CFWF 2012 opening reception in “Canada’s most important building”

By Maureen Fitzhenry, MFWBA

Add a new reason to the list of why you should attend CFWF 2012 in Winnipeg, Sept. 20 to 23! The conference’s opening reception will be held amid waterfalls and artwork in the atrium of the amazing Manitoba Hydro Place on Portage Avenue.

Completed in 2009, the creation of this building’s award-winning, climate-responsive design has been called a “critical moment for Canadian architecture” and Canada’s most important building. This gorgeous office complex set a precedent for the seamless integration of architectural excellence and is climate responsive, energy-efficient and sustainable design.

A range of advanced technology was used to achieve a “living building” that dynamically responds to the local climate. Massive solar panels and a 377-foot tall solar chimney at the peak of its towers capture sunlight and create passive ventilation that constantly fills the building with fresh air. It has the largest closed-loop geothermal heating system in the province, with green roofs, accessible terraces and much more — all connected to Winnipeg’s downtown skywalk system.

To view photos, visit: http://www.hydro.mb.ca/corporate/mhplace/image_gallery/web/index.html

Plan to arrive on the Thursday morning, so you don’t miss out on the building tour and reception, or the fantastic conference pre-tours earlier that day, including a Magical Musical History Tour focusing on Neil Young and The Guess Who, a Hermetic Code Tour of the secret freemasonic symbols built into Manitoba’s legislature, and a look at the construction site for the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights at The Forks, a true architectural marvel.

Online registration opens soon for CFWF 2012: Mud, Floods and Suds — a celebration of soil and water. The conference home base will be the historic and haunted Hotel Fort Garry, located a block from The Forks National Historic Site in fabulous downtown Winnipeg — the centre of everything!

With a focus on mud (soil and water), you can be sure it’s going to get dirty. Come see why Manitoba is a Canadian and world leader in research and innovation surrounding soil and water, especially as it applies to agriculture. Our tour stops will include the National Centre for Livestock and the Environment, the brand new University of Manitoba Farm and Food Discovery Centre and the marshes around Lake Winnipeg.

For more information, please check out the conference website at www.cfwf2012.com, where you can see all the exciting plans underway. Come rack some muck!
IFAJ 2012—Register now for Sweden!

By Allison Finnamore, ACFWA


The early registration runs until March 10. There is a registration cap of 200 people, so early registration is encouraged. The cost is approximately 800 euro. Full details are at www.ifaj.org/congress2012.

The arrival day, Aug. 15, features an early evening professional development session, followed by a welcome dinner. Further professional development sessions discussing the congress theme, Solutions for a Green Future, will be held on Aug. 16, as well as the IFAJ delegate assembly. All delegates will then leave for a farm visit and barbecue at the world headquarters of DeLaval.

The second and third days will send us out on one of the eight farm tours. Each tour is a day trip and the buses will return to the host hotel each evening.

On the final day of the congress, Aug. 19, we will gather in Stockholm for the IFAJ Congress banquet, which will be held at the City Hall of Stockholm -- the same venue as the Nobel Prize banquet.

Lena Johansson, the congress' general, says there will be presentations during the congress that show how agriculture is integrated with other activities in society.

"The future role of agriculture and forestry will also be discussed, as well as more and new possibilities in the future," she says.

Sweden is the fifth largest country in Europe -- 450,000 square kilometres. A total of 53 per cent of the country is forests and eight per cent cultivated land. From its northern tips to southern tip, the longest distance is 1,574 kilometres -- roughly the distance from the Ontario/Manitoba border to Calgary.

Sweden has 72,000 farm businesses, 20 per cent of which are dairy farms, so milk production is the single biggest agricultural product. Total agricultural land in the country is 2.6 million hectares.

Of the 72,000 farm businesses, 31 per cent are farmer-owned and 61 per cent partly leased. The average farm is 36.5 hectares in size. Although the tendency is that arable land per farm is increased annually, Sweden is facing the same agricultural phenomenon as seen in other parts of the world -- the number of farms with less than 100 hectares is decreasing and the number of larger farms with more than 100 hectares is increasing.

The central and southern regions of Sweden are mostly crop land and the southern regions are mostly dairy and other livestock. Farms in the north of Sweden are mostly small farms combined with forestry.

The congress will be held at Sånga-Säby, what congress organizers call a site beautifully situated on Ekero island in lake Mälaren, 35 kilometres west of Stockholm city. Once a school for farmers, the facility is now a residential study and conference centre and owned by the Federation of Swedish Farmers. Sånga-Säby is environmentally certified and serves food prepared from products from the Swedish farmers.

Tour options

Tour 1
Follow the tree trunks from the forest to finished building material and meet two dairy farmers.

Tour 2
Learn how forest seedlings are protected from a pest, experience moose and see the latest techniques for processing tree tops and branches for energy use. Also, meet dairy farmers who market their milk locally.

Tour 3
Meet a farmer who saves money and the environment by using tiling equipment made in Sweden. Get into the fight over wild boar.

Tour 4
Cook with the minister of agriculture, discuss strict animal welfare rules, visit an organic pig farm and conventional crop farm.

Tour 5
Discuss the best way of selling grain with environmentally conscious farmers. Visit a power plant that uses crops to make energy and learn about breeding Swedish dairy cattle.

Tour 6
Visit the one of the country's largest publishing companies, owned by Swedish farmers. Hear the strategy of a large scale horse breeder, a producer of fresh herbs and a successful sheep farmer. Visit combined sheep, vegetable and tourism farm.

Tour 7
Experience farming in the archipelago. Learn how the sensitive environment is protected and see sheep and cows graze on islands.

Tour 8
Take a unique chance to see exclusive and very modern dairy farming. Meet cows that live in a "comfort home" instead of a barn.
How to speak for and to producers

By David Schmidt, BCFWA

Do you promise to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth? Is a question well-known to anyone who has ever watched a court drama on TV.

The answer, when being interviewed by the media, is mostly.

The answer, when it comes to the media itself, is not necessarily.

That is the consensus opinion of BC Dairy Association executive director Robin Smith, BC Cattlemen’s Association general manager Kevin Boon and BC Farm Animal Care Council general manager (and BCFWA member) Geraldine Auston, who has also worked with BC blueberries, cranberries, mushrooms, raspberries, strawberries and hogs.

The three spoke to the BC Farm Writers Association on the broad topic of speaking for and to producers during our AGM. Attendance at the AGM has steadily increased since we made it a dinner meeting during the Pacific Ag Show, the province’s largest agricultural show. Likely because of the speakers and the topic, this year’s AGM drew our best attendance ever, over 20 people including Tom Whitehead, possibly CFWF’s oldest member.

You have to be honest, Boon said.

Smith agreed but added, I’ll tell nothing but the truth, but not necessarily the whole truth.

Auston says it is important to acknowledge issues when they arise. Sometimes saying nothing is the worst thing you can do.

While some issues are easy to manage, others are more difficult. That could be the case with Auston’s current role with the BCFACC.

The issue is an anti-animal initiative. It is not about specific activities, she says. The more you improve what you do on the farm, the angrier the activists get.

Boon says it can be difficult to represent producers when they do not agree. I have 1,200 members and they can have 1,200 different opinions.

His first job is to ensure the media understands the story. Our issues haven’t changed in 60 years but urbanites no longer understand them.

Smith suggests some media do not want to understand, especially when it comes to supply management. Some reporters aren’t reporters, they have a soapbox. You’re not going to win when they only present one side.

People don’t want to know the other side of the story, Auston adds, noting major media is in such a hurry to be the first to deliver the story, they often don’t wait to get all the facts.

Because media isn’t giving industry enough of a chance to tell their side, the BCCA has started putting ranchers at meat counters in urban supermarkets to talk to consumers one-on-one.

Our focus is on how we care for animals and what we do for the environment, Boon says.

All three stress the importance of being proactive and, above all, prepared.

We have prepared messages for anything you can think of, Smith says.

The lively discussion, moderated by CFWF president Tamara Leigh, went on so long it left little time for business. We accomplished the business in rapid fashion, quickly reelecting our executive en masse and creating a team to begin planning the 2013 CFWF convention.

This year’s BCFWA executive is therefore the same as last year: president David Schmidt (Country Life in BC), vice-president and CFWF rep Tamara Leigh (Shiny Bird Communications) secretary Jackie Stewart (Agriculture & Agri-Food Canada) and treasurer Sandra Tretick (Investment Agriculture Foundation).
Manitoba chapter marks another active year

By Maureen Fitzhenry, MFWBA

The Manitoba Farm Writers and Broadcasters Association held its annual general meeting on February 9, marking another active year. Twenty-one members were in attendance at the Norwood Hotel in Winnipeg for a fabulous buffet dinner and a presentation by Denis Tremorin, manager of sustainable production for Pulse Canada.

Denis explained a new project undertaken by Pulse Canada, the Canadian Wheat Board, the Canadian Canola Growers Association, General Mills, the Flax Council of Canada and Ducks Unlimited Canada, which looked at two decades of environmental progress for eight western Canadian field crops (peas, lentils, spring wheat, winter wheat, durum wheat, canola, oats and flax). The report, entitled Application of Sustainable Agriculture Metrics to Selected Western Canadian Field Crops, will hopefully lead to greener practices, spurred by increasing consumer demand for food products to be provided using sustainable practices.

The meeting began with elections for three of the six member board of directors. Shannon VanRaes, a reporter for the Manitoba Cooperator, was newly elected. Adam Reid of Buhler Versatile Inc. and freelance journalist Anne Cote were re-elected. The other three directors are Maureen Fitzhenry, Crystal Jorgenson and Karli Reimer.

The membership also voted to approve a set of significant amendments to the association’s Constitution and Bylaws. These bylaws had not been updated in some time and needed to be more aligned with current practices and association requirements.

The President’s Report was then delivered. Maureen reported on the year’s activities, which included:

• Last year’s AGM on Feb. 23, with newly elected MP Robert Sopuck as guest.
• A May 5 luncheon with speaker Brad Havixbeck, manager of the agribusiness sector of Manitoba Trade and Investment, who spoke about their Border Busters program of matching agri-food exporters with U.S. buyers.
• The first planning meeting for the CFWF 2012 national conference, held May 19.
• Our annual spring tour, held on June 24, which began with a videography workshop, lunch in the country at the Café on Rose Lane in Rosenort, followed by visits to the National Centre for Livestock and the Environment, the new Bruce D. Campbell Farm and Food Discovery Centre and the farm of Tom Schindel, who has been plagued by repeated flooding, exacerbated by his proximity to the City of Winnipeg’s floodway.
• The IFAJ-CFWF conference Sept. 14 to 18, which was attended by a number of Manitoba members.
• Our annual Christmas get-together on Dec. 15, held at Hu’s Asian Bar and Grill, with guest Doug Chorney, president of Keystone Agricultural Producers, who spoke to us about some of the important issues in the supply-managed sector.

Treasurer Adam Reid then gave the financial report and updated members on the directors’ decisions to change banks from CIBC to Steinbach Credit Union because of customer service issues. Membership chair Crystal Jorgenson gave the membership report, noting that our membership has remained steady at 66. She encouraged members to forward their ideas for people who should be encouraged to become new members.

The meeting ended with an update on progress towards organizing the CFWF 2012 conference, to be held in Winnipeg on the weekend of Sept. 22, 2012. The promotional slide show that was prepared for CFWF 2011 was also shown to the local group.
Ottawa Tour & Social

By Christina Franc, ECFWA

ECFWA held its very first regional social in Ottawa October 29. It was a chance for Farm Writers to gather and learn something new, but also to catch up with each other. About a dozen people made it out to the Upper Canada Cranberry Farm in Ottawa. A couple of people even came from as far as Guelph!

Lyle Slater gave us a tour of his cranberry farm, the only commercial cranberry farm in Eastern Ontario. He started his operation in 1998 and he explained it continues to evolve every year.

He started off by explaining that the cranberry harvest is unique in that the fields are flooded and then the vines are shaken (Lyle uses one of his homemade apparatuses) so that the berries come loose and float to the top. He then collects the floating berries and packages them himself.

Each year, Lyle has bumblebees shipped via Purolator to his home so he can use them to pollinate the cranberry vines. "Cranberries and bumblebees are both indigenous to North America, so they work well together," he explained.

Lyle explained that he adapts to his customer base but isn’t afraid to try new things. For example, he figured out that dried cranberries coated in maple syrup may taste good, but don’t last as long as dried cranberries sweetened with sugar, so he cut down on production of maple-sweetened dried cranberries, making snack-packs instead.

After the tour, everyone gathered at the Murray Street Bistro for supper and socializing. We discussed what we had seen and how much of a fun character Lyle was, even if he wasn’t quite by-the-book all the time.

The first regional social was a huge success and we hope to have many more in the future!

Fun facts about cranberries:
- Quebec, not British Columbia, is Canada’s largest producer of cranberries
- If cranberries bounce, they’re good to eat
- Cranberry bogs are flooded in the fall so a layer of ice can freeze over the plants and protect them from the extreme cold of the winter.
- It takes two years before a new cranberry plant will bear
Be kind to yourselves and eat your vegetables

By Bonnie Warnyca, SFWA

This is a talk Bonnie gave at the Cattle Women for the Cure in 2008. Since February is heart month she decided it was time to share with her CFWF colleagues.

Stabbing pain in between my shoulder blades on July 31, 2006, at the age of 56, signaled a heart attack. I didn’t realize it at the time but I had had two previous heart attacks that same week.

When I tell you I’m glad to be here I mean that literally. I’m thankful to be anywhere.

When the Heart & Stroke Foundation tells you that thousands of Canadian women are dying every year because they don’t recognize the symptoms of a heart attack I’m here to tell you they are right. But another sobering statistic is that many doctors don’t recognize the symptoms of a heart attack in women.

Did you know that more North American women die of a heart attack than from cancer or car accidents put together? How about that for a shocker?

Let me take you back to that Monday morning on July 31, 2006. I woke up at 3 a.m. with severe pain in between my shoulder blades. Because I have fibromyalgia with ongoing symptoms of severe muscle spasms I assumed that’s what it was. But even though my husband rubbed my back I and I applied ice and took some Advil, the pain didn’t subside.

My husband went back to bed and as I sat in the living room I had the feeling that my sweaty forehead and anxiety made this something to be concerned about. I got dressed and woke my husband and asked him to take me to the neighbouring town of Indian Head 45 minutes away.

We arrived at the Indian Head hospital at 6:05 a.m., which is now three hours and five minutes after the attack. Even though my blood pressure registered 165/112 and the pain between my shoulders was severe I when the nurse called my doctor he refused to get out of bed and told her he would be there at the usual time I which was 8 a.m. The nurse did do an ECG and it showed nothing I which is not unusual I have discovered.

At 9 a.m. the doctor ordered blood work and still seemed unconcerned with my condition. At 9:40 a.m. I was given nitro and my doctor came into the room and closed the door and he was visibly concerned. He said, “The first two blood tests point to a heart attack and if the third one comes back positive then we will be going to the coronary unit in Regina and I will be riding in the ambulance with you.”

A myocardio infraction. A what?

Stop for one minute and imagine how you would feel to be told that you have had a heart attack. I’m too young. I’m too busy, I’ve got kids I have deadlines on Wednesday.

Life is what happens to you while you are busy making other plans.

I arrived at the General Hospital in Regina by ambulance 8 ½ hours after my heart attack. Early the following morning I received two stents to open the clogged arteries that were causing the problem and while they looked at my heart on the monitor I the dye going through it showed that I have heart disease. So now there are not just two arteries involved but all of my arteries.

Now the time for soul searching and you look back and would like to take back the cigarettes smoked, the fatty foods, the days when a walk was scheduled but cancelled and oh yes I the big one I stress. We women are emotional beings and I believe that even though God made us that way we haven’t learned to manage this added bonus to our makeup. Our emotions lead us into a stressful state time and again.

We have the gift of being able to cry with a friend in a time of need and sorrow for those a half of world away when something bad happens. We need to learn to give but not receive.

Women believe that it is their job to carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. We worry about our children, our jobs, our neighbors, our aging parents, the condition and state of the world that our children are marching into and on and on.

STOP IT.

99 percent of the things we worry about NEVER happen and we’ve wasted all that energy and put all that stress on our bodies for nothing. Stressing is the hardest emotion to let go of but I’m working on it.

There are two new things I am trying to live by I Number one - it is none of my business what other people think of me I and number two - I have no control over another human being. I can only control my own reactions and my own outlook on life.

When you look at me you’re probably thinking why would she have a heart attack? She’s not much overweight, she probably knows how to eat properly, she’s relatively young, and she quit smoking 15 years or so ago I ..so how did it happen?

My father died of a heart attack when he was just 49 years old. I never gave it a lot of thought about how it would affect me in the physical sense. My family chalked it up to dad’s obsessive nature for

(Continued on page 7)
Eat your veggies cont’d

Eat your veggies cont’d

work, drink and cigarettes. But his dad also died of a heart attack. So there is certainly a family history to this disease – one which we should have been more mindful of many years ago.

On the upside - I am truly grateful for what has happened as the result of my heart attack.

While lying in the hospital it didn’t take long for friends and family to arrive. When I saw both my children walk into the room and since my son Todd lives in Edmonton and my daughter Jessica lives in Calgary I remember thinking - okay now this is serious.

At one point I woke up to see my best friend Marsha crying over top of me I shit I now I’m thinking this is really serious I must be going to die.

Thankfully I didn’t. And the gifts that my daughter Jessie has given me since my heart attack are immeasurable. Her care and attention her genuine commitment to spending time with me whenever possible overwhelms me as a mother. We were always close I but this brought us closer.

My girlfriends didn’t just stop by the week or so after the hospital to see how I was doing they called and came for months after. They carried me through the crisis. And if you have an attack or know of someone that has one please go see how I was doing the week or so after the hospital to come for months after. They called and came for months after. They carried me through the crisis.

A couple of my favorite sayings are - Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever. (Gandhi)

I write features for the Alberta Beef Magazine and the Saskatchewan Cattlemen’s Connection and do some additional freelance writing. I also run Eden House B & B in an old Victorian House in Indian Head, Saskatchewan. I work more than ever and I feel better than I have in years. My cardiologist told me to get rid of the stress and I took him literally and am now divorced. (No humor in that I but I acted upon a situation that was harming my health).

A couple of my favorite sayings are - Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever. (Gandhi)

Or this one written by Robert Hastings. Enjoy the journey I the station will come soon enough.

Remember to - Work like you don’t need the money, love like you’ve never been hurt, and, dance like no one is watching.

Be kind to yourselves and eat your vegetables.

Here to you.
Here & There

Lyndsey Smith, Saskatchewan Farm Writers’ Association president and editor of Grainews, welcomed wee little Elliott on lucky Friday the 13th in January. He weighed 7 lb 12 oz at birth but is rivaling some young steers for rates of gain as he's already outgrowing his sleepers. He hasn't quite figured out his nights from his days yet, which gives his mum plenty of time to follow what's happening in agriculture on Twitter. What did new mums do before social media?

**Future Farm Writers?**

Elliott at five days old. He was totally worth foregoing all the delicious wine tasting at IFAJ!

**Spreading the word**

By Glenn Cheater, MFWBA

Coverage of agriculture has diminished in urban newspapers. But if a daily in your area is producing strong farm stories, you may want to send a copy of this edition of The Farm Journalist to the editor. The Winnipeg Free Press is a regular entrant in the CFWF Awards competition and last year walked off with seven awards. The Free Press has a long tradition when it comes to reporting on agriculture, dating back to Cora Hind, said editor Margo Goodhand. Really an honour to have this work recognized.

**Going international**

Steven Biggs’ book *No Nonsense Vegetable Gardening* is being released in the United States this spring by St. Lynn’s Press. Biggs and his co-author Donna Balzer self-published the original Canadian version (*No Guff Vegetable Gardening*) in 2011 so they could create what they thought might be beyond the comfort zone of a traditional publisher: a zestful, fun, information-packed, opinionated—even slightly irreverent—graphic-novel-meets-gardening book.

From left to right: Murray McNeill (bronze, daily press reporting), Bart Kives (silver, daily press reporting), Margo Goodhand, Laura Rance (bronze, press column), Joe Bryksa (bronze, news photo) and Bill Redekop (gold, daily press reporting). Not present: Lindor Reynolds (bronze, press column) and Phil Hossack (silver, feature photograph). Photo: Mike Aporius, Winnipeg Free Press
IFAJ approves global expansion plan

The International Federation of Agricultural Journalists (IFAJ) executive committee has approved plans to provide new networking and professional development opportunities for journalists in developing nations and nations without free press. The plan is pending approval of the IFAJ delegate assembly, which meets in Sweden in August, 2012 at the next IFAJ Congress.

The prospective plan, approved by the committee at the Green Week business meeting in Berlin, gives the Federation the freedom to provide additional professional development and outreach programs. These could include face-to-face meetings and online training or discussion groups, as well as networking opportunities for journalists in developing countries and in countries without freedom of the press.

The strategic plan was prompted by frequent requests to IFAJ for help from communicators in non-member countries, and by IFAJ initiatives such as the annual master class, a program which brings journalists from developing and non-free press nations to IFAJ congresses for workshops and networking.

“The role of the agricultural journalist has never been more important, especially as the planet moves toward a global population of 9 billion by year 2050,” says IFAJ president Mike Wilson. “In our profession, we communicate and help educate our audiences on a wide range of issues, from production to food safety. Reaching more communicators worldwide with networking and professional development is a natural extension of the IFAJ mission.” For more information, check out IFAJ’s news page at www.ifaj.org

Important Dates

The Serbian Association of Agricultural Journalists, AGROPRESS, is organizing the second workshop for foreign journalists covering agriculture. The Balkan Tour 2012, in Serbia is to be organized May 14-19, 2012. The tour is to be organized May 14-19, 2012 in Belgrade, Novi Sad and Valjevo, among other places. For more details visit www.agropress.org.rs/balkan-tour-2012-eng.html

SFWA will be hosting their 2012 Spring Tour & Professional Development seminar on Saturday, June 16 in Saskatoon. Go to www.saskfarmwriters.ca for regular updates.

Registration has opened for the 2012 IFAJ congress in Sweden. The event will be held from August 15-19, 2012. Register at www.ifaj.org/congress2012

The 2012 CFWF AGM & Conference will be September 20-23, 2012. More information can be found at www.cfwf2012.com

CFWF Up & Coming Webinars

CFWF is pleased to announce to further professional development in our network, we will be releasing a series of webinars over the spring. Thanks to FCC for helping us put this together. The three first PD webinars will be:

- Social Media Strategy: Beyond the Basics
- Adding value to your stories through photography
- The Craft of Writing

Stay tuned for more details!