

# OPUNTIA 420





## Early August 2018

**Opuntia** is published by Dale Speirs, Calgary, Alberta. It is posted on [www.efanzines.com](http://www.efanzines.com) and [www.fanac.org](http://www.fanac.org). My e-mail address is: [opuntia57@hotmail.com](mailto:opuntia57@hotmail.com) When sending me an emailed letter of comment, please include your name and town in the message.

### ELBOW LAKE PASS, KANANASKIS MOUNTAINS

photos by Dale Speirs

I finally made my first trip out to the Rocky Mountains on July 17, quite late for me. I've been busy, that's all. The cover photo looks due east across Elbow Lake. At the far end is the outflow, which is the Elbow River. It will wind its way about 120 km to Calgary. The city was founded at the junction where the Elbow River flows into the Bow River. All of the southern Alberta native tribes in their various languages call both the river and the city Elbow because the river makes so many right-angle turns. (The Bow was a source of wood for bows and arrows, hence its name.)

At right is the far end of the lake. The 1-metre wide stream is the official start of the Elbow River, which drains hundreds of square kilometres of the eastern slopes and takes in dozens of streams and rivers, plus thousands of rivulets too small to have a name or even be mapped. At this point, you can step over it without breaking stride or getting more than your ankles wet if you miss.

The trail up to the lake is from the far side of the Kananaskis mountains, not the Calgary side. It isn't long, only a 1.3 km walk, but the catch is that it rises at a 45° angle about 300 metres up. I made frequent stops, not to admire the view but to catch my breath and waiting for the pounding of my heart to subside. It was definitely good cardiovascular exercise.





Below: Mount Elpoca forms the north shore of the lake.  
Bottom: Mount Rae forms the south and southeastern shores.



The water was crystal clear. I photographed this trout as it swam along the shoreline in a metre of water.





Below: Without the pair of trout in this photo, you might think this to be an image of a dry mudflat. The fish are under a metre of water.

At right: Again, these rocks are a metre deep along the western shore.





The water colour changes with distance and angle.



I wish I could show this as a video. Millions of bright sparkles on the turquoise.





Looking due south at Mount Rae, which still has remnants of snow in July. In the foreground is the Elbow River.



Below: Telephoto shot of Tombstone Mountain to the distant east of the lake. Bottom: Beside the trail going back down to the trailhead. These boulders fell decades ago. Most of the rockslide has been covered by vegetation.





After a journey of 120 km, the Elbow River empties into the Bow River. I took this photo 2017-06-03. The blue waters of the Elbow River come from out of the left and flow into the brown waters of the Bow River. You can see the meeting of the waters.

The grassy area on the far bank is Fort Calgary Park, the original location where the Mounties established the fort on August 28, 1875. A pioneer village grew up on the west side of the fort, today the skyscrapers of the downtown core.







After the Stampede is over, the festival season swings into full gear. Every weekend a community somewhere in the Calgary suburbs has a street festival, and Olympic Plaza downtown is booked with ethnic festivals.

The inner city suburb of West Hillhurst, just northwest of the downtown core on the opposite bank of the Bow River, has tried to differentiate its street festival from others by specializing as a costume festival. This year it was held at Kensington Road NW, on Sunday, July 29, a scorcher of a day with the temperature reaching 31°C.







At right: The knight admitted it was hot in his suit but said he could bear it.





This costumer said he wanted a job with no heavy lifting and where he could sit down while performing.



A proud father and his little angel.





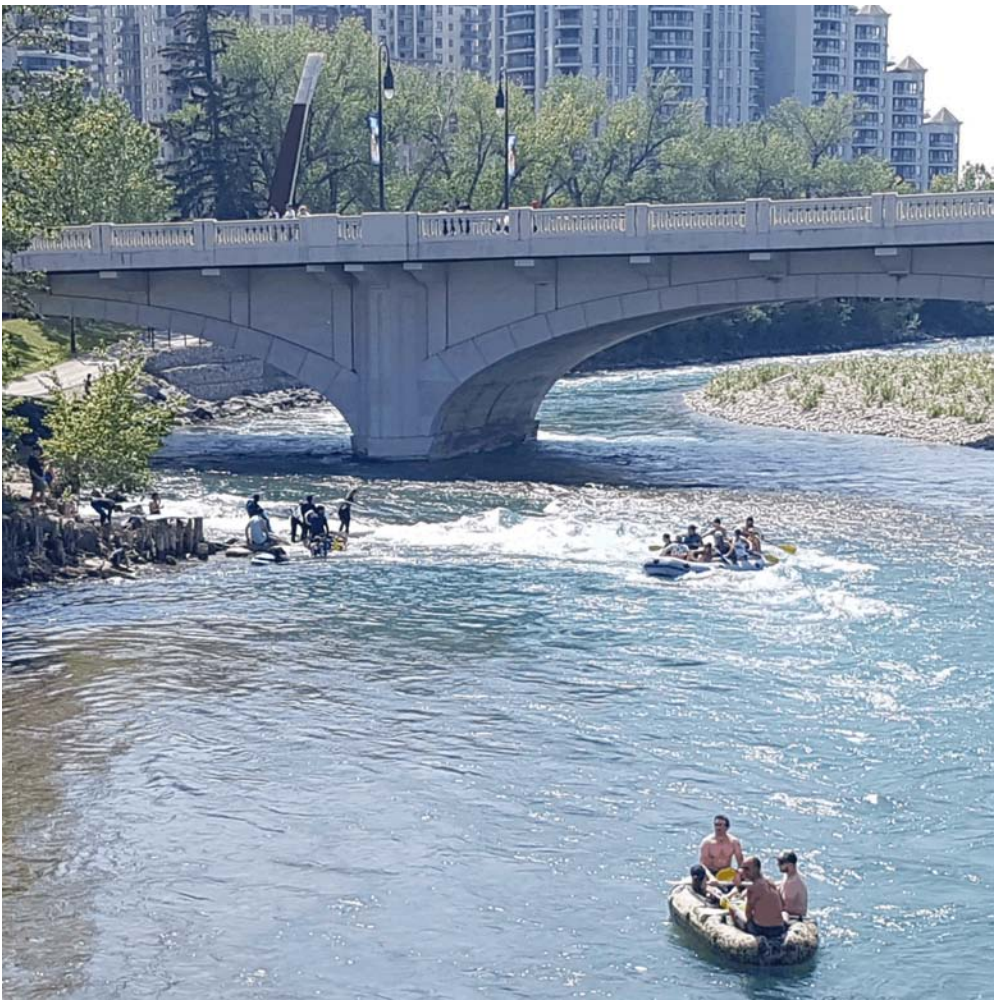
Alberta is a landlocked province; the nearest ocean is 700 km away on the far side of the mountains. Yet we have a surfing group here in Calgary, formed after the great flood of 2013 that altered rivers throughout southwestern Alberta and gave us our first and only surfing site. (See OPUNTIA’s #264 to 266 for reports of the great flood, the worst ever in Alberta’s history.)

The view below is looking upstream at the 10 Street bridge, taken from the 9 Street pedestrian bridge as I was walking back downtown from the Fantasy Faire. The island in the river did not exist until June 21, 2013, when it was created by the great flood. At left are rapids and a standing wave that were also created on that horrible day. The river rose 5 metres in a few hours and flowed overtop the bridge deck.

The standing wave, shown in various views here, has since become popular with surfers. It is trickier than it looks. I watched a dozen surfers, and about half wiped out as soon as they stood up on their boards. They are wearing wetsuits because the Bow River is a glacial river. Even on the hottest summer day, the water is only a few degrees above freezing. Many a swimmer has drowned from muscle cramps after trying to swim across the river.



The river is popular with rafters on summer days, so the surfers have to share the water with them.







## The Wave at 10th Street

**Where there is water there is risk**

**Know before you go**

- Do not go on or near the river during a high flow advisory. Check [rivers.alberta.ca](http://rivers.alberta.ca) or the Alberta Rivers app for current advisories.
- Even when an advisory is not in place, be cautious. Scout the river for hazards and go out only if you feel you have the skill to manage current conditions. Do not go out on the river if there is lightning or thunder.
- Don't go out if a thunderstorm is forecast.

**Surfing safety**

- Do not use an ankle leash or tow rope, as they can become an entrapment.
- If needed use a knee leash with quick release or waist belt with quick release.
- Fall flat on the water and stay on the surface of the river.
- Do not put your feet down in fast moving water. Swim or paddle to slow moving or still water before trying to stand up. Fast water near the bottom can trap your feet.
- Keep your board downstream of your body when you are not on your board. Rivers can pin you with your board.
- Wearing a life jacket can not only save your life in an accident, it saves energy swimming in the river so you can surf longer.
- Wear a helmet to avoid concussions.
- Never surf alone – a buddy can help in an emergency.
- Use a wetsuit and wet gear.
- Alcohol and rivers can be a deadly combination. Don't drink and surf.

**Your safety is your responsibility.**







Below: Looking in the opposite direction at the 9 Street bridge, just downstream of the 10 Street bridge. The lower deck is the pedestrian crossing, and the upper deck is the LRT line. During the great flood, the lower deck and pathways were under water. Notice that the 10 Street island extends down to the 9 Street bridge.





# LIFE ON THE BROADCAST WAVES: PART 3

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 and 2 appeared in OPUNTIA's #268 and 339. Related articles appeared in #260, 263, and 271. Radio fiction reviews appeared in #301, 302, 310, 319, 330, 353, 370, 377, 394, and 411.]

## Cowtown Wavelengths.

I gave up on commercial radio stations decades ago. The music that I enjoy I have as CDs and mp3s, so there is no reason to put up with a barrage of commercials and bad songs on the off-chance that I might hear one that I like.

In Calgary, for commercial-free listening, there is a choice between CBC Radio or the University of Calgary radio station CJSW. I seldom listen to the former because CBC Radio 1 is talk show hosts and newscasts that are either superficial or obscure, and Radio 2 is endless classical, jazz, and folk songs that collectively make good elevator music.

I do tune in to several programmes each week on CJSW. They have several shows of electronic music, the stuff that will never play on commercial or CBC stations, and which I like. You can stream their programming at [www.cjsw.com](http://www.cjsw.com), and podcasts are available of the shows for free download.

Legally, CJSW is not a campus radio station but a community station, as defined by the Canadian Radio Telecommunications Commission, which regulates television, radio, cable, and Internet companies. A community station broadcasts at the same sort of power as commercial stations. It provides air time to ethnic groups and local community organizations. A campus station is a low-power transmitter designed to reach only as far as the edge of the campus. It only addresses the student population.

CJSW is operated on the University of Calgary campus and focused on the music and news that students are interested in, but also has shows on weekends for all the ethnic groups that make up Calgary, in languages from German to Arabic to Cantonese. Each group has a half-hour or hour, depending on their size, with their own hosts speaking in bilingual mode, English and their language.

French isn't the second language in Alberta. It isn't even in the top ten. According to Statistics Canada, the federal census bureau, the top ten non-

English languages in Alberta are: German, Tagalog (Filipino), Panjabi, Mandarin, Spanish, Cantonese, Arabic, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, and Urdu.

CBC looks after the French service, which no one listens to, and CJSW takes care of all the other languages. This is why Albertans are so adamantly opposed to compulsory bilingualism by the federal government. They're not against other languages, just the useless ones. My mother was Finnish, but I never learned Suomalais and would be the last person to support a radio show in that language.

## The Early Days.

But I digress. I told you all that as a preparation for a review of the book *WE MAKE RADIO* (2016), edited by Matthew Kennedy. It is a somewhat randomized history of CJSW by various staff, past and present. The book is well illustrated in full colour, slick paper throughout, and obviously designed by someone with a degree in graphic arts. The content could have been better organized though.

The station traces its roots back to 1955, when the university was a branch of the University of Alberta in Edmonton, my alma mater. The University of Calgary was not formed until 1966. CJSW was a campus station, and a primitive one at that.

Broadcasting consisted of loudspeakers in the Student Union building, a cable channel, and transmission through electrical power lines (carrier current signal) into student residences. When students plugged in radios in their rooms, the CJSW transmission overrode all other radio stations, which explained why the residents hated it so much. The only way they could listen to an outside radio station was on a battery-powered radio.

Up until the 1970s, the station was tolerated as a training ground for commercial DJs and talk show hosts, mostly students taking a communications major. The Revolution was late coming to Calgary, always a cultural backwater in those days, but eventually some of the students discovered punk rock. They enlisted their friends as fellow DJs, and in the late 1970s the station became a punk rock station.

Nevermind what the general public thought of punk rock, most students didn't like it either. The problem was that because CJSW was broadcasting through



loudspeakers around campus and through carrier current signals, people couldn't get away from it. Changing the channel was not an option. In the early 1980s, the Student Union began action to shut down CJSW and open warfare broke out on the campus.

CJSW volunteers did some adroit campaigning after the Student Union cut off funding. A referendum was held to provide a separate levy for CJSW in 1982. Because most students were apathetic in voting at student elections, while the CJSW activists went all out recruiting supporters, the levy squeaked through.

**New World Aborning.**

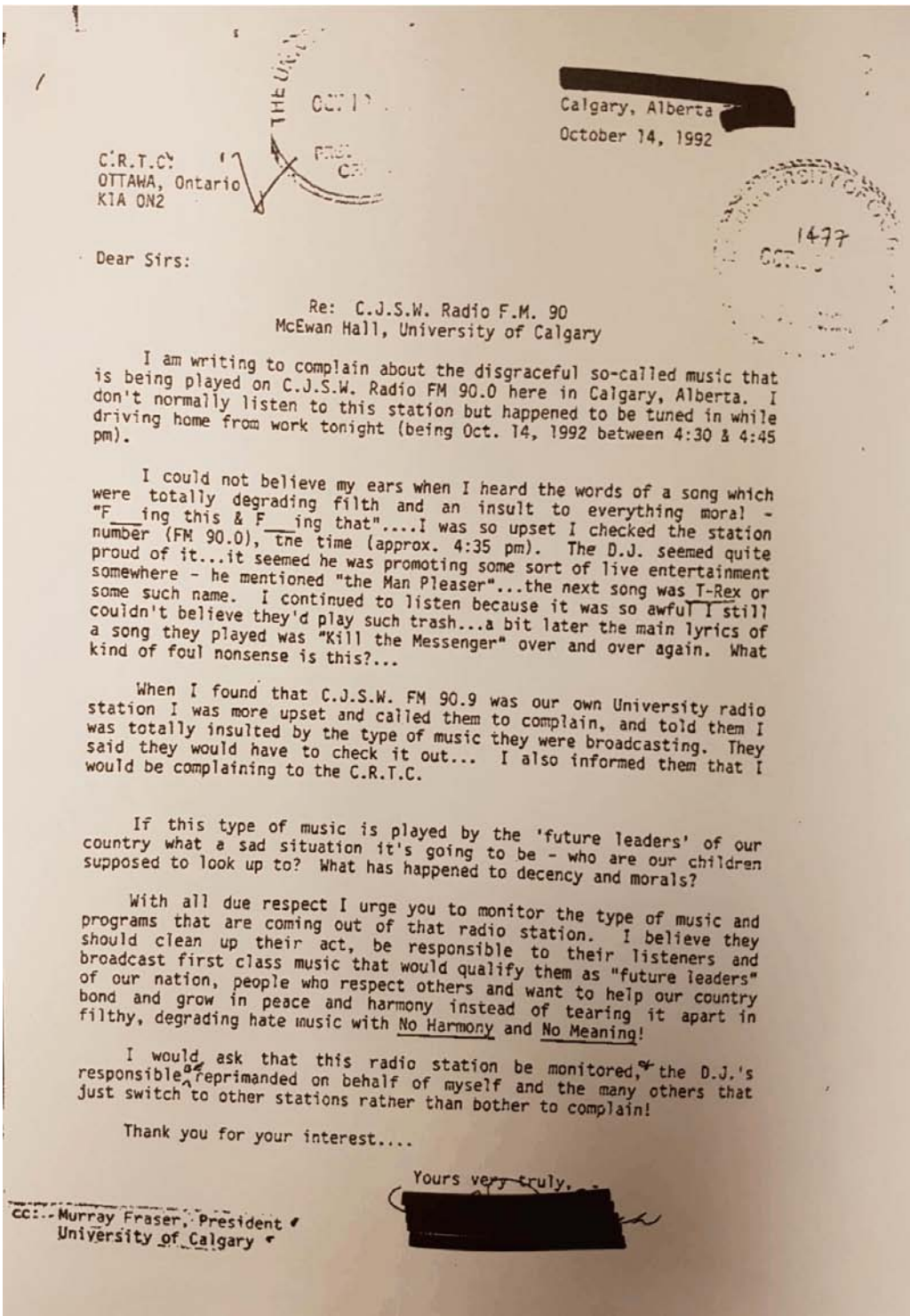
A major change occurred in 1985, when CJSW became a community station in order to get an FM licence from the CRTC. That year also began funding drives to make it independent of its minuscule student levy, and to upgrade its equipment, first to more powerful transmitters and later to buy computer gadgets for streaming and podcasts.

In order to get a community licence, CJSW had to break its punk rock mode and reach out to the surrounding city. The music director was of Greek ancestry, so he asked around and got volunteers to do a Greek language show. The accountant was Italian, so she organized a show for them. And so forth.

The ethnic shows brought with them not only a bigger audience but an activist one that helped CJSW in many ways. The ethnic groups donated much money to cover the costs of the shows, and wrote letters of support to the CRTC, which made a big difference. With no Internet, a radio show was the only practical method of reaching ethnics on a real-time basis, as opposed to ethnic newspapers which published monthly.

The application to the CRTC was successful. On January 15, 1985, CJSW began broadcasting throughout the city and the surrounding countryside with a variety of music and community shows. The first song played was "Once In A Lifetime" by the Talking Heads. Today there are about 100 shows.

Being heard over a wider area brought on some other problems. There are always people who look for something to be insulted by, and not a few grannies didn't like the music of CJSW. Kids these days, and all that. The fact that every radio comes with a channel changer doesn't enter into it. Illustrated in the book is this letter.





Until 2008, the station facilities were housed in basement rooms that no one else wanted. No ventilation or heating. Air temperatures in winter went down to 10°C. The space was available because the janitors refused it on safety grounds, and were backed up by their union.

In later years, tests were done that showed the rooms had low oxygen content. The loading docks were immediately adjacent, and diesel fumes from delivery trucks frequently filled the air. Garbage bins from the adjacent food court resulted in massive fruit fly infestations.

CJSW now has palatial new quarters with all the latest equipment, including a studio where guest bands and DJs perform live to air. The emphasis is on local musicians and up-and-comers. The show hosts do not gush over big-name bands and seldom invite them.

An oft-told story is how Green Day visited the station and were upset at not being treated like royalty. So much so, that the band left in a huff. As they were exiting, one of the band members grabbed a full garbage can and heaved it at a passing CJSW volunteer.

In the days before the Internet, CJSW had to communicate with its listeners somehow. The method was to start up in 1983 a free tabloid newspaper called VOX, which provided news about the programming and guests. It gradually began to expand its mandate to left-wing news and record reviews. The editorial volunteers thought of themselves as a separate operation, and there were conflicts.

Matters came to a head in 1998. The World Wide Web was stealing advertisers and readers. The paper was bleeding money from the station. VOX was sold to the Vancouver publisher Georgia Straight, and became the CALGARY STRAIGHT, a trendy shopper paper. It died two years later and was not mourned.

CJSW is still going strong. With the exception of the station manager, everyone is a volunteer. The music they play is not heard on commercial stations. I leave my radio dial set to CJSW 90.9 FM because the rest of the dial is a wasteland.

## **COZY MYSTERIES: PART 6**

by Dale Speirs

[Parts 1 to 5 appeared in OPUNTIA's #361, 379, 395, and 398, and 400.]

Cozy mysteries have evolved into a standard format from their distant origin in the Miss Marple series. The book titles usually are puns. The main protagonist is an amateur sleuth who busily snoops about contaminating evidence, indirectly obstructing police, and getting into the line of fire from the murderer.

Cozy mysteries have developed a number of subgenres. There are several series involving cats, dogs, or birds. Food is popular, whether a restaurant or bakery. If there is a Website for a particular hobby or interest group, then there is probably a cozy mystery series for it.

### **Food Cozies: Competitive.**

I have one serious problem in reading food cozies. I get hungry. These novels have recipes in an appendix or, in some books, interspersed between the chapters. I find it best to read such books on a full stomach. A popular sub-sub-genre is the food cozy involving a competition of some sort, whether a bake-off or barbecue.

THE FATAL FUNNEL CAKE (2013) by Livia J. Washburn, is part of a food cozy series set in Weatherford, Texas, where Phyllis Newsom lives. She is a retired teacher, widow, boarding house landlady, and Miss Marple.

She is competing in a cooking contest at the Texas State Fair in Dallas. Celebrity chef Joye Jameson is broadcasting her show from the fairgrounds. She has invited Newsom to prepare her funnel cake for the viewing audience, live on camera. Jameson, evidently not having read up on Newsom, takes a bite of her funnel cake and promptly departs this world due to a fatal allergic reaction.

Needless to say, Newsom has to do some fancy sleuthing to restore her good name. The second-place funnel cake contestant was a sore loser and tried to punch out the judge. (If you think the Hugo Awards are catty, they're nothing compared to any local baking contest.) There are several television crews and news reporters at odds with each other, due to incidents years ago and the regular professional jealousies.



“You’re a funnel cake Nostradamus.”, a friend tells Newsom. Fortunately the police latch on to a production assistant as the culprit, leaving Newsom in the clear. Naturally she knows they got the wrong person.

Someone had replaced the corn oil with peanut oil, so whoever did it knew Jameson had allergies. The search turns to finding the person who swapped the cooking oils. Newsom works her way through the list of suspects before proving the least likely one did it. The murderer was someone who wanted his own cooking show and decided to create a vacancy.

From there to the recipes section, which concludes the novel. The funnel cake recipe is expected, but there is also one for Texas-style Spam sushi. That could start another war with Japan if the book is ever translated. I thought Texans only ate barbecue down there.

I got so hungry reading the book that I went out for a strawberry funnel cake. I’m not making that up. There is a Dairy Queen five minutes from my house which has funnel cakes on the menu. I took this photo with my smartphone.



KILLER CRUST (2013) by Chris Cavender (pseudonym of Tom Meyers) is from a food cozy series about Eleanor Swift and her sister Manny Spencer, proprietors of A Slice Of Delight pizzeria in Timber Ridge, North Carolina. Laughing Luigi Pizza Dough, purveyors of frozen pizza dough, blow into town and invite the sisters to enter a \$25,000 pizza making contest. Luigi DeMarcos is a sharp practice man but the sisters could use the money to prop up their restaurant, assuming they win.

The competition goes badly for the women. They let the crowds and cameras get to them, and an unknown competitor sabotages their oven. They still manage to finish in the first round. The second round doesn’t start for three hours, so a full page is spent on the sisters discussing where they should go out to eat. So much for eating your own cooking. They deserve to lose.

The competition now goes badly for Luigi, who isn’t laughing anymore on account of being murdered before the second round starts. The company keeps the contest going, however. As to the method, it appears to have been a poisoned slice of pizza from one of the competitors.

The sisters are now twice as busy, adding in their sleuthing on top of competing. Everyone has a past with Luigi and a motive to kill him. The sisters eventually confront the killer, an ambitious executive who wanted to take over Laughing Luigi in the worst way and almost does. A last minute save, and the pizza crisis is over. The final conclusion is, strangely, a recipe for calzone, not pizza.

A FRYING SHAME (2017) by Linda Reilly is an installment in a cozy series about Talia Marby, proprietor of the Fry Me A Sliver restaurant. Located in Wrensdale, Massachusetts, it is an epicentre of murder.

The book at hand is about Marby’s competition in a \$25,000 cooking contest. No relation to any other cozy novel, of course. She had high hopes for her mini deep-fried apple pies, but alas, Norma Ferguson wins with flaky-top chicken stew. A further alas, for a short time later, Ferguson is murdered at her cooking station. A teenaged boy who walked in just as the killer was departing got a beating that left him in a coma.

The police immediately warn Marby against trying any of her Nancy Drew routines. *Obstruction of justice is a serious matter, as is interfering with a police investigation. Think about it. You won’t be eating any of your delicious fried goodies in jail. Only stale bread and lukewarm tap water. Get it?*

That of course does not stop her, otherwise the novel would end on page 46 (paperback edition). Crystal Galardi had finished second and everyone, police or civilian, suspects her because her restaurant was financially shaky. She really could have used the \$25,000.

A major clue in the case is that just before the beaten boy went into a coma, he muttered the word ‘mercury’. It is used in an improbable way, quite



unbelievable. Consider this: you have been attacked but saw that the licence plate on the killer’s car began with ‘HG’. Do you tell the cops ‘HG’ before passing out, or send them on a wild goose chase looking for Mercury automobiles? (For those who don’t know science, Hg is the scientific symbol for the element mercury.)

It doesn’t matter because the solution comes out of right field with an elaborate scheme between a local politician and his compulsively spending wife. They wanted to pay off her debts by roping in Ferguson as a stalking horse in the cooking contest. All told, the plot was far fetched even for a cozy.

Since this is a food cozy, there are recipes at the back of the book. The deep-fried macaroni and cheese seems to guarantee a coronary thrombosis. The mini deep-fried apple pies are safer.

**Food Cozies: Food Trucks.**

Every big city has food trucks, parked in the downtown core on weekdays and out at street festivals on weekends. Cozies are not far behind.

J.J. Cook is a pseudonym of Joyce and Jim Lavene, who have a cozy series about Zoe Chase, a food truck owner in Mobile, Alabama. She uses a converted Airstream RV called the Biscuit Bowl. Her specialty is deep-fried bread bowls stuffed with assorted types of sweet or savory foods.

The first novel in the series was DEATH ON EAT STREET (2014). Chase has quit her job with a bank after being passed over for promotion once too often. She couldn’t afford her dream of a regular restaurant, so she bought a food truck and called it the Biscuit Bowl. She operated it in downtown and waterfront Mobile, but isn’t doing that well.

It does worse after someone dumps the body of one of her competitors into her truck. The police investigation is bad enough but all her family and friends are using the murder as proof she should have stayed in the bank. Her food truck competitors are adept at sabotage, and she has to contend with holdups and muggings.

Chase’s investigation stirs up additional trouble. The dead man appears to have stolen a valuable recipe handwritten by Thomas Jefferson. Where it is, no one knows. Some very bad men are hunting for it, with Chase in the middle of it.

After the final confrontation, the loose threads are tied up in the epilogue and from there on to the recipes. Creme Brulee (also the name of her cat), spicy gumbo, and deep-fried biscuit cakes for the discriminating Southerner.

FRY ANOTHER DAY (2015) has Zoe Chase driving her food truck to Charlotte, North Carolina, to compete in a food truck race. The Sweet Magnolia Food Truck Race offers a grand prize of \$50,000 and will be televised on a food cable channel.

The race has ten entrants, of whom Chase is one. It goes from Charlotte to Mobile with three stops en route, a total of five competition points. At each stop, the trucks have to prepare a specialty item called by the organizers, sell at least 100 of them, and get 20 customers to say they were delicious.

One of the other entrants is the Dog House, operated by a nasty fellow who departs the race, and this world, before it even starts. He was first thought to have been killed accidentally when something fell on him, but police later consider it to be murder. The race goes on though. The food network has too much money invested to let it die.

Without even doing any sleuthing, Chase learns that Alex Pardini, the television producer, was involved in a conspiracy to sabotage certain competitors to ensure the right person wins. Sort of like professional wrestling or reality shows, except Pardini didn’t sanction a murder. The police detective investigating murder #1 becomes murder #2 when a hit-and-run driver kills him.

Off to Columbia for the next stop in the race. A spate of sabotage begins against the food trucks. Events become uglier and uglier as the death toll climbs. The race staggers along. The winner may not be the best cook but instead the last one still alive by the time they get to Mobile.

The ending was forced, with a killer who came out of the woodwork and whose motives were introduced late in the book. Not a believable finish, although the biscuit bowl recipes at the back are nice.

**Food Cozies: Hot Stuff.**

DEATH BY DEVIL’S BREATH (2014) by Kylie Logan (pseudonym of Connie Laux) is part of a food cozy series about Maxie Pierce and her half-sister Sylvia. They operate Texas Jack’s Hot-Cha Chili, named after their father. The



sisters are in Las Vegas for the Devil’s Breath Chili Showdown, and have a booth in the dealer bourse.

The judges are celebrities, or at least moderately well known on the Strip. Comedian Dickie Dunkin is sampling the entries. He tells the audience a joke about a restaurant where the chili is free but ice water is \$10 a glass. While they are still chuckling at that one, he dies from poison, flopping face down into the chili bowl. All the judges sampled from the same chili, so the question is how the poison was administered.

The murder is good for business. Once the news spreads, tourists jam the bourse. Maxie snoops about, learning that Dunkin was not a popular man. In addition to the usual clashing of egos in show business, there were assorted romantic entanglements. Maxie has her own problems, as she and Sylvia do not get along together.

One of the contestants had a back story with Dunkin, serious enough that she decided to silence him. He wasn’t the sinner he was painted as, but that knowledge isn’t introduced into the novel until a late chapter. Finally though, the ending, followed by a recipe for chicken chili. I don’t like spicy foods, so I was able to finish the book without gaining weight.

KILL ‘EM WITH CAYENNE (2014) by Gail Oust is about Piper Presscott, owner of the Spice It Up shop in the village of Brandywine Creek, Georgia. The usual cozy mystery economics are applied, that is, a specialized store that would struggle in the big city does well in a rural village. Cuteness as well, because the scientific genus name for peppers is *Piper*.

In the novel at hand, the annual Brandywine Creek Barbecue Festival is underway. The competition is vicious, too vicious. Becca Dapkins and Maybelle Humphries are the top competitors and also archenemies. Dapkins’s body is found in the village square, by Presscott of course, and equally of course the police know who to suspect. One observer frets: “*Brandywine Creek will get a reputation for murder like New York City or Chicago.*” Too late to be worrying about that.

Presscott seems to be doing an amazing amount of business, which doesn’t leave her much time for sleuthing. Lots of soap opera entanglements come to light. Roaming about is Barbara Quinlan, aka Barbie Q, a reporter in town for the Festival on behalf of the Cooking Network. She is a hometown girl made good

but had a rough childhood. She’s back for revenge. There’s a hot time in the old town tonight, and it isn’t because of barbecue spices.

During the traditional held-at-gunpoint climax, the killer helpfully ties up the loose threads before the equally traditional last-minute escape. Dapkins had recognized him as a Chicago gangster on the lam and tried to blackmail him. A happy ending, with Presscott handing out a free bottle of chili powder to a potential boyfriend, who will no doubt have a bigger part in the next novel.

The barbecue recipes at the back of the book began with Dr Doug’s Butt Rub. I didn’t read past the title.

**Food Cozies: Miscellaneous.**

REST IN PIZZA (2012) by Chris Cavender (pseudonym of Tom Meyers) is from a food cozy series about Eleanor Swift and her sister Manny Spencer, proprietors of A Slice Of Delight pizzeria in Timber Ridge, North Carolina. This novel is about a book signing tour that brings Antonio Benet to the village bookstore. He was a cable television chef whose series is suddenly canceled after someone puts a knife in his back.

Benet was a blowhard who insulted everyone he met, from Swift to the bookstore owner to his television producer and especially to his personal assistant, plus anyone he met on the street. His cookbook was titled A TASTE OF ITALIAN HEAVEN. Those who knew him well all agreed he was bound for the other place, the one Dante wrote about. Swift has her own taste of Hell because Benet was murdered in her pizzeria.

With a plentitude of suspects, including Swift near the top of the list, motive is not a factor in the investigation. For once, an obvious suspect is indeed the murderer, although Swift adheres to cozy tradition by getting herself trapped with the killer. Benet didn’t care about ruining other people’s lives, but one of his victims cared enough to push back hard. From there to the dessert pizza recipes at the back of the book. A fair read for a cozy.

**The Sincerest Form Of Flattery.**

If you read enough cozy mysteries, you will soon notice how the same plots and situations are re-used. Sometimes the correspondences are so close that it is surprising there aren’t more lawsuits for theft of intellectual property. Literary



ideas are generally not copyrightable, but if the connection is extremely close, then litigants can and have won in court.

DEATH TAKES THE CAKE (2009) by Melinda Wells is about Della Carmichael, who runs a cooking school in Santa Monica, California, and has a cable television show.

BATTERED TO DEATH (2013) by Gayle Trent is about Daphne Martin, who runs a cake decorating business in Brea Ridge, Virginia. The very thing that every rural village needs.

Carmichael enters a televised cake competition. Martin enters a televised cake competition.

Carmichael finds the body of the show’s sponsor, face down in a bowl of batter. Martin doesn’t find the body of the show’s celebrity host face down in a bowl of batter. Someone else did, but suspicion falls upon her anyway.

Both books follow standard cozy procedures. Lots of amateur sleuthing, and suspicion is scattered about like icing sugar. The two Miss Marples have their close encounters with the murderers, but all ends well, at least for the survivors. Both books end with recipes for cakes.

**COWTOWN FOOD TRUCKS**

photos by Dale Speirs

I love my smartphone camera, which is very handy for snapshots as I walk about town. These are but a few of the food trucks seen around Calgary. On regular business days they congregate downtown, while on weekends they park at street or ethnic festivals. Like cozies or Websites, they cover many obscure types of food.









**SEEN IN THE LITERATURE**

Bertolami, O., and F. Francisco (2018) **A physical framework for the earth system, Anthropocene equation and the great acceleration.** GLOBAL AND PLANETARY CHANGE 169:66-69

Authors’ abstract: *It is proposed, based on the Landau-Ginzburg Theory of phase transitions, that the transition of the Earth System from the stable conditions of the Holocene to the human driven condition of the Anthropocene is, actually, a phase transition, a qualitative change away from its Holocene equilibrium state.*

*Based on this physical framework, one obtains the Anthropocene equation, the so-called Great Acceleration and shows that*  
*(i) the Earth System temperature at the future equilibrium state diverges from the average temperature of the Holocene as the cubic root of the human intervention, described by a parameter, H;*  
*(ii) the human induced departure from the Holocene can be as drastic as the ones due to natural, astronomical and geophysical causes;*  
*(iii) the susceptibility of the Earth System to human effects is much more relevant near the phase transition.*

Augier, E., et al (2018) **A molecular mechanism for choosing alcohol over an alternative reward.** SCIENCE 360:1321-1326

Authors’ abstract: *Alcohol addiction leads to increased choice of alcohol over healthy rewards. We established an exclusive choice procedure in which ~15% of outbred rats chose alcohol over a high-value reward. These animals displayed addiction-like traits, including high motivation to obtain alcohol and pursuit of this drug despite adverse consequences.*

*Expression of the  $\gamma$ -aminobutyric acid (GABA) transporter GAT-3 was selectively decreased within the amygdala of alcohol-choosing rats, whereas a knockdown of this transcript reversed choice preference of rats that originally chose a sweet solution over alcohol. GAT-3 expression was selectively decreased in the central amygdala of alcohol-dependent people compared to those who died of unrelated causes.*

*Impaired GABA clearance within the amygdala contributes to alcohol*

*addiction, appears to translate between species, and may offer targets for new pharmacotherapies for treating this disorder.*

Maixner, F., et al (2018) **The Iceman’s last meal consisted of fat, wild meat, and cereals.** CURRENT BIOLOGY 28:2348-2355

Authors’ abstract: *By undertaking a complementary -omics approach combined with microscopy, we analyzed the stomach content of the Iceman, a 5,300-year-old European glacier mummy. He seems to have had a remarkably high proportion of fat in his diet, supplemented with fresh or dried wild meat, cereals, and traces of toxic bracken.*

*The well-preserved stomach content still contains ancient endogenous biomolecules as demonstrated from the complete reconstruction of the Iceman’s Helicobacter pylori genome. Previous isotopic analysis ( $^{15}\text{N}/^{14}\text{N}$ ) of the Iceman’s hair suggested first a vegetarian lifestyle which was later, after careful re-examination of the data, changed to a omnivorous diet.*

*Further analyses of lower intestinal tract samples of the Iceman confirmed that he was omnivorous, with a diet consisting of both wild animal and plant material. Among the plant remains, there were cereals, pollen grains of hop-hornbeam, and fragments of bracken and mosses. The detection of the Iceman’s stomach content with its pristine yet undigested food mix, provides the unique opportunity to fully reconstruct a Copper Age meal.*

Barbi, E., et al (2018) **The plateau of human mortality: Demography of longevity pioneers.** SCIENCE 360:1459-1461

Authors’ abstract: *Theories about biological limits to life span and evolutionary shaping of human longevity depend on facts about mortality at extreme ages, but these facts have remained a matter of debate. Do hazard curves typically level out into high plateaus eventually, as seen in other species, or do exponential increases persist?*

*In this study, we estimated hazard rates from data on all inhabitants of Italy aged 105 and older between 2009 and 2015 (born 1896 to 1910), a total of 3,836 documented cases. We observed level hazard curves, which were essentially constant beyond age 105. Our estimates are free from artifacts of*



aggregation that limited earlier studies and provide the best evidence to date for the existence of extreme-age mortality plateaus in humans. Human death rates increase exponentially up to about age 80, then decelerate, and plateau after age 105.

Speirs: In other words, if you can make it to 105 years of age, you're set for life.

Miyano, T.D. (2018) **Moon-based planetary defense campaign.** JOURNAL OF SPACE SAFETY ENGINEERING doi.org/10.1016/j.jsse.2018.06.002

Author's abstract: *The Moon is an ideal location to launch intercepting missions to life-threatening and catastrophic asteroids. The effectiveness of the interception greatly depends on the weight of the spacecraft. Unfortunately, interceptors launched from the Earth lose more than 98% of their weight by burning the majority of their onboard fuel and by jettisoning their lower stage structures before entering a heliocentric orbit.*

*However, if interceptors are launched from the Moon by a lunar surface accelerator, they can enter a heliocentric orbit without consuming any onboard fuel or jettisoning any part of the spacecraft. A 5-ton construction package, which consists of robots and industrial production equipment, would enable mining on the moon and construction of a 3.5 km-long, 5,000-ton accelerator.*

*Large asteroid impacts have and will inevitably occur, and it is important to be prepared to avoid catastrophes, but they may not happen immediately or even within the next fifty years. The future planetary defense system must be a dual-use system, which continuously provides a secondary benefit to justify its operation and maintenance costs.*

*When it is not defending the planet, the Lunar Electromagnetic Interceptor Launch System (LEILAS) can send over a thousand tons of construction material and fuel annually to the Low Earth Orbit (LEO) or Earth-Moon Lagrange Point Two (EML-2) to build space stations and to construct large spacecraft for deep space missions.*

Barletta, V.R., et al (2018) **Observed rapid bedrock uplift in Amundsen Sea Embayment promotes ice-sheet stability.** SCIENCE 360:1335-1339

Authors' abstract: *Earth's crust deforms under the load of glaciers and ice sheets. When these masses are removed, the crust rebounds at a time scale determined by the viscosity of the upper mantle. Using GPS, the viscosity of the mantle under the West Antarctic Ice Sheet is much lower than expected. This means that as ice is lost, the crust rebounds much faster than previously expected. Although estimates of total ice loss have to be revised upward, the surprising finding indicates that the ice sheet may stabilize against catastrophic collapse.*

*The marine portion of the West Antarctic Ice Sheet (WAIS) in the Amundsen Sea Embayment (ASE) accounts for one-fourth of the cryospheric contribution to global sea-level rise and is vulnerable to catastrophic collapse. The bedrock response to ice mass loss, glacial isostatic adjustment (GIA), was thought to occur on a time scale of 10,000 years.*

*We used new GPS measurements, which show a rapid (41 millimeters per year) uplift of the ASE, to estimate the viscosity of the mantle underneath. We found a much lower viscosity ( $4 \times 10$  pascal-second) than global average, and this shortens the GIA response time scale from tens to hundreds of years. Our finding requires an upward revision of ice mass loss from gravity data of 10% and increases the potential stability of the WAIS against catastrophic collapse.*

Speirs: The same thing is happening with North America (see OPUNTIA #381, page 14), a phenomenon known as isostatic rebound. That is why none of the sea level rise predictions over the past decades have come true. As the ice melts, the continents are lifting up.



**SIGNS, SIGNS, EVERYWHERE A SIGN: KANANASKIS**  
photos by Dale Speirs

Below: Seen in a Kananaskis village store. If I went around with my shorts half off, I'd be arrested for public indecency. Oh wait, maybe they meant something else.

At right: At the head of the Ribbon Creek trail, along the bottom of the terrace that Kananaskis village is located on. No joke here. Bears usually take out two or three tourists each year in the Kananaskis mountains. It might be me someday.

