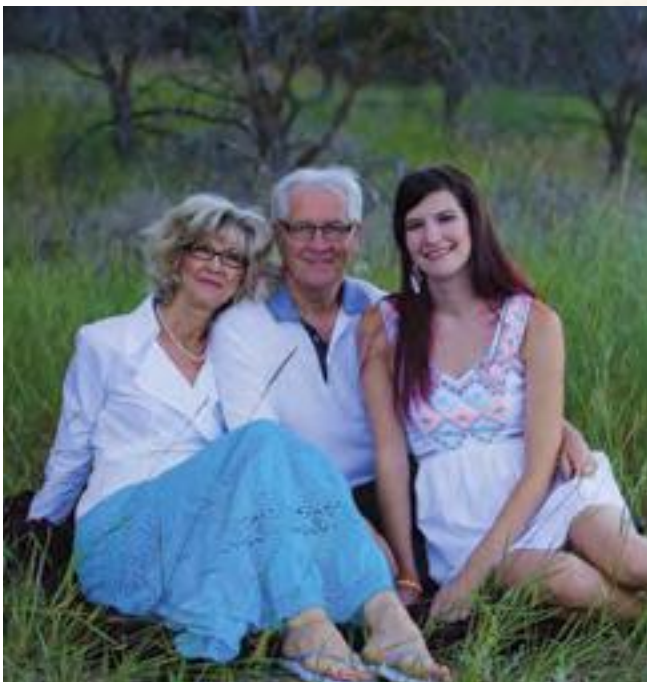
Playing Rummikub



Christmas fun!



Phoenix desert



# Bryn Delyea



Date of birth: **March 26, 1990**  
Place of birth: **Assiniboia, SK**  
Middle name: **Marie**  
Nickname: **None. My parents gave me a short name to avoid nicknames.**

## Favourite childhood memories

I was so fortunate to grow up on an acreage. I have many fond memories of playing outside and going on adventures. I spent my summers hunting for new kittens and playing in the barn with them. I wasn't allowed in the barn without supervision, but that never stopped me because I have always been a rebel!

Once, I got caught in a big rain storm. My friend and I danced in the rain and jumped into every mud puddle we could find. What a mess!

I remember Chelsea and I starting a not-so-secret club in my closet and trying to raise money to save the world. It's still a work in progress, clearly! I had such a wonderful childhood. I could go on and on, but you get the idea.

## Favourite memories of Grandma

A more recent memory that stands out involves Grandma and her very blatant love of her boys. She pretty much fell instantly in love with Mason the first time I brought him home. I'm sure the fact that he's a fireman helped! One of my favourite stories to tell people is the time she Skyped me. After a quick greeting she asked me where Mason was. I informed her that unfortunately he was working. She immediately wished me well and hung up!

But seriously, she is such an amazing woman. The love she has for her family is so unwavering and inspirational. She is always so much fun to be around and brings such joy to the people around her. You can't help but love her. She is always there to offer a hug or friendship to anyone who needs it.

On our more recent visit out, we got to see her in her new home and she was so proud to show off her space. She was telling me about how she met some new people on her floor that had just moved in and immediately invited them into her home for a visit. The woman had a bad back and Grandma wasted no time in offering to give her a massage with essential oils to help her feel better. That speaks volumes about the kind of person she is.

## Favourite story about Grandpa

I never had the chance to meet Grandpa, but I've been told that he had a wonderful singing voice. My mom always said that she wished they had a recording of it. This has made me realize how precious and important it is to capture life's moments. It's why I'm always taking pictures and videos of the people I love.

## Favourite memories of my aunts and uncles

**Alex:** My fondest memory of Uncle Alex is when we were having a bonfire and he and Chris (I believe) told us the scary story about the dreaded Minkies and how they lived in trees and under bridges. They would sneak out, climb up your pants and take your nose. As little kids sitting around a fire at night, it was truly terrifying. When he was finished his story, the trees started shaking and there was all kinds of ruckus, courtesy of Chris. We were all freaked right out! For years after, every time we drove under a bridge, we had to lift our feet and protect our nose in case the Minkies jumped down from it and got into the car.

**Dennis:** Uncle Dennis was always the prankster. I remember when I was really little, he showed me the got-your-nose trick and I was 100% convinced that he had actually gotten in. He also did the thumb trick where you make it look like it's being pulled in half. I thought he had magical powers for many years.

**Mary Ann:** This is more of a tradition than a memory. Every year for Christmas, Auntie Mary Ann would buy me a Christmas ball. I always thought they were beautiful, but never fully appreciated them until I moved out and started decorating my own tree. I now have a tree filled with stunning and unique Christmas balls. They have become such a beautiful treasure to me and make the holiday season even more special.

**Rita:** When I was little, I always saw Auntie Rita as a larger-than-life person. She was so sophisticated with her white clothes and fancy hats and love of all things pink. I remember how excited I was when they invited us onto the boat for a week. I had never really spent any time with Rita outside of big family events, so I was thrilled to get the chance to play with her. We had such a fantastic time swimming, going to an insect museum and jumping off the boat into the ocean. Turns out she is just as crazy as the rest of us!

**Susie:** I spent my summers on the farm with Auntie Susie. We would play and go on all kinds of fun adventures. I remember her putting some dish soap on the trampoline and throwing the sprinkler on under it so it became a crazy bubbly slip 'n' slide. She always had crafts for us to do and was forever baking, cooking, or making jerky and fruit leather. It was always an exciting adventure to spend time with her.

**Alice:** I always thought of Auntie Alice as my goofball aunt. We would laugh and play and just be crazy whenever she visited. I remember when

she came home from the Philippines and came to my class. She talked about her time there. I was so excited to tell everyone that she was my aunt.

## Favourite memories of my cousins

I have so many memories as a child playing with Chelsea and Leon. They were the sister and brother I never had. I remember how exciting it was when baby Leon came along and how he always got stuck in everything when he got older. We all had so much fun together.

I also remember how much we loved to torment our older cousin Danny. If I'm not mistaken, he locked himself in the sauna to escape us. Sorry Daniel!

I have to say my favourite thing about all of my cousins has been getting to know them as an adult. Most of my cousins are a lot older than me so, as a child, I never really played with them or got to know them. Now that we are all older, the age gap doesn't matter. We can really get to know each other and enjoy spending time together. The last few years have been really special to me for this reason.

## Favourite memories of my parents

**Mom:** I remember baking Christmas cookies. She would invite friends over and we would all decorate them and make a huge mess. It was so much fun.

She also spent hours making my insane Halloween costumes. I could never just go as a witch or ghost. I had to be a Christmas tree, boombox, garbage can or any number of other ridiculous things. She always put so much time into these things for me.

She would plan the best birthday parties and slumber parties for me. People would fight to get invited to my parties because of how much fun Mom made them.

**Dad:** I remember going out crop checking, riding in the combine, and having harvest picnics in the field. I also remember Dad's "shortcuts" that always took way longer but were much more of an adventure.

During a camping trip, we went for a bike ride. When we got tired, Dad told us to keep going, just a little further—at least to the next bend. When my friend and I finally gave up, he came



back from around that next bend with a story about how there was a beautiful lake with a waterfall and baby animals frolicking.

My absolute favourite memory is stargazing with him. It was always way past my bedtime, but with my book of constellations in hand, we would lay in the grass looking at the universe together.

## Significant life event

I would have to say meeting Mason. Neither one of us was looking for a relationship when we met, but I guess fate had other plans. Thanks to his encouragement, I went to school and got a job that I love. Mason showed me that I deserve more in life. Without him I wouldn't have the life I do now, and I will be forever grateful for that.

## Hobby or pastime

I love my plants. Being outside planting, growing and designing is my happy place. Nothing makes me happier than having my hands in the dirt.

## Fun fact about me

I would love to see the world; not just the normal places like Paris or Mexico. I would love to go off the grid and explore the forests and deserts. When I was little, I always dreamed about just disappearing into a rainforest and living there with the plants and animals.

## Current and past occupations

I am a landscaper. I love my job even though it is hard work and dirty. I also just started doing eyelash extensions and am working on growing my home business doing that. My past jobs include washing the floors at Napa for my dad, dish washing at a Chinese food restaurant, serving at a fish and chips joint, working nights at Tim Horton's, being a customer service manager at Walmart and a cash manager at Shoppers Drug Mart.

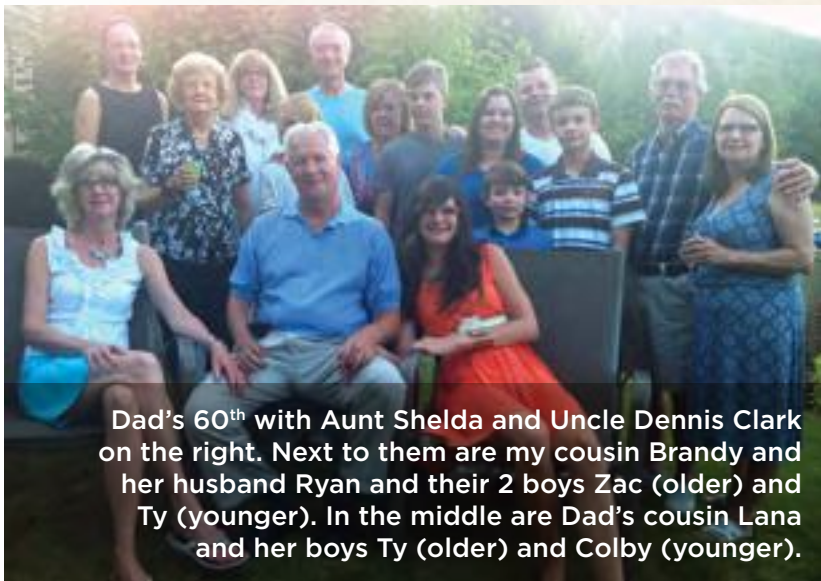


With my grandma  
Marj Delyea

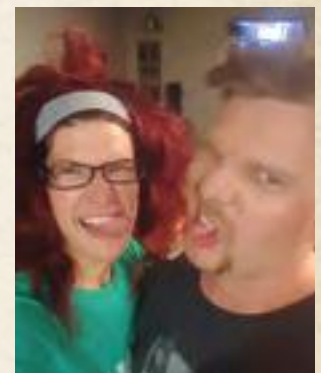
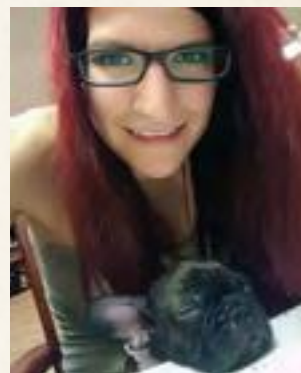


With my Grandpa  
Red Delyea





Dad's 60<sup>th</sup> with Aunt Shelda and Uncle Dennis Clark on the right. Next to them are my cousin Brandy and her husband Ryan and their 2 boys Zac (older) and Ty (younger). In the middle are Dad's cousin Lana and her boys Ty (older) and Colby (younger).



# Mason Sawatzky



Date of birth: **March 23, 1989**  
Place of birth: **Saskatoon, SK**  
First name: **William**  
**(Mason is my middle name)**  
Nickname: **Macenuts (at work)**

## Favourite childhood memory

I loved spending my summers at Candle Lake and riding cows in the corral with my grandpa.

## Favourite memory of Rosalie

Our heated Rummikub battles are the best, especially when I kick her butt! Also, when she pushed past Bryn to give me a hug first.

## Favourite memories of the Blais aunts and uncles

I had a great time at the tequila tasting at Dennis and Bette Lynn's.

Christmas at Rita and Peter's was fun.

Neil gave me great advice about getting into the family: suck up to Grandma and you're in!

Mary Ann and Tom generously let us spend time at their cabin at Haynes Lake.

Alice and Larry are always very hospitable whenever we travel to Edmonton.

## Favourite memory of my cousins

On my dad's side, we are all only children so we are very close. Holidays were always hectic with all the cousins from my mom's side.

I have no siblings but I am very close with my cousin's two children. I often look after them.

## What I love most about my parents

My parents have always supported my goals and aspirations. They chased me from rink to rink, ball diamond to ball diamond and more!

Whenever my dad worked on a renovation or repair, he always had me there to hold a flashlight or help in some small way.

There's no doubt that I got my competitiveness from my mother. She and I even took home a parent/child bowling trophy when I was in elementary school.

## Significant life event

Bryn and I got engaged at Haynes Lake at the end of January 2017.

## Hobbies or pastimes

I love sports, hunting and fishing.

## Fun fact about me

I have some sweet magic tricks!

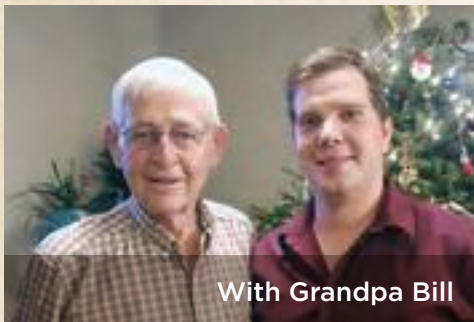
## Current and past occupations

Currently, I'm a firefighter and was once Deputy Fire Chief. I've also been an aerial communication technician working 500 feet in the air on cell towers. I've been a high angle rescue technician and have built air seeders for CASE. I've delivered drywall, drove a forklift, played hockey, taught hockey school, pumped gas and flipped burgers at Dairy Queen.





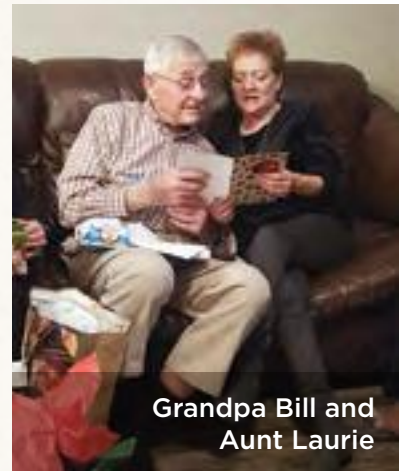
With my mom, Shirley



With Grandpa Bill



Having a cigar with my dad, Dwight



Grandpa Bill and Aunt Laurie



With my goddaughter Lenny and cousin Samantha



At Candle Lake with my dad Dwight, Erickson and my mom Shirley





Me with my Aunt Mary, Aunt Elsie, Shirley (Mom), Dwight (Dad), Mary, Grandpa Bill, Paige, Darren and Aunt Laurie at Christmas supper



Easter with our friend Aimee (in red) and Grandpa Bill and his wife Mary



To be continued...







