

St. Albert Gazette

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Consequences

Drunk driving is a dangerous and harmful habit, as shown by this photo story. ... 18

Not enough taxis in the city?

Cab shortage could hamper New Year's fun

BY VIOLA PRUSS
Staff Writer

The holiday season is in full swing and with all the hype around New Year's Eve, it's expected that people will want to have a good time. Alcohol plays a big role in that celebration, which is good for business but bad for driving.

The latter especially worries those who run local pubs and bars. The number of available cabs on New Year's Eve is limited and drunk drivers are a concern, said Troy Marchak, owner of the Crown & Tower Pub.

"We are supposed to have everyone out of the bar by 3 a.m. but when people have called for cabs at midnight and they are still not there at 3 a.m. and it's minus 30, what do you do with these people?" he said.

"We don't want them to drive."

Stand in the cold

While he keeps a sign and courtesy phone near the entrance of his pub - suggesting to customers that they call the cab companies at least three hours in advance - Marchak said that doesn't guarantee the taxi will be available at the end of the night.

He doesn't want people to stand around in the cold either, he said, as they may decide to drive home on their own. But letting them wait in the foyer also costs him money, having to pay his staff to work longer hours, he said.

"They always say plan ahead, take a cab ... that's all fine and dandy but if there isn't a cab to take, what are you supposed to do?" he said. "There are designated drivers but not everyone has one."

Law sets closing times

Under section 71 in the Gaming and Liquor Act, drinking establishments are expected to serve the last drink by 2 a.m., and have all customers leave by 3 a.m. Should a bar owner not obey these rules, a first offence can cost as much as \$1,500 or lead to a six-day license suspension.

The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission is aware of the issue surrounding late-night cab services and therefore asks people to plan ahead and call for a taxi early, said spokesperson Jody Korchinski.

"As an organization we do recognize that this is complex," she said. "So certainly the AGLC inspector would be able to look at the circumstances and determine whether or not a penalty would be provided."

Billy McBain, owner of The Celtic Knot, said the lack of taxis during the holiday season is not a problem specific to St. Albert but happens in most cities across the country.

While he said there could always be more taxis available, he suggested that cab companies probably focus on the busiest spots in town first.

See "Taxis," page 4



CHRIS COLBOURNE/St. Albert Gazette

PANCAKE BREAK - Keenoshayo Grade 2 student Christopher Boer shows his friends a new and funny way to eat their food at the school's recent pancake breakfast just before the holiday break. Students were also treated to a surprise visit from Santa Claus. Classes for all schools in St. Albert resume in early January.

Lacombe Lake opens to ice skaters

BY CORY HARE
Staff Writer

After being designated off-limits most of last winter and throughout the extended stretch of cold weather leading up to Christmas, Lacombe Lake opened to skaters on Dec. 24.

The city's public works

department started clearing snow at 6 a.m. that day and had a rink ready by 11 o'clock, said operations supervisor Stephen Schlese.

"It's a huge win for us," he said. "It's something that the residents definitely look forward to skating on every year."

A deep blanket of snow

delayed the formation of thick ice despite a healthy helping of severely cold weather this fall.

"Snow acts as an insulator on the ice surface and it's really tough for the ice to get built up," Schlese said.

Personnel from public works and the fire department took some ice measurements last

Sunday, finding a solid 11 to 12 inches, enough to safely bear the 3,000-pound weight of a small piece of snow-clearing equipment.

After a skating area was cleared on Tuesday, it didn't take long for area residents to notice and take to the ice.

"We didn't even have it post-

ed. There were 25 people out there already," Schlese said. "News gets around quickly, I guess."

The lake was unsafe for skating most of last winter because a vandal chopped several large holes into the ice surface just before Christmas.

See "Ice skating," page 3

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painted on the 84 houses that line the caves of her garage. No doubt, even the sparrows smile each time they come through their doors.

A visit to Jwaszko's home late in the summer showed two more houses up on the edge of the roof. One was labelled "Susan's house" and the second read "April's house."

Fitting labels for some bird-brained, flighty creatures, that's for sure.

Amy Crofts – court, crime and health reporter



AMY CROFTS
Crime, health

In late September, the death of a young boy gripped the city of St. Albert and shook it to its core.

Thomas Wedman, 6, died after being struck by a school bus while walking to school.

Thomas and his older brother both ran ahead of their dad that morning and when Thomas went to cross the street, he was hit by a bus that was making a right-hand turn onto Woodlands Road from Sir Winston Churchill Avenue.

He thought it would stop, but it didn't. Despite being shaken by grief, a com-

munity joined hands and embraced a heartbroken family. From strangers sharing condolences, to fundraising efforts and porch lights shining into the night around the world, Thomas' memory was kept alive.

More than 1,000 gathered at a public memorial to remember his joie de vivre.

The Wedman family invited people into their homes so every person who knew their son could have a proper goodbye. They also decided to have Thomas' heart valves donated through the Human Organ Procurement and Exchange Program to help better the lives of two other children.

Thomas' death grasped the heart of our community and for that reason, his story is the one that has impacted me the most since I've worked at the *Gazette*.

Being at the site of the incident was the toughest assignment I've been on. Asking Thomas' father Jeff questions about the circumstances of his son's death have been some of the toughest I've ever had to ask.

As a reporter you come to realize that when you ask someone to tell you their narrative, you are asking them to relive it. I want to thank the Wedman family for letting me share their story and inspiring the rest of us with their unflinching strength while doing so.

Every time I pass by École Marie Poburan these days I turn my head to the spot on Woodlands Drive where the

school bus was last parked and think of the fair-haired boy giggling in his home-made iPod videos.

Then I double check my speedometer and keep my eyes peeled for pedestrians.

I'm sure I'm not the only one.

Scott Hayes – visual arts reporter



SCOTT HAYES
Visual arts

This has been a very interesting year for me and I've had the pleasure of writing stories about some of these wonderful moments. There are several that stand out in my memory, like the story about Raemonde Bezenar who ran around the city in a gorilla suit to promote her charity work with the Canadian Friends of the Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project.

Then there was the time the fine folks at the Tudor Glen Veterinary Hospital who cleaned up a field's worth of dog droppings in an event they appropriately called the poop-a-thon.

I've written about numerous authors, several of them local, who have either published new books or brought their books on tour through town. I also had the privilege of discovering the wealth

of archival material that was donated to the Musée Héritage Museum by the family of Victor Post.

The late photographer had a very interesting life and was in the unique position as the province's official photographer to take pictures of some prominent and celebrated individuals. As far as I know, the museum is still poring through the collection, trying to catalogue it all.

I started a new regular feature called Artist of the Month that runs on the second Wednesday of every month. My movie reviews started up again in October and my new blog, *The Hayes Code*, is now live on the *Gazette's* website.

Probably my favourite stories, however, have delved into the city's history. I wrote Meet the Founders to give readers a better idea of who Father Albert Lacombe and Bishop Alexandre-Antoine Taché were. A few months after that, my feature on the former inter-urban railway was published.

Few people know that St. Albert and Edmonton were once connected by rail car transit 100 years ago. Sadly, it only lasted for six months until a fire stopped it in its tracks. Efforts to revive it were met with disappointment.

I'm always pleased to offer today's readers the opportunity to understand and appreciate our common history.

Wishing you and your family a joyous Holiday Season and a Happy New Year!

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Carole-Bea Clancy

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Carole - Bea Sandy

Sandy MacPherson

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Drawing his craft from St. Albert

Q & A with Disney animator Brian Ferguson



Supplied photo

ANIMATED – Former local resident Brian Ferguson had a hand in such notable films as *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin* and *The Lion King*.

BY SCOTT HAYES
Staff Writer

The state of animated movies has seen a quantum shift over the last 20 years, with traditional hand-drawn work losing out to computer-generated imagery, or CGI. One St. Albert-raised man, Brian Ferguson, has seen it all.

Now 52, he's been with Disney Studios since the early 1990s, having had a hand in such notable films as *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin* and *The Lion King*. He's also contributed to the studio's more modern CGI fare such as *Chicken Little*, *Meet the Robinsons*, *Bolt* and the recently-released *Frozen*.

The *Gazette* interviewed Ferguson from his home in California to discuss the two forms of animation, and what it all means for both the artists and the viewers.

In starting off, he said that he originally went to post-secondary education at the University of Alberta, getting his bachelor of science degree majoring in zoology. He said that background definitely helped him to draw characters in

a lot of these animal-based Disney movies. That was before he went off to Sheridan College, a renowned Toronto animation incubator.

This is part one of the conversation. Part two will run Wednesday, Jan. 1.

Gazette: When did you graduate from Sheridan?

Brian Ferguson: It was '86 but I did an extra year of study there because I wanted to complete a film. Then I was recruited from there to work in New York at the Computer Graphics Lab Inc. I could spend a week telling you stories about working there.

It was originally run by a guy who loves animation. He bought up half of what used to be the world's largest mental institution and converted chunks of it into a college: the New York Institute of Technology. He had this lab – the computer graphics lab – where they did experiments or developed computer animation. Ed Catmull, who is one of the top three people at Pixar, came out of there.

G: I'm looking at your IMDb page with all of your filmography. The first entry is for your work on the TV series called the *Care Bears* family.





BF: Yeah, the Care Bears... it was one of the deciding factors in 'I will not work in TV' sort of thing. All of the stuff that I had just learned, these principles of animation, putting life into the drawings and all that ...

There was one assignment I had there, this character who was supposed to be really sleepy, falling asleep standing against a wall. I was told you have to have the template drawing of the character. It's off model if you squash him in any way. I thought, 'OK, that's it. I'm done.'

G: After that, there was the *Prince and the Pauper*, a short film, and

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Merry Christmas to all and a safe and Happy New Year!

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"I was always interested in getting involved in computer animation ..."

BRIAN FERGUSON
Animator

then 1991 you're working for Disney and *Beauty and the Beast*. You had a good string of Disney movies in the early 1990s that also included *Aladdin* and *The Lion King*, and on and on from there.

BF: When I was in New York, I was recruited there to work on a movie that will never be released. It was supposed to be a sequel to *Yellow Submarine*.

G: That died in the water? Not to make a pun out of it ...

BF: The guy that ran the animation and owned everything out there ended up giving the college to one son and the computer graphics lab to another. The one who was running the computer graphics lab... the whole time I was there it felt like a money-laundering project. He was continually chasing after investors. Each time he'd get an investor for this movie, they would invest so many million dollars with the condition that



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they would have to change the story somewhat just to suit them. The movie was continually being blown like a reed in the breeze. That's what that whole thing was like.

Starting at Disney, *Prince and the Pauper* was the first project. It was *Mickey Mouse*, a short that came in front of *Rescuers Down Under*.

G: In regard to the feature length movies, even starting with *Beauty and the Beast*, that movie still had some pretty strong elements of CGI in it, especially that ballroom scene that had hand-drawn characters on a CG background. That was a watershed moment for the future of animation. Did you know from the beginning that you were involved in an artform on the way out?

BF: I wouldn't say that I knew that I was. I was interested in an art that could have any number of media to deliver it, hand-drawn being one way and various technical ways of putting it out going from pencil and paper to actually drawing on tablets and screen, that kind of thing, to actual computer animation which I had a taste of in New York.

I was always interested in getting involved in computer animation but wanted to do hand-drawn first to get the foundations of the whole performance down. Whenever people would say that computer animation is going to take over, 'do you worry that hand-drawn is going to be gone?' my answer was always, 'I don't see why it couldn't just be two different media that necessarily have to compete with each other.' Little did I know...

There was always that possibility but my thinking was that my priority is the performance. I would be just as happy to animate with a computer.

G: What got you into animation? Were you always the doodler in class?

BF: Definitely. Everybody always thought I was an amazing artist. When I was in third grade, my mom taught me to do flip decks. All my scribbles from that point through high school and university would have



animation in the margins. You could flip the books and all around the margins, there would be stick figures doing stuff.

By the time I was in high school, I had always been thinking I would be doing some sort of science as a profession but I was also thinking I'd be doing animation as a hobby. When I finished university, I was thinking 'I'm not sure that I'm interested in what's available as work in the sciences. I'd have to think maybe for a year and then decide what I might do for a masters.' I had very specific interests but you can't study octopus behaviour on the Prairies. The work that was available at that time would probably set my course for life. That means I could end up counting ticks on artificially infested moose for the rest of my life.

Instead, I thought for a time, clued in to the existence of Sheridan and the possibility that I could actually make a living doing animation. (Continues next issue)

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and Many Thanks!
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and Happy New Year!

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Happy New Year

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