

Carol (Smith) Bullock - daughter of Elva (Neilson) Smith.

I was a farm kid. I grew up in rural Alberta when small towns were thriving business communities. It was a time after the war when things were looking better and farm life was the focus. I was able to attend an old country school, one with a big school bell, and of course an outhouse, but only for a half a year, then we were bussed to town. All the farms around us had real families, I mean lots of brothers and sisters, and extended family members. It was an era of rural party lines and country dances. The houses were full and the schools and churches were full. The small towns had stores and were competitive, each having its own ball teams. My brothers and I went to all the country dances, wherever they were. People associated together every week. Today, I call that a good support system. Our school was multicultural, although the parents knew other languages, the kids only spoke English, in our town there were four churches on one corner and each Sunday there were many cars crowded around them. I think these small communities contained people with a sense of belonging, something that maybe we miss today. At the end of the war my father bought six Lancaster bombers which he sold or used for parts. We had a hugh airplane in our yard which father had pulled home from the Vulcan airport six miles from our farm. My brothers, sisters, and I spent a lot of time climbing in and out of the airplane before it became part of our garage.

When I was in grade five we became a single parent family. My father was killed in a tractor accident, leaving my mother a young widow with seven small children. My baby sister was only 18 months old. We stayed on the farm and kept it going until my brothers were able to take on the responsibilities they are still doing today.

After high school I entered nurses training, one of the popular things for girls to do in those days. I worked with many dedicated girls who took pride in giving service to the sick. I met my husband on a blind date which had been arranged by one of my nursing friends. We were married one month before my nurses training was over. I was able to work enough to help us live the next six years while my husband finished his schooling. We spent the last four years of school at the George town Dental School in Washington D.C. It was a good experience to be in the Capital area with all the national historic spots. We were in Washington when Martin Luther King was assassinated and we could see the city fires from across the river. We shared the excitement of the capital city at the time of President Lyndon Johnson's inauguration. We enjoyed the beautiful cherry blossoms each spring around Tidal Basin and the Jefferson Memorial. We took visitors to see Abraham Lincoln sitting on the big chair in the Lincoln memorial. We visited Mount Vernon, the country estate of George Washington. We had a great experience in the capital and even climatized ourselves to the hot humid weather.

We returned to Alberta in 1968 with our three daughters, where we set up a dental practice and we still continue to reside in Lethbridge. Our family increased with the addition of one more girl and four boys. It is interesting to watch children grow and develop, I think some of the happiest times are in the middle years when they are so enthusiastic about everything, and love to go on family outings. We also have enjoyed the high school and university sports, being parents of a six foot six inch basket ball player. My youngest son was born when I had four teenage girls, so he had five mothers. I would recommend a late baby for anyone. Teenagers can learn a lot about love from a baby. Our children have not caused us any undue stress as none have been rebellious to the values we wish to pass on to them. We have watched our three oldest girls complete University degrees and we now have a Dietitian, a social Science graduate and a Pharmacist. The girls are working now but look forward to being able to marry and raise a family.

I have always been interested in homemaking skills, and have been content to be at home sewing, decorating, or whatever interests me at the time. I was never encouraged to pay much attention to current events or politics so everything that I have learned I've done in the last few years. My craft patterns have been put in a far away closet and now my drawers are full of information about family concerns. I want our children to know the importance of the family unit and family life and it helps if other people share this value to build strong communities.

As I drive through the same farm country I grew up in, I ask my Mom about the families in each farm and it seems there are no families anymore. Communities have decreased to a handful, and people are not as concerned about each other.

We are living in the information age, new ideas, thinking and ways of doing things, but we also must remember the old values of the family unit. It can't be replaced, it's still the best way of raising children and caring for the elderly. I'm thankful I have known and experienced those good times and appreciate the heritage I have and the pioneers who sacrificed so much to give us a better life.

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