

# OPUNTIA

## 71.5

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**OPUNTIA** is published by Dale Speirs, Box 6830, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2P 2E7. It is available for \$3 cash for a one-time sample copy, trade for your zine, or letter of comment. Americans: please don't send cheques for small amounts to Canada as the bank fee to cash them is usually more than the amount. US\$ banknotes are acceptable in Canada at par value; what we gain on the exchange rate we lose on the higher postage rate to USA. Do not send mint USA stamps as they are not valid for postage outside USA and I don't collect them.

Whole-numbered OPUNTIA's are sercon, x.1 issues are reviewzines, x.2 issues are indexes, x.3 issues are apazines, and x.5 issues are perzines. A cumulative subject index for all issues is available on request.

### BUZZING ABOUT

by Dale Speirs

One of my retirement projects is to write the postal history of Alberta, first publishing it as articles in various philatelic periodicals and then perhaps in some distant day as a book. There were 2,800 post offices in Alberta to the early 1970s, plus hundreds more since then as retail outlets in cities. Even with the resources of the University of Calgary Library and its databases, it takes me a couple of weeks to research and write the history of a district and its post offices. Assuming I have about twenty years of useful retirement left, I might be able to get southwestern Alberta (where I live) and central-west Alberta (where I was born and raised) done before I shuffle off this mortal coil.

Although most of the post offices I have been writing about are extinct, they are usually survived by a hamlet or a cluster of acreages. Back when roads were linear mudholes, post offices were established every 15 km or so, often in ranch houses. Good gravel roads and rural mail delivery have killed off most of those post offices. I have been touring the countryside surrounding Calgary to get the lay of the land and take some photographs. En route, I have also been adding to my collection of photos of roadside memorials (crosses put up where someone was killed in a traffic accident) and taking snapshots of anything else that is interesting.

Seen in August 2011 in Priddis, a hamlet southwest from Calgary.

I've seen this type of sign before but always as sandwich-boards in front of a business.





## ROADSIDE MEMORIALS OF ALBERTA: PART 1

photos by Dale Speirs

In central-east Alberta, east of Lacombe on Highway 12 in the ditch, is a large granite cross with three names on it.



Two days before Christmas 2004, Tracy Borup (age 34) and her two young sons Brett and Brook were killed when the pickup truck she was driving spun out and hit a cement truck, which then rolled onto the pickup and crushed the cab flat. Not much of a Christmas for the next-of-kin.

Looking west on Highway 547 on top of Gladys Ridge, about 30 km south of Calgary. Two men died in 2008 when their car slid

out on the curve, crossed the centre line, and was broadsided by a pickup. RCMP ruled out alcohol or

mechanical failure.



Two crosses in the ditch remain. What happened? The two men lived in the area all their lives, so the curve should not have been a surprise. Probably the car was going too fast and the driver over-corrected. No one will ever know.

It's a beautiful view from the ridge, and on a clear day one can see the skyscrapers of downtown Calgary.





This is the ramp from southbound Macleod Trail to eastbound Anderson Road in south Calgary. On the night of 2003-09-20, 24-year-old Shari Byrgesen was driving a car with three passengers when it rolled on the curve. It was late Saturday night, and the police used their customary phrase “Alcohol and speed are believed to be factors in the accident”. Shari died; the passengers survived with injuries.

Notice the black tire skid marks on the concrete barrier. You can see the roadside cross in the background; on the next page is a close-up. Shari’s parents used fertilizer to make the heart shape. Photo taken in 2004.



## SIGNS, SIGNS, EVERYWHERE A SIGN

Chestermere Lake is essentially a suburb of Calgary, about 30 km due east of the city. It is a town in its own right, separated from Calgary by farmlands. It is popular with commuters who want to raise their kids in a small town but keep their job in the big city. However, life can be dangerous, as attested to by the park signs shown at right.





Carseland is a rural village about 50 km east-southeast of Calgary, out on the flatlands. It is too far away to be attractive to commuters, but it has grain elevators as its basic industry and a nearby provincial park that supplies some tourist traffic.

I've seen hundreds of "Help Prevent Forest Fires" signs in my time, but in all my travels through the drylands of southern Alberta this is the only sign of this type I've ever seen.

Museum of the Regiments. Of the many sites where Remembrance Day services are held in Calgary, this one has the largest crowd, usually about 5,000 people. The streets in my neighbourhood are filled up with cars an hour before the event. Crowchild Trail freeway runs along the west side of the Museum, and on the day it is lined with hundreds of parked cars, the only time that police allow parking on a freeway.

I stood on a berm and used my telephoto lens for this photo of the ceremonies. Alberta's newly-elected Premier Alison Redford is speaking and she can be seen on the large screen at left of stage.

The Museum is surrounded by outdoor exhibits and after the ceremonies we all walked around and looked at them. On the next page is a view of the tank exhibit.









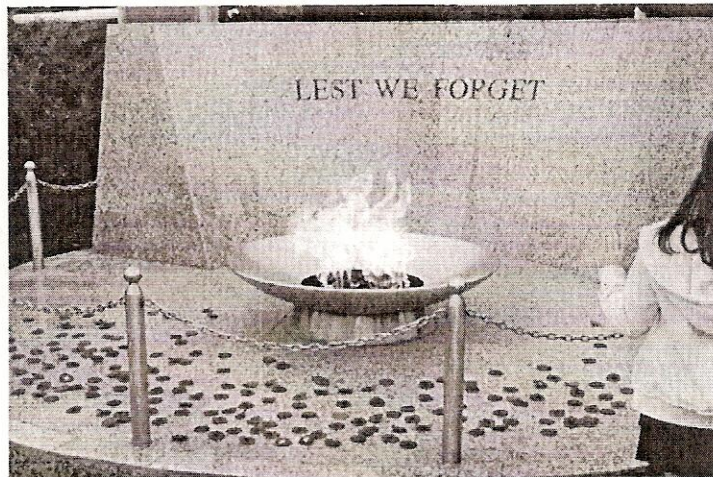


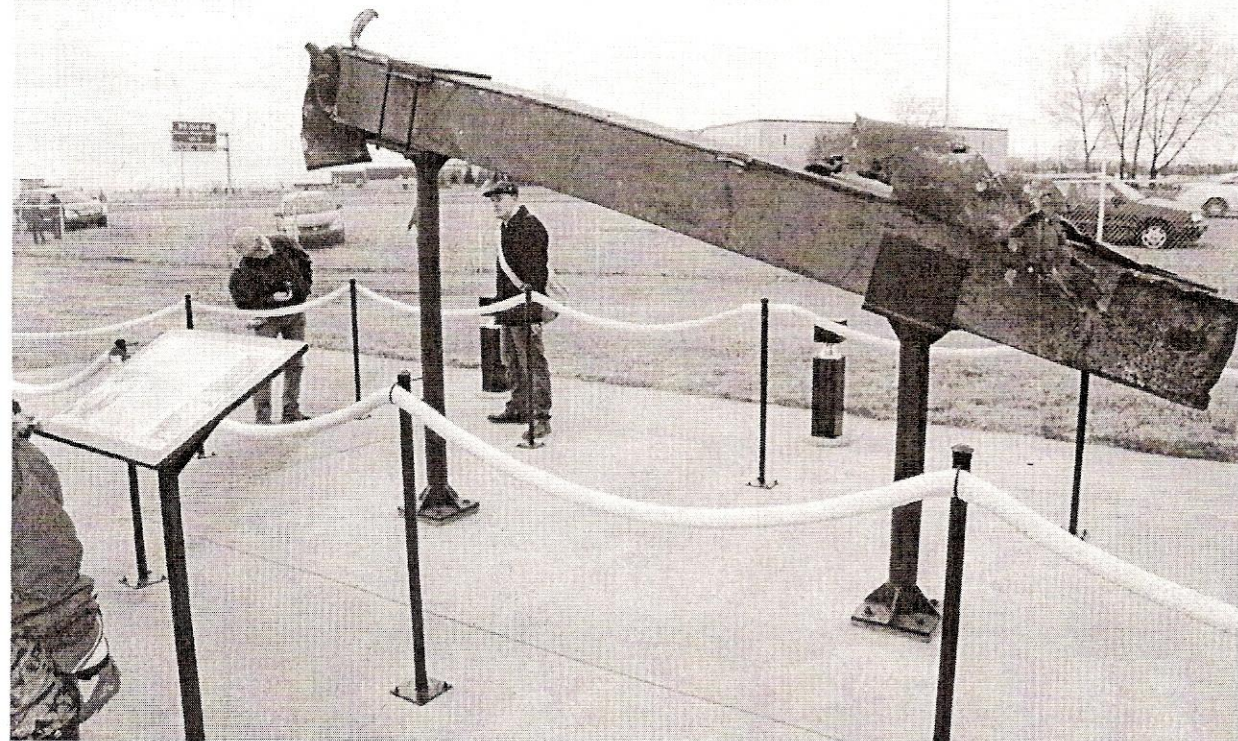




Above: A Calgary police constable (at left in dress uniform) chats with Army veterans of a mechanized infantry unit.

Below: The Eternal Flame in front of the Museum, with poppies left around it by spectators.





A new exhibit -12-  
at the museum  
is a piece of steel beam  
from the Twin Towers.  
After 9-11, Canada  
deployed troops to  
Afghanistan and has  
had many casualties in  
that war.

It used to be that  
Remembrance Day  
was for old geezers  
who fought in ancient  
wars. Now Canadians  
appreciate the meaning  
of it more, as the  
present generation  
does its duty.

A close-up of the  
plaque is on the next  
page.





## ARTEFACT DU WORLD TRADE CENTER ARTEFACT

On September 11, seven hundred terrorists hijacked four commercial passenger jets. Two of the planes were crashed into the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third was crashed into the Pentagon in Washington D.C. and the fourth crashed in rural Pennsylvania after passengers struggled to retake control. There were no survivors from the flights and with the collapse of the Twin Towers, less than two hours after impact, nearly 3,000 innocent people from more than 70 countries perished.

This steel artefact was recovered from the World Trade

Center. It was shaped by the cataclysmic events that engaged the United States of America in their Overseas Contingency Operations. Canada was immediately and directly engaged in the struggle, through the continental air defence of North America and the dispatch of sea, land and air forces to the South West Asia theatre of operations, covering military operations in the Arabian Sea and Afghanistan.

With the support of the September 11th Families' Association, this artefact was graciously presented by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey to The Military Museums to recognize and honour those who perished on September 11, 2001.

Le 11 septembre 2001, quatre avions de ligne furent détournés par dix-neuf terroristes. Deux allèrent percuter les tours jumelles du World Trade Center à New York, le troisième frappa le Pentagone à Washington D.C., et le quatrième s'écrasa dans une région rurale de Pennsylvanie, après que des passagers eurent tenté d'en reprendre le contrôle. Il n'y eut aucun survivant de ces quatre vols. Moins de deux heures après l'impact, les tours jumelles s'effondraient, entraînant dans la mort près de 3000 innocentes victimes provenant de plus de 70 pays.

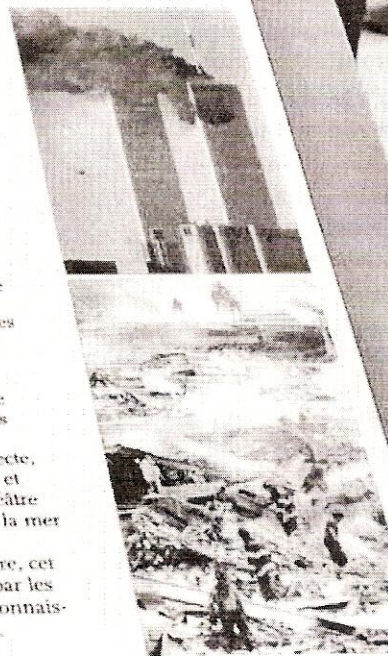
Cet artefact d'acier a été récupéré des débris du World Trade Center, et façonné par le cataclysme qui a mené les États-Unis d'Amérique à entreprendre leurs opérations de contingence-outremer. La participation du Canada a été immédiate et directe, par la défense aérienne continentale de l'Amérique du Nord et l'envoi de forces maritimes, terrestres et aériennes dans le théâtre d'Asie du Sud-Ouest, en vue des opérations militaires dans la mer d'Arabie et en Afghanistan.

Avec l'appui de l'Association des familles du 11 septembre, cet artefact a été gracieusement offert aux Musées militaires par les autorités portuaires de New York et du New Jersey, en reconnaissance et en l'honneur des victimes du 11 septembre 2001.



A close-up view of the twisted steel artefact recovered from the World Trade Center towers shortly after the September 11 attacks. The artefact is a large, dark, jagged piece of metal, showing the twisted structure of the towers.

set on fire after being hit by a plane, and then fell to the ground after a fire following the plane strikes. The debris from the World Trade Center is a large, dark, jagged piece of metal, showing the twisted structure of the towers.



A close-up view of the twisted steel artefact recovered from the World Trade Center towers shortly after the September 11 attacks. The artefact is a large, dark, jagged piece of metal, showing the twisted structure of the towers.





Not a display tank but a real live one brought out for the event. The sign says "Buses Only" but it would be a very brave commissioner who tried to tow an illegally parked tank.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

[Editor's remarks in square brackets.]

FROM: Anna Banana 2011-10-21  
3747 Highway 101  
Roberts Creek, British Columbia V0N 2W2

I thought about you recently, with all your wilderness hikes, when [the CBC radio programme] AS IT HAPPENS interviewed a wilderness guide in Canmore who was stalked by a grizzly bear. It twice came after him and his client after they climbed a tree when they noticed the bear was following them too close for comfort. Somehow they managed to discourage the beast from coming all the way up to them, twice. I hope you never find yourself in such a situation.

[I hope not either, but I don't worry about it. I'm more likely to be in a serious car accident driving out to the mountains on the Trans-Canada Highway than to be attacked by a bear or cougar. I only do day hikes on well-traveled trails and don't go into the back country. If I'm in dense bush and there is no one else on the trail I can see, at intervals I will cough or speak loudly, or stomp or scuffle branches or gravel on the ground. A popular piece of advice is to carry jingle bells so the animal can hear you coming, but several experienced park wardens have told me this often

makes animals curious since bells are not a natural sound, whereas the sound of scuffled gravel or branches breaking will alarm them. I see lots of deer, elk, and bighorn sheep, but the only predators I have ever come across was the occasional coyote, which would bolt and run away as soon as it saw me.]

FROM: Lloyd Penney 2011-07-22  
1706 - 24 Eva Road  
Etobicoke, Ontario M9C 2B2

I think you may find that even though you are retired and don't have to work, you may wind up taking a part-time job so you can feel useful and connected. I will never be able to contemplate retirement, but if I ever did I'd want to be busy anyway.

[Unless we have prolonged double-digit inflation combined with a massive simultaneous crash in the stock, bond, and bullion markets, and my pension defaults, I don't need a job. I keep very busy in the Calgary Philatelic Society, editing the bimonthly club bulletin and working on the Show Committee. I've just begun publishing the postal history of Alberta district by district. And, of course, I publish this zine and am re-reading my library (two rooms plus bookcases all around the living room).]

FROM: Sheryl Birkhead  
25509 Jonnie Court  
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20882

2011-10-01

[Re: photo of crushed SUV that had been airlifted out by helicopter after falling off a cliff in Kananaskis] Yeouch, that is a pretty hefty price tag for a useless planter. I was trying to see if the company logo is at all visible but can't see even a hint.

[It wasn't a company vehicle, it was a private vehicle. I got to thinking afterwards about whether the insurance company would pay off since the driver had been on a remote mountain trail and had deliberately assumed risks, as opposed to an ordinary vehicle accident on a public road. Hopefully he had an extension on his insurance policy.]

FROM: Franz Zrilich  
4004 Granger Road  
Medina, Ohio 44256-8602

2011-08-09

Your account of the further adventures of the Calgary LRT was interesting. The LRT authorities ought to buy rights of way in anticipation of growth in the future.

[The problem is that past City Councils were a bunch of wibblers

who would never spend any money on infrastructure until the screaming and yelling became too loud to ignore. All new suburbs are required to have rights of way for LRT and BRT, but the big difficulty is that because previous councillors never had the guts to map out lines and buy property, the inner city sections will cost a fortune to buy out landowners. Under provincial law, expropriation has to be done at market value. An average inner city house lot is about \$800,000. Supposing ten lots along the side of a city block, and given that the next LRT line, planned for north central Calgary, will traverse at least eighty blocks before finally hitting a clear right of way, you can see how the money will add up just for land acquisition, never mind the actual construction costs.]

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**I Also Heard From:** John Held Jr, Phlox Icona

## **WORLD WIDE PARTY #19**

2012 will be the 19th annual World Wide Party on June 21st at 21h00 your local time. At 21h00, you are requested to raise a glass to your fellow denizens of zinedom. Write it up for a zine or do some mail art. Have a party, or devise your own method of celebrating.