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Waddy is carried to his grave in Primmister, England by soldiers of the 4th Parachute Brigade, successors of the men with whom he had jumped into Arnhem.

Unlike the steppes, there were no defensive walls. Except the walls of nature. Enormous wheat fields, dense low forests, bald rolling prairie, all of it constantly changing between amazing colours, extreme temperatures and extreme winds.

As it happened, when John Waddy arrived in Rivers, a Winnipegger, my father Lt. Col. Bill Saul, was commanding the Airborne School. The two men quickly became close friends. My father hadn't become a paratrooper until transferring in the post-war years to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, freshly converted into a parachute regiment. During the war he had been a Winnipeg Rifle, first fighting on loan to the British in North Africa, then back with his regiment landing on the first wave at Juno Beach on D-Day, then briefly in the Netherlands before he was wounded.

In any case, they spent a lot of time joking together, leading the jumps. I've been told that sometimes in the middle of conversations they had thrown themselves out of the rear of the crazy looking C-119 Flying Boxcar transports a little too soon, ending up in deep snow somewhere off in the distance. I was just over 10, but I remember Maj. Waddy well — relaxed, smiling, self-confident, with the aura of someone who had experienced almost everything war could deliver and had survived. So far.

It is hard to explain life at Rivers. Not something most people would know about. During recess we would pile out to see if there was a jump going on, and whether we could identify our fathers in the sky. When a snowstorm removed all visibility and the winds and temperatures were dangerous, big white Bombardier military carriers would appear out of the obscurity to take us to school. No cancelled school days. The soldiers and the children loved the atmosphere of adventure. The wives were stranded and not particularly happy.

John Waddy seemed to feel completely at home in the relaxed Canadian atmosphere, the mysterious rolling prairies, the extremes of nature. He and his wife Ann seized every free moment to go off camping somewhere, the more isolated the better.

Until just a few years ago, older men would come up to me to say, "Your father gave me my wings" and "Do you remember that Englishman?" Immediately that whole out-of-the-ordinary life would come flooding back. John Waddy had been deeply affected by it. In later years he would constantly say those were the best years of his military career. The night before he died, he was talking about Rivers and Canada and his friendship with my father. That friendship was kept up by my brother Alastair, who had a dream of serving in the Parachute Regiment. He moved to England and fulfilled it as a young officer for several years.

As for Arnhem, the frustration of 1944 was erased in 1945 — on April 13-14 with Operation Anger. Again there is the Canadian link. The city and the area were taken and freed by First Canadian Corps, commanded by Gen. Charles Foulkes. First Canadian Corps was then made up of Canadian and British soldiers. Foulkes gave the Brits the honour of leading the attack on Arnhem. History demanded this. More precisely, it was quite rightly the mythological property of their Airborne forces. This second battle of Arnhem was not the most dramatic, but nor was it easy. Two days of fierce fighting. Not a battle to be forgotten. And it was the final act of Canada's Arnhem role — the sacrifice of the CANLOAN officers, the miraculous Canadian Engineers rescue, the final victory at Arnhem by First Canadian Corps.

When John Waddy died, the desire of the Regiment for a grand celebration of his life was limited by the COVID-19 pandemic. All the same, as many paratroopers as could be there stood outside around the church. He was carried to his grave and lowered into it by men of the 4th Parachute Brigade, successors of the men with whom he had leapt into the Battle of Arnhem.

John Baston Saul's books include *Voltaire's Bastards*, *The Collapse of Globalism and The Comeback*. As *International President of IEN*, he took a new approach to activism, negotiating with dictators and speaking out for endangered languages. As a leading voice in the international movement supporting immigrants and refugees, he is the co-chair of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship.

KIDS PETITION ST. NICK FOR A LITTLE HELP WITH THE PANDEMIC

The list of asks was as brief as it was modest. Jasmine from Georgia, one of hundreds of thousands of children who will write to Santa this year, knew exactly what she wanted for Christmas. End of COVID-19. World Peace. Climate Control. New Xbox. She said, in a handwritten note to the man at the North Pole. The letters to Saint Nick, which the U.S. Postal Service says it has been sending along for 108 years, reflect the unique hardships

of this year, capturing the earnest pleas and eagle-eyed determination of children whose lives have been upended by the pandemic. "Were you sick during this virus thing?" a child from Texas wrote. "Please come this year wear a mask if you have to."

Other than material objects, wrote a child from Virginia, "I ask want Mom to be happy. I know this Christmas is going to be hard for her."

She continued, "But I really do want a phone." Since 2017, the mail service has run a limited gift-donation campaign connecting people with the children and families asking for Santa's help. Through the agency's website, people and organizations can "adopt" children's letters and send responses and gifts to fulfill holiday wishes.

— The Washington Post



A circus parade travels down Rosser Avenue in Brandon, circa 1905.

The adventure of youth in early 20th century Brandon

A YEAR-ROUND WONDERLAND

HILDA HESSON

This article first appeared in *Manitoba Paganist* in January 1960 by the Manitoba Historical Society.

It was a good many years ago, and Brandon was a tiny town perched on the gentle slope of the wide valley of the Assiniboine River, and facing the hills at the north where the buildings of the Asylum and the Experimental Farm made spots of colour against the green of the hills. It was across the tops of those hills that on hot August days dust devils whirled, carrying the soil from one farm to the next, and in winter the clefts and the valleys among them were deep with snow.

Two bridges crossed the river, at First street and a mile away, at 18th street. Farther east was the old Iron Bridge, across which the trains rattled, and near which, on the river bank, we often had picnics. The railway lines and the elevators divided the town from the valley and "the Flats," where many of the newcomers from across the seas had built themselves small houses smothered in gardens of old-fashioned flowers, and often fenced with hand-woven willow fences. In the rich river-bottom soil, vegetables and flowers grew to a great size, and the floods which sometimes devastated the valley left behind a gift of richer soil.

In the town itself, all the streets ran uphill from Pacific Avenue and the railway, south to the Johnson Estate and Van Horne Avenue. There were wooden sidewalks on the most important streets, Rosser Avenue, Sixth, 10th, 12th, and probably on Princess and Lorne avenues. There were wide open patches of prairie everywhere, and here we searched for the first furry crocus in the early spring before the snow had all gone, and later found buttercups and vetches, cowslips, wild roses, buffalo beans, and luscious wild strawberries that could not hide themselves from the experienced hunters. There were the strawberries too that grew on tall stems in the ditches, larger and far easier to pick, but never as sweet as those hidden in the grass.

It was a wonderful place, Brandon, or at least we thought so. There was so much to do. School of course, and except on very stormy days when we were driven in the old cutter drawn by "Jess," the cream-coloured pony, we walked to the new Central School a mile or more. When we came home there were hills to slide down, a home-made rink for skating, the cow, the horse and



chickens to be fed; the dog to romp with in the snow. When summer came, there were some things we didn't enjoy too much, weeding the garden for one, but there were rewards here, for we could gather the fruit and vegetables as the summer grew, and no strawberries or raspberries or wild plums ever tasted better than those we gathered, warm with the sun, in our Brandon garden.

There were no movies in those days; no television, no radio, but there were Festival Days just the same. The 24th of May was always Race Day, and we usually managed to see the trotting races, and share the special meal at which there were always guests. A home-baked ham and the first strawberries were the menu for that evening. And then there was the day the circus came to town. It was a circus that brought the first "horse-less" carriage to Brandon, and it was as rare and amusing to us as the clown and the screaming colt. The lions always seemed to roar at the right time, just as they passed us, and the beautiful ladies on horseback skirts and coats, with veils hung from high silk hats, were our idea of pure romance.

In the summer there were picnics — beginning usually with the Sunday School picnic, and it was a great thrill when we came to the place where we had to use a train to visit a park in nearby Souris or Wawanesa. I can still smell the smoke and feel the gritty soot of those green plush, lamp-lighted cars. Most of all though, we enjoyed family picnics when in phaetons and buggies we drove out to Lake Clementi, a tiny slough on a farm south of Brandon. After the horses had been tethered under the trees, the children were usually taken out in a boat and the mothers set out the wonderful picnic food on tablecloths on the grass. What food — no sandwiches here — but veal and ham pies, cold roast beef, the most luscious desserts, and because some of the friends who came were able to afford it, we actually had plums, and sometimes even peaches — a rare treat in that prairie town.

There's not much doubt that Christmas was one of the great times in Brandon. There were no street decorations or strings of light (electricity was far too rare and expensive

for that) and often the lights in the stores only gleamed faintly through the heavy white frost on the windows. A few stores had some bits of evergreen, but decorated or not, they were thrilling to us, especially the butcher shop, dim behind its thickly frosted windows, and shivery cold, as you scuffled through the clean sawdust on the floor and looked up at the huge sides of beef, and the stiff frozen pigs hung from great hooks and garlanded with paper roses and chains. We watched with awe while the butcher with his long knife and saw cut off a 24-pound roast that was to be spiced for the New Year. Our turkey never came from the butcher shop, but from a farmer, and never again will I see such turkeys and chickens and huge brown eggs, as those that had travelled perhaps five miles into town in an open sleigh carefully wrapped in many coverings.

Most of our Christmas shopping was done in a small, dark, crowded little shop, heated by a round coal stove, where a little man slid in and out among the shadows, and the shelves held entrancing gifts for a few cents. At least we thought them entrancing — my 75-cent budget had to be spread out! My brother and I combined to buy our father's gift, a shaving mug. As he wore a beard I'm afraid the gift was an ornament only!

The house at Christmastime, always seemed warmer and lighter, and for weeks there were especially spicy odours, as Christmas puddings burbled in the boiler, mince-meat mortared in a crock, and fruit cakes coming out of the oven filled the house with a wonderful fragrance. There was mystery in the air too. Capboards that we were not allowed to open; interesting looking parcels brought by the express man in his red wagon; more mail than usual, as, on slow feet, we approached "the Day."

It was about 6 a.m. when the first footsteps creaked on the stairs, and a sleepy parent bribed us with one parcel each to go back to bed while he poked up the furnace and lit a grate fire. How exciting it all was! We hardly noticed breakfast, and it was a scramble to get off to church. After church, Christmas greetings, and the odd little parcel tucked into a muff, then, sleigh bells jingling, it was of home to the long-awaited dinner, and to play with the new toys.

From then on, the days got colder with white frost-covered fur collars and snow piled up along the sidewalks, and the horse-drawn wooden plough progressed down the main streets slowly. It was a long, cold winter always, but we never had time to think of that. There were parties after school, rehearsals for this and that, but sometimes, when stiff with layers of clothing and with "clouds" (woolen scarves to you!) tied around our heads, we struggled home in the snow, against a west wind, and as we watched the foreboding sundogs that told of a coming storm, we wondered what it would be like in California where our neighbours had recently gone to live. But it was a nice town, Brandon, to grow up in.

To read the full version of this story, please visit our website at mhs.mb.ca. There, under *Honorable Manitobans* you can learn more about Hilda Hesson. The MHS is on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as *manitoba-history*.