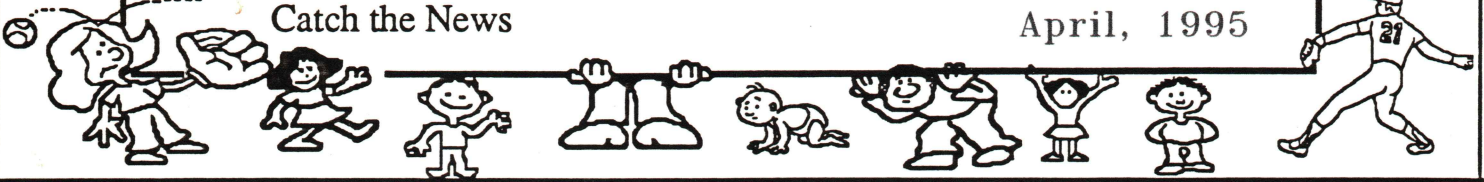




# The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News

April, 1995



## FREAK SNOWSTORM HITS MISSION HILLS AREA

On a recent Saturday morning weather experts were astounded to observe a heavy snowfall in the Mission Hills area. Although highly localized the brief storm left at least an inch of heavy wet snow at the area of greatest concentration. Since the storm passed through the area during the early morning hours it was not readily observed by those in the affected area. However, a mysterious visitor, whose identity can be only surmised, noted the event and posted a sign (see below) commemorating the snowfall, and suggesting a possible explanation. The RFNL editor has appointed a special commission to investigate this event, and we anticipate that a complete technical report will be forthcoming soon.

So who says anyway  
in the miracle of every  
day life that it really  
couldn't snow!

## SOME BABY SITTING ACTIVITIES

Last month was a busy one for Grandma, from the baby sitting standpoint. As mentioned in the March issue, Robert and Karla dropped off Katy and Brian for the evening, while they enjoyed dinner at a fancy restaurant. Unfortunately, Brian was under the weather, and spent most of the evening asleep. See the Runny Nose Report for more details.

In mid-March there was an all day party at Grandma's, involving Craig, Annie, Kristy, David and a friend. Francis Parker was shut down for the day, and the kids enjoyed some ping pong, pool and TV watching. At lunch we all went to Grant School park for a picnic. Grandpa cooked hamburgers and hot dogs and everyone enjoyed the food and the games at the park. All of the group (except Grandpa) walked from home to the park, and some also joined Grandam in the walk home. Everyone had a great time.

## A HAPPY EASTER FROM BRYCE SOREM

Recently Bryce submitted to the St. Columba School paper his "HAPPY EASTER" sketch. Although it was not selected for publication, we are happy to have it for RFNL use, and it is reproduced below.



St. Columba  
Cougar's  
Tribune

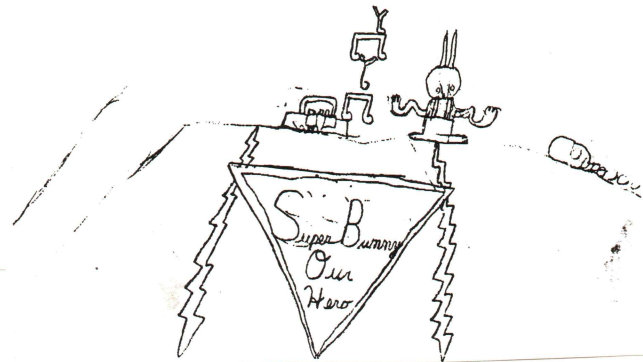


Spring 1995

Name: Bryce Grade: 3



Australian  
for  
Bar!



## BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Kristy Gillingham enjoyed the "rain check" movie promised by Grandma. After lunch at Carlos Murphy's we took in the film "Roommates", and then visited the Toys R Us store for some power shopping.

## BIRTHDAY CALENDAR

Dustin Benesch	April 3	10
Brian Riel	April 5	6
Robert Riel	April 9	38
Kevin Riel	April 11	16
Jan Riel	April 21	47

It looks like a busy month for Grandma!



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**AUTHORS** / An epic biography of Canada's famous Métis martyr continues a Governor-General's Award winner's fight against the little-sod-hut school of history

## Maggie Siggins's passionate search for the real Riel

BY CHRIS DAFOE  
Western Arts Correspondent  
Regina

ON Nov. 16, the 109th anniversary of the hanging of Louis Riel, a remarkable thing happened in a hotel meeting-room in Regina. Maggie Siggins started to read from her new, 500-page biography of the still-controversial Métis leader and not one historian rose to pick a fight.

It was remarkable because Siggins has been absorbing criticism from historians since *Louis Riel: A Life in Revolution* was published just over a month ago. While there have been positive notices — George Woodcock, writing in *Quill & Quire*, called the book "the most adequate book on Riel yet written... one feels close to Riel throughout" — those written by academics have been less than enthusiastic. "There are simply too many slips, too many partisan judgments, too many hasty generalizations," wrote Roger Hall, a professor at the University of Western Ontario in London, who reviewed the book for *The Globe and Mail*. Allan Levine, a Winnipeg historian writing in the *Winnipeg Free Press*, was kinder, calling the book "first-rate," but noted that Siggins's "one-sided approach... doesn't always make for good history."

Negative reviews are something new for Siggins, who enjoyed overwhelmingly positive response to the first two books of what she now calls her trilogy of land and murder in the West. *A Canadian Tragedy*, her 1985 book on Colin Thatcher's murder of his wife JoAnn, was praised by critics and turned into the top-rated mini-series *Love and Hate: Revenge of the Land*, which chronicled a century of life, struggle and death on a prairie farm, won the Governor-General's Award for non-fiction in 1992. And then came Riel.

"I've never had a book that's had such good reviews or such bad reviews," says Siggins, curled up in a chair in her Regina home. It's a surprisingly warm autumn day outside, but Siggins is sniffing through a nasty cold she picked up on a recent two-week trip to China.

"It's the first time I've written a book where you can tell the politics of the reviewer just by reading the first line," she says. "My husband [Jerry Sperling, a University of Regina political science professor] warned me about academics, but I had no idea."

All this for a book that Siggins wasn't sure she wanted to write in the first place. When HarperCollins, the Toronto-based publisher, approached her with the idea of a Riel biography several years ago, Siggins hesitated. "I took a month to look into it," says Siggins. "At first I thought, 'Oh no, not another book about Riel.' Then I began to realize that there really hadn't been a biography that viewed him as a person rather than as a political figure. I was also worried that he'd be so crazy that I wouldn't be able to cope with his ideas. But when I started to read his diaries, I thought, this isn't so crazy after all."

Riel was born in 1844 in what is now Manitoba and from 1869 until his death in Regina was frequently at the forefront of the West's struggles against Ontario domination. Siggins spent 2½ years poring over Riel's diaries as well as his letters and poetry, and scholarly and popular accounts of his life and politics. Along the way, her views of the man and of the history of the West changed completely.

Born in Toronto in 1942 and raised there, Siggins eventually became a journalist, working for the now-defunct Toronto Telegram as well as Toronto Life, Chatelaine, CITY-TV, CTV and CBC. She travelled to Regina in 1983 for a one-year appointment as the Max Bell professor of journalism at the University of Regina. Her decision to remain in Regina can be attributed to two men: Sperling, whom she married, and Colin Thatcher, the high-profile Saskatchewan politician whose murder trial, in 1984, began just as her term at the school ended. Siggins covered the trial for CBC-Radio's *As It Happens*, while doing in-depth research for the book that would become *A Canadian Tragedy*.

Siggins suggests that, with that book and with *Revenge of the Land*, being an outsider worked to her advantage. "I came from Ossington and Bloor in downtown Toronto and it still feels very strange to be standing in a field in the middle of the prairie," she says. "I feel much stranger, in fact, than I do standing in the middle of Beijing. It's not a bad feeling — I don't think I could live in Toronto again — but it is strange. Land is everything here. Land is how you express your manhood. Maybe it took an outsider to see this incredible drama that's been played out."

Researching the Riel book, however, forced Siggins to question some of the lessons about the West that she had learned while growing up. "In the East, you're taught to believe that everyone here was a homesteader," she says. "It's the sweet-little-sod-hut school of history. And of course, it's completely untrue, because a lot of the settlers came to make a fast buck. And while I was sympathetic to the Métis, I also was brought up to believe that Riel might have led the Métis astray, that he was this crazy religious nut. I wouldn't say that when I started I thought he was a great hero."

By the time she had finished the book, that had changed. Siggins's Riel sometimes appears to be the only honest man in the West, a Canadian hero with charisma to spare.

### RIEL BOOK REVIEW

The above book review was provided by Aunt Margaret, and was copied from a Canadian newspaper. Although our own information reveals no direct descent line, since Louis Riel had no direct descendants, it has been assumed that we share common ancestry from the past.

### JESSICA AND DUSTIN HAVE ROLES IN CYT OPERA

Grandpa and Grandma recently were treated to another performance by the Christian Youth Theater. The Hartman and Gillingham kids also were there, and we all enjoyed a very professional cast put on one of the best performances we have seen. Both Jessica and Dustin did a great job as members of the TOWNSFOLK Chorus. We understand that all eight performances were sold out, and after seeing the show we all understood why.

IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN - APRIL 15

No doubt you are all looking forward to making your annual peace with the IRS. We thought that the following cartoon might apply to some who feel they are giving too much.

### Quotes 'n Quips

The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary. — Vidal Sassoon

Don't be afraid to take a big step. You can't cross a chasm in two small jumps. — David Lloyd George

Collecting more taxes than is absolutely necessary is legalized robbery. — Calvin Coolidge

### Just for Laughs



"Hey, Bill, I think I have someone in my office now that can help us settle the national debt."

Christian Youth Theater  
San Diego/East County  
presents...



Jessica Emesch  
Dustin

Lewis Junior High School Auditorium  
5170 Greenbrier Avenue • San Diego  
March 2, 3, 10, 11 at 7:00 p.m.  
March 4, 5, 11, 12 at 2:00 p.m.  
Winter • 1995



# The Riel Family Newsletter

Catch the News



April, 1995

## ANOTHER BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

Recently Craig Hartman celebrated his 12th birthday, and the fun began when he was picked up at Francis Parker Middle School grounds, at lunch time. Grandpa and Grandma treated him to lunch at a Chinese restaurant. After a short time looking at TV Craig and Grandpa took off to see the movie "Forrest Gump". Grandma stayed at home, since she already had seen that movie. After the show we had ice cream at Swenson's. We both agreed that the movie was pretty good, but not really as good as it's record at the Oscar award would indicate. The ice cream, however, was excellent. Grandpa and Grandma then delivered Craig to his home, and the celebration was over.

## RUNNY NOSE DEPARTMENT

As we mentioned above, Brian Riel was hit with some sort of virus, and when it failed to go away at once some tests were conducted to be sure there were no more serious problems. Fortunately, nothing else was detected, and a few more day took care of the problem.

Bruce Hartman also was laid low by some sort of a virus, from which he seems to have recovered. His other problems continue, however, and he currently is undergoing some additional hospital testing. We are looking forward to hearing about the results.

## GRANDMA'S CAR IS SICK

Recently we noticed that Grandma's car was leaking oil when parked in the garage. We took it in to the garage and the bad news was that the engine was in bad shape, and needed a complete overall. Not only is it expensive, but even worse, Grandma is grounded for two and a half weeks. If this impacts some birthday celebrations, be patient, they will be made up as soon as possible.

## RFNL NOW HAS FAX EQUIPMENT

In response to numerous requests, RFNL has invested in FAX equipment, in order to facilitate the collection of news items from the family. At the present time it is hooked up in the most simple mode, requiring that the sender call 295-9544. When we learn that a message is to be sent we will turn on the machine. Later on we hope to get it set up in a more automatic mode. ( Note to Robert - HELP) We hope that those with similar equipment will take advantage of this new capability.

## SPORTS NEWS

We learned recently that Bryce Sorem has been active in basketball, and in a recent game scored the winning basket just as the buzzer went off. Nice going, Bryce!! We also hear that Craig Hartman is active in soccer, and enjoying sports at Francis Parker Middle School.

## MISSION HILLS - HOW WE GOT HERE FROM THERE

In the February issue of RFNL we started an article on the history of the Mission Hills area. We have some extra space in this issue, so we will include a second installment.

Sometime during the last two million years Mission Hills, along with the entire southwest corner of San Diego County, was pushed up out of the ocean. It turns out Mission Hills sits in the middle of the largest fossil bed of Late Pliocene marine vertebrates in North America. Fossils found so far include sharks, rays, bony fishes, sea birds and marine mammals, which explains why it's so easy to know what you're looking for.

### CALIFORNIA HERE

#### THEY COME

It's hard to imagine Mission Hills without people, let alone an "empty" area; 40,000 years ago there weren't any people anywhere in North or South America.

People started moving into North America from Asia during the last Ice Age. The ice consumed so much water that sea level fell at least 255 feet, thus exposing a land bridge connecting Siberia and Alaska.

Depending on which experts you believe, the first people crossed this land bridge between 32,000 and 12,000 years ago. (As the ice melted, the water again covered the land bridge. (In the last 140,000 years the bridge has appeared three times.)

Pursuing game, the newcomers multiplied and headed east into the Great Plains. Changing conditions brought them back to California. Beginning about 5000 B.C., these Californians began to depend less on hunting and more on local resources. In one locale the resource might be fish, in another sea animals; in Mission Hills it was acorns.

This led to surpluses of food which were then traded to neighboring tribes. Shell money emerged as a way to make the system work more effectively. Curiously, chiefdoms and the state organizations to control trade did not develop as they did in the Aztec and Mayan cultures.

By 500 A.D., in California, there were 86 major language groups broken into some 500 tribal organizations which varied widely in speech, technology, religion and social organization.

### THE FIRST COMMUTERS

#### AND THE ZONIES

By the 1700's the natives who inhabited the San Diego area were Kumeyaay, (pronounced KOOM-yi). They had been greatly influenced by the Yuman migration which brought large numbers of Arizona natives into the region. The early Zonies (as Arizonans are known today) arrived about 1000 years ago and introduced the bow and arrow to the Kumeyaay. (to be continued)



## LEGACY

BY MEGAN R-M

My face is the life of the mountains  
rivers and streams  
That hold a place for everyone who has wishes to be shared

My thoughts are birds soaring without a mission  
Through the endless sky

Pictures in my mind, wispy clouds floating silently by  
Trees swaying in the whispering wind  
Snowflakes softly falling to the ground  
As a fawn tramples over them  
Tripping over its legs  
Trying again and again  
To stand never giving up  
Just as I would like to do

My wind is flying up and up  
Fighting for the top  
With an ever lasting soul that won't rest till it's won

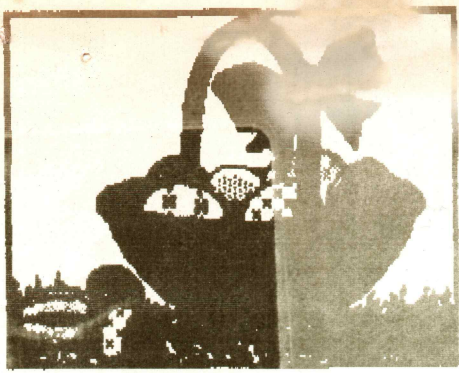
My word, my word is hope  
A wish  
Something to hold on to when everything else is gone

Legacy, the obligation to have many others fill my footprints  
As they too try to reach for the stars



So who says anyway  
in the miracle of every  
day life, that it really  
couldn't snow!  
~~~~~



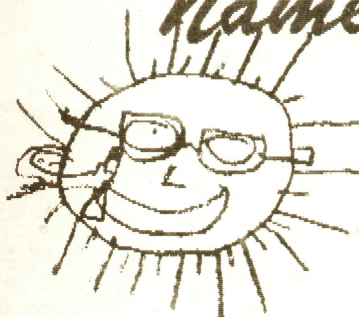


# St. Columba Cougar's Tribune

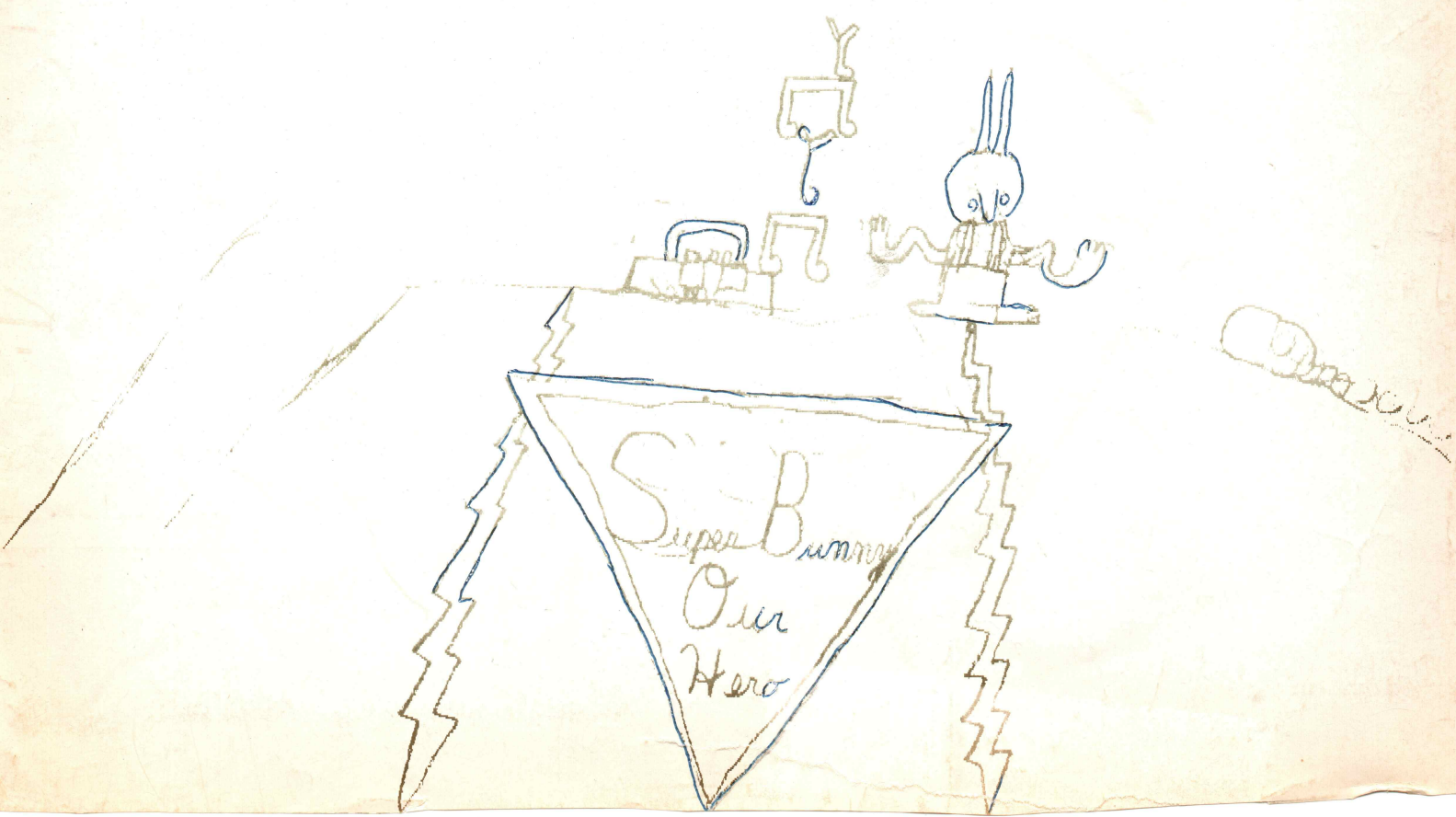
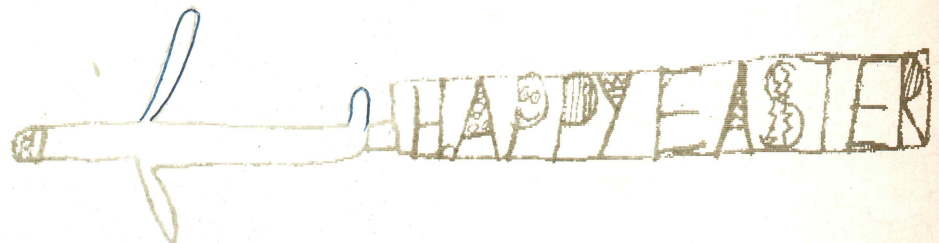


Spring 1995

Name: Bryce Grade: 3



Australian  
for  
Beer!





Christian Youth Theater  
San Diego/East County  
presents . . .



*ISSAC*  
*Bmesch* *Dustin*  
♡

Lewis Junior High School Auditorium  
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Winter • 1995

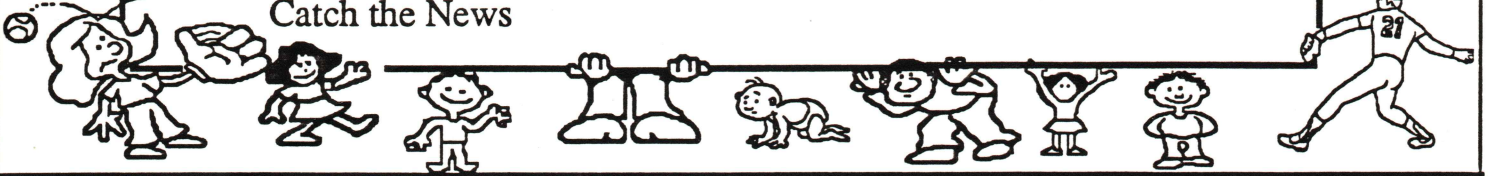




# The Riel Family Newsletter

March, 1995

Catch the News



*EXTRA*

*EXTRA*

*EXTRA*

## RIEL FAMILY NEWSLETTER ACQUIRES FAX FACILITY

In response to numerous requests your favorite newsletter has acquired a FAX machine. We have been told many times that FAX equipment would greatly facilitate the timely transmittal of newsworthy information from the various family members. We certainly hope that this new facility will facilitate the timely transmission of information from each family.

At this time the equipment is set up only to receive items after we have been notified by phone that a transmittal is ready to be sent. Later on we expect to be operating on a more automatic mode, so that messages can be sent at any time. Our regular phone number, 295-9544, is the one to use.