



*Happy
Anniversary*



To Mom & Dad on their 50th Wedding Anniversary

From

Bob & Joy & Kids with much love.



1926 - 1976: The First Fifty

Taking the example of the Chinese, whose respect for their elders is legendary, this address will commence: "Honored Parents". Then it will continue to include us all, "Members of the family and dear friends". And having thus started politely and formally, it will continue as a sometimes irreverent and informal ramble through fifty years of history as seen through the eyes of the offspring of the couple we are gathered today to honor.

Having reached and passed the Biblical allotment of three-score years and ten, these two people have seldom fallen into the error of boring their younger listeners by harking overmuch back into the past, and their unfailing enthusiasm for things yet to come puts many of us here to shame. But a seasoned traveller, in order not to altogether lose his bearings, occasionally looks back over his shoulder to fix landmarks in his mind and see exactly where he has been. So let's pause now and glance back to see where we have been, and where we have come from.

Fifty years ago today two young people stood before their peers in a Christian ceremony and solemnly promised to love, honor, and cherish each other until death did them part. Nothing remarkable about this; it had been done for centuries and was an everyday occurrence. But in a century which has become somewhat infamous for its indifference to promises, perhaps the remarkable thing is that they have faithfully kept that promise, with no thought of neglecting it even entering their minds. This example of faithful acceptance of responsibility has had an effect on the lives of their children, and will more than likely reach beyond them to succeeding generations, four of which are represented here today. And for this example, by two stubbornly individualistic people who learned to live together in reasonable harmony, we, your children, offer our sincere thanks.

Over half a century ago (so the story goes, and it may in part be apocryphal) Dad was sparking a young Home Ec student from Hamiota. One Sunday, upon walking into the Atkinson barn, he came upon this lady's younger sister spiritedly belaboring a shifty-footed cow with a piece of plank. (Nails in it, too) This exhibition of personal independence must have struck a spark kindred to his own somewhat fiery temperament, because the raven-haired cow-beater became our mother and not our aunt. Thank goodness for this, for we are all now sisters and brother, and not each other's cousins! The real truth of this anecdote is obscured in the mists of the intervening years, and I'm not about to spoil the effect by having it verified by our Uncle, Mom's brother, who sits here grinning. He, too, has been known to handle the truth somewhat loosely on occasion. Anyhow, whatever the real beginning of the romance, it culminated in the marriage of Ellen Grace Atkinson and Norman Leslie Turnbull on June 26, 1926, and that's where this history begins.

The couple moved onto the Atkinson farm into a monster of a house built by Grandpa Atkinson forty years before its time, taking over with the move a big mortgage and a virile acreage of couch-grass. Father's stubborn determination not to be outdone by an unthinking vegetable enabled him to conquer the couch, to the amazement of his neighbours, but the mortgage was the first battle the young couple lost, aided by the world-wide depression which set in in the fall of 1929. But we get ahead of the story.

In May 1927, the union was blessed by the arrival of the first child, a son, Robert Orison. It should be noted in passing that this son, by virtue of eventually turning out to be the only male offspring, doggedly maintains that after one perfect accomplishment, the couple devoted the remainder of their productive years to bringing forth five lesser mortals, all female!

However, the girls just as stoutly maintain that after one such horror, enough was too much, and the stork was entreated to present girls exclusively. Mom and Dad say they had several boys' names picked out but eventually reconciled themselves to the inequitable distribution the Lord saw fit to provide. You may take your pick of those alternatives, but one thing all six of us realize; we were all loved, fed and watered impartially and brought to our majority in rude health and with a fine sense of individuality.

Early in the spring of 1929, blown in on a March blizzard, Georgina Constance arrived. Her timely appearance served to help soften the blow of what was later to become known as the Great Depression, in that same year. Life on a half-section Manitoba farm continued, as it did for countless others, to be a challenge and a struggle, and became even grimmer with the collapse of the economy. Father somehow acquired a steel-shod Wallace tractor and augmented a dwindling income by turning bottom-side-up many acres of here-to-fore unplowed bushland for neighbours. He also acquired a reputation as a hard worker who gave good value for a dollar, while Mother kept a supervisory eye on the farm, coped with two boisterous children, and always half expected to see her husband carried home in a basket through a misfiring of the dynamite he used to blast recalcitrant stumps and rocks from the path of the Wallace and breaking plow.

It was in these early years that little accidents and adventures occurred which stick in young minds like glue to a blanket. Such as the time of the belligerent rooster who put the run on the two kids and eventually ended up in a pot for Sunday dinner for his aggressive tendencies. Delicious! Or the time Mom stepped into the open lid of the cistern and survived the straight drop, emerging shaken and white-faced. And the time that Connie, playing at the head of the cellar stairs, crawled into the cream-can and rolled to the bottom, her shrieks of terror redoubling

with each bounce until Mom was sure she was being massacred! The quiet nights with the French windows open to the sounds of evening frogs singing in the marsh north of the yard. Or another horrifyingly unforgettable sound; the blood-curdling scream of agony as Darky, Dad's hackney gelding, had his tail torn off by a thresher belt. Psychiatrists would have a ball with that incident, but we and the horse survived the experience and Darky became quite famous around Hamiota and later Binscarth for his abbreviated appearance. Remembrances of waking with hoar-frost on our blankets in that first home make us all doubly thankful for the cosy comfort of our present abodes, even at the expense of helping precipitate an energy crisis!

Ida May Cecelia , named for her two grandmothers, arrived in August of 1933. Her birth-date sticks in the memories of her older brother and sister, not because she was in any way remarkable, but because we were at the time of Mother's hospital confinement being cared for by a "hired girl" of extremely mercurial temper, due, we learned in later years, to her own romantic affairs. Also this same older pair picked this time to embark on a nautical experiment in an old wooden horse-trough in the slough, and ended the episode with a violent case of good old Prairie Itch!

1933 was also the beginning of the end for the Hamiota farm. That fall, Dad got a job firing the boilers of the flour mill in town, riding to and from the farm in all weathers on the now-recovered Darky. The "Auction Sale" took place early in the spring of 1934. It was an experience of a bitterness unbelievable in today's society. We saw tears in the eyes of our parents as they watched animals they had cared for and loved, knocked down for a fraction of their real worth. Kind neighbours, bidding in some cases beyond their means to help soften the economic blow, turned away shame-faced, realizing their efforts on our behalf were almost insults. And there were the greedy bargain-hunters, but they were simply the outgrowth of a cruel time in Prairie history, a time which those of us who remember it devoutly pray will never again occur.

We settled in a rented house in the north part of town, and we older ones remember it chiefly for its cramped confinement after the freedom and space of the farm and its huge dwelling. Jessie Hope put in her appearance in the spring of 1935 in the midst of an epidemic of whooping cough. With Dad at the mill up to eighteen hours a day, Mother coped with four children all barking like stag-hounds and trembled in terror as she watched her newest girl-child turn blue and then black in the face from the terrible coughing. Between our own spells, we older ones thought Jessie quite entertaining, with her infinitely variable complexion. But we all survived that memorable spring, including the tiny Jessie. She is no longer so tiny, and today the only time we see Jessie turn purple is during one of the infrequent family rows, a warning that things have gone far enough!

It was not until Father became a successful candidate and was elected to the Legislature in 1936 that the other residents of Quality Hill (a self-styled designation bestowed by a somewhat purse-proud neighbour matron) began to feel we were not entirely out of place. Dad's political success was mainly attributable to his reputation, gained from his work with the old Wallace and the subsequent years in the mill, of which he was now manager. This reputation was one of absolute honesty and integrity, when many times a little less careful dealing could have resulted in monetary betterment of the Turnbull fortunes. But the pride of his children in their male parent's character almost made up for the ridicule they suffered due to his unfortunate choice of a political vehicle upon which to ride to fame and fortune!

Soon after Father entered political waters, he dashed the pride of the Quality Hillers by buying a little cottage on the eastern outskirts of town. Here, despite his somewhat improved social position, his agricultural instincts again came to the fore. The house was notable for two things. The first was its size; it was suitable to house two in comfort and actually did house six

and often more. The second was the size of the grounds which went along with the house. These were large enough to feed forty and eventually did support a cow, two pigs at intervals, and enough hens to keep a voracious family in fresh eggs and old fowl. A weedy garden of less than half an acre looked like the reaches of the vast Pacific when viewed over a hoe-handle on a sunny Saturday morning, with the swimming hole and more fortunate chums beckoning. It is quite remarkable that so many of us have showed any affinity for agriculture after that garden! What it must have looked like to Mom after canning a hundred quarts of peas in the heat of July over a woodburning stove is something else to ponder, and you younger people here can bless the Gods of Electricity and Progress for today's quick-frozen foods.

The end of the Dirty Thirties decade saw a slight improvement in the Turnbull family's fortunes. The old third-hand Chrysler which had carried Dad to local political prominence was retired in favor of a spanking new Dodge which he and a friend drove back from the factory in Windsor in 1939. If I remember correctly, the whole deal, car, license, insurance and trip home came to less than a thousand dollars; a bench-mark by which to judge the inflated price of a similar vehicle today. That same year the Dodge carried the six Turnbulls on a westward odyssey almost to the Rockies, to the home of our aunt, the lady mentioned earlier in this saga as having just missed being our mother. This was the greatest adventure of our lives to us younger sprouts, and may have had something to do with activating a latent itchy foot in some of us. However, it must have been a trying experience to these two people who sit smiling at the head of the table today. Anyone who has had to survive in a cramped automobile for two weeks in company of four Tasmanian Devils will have some idea of what I mean.

The end of that decade was the death of an age; a period in the book of history. Those of us who were born before 1939 and

grew up in those years lived in a world quite different to what soon followed. Since the advent of the Second World War, there have been more social changes, more technological advances, more scientific discoveries and more population upheavals than in all of time preceding that date. Not all were good; not all have been bad; but all very bewildering and difficult to adjust to.

The war years saw more responsibilities fall on the shoulders of the elder Turnbulls, and the older children began the somewhat uneasy task of growing up. Father became a member of the Manitoba Government Cabinet; a tribute from his colleagues to his worth as a man rather than to his political persuasions. In this position he served well, if without fanfare, when he felt he should be overseas with other men, many no older than he. Mother was left to handle four rambunctious young monsters more and more on her own due to her spouse's week long absences in the city. How she retained her composure and indeed, her sanity is almost beyond belief when we recall some of our behaviour and escapades.

I wonder if Mom remembers the time she sent her first-born to the bush to cut a switch with which to be whipped, and he returned carrying a fragile milk-weed? Her stern admonishment to return with something more substantial was parried by his staggering in with a whole tree, and she broke up in laughter and tears and the whipping mood was at least postponed? Or the time Connie exhibited a definite reluctance to cease dawdling over the dishes and in exasperation, Mom tapped her on the head with a milk-bottle and the thing disintegrated, leaving her with the neck in her hand and her daughter's hair full of shards! Mother's horror-struck expression was priceless but went unrecorded except in the memories of the startled witnesses!

The beginning of the forties also saw a gradual move back to Dad's ancestral home at Binscarth. These were the years when we

had two homes; a summer one on the farm at Gripfast and a winter one in Hamiota where we suffered the painful process of becoming somewhat less ignorant through the unceasing efforts of sorely-tried teachers, (who in those times had no Association or Union to protect them from whatever evils then existed.) After a production lull of some years, Leslie Blanche was born in June 1944. A cleft palate and the subsequent corrective operations made her babyhood a torment and worrisome time to her parents, but she overcame this handicap to develop into one of the favorite people of all who know her. Violet Heather arrived a day late for St. Valentines in 1948, and the first cycle in the union of Norman and Grace was completed.

This was the year Father decided not to remain in politics, when he had reached the point where he could have been re-elected by acclamation, probably indefinitely. But he decided that almost thirteen years of that type of public service (poorly paid by today's standards, I might add) was enough, and if he was to get back to his real love, farming, the time was then before it grew too late.

1948 was also the beginning of the second phase of the Turnbull history, with Connie's marriage to Derry Ashcroft and her move to their home in Solsgirth. After sporadic work in odd moments on the farm house at Binscarth, Mom and Dad Turnbull decided to really renovate it and move back, lock stock and barrel. But before they could do so in 1949, only son and his cat somehow managed to be the only residents when the place burned to the ground. Eldest son survived the holocaust, but unfortunate cat did not and the real cause of the fire was never determined. Did you really enjoy living in a portable grainary that summer, Mom, while we dug and mortared and rebuilt the house in which you presently live?

Connie and Derry's first child, Karen, was born in 1949, and

it must have been with mixed feelings that the two people who considered themselves relative youngsters first heard themselves addressed as "Grandpa and Grandma". But this dubious honor was overshadowed by the bustle of the move back to the now completed house on the farm, and late in the fall of the same year, 1950, Karen's eldest brother squalled his way into the world and Grandpa Turnbull had his first descendant named for him in the person of Norman Peter. The years flew by, with the elder Turnbolls becoming re-established in the farming game and the next generation attempting to break into it between jaunts to the north to support a weak economic base. In 1951 Ivy Eulah Hall joined forces with son Robert and they proceeded to re-establish the somewhat dwindled Turnbull line.

The fifties were boom years for family additions; mates were chosen and grandchildren arrived with increasing frequency. James Norman Robert, named for his three immediate male predecessors, arrived in September of 1952. May, finding a bachelor near Oakburn more attractive than the little school at which she was teaching, became Mrs. Bill Deller in July 1953. Connie and Derry's second son and third child John started 1954 right by arriving in January, and has grown to be a constant reminder of his father. Three months later Patricia Anne was a Good Friday baby, Bob and Ivy's second child. Another cousin and grandchild arrived on his father's birthday in June, and Walter's precisely timed appearance raised May's reputation for organizational ability another notch! In May 1956 Terri Ellen joined the Deller menage to balance the sexes. On the first of August 1957 the worst hail storm in the history of Gripfast wiped our platters clean of crop for that year but father was able to cut his losses somewhat on the 3rd by unloading third daughter Jessie onto Jack Woodhouse, a progressive young farmer from north of Binscarth. A short pause in reproductive activities was broken in 1959 by the arrival of Meredith Dee Ashcroft in February and Rhonda Louise

Turnbull in March. So the decade ended with four children married and settled and the profitable figure of nine grandchildren added to the family roster.

That same period saw the senior Turnbulls ever more deeply involved in church and community affairs. Dad had become chairman for the local school board and was instrumental in getting built the school to which many of his grandchildren have gone, albeit some of them reluctantly! In the autumn of 1966, Mom was stricken with rheumatic fever, the malady that had carried off her older sister some two dozen years earlier, and for weeks and months it seemed that she would slip away to leave us to carry on without her. But improved medical knowledge and a streak of stubbornness in her make-up (of which many of us were aware) carried her through to renewed health. Since then she has suffered extra sensitivity to cold, but she has in no way quote"enjoyed" unquote ill health as so many seem to do.

Kenneth Turnbull arrived to start the sixties and carry on the clan name of Leslie for his generation, making it just a week before his mother's birthday in November. Connie's second marriage, to Bill Choptiuk, took place just after Christmas of this year. Nearly a year later Peggy Woodhouse gladdened the hearts of Jack and Jessie, and Connie and Bill's Mathew followed by a week. Esther Woodhouse, another November baby, appeared on the scene in 1963. This was something of a boom year on Gripfast farm, with Bob and Ivy building their new and long-planned home across the way from Grandpa and Grandma. Turnbull senior, who rightfully boasted he never saw a machine he couldn't improve or a building he couldn't plumb, was master carpenter for the project and the result was a warm comfortable home which has been greatly enjoyed in the years since then. That same talented man has before and since then also had a hand in most of the building

projects undertaken by the various members of the family, and I hope we all appreciate the dollars it has saved us to have a built-in contractor in the family!

At the end of seeding time in June 1965, Douglas Anthony joined the lengthening roster of male Turnbulls. 1966 was bursting with family events. Edward Deller arrived in February and the second-last daughter of the senior house, Leslie, took Dennis Wrightson as her lawful wedded spouse at the end of June. In August, Donald Turnbull bounced (literally) into being on his mother's journey to the hospital and he has been a do-it-yourselfer ever since. A short quiet interlude, and then the baby of the family, Heather, was pursued by a young divinity student, Gordon Thurston, until she caught him and they were married in June, 1968. Father, must have heaved a sigh of relief at having safely turned over the care of all his daughters to other worthy men, since the year before, he had announced that he was going to retire, turning over the reigns of farm management to son Robert. His plan was to begin doing some of the things he enjoyed doing, rather than those he had to do out of economic necessity.

Many of us doubted that a man who had habitually put in fourteen or more hours a day could turn off the tap just like that, and we were only partly right. He went into the chicken business as a quote "Paying hobby to keep him occupied". Over the next seven years he produced some of the finest quality eggs in the area and supplied family and residents at a price they should have appreciated but doubtless did not. In rush seasons, he kept his hand in on the farm machinery, although a growing interest in rock-hounding made him virtually useless on a summerfallow field once he caught sight of some new stone. It was not unusual to find him a quarter mile from the outfit after having cultivated but a few dozen feet, head down in search of ever more intriguing

rocky quarry! The proof of this statement he will be glad to show any of you who haven't already seen his collection of cut and polished stones, but make sure you have more than ten minutes for the viewing; there must be upwards of a ton of them!

In these years, Mom exhibited a growing talent for a variety of quite remarkable handicrafts, and today the homes of three generations proudly display many beautiful examples of her work, so unique as to be conversation pieces when first seen by outsiders. She is not a prize example of the Devil finding mischief for idle hands, since her hands are less idle in her "retirement years" than they were when she had her home full of young people. Perhaps wielding a switch or a milk-bottle frightened her into using them for gentler lines of endeavor!

Closer to the present day, in 1971 Karen Ashcroft became the first of the third generation to leave the nest for matrimony and a distant home. She married a young American, Ken Klemm, whom she met on a visit to her great-aunt and uncle when they and Ken's folks all lived in Baraboo, Wisconsin. The Klemms all now reside nearly half a continent west, in Colorado. Adrienne Wrightson made Dennis and Leslie's home a menage-a-trois in December of 1972. Peter Ashcroft followed his older sister into matrimony taking Jean Bamford as his bride in May of 1973, and Blake Thurston was born in April, 1974, Gordon and Heather's first-born. Pat Turnbull married Phil Tremaine in May of that same year, and was closely followed by her elder brother Jim who married Beverley Lynne Taylor. In January 1975, Michael Wrightson arrived to enliven the nights of his father, now holding a responsible Collegiate Principal's job at Birtle. Michael made the sum of grandchildren nineteen, and in March Peter Johnathon Klemm began the fourth cycle of the clan as Ken and Karen's first child, and our honored guests' first great-grandson. Bev and Jim Turnbull balanced the scale in May by presenting for approval Kristy Leigh.

1975 was notable in this tribe for one other major incident. Not many great-grandparents pick up stakes and drive a couple of thousand miles, board a plane and spend a month touring Britain, then nonchalantly drive the same distance home again. But after having dreamed of it for years, and after the rest of the family had despaired of it ever happening, this is what these two remarkable people did last summer. I think probably a lot of us enjoyed this as much as they did, both from the sudden realization that years are no barrier to the determined and adventurous, and from the tales and pictures they came home with, and we certainly were not as tired from the whole experience!

Now this brings us to the present time. I'm quite certain that on that wedding day fifty years ago, sitting around a table with their accumulated family half a century later was the furthest thing from their minds. And not in their wildest imaginings could they have dreamt that that family would then number thirty-nine, themselves included. But here we all are, and all of us so proud and happy that this event could take place that to put our real feelings in words is quite impossible.

Trying to put half a century of family living on a dozen or so pages is like trying to put all the ants in an anthill on the face of a penny. More get away than are retained. We have missed dozens, thousands of incidents; some hilarious, some sad, and many just plain nutty and part of most human living, remembered to varying degrees depending on the temperament of the principal persons involved. Some of us are not nearly as vigorous as our parents, and even exhibited early signs of sloth. May started out to be an outstanding example of this since she obstinately refused to walk long after what was considered normal time for ambulatory efforts. But one day when Mom was momentarily out of our first town home, she stood up, looked around, and tromped stolidly from one corner of the kitchen to the other, leaving

her older sister and brother speechless with surprise. The fact that she never did it again for weeks almost made liars out of us, but she grew to be one of the most energetic of the first brood, despite early contrary indications.

One malady none of us ever suffered from was any impediment in our speech. Today a certain indication that there is a gathering of the Turnbull clan in progress (what one member only half humorously terms a family rebellion) is a Babel-like clatter of tongues, with everybody talking at once and nobody listening except those long-suffering spouses who married into the family! But most of them have lived with us long enough to have come to accept this as one of the penalties of life, and while we seldom apologise for anything we do, we can understand how you must feel!

No mention has been made of the times of sorrow and pain that Grandma and Grandpa Turnbull have lived through, and there has been the usual allotment of these. Since their marriage, they have seen many members of their immediate family pass to the life beyond this worldly one. Two mothers, a sister and a brother-in-law, a father, two young men in the prime of their lives in the persons of a nephew and a son-in-law, and countless friends both older and younger than themselves. But to two people who believe as firmly as these two do in a Supreme God and Life Everlasting, death is not a period to life, not an end, but a transformation of things past into a new and better future. And human memory has the blessed faculty of retaining mainly the happy and joyful things, and cloaking the sorrowful with the anesthetic of acceptance and understanding.

So here we sit gathered together to celebrate fifty successful years of human love and companionship, family and friends. Think about this occasion, for here this group encompasses over two hundred years of history. Grandpa and Grandma, well into their seventh decade, have had direct contact with people now gone,

who began their lives as much as a hundred and thirty years ago when the industrial revolution was just about to start in Europe. The two great-grandchildren, just barely started their first decade, will live the better part of their lives far into the next century and who knows what unimaginable scenes. So whether or not you believe in spiritual immortality, a family lives on as long as it continues to re-create itself, and the influence of our two honored guests will be passed, like many of their genetic traits, far into the future generations. A sobering but quite wonderful thought.

It is time to bring this collection of memories and thoughts to a close. Many of us would change past actions of our own if we could, but the past is behind and it is time to return to the present and to look again to the future. While none of us know what the future will bring, it is quite safe to predict that it will be challenging and rewarding if we face it in the manner Norman and Grace Turnbull have set before us as an example. Thank you, dearly loved parents, grand-parents, great-grand-parents, you who are all these and have managed to stay our friends as well. May your own future be serene, and as worthwhile as your past. No better words with which to close this effort come to mind than the well known ones of Tiny Tim: "God bless us, every one."