

We were fiercely proud of who we were

None of us three sisters were athletic, although we gave it our best efforts. We spent many weekends supporting our brother at his basketball games. We were on the fringes cheering during the track events on our school grounds. We reluctantly joined the crowd toiling up Snake Hill during the mandatory outdoor physical education activities.



**JOYCE
HOEY**

Because of that reluctance the last month of school always brought a mixed set of emotions. By mid-month the courses had pretty much been completed and our classes were spent in review. Most of the subjects required final exams and our teachers were diligent in preparing us as best they could. Often by the end of the day we were experiencing fatigue and distraction. Several times a week we were given the option of heading outside, for a quick game of baseball.

The boys in general were keen on that. We had a few girls who were excellent athletes and many more who were good sports. I was neither and I dreaded those games. On occasion I was given the job of keeping score, a task I could enter into with enthusiasm. Providing encouragement from the sidelines worked for me too.

Sometimes the teacher required each one to participate or no one was going to play. Now that was pressure. Of course we had to play; we couldn't disappoint the whole class. Many of us remember all too well: waiting patiently while everyone else was selected as sides were chosen, being an outfielder – way out there, because we couldn't catch or throw.

Once or twice we had a special treat. The teachers formed a team to go up against a team of the better student players. There was always a crowd of coaches on the sidelines on those days.

Our principal was a tall man, with stern, rugged features. He had a military air about him and his shout brought the expected "sir!" Everyone dreaded being sent to the office if he was on duty. There are photos in the old yearbooks on Larry's shelf, with a couple of the offenders standing outside the office under the clock, with their noses to the wall. Corporal punishment was meted out quite readily in those days. One of the senior high teachers was also known for his tough approach in disciplining. Many of his students met him in the hall with eyes averted and heads down. Yet these two men were on that baseball diamond.

Several of the teachers were coaches and so very fit. Two of the men were avid skiers and mountaineers. Another was quite small in stature but very aggressive as a fitness advocate. Others were not into sports but joined in with good humour to provide a lighthearted sports day.

I don't remember how the game went at all. I do recall watching in astonishment as the principal's bat connected with a mighty crack and he sprinted around the bases. I could imagine him marching or striding, but running?

I seem to hear an uproar of cheering at every pitch, for every runner regardless of which side we were rooting for. I have little doubt that the entire student body showed up for the game. Sundre was a smaller school, but we were fiercely proud of who we were.



Elden and Helen Spicer, Joyce Hoey's father and mother.

photo submitted

Letter to the editor

Alberta Energy Regulator should be ashamed

(Re: Directive 60 - changes to flaring, incineration and venting)

The Alberta Energy Regulator (AER) has just put forth changes to the regulations governing flaring, incineration and venting, oilfield practices that added 1.44 trillion litres of waste gas and emissions into Alberta's environment in 2012.

Jim Ellis, CEO of the AER, had this to say about the new directive, which has already taken effect: "The AER continuously reviews and improves our requirements to ensure, safe, orderly and environmentally responsible development of Alberta's energy resources..."

As a landowner in close proximity to wells that have adversely affected us by way of these practices, we are very concerned these changes were not made in the best interests of protecting the health, safety and environment of Albertans.

Having read these documents in their entirety, I am not fooled by the shallow affirming statements of regulatory executives but appalled by their audacity to advertise these changes as progressively better.

Of greatest concern is that off-lease odours are now permitted from energy sites. The previous document was clear; no off-lease odours were allowed. Reasonably so, NO contamination should be leaving these sites. To point out the obvious, these are not odours; cooking fish in the house causes odours.

Flaring, incineration and venting create emissions containing numerous hazardous and toxic chemicals. Many of these substances are definitively known to impact health and at levels below olfactory detection.

However, the AER's "improvement" is to allow off-lease odours and will enforce mitigation based on the opinion of an inspector that will assess the

duration, proximity, frequency and strength of the emissions to determine if they are offensive. These emissions are complex, containing BTEXs, VOCs, PAHs and can be outrageously abundant.

Nearly a billion litres of gas is permitted to be vented each day from each well site and well testing can burn hundreds of billions of litres of waste gas in mere days.

There should be no opinion involved in establishing if pollutants created at an industrial site are harming citizens. A science-based approach of accurate measurements, testing and analyzing emissions should have been mandated.

Currently, all vented volumes are estimated and no requirements for infrastructure or accurate measuring protocols were included in the new directive.

The superseded directive also stated that landowner approvals were needed to temporarily vent within 500 metres of a residence; that bit of courtesy is now in the trash heap too.

Companies now tell you they are venting and in so doing, are compliant.

Maybe you'll have experiences similar to ours where our public notifications failed to mention any venting or emissions or how the AER inspector investigating our odour concerns examines the site when operations were suspended, creating a crooked technicality where he can write "no venting on site" in plain view of the storage tanks that do so and the last three years of venting records in his files.

Maybe you live by the cluster of wells up the road where a company got a high-risk non-compliance for not reporting any venting at all despite years of routine venting.

Maybe the breeze is blowing benzene into your yard right now, where just one acute contaminat-

ion event can cause certain blood cancers. What's interesting is benzene has a sweet smell; if it is not offensive but deadly, will the AER invoke enforcement?

Be mindful of health effects (livestock too) related to these emissions, such as chronic respiratory/sinus troubles, headaches/migraines, dizziness/nausea, visual disturbances, nosebleeds and other worrying symptoms of chemical exposures; keep detailed records and report them to your healthcare provider and Alberta Health.

Sour gas air quality dispersion guidelines have also changed exponentially. The previous regulations required analysis on sour gas wells over one per cent; that value is now five per cent. Five per cent equates to 50,000 ppm and H2S is fatal at 1,000 ppm. Byproducts of burning acid gas such as sulphur dioxide and carbon disulphide are potent respiratory and neurological toxins.

To increase the dispersion modelling to such a degree demonstrates total disregard for the health and safety of communities where industry operates.

It is impossible to reconcile how these changes are an improvement, unless you are an oil company after shale gas.

The AER should be ashamed of putting forth such weak and biased regulations and Albertans should be outraged at being made guinea pigs for profit margins.

As industry intensifies in our area, so too will the impacts; in response, our "best-in-class" regulator has thrown public safeguards to the cutting room floor and insists this is responsible development.

Diana Daunheimer
Didsbury

Mountain View
GAZETTE

Published weekly by:
Mountain View Publishing Inc.

5013 - 51 Street, Box 3910, Olds, Alberta T4H 1P6

Phone: (403) 556-7510 Fax: (403) 556-7515

E-mail Advertising: production@olds.greatwest.ca

E-mail Editorial content: gazette@olds.greatwest.ca

Website: www.mountainviewgazette.ca

Publisher:
Editor:
Photographer:
Reporters:

Murray Elliott
Dan Singleton
Noel West
Paul Frey, Didsbury
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