

## Recycling by Nancy Archibald

You might say I was already hooked on garbage by the time I became a teenager. Since I was the youngest in our family, my parents assigned chores like taking out the garbage and cleaning the bathroom.

When I lived on the farm, we had to separate our garbage between the burning barrel, the scrap heap, and what we fed the pigs. In Alberta, people took pop bottles, beer bottles, and liquor bottles to the bottle depot to get the deposit we had paid at the store back.

The burning barrel was near the house because we used it daily for paper and cardboard. I used the wooden matches from a container hanging on our wall to light the fire.

Taking out the swale pail, filled with water and scraps for the pigs, was Dad's job because it was too heavy for me to carry down the hill to the pigpen. I was eight Dad built our new house with central heating and running water, so we no longer needed the pail to dispose of the water. I began to divide the scraps between the rabbits and the pigs.

Cans and plastics had to go to the scrap heap. Some farms had their scrap heap near the house. Mom made sure it was far enough away and hidden in trees, so no one saw the unsightly mess it makes. In warm weather, I enjoyed taking the garbage to the scrap heap because I could get out of the house and walk on a path to a grove of trees, the walk down a hill on a road with trees on either side and across a field to another grove of trees to dump it on a pile of years of rusted cans and broken glass. Sometimes I lingered in the grove because there were old hay rakes that had seats to play on. I pretended I was driving a tractor or a team of horses, like Dad. I often stopped to play with the kittens or

feed my rabbits grass by the rabbit pen.

After moving to another farm, we had to figure out what to do with the scraps. Mom didn't want an unsightly scrap heap, so we put them in an old wooden-wheeled grain wagon.

During this time, Mom actively pursued her Bachelor's of Education at the University of Alberta. While taking a course about the environment, she became interested in recycling cans and glass. Mom washed the cans and removed the bottom and the label before crushing them. She thought she could put them in the bunkhouse to wait for recycling to begin in our province.

In my teenage years, I had fixed up the bunkhouse with funky artwork and new-age orange and yellow curtains. In the summer, I slept there occasionally and it was also home to tame mice I kept in a cage. When I moved away to university, Mom used the old bunkhouse as a storage place for the cans that would eventually be sent to a recycling facility.

During one of my visits home from university, Mom explained what she was doing. I was taking environmental biology so we became co-conspirators in recycling.

In 1982, my husband, Bill, and I moved a mobile home where the bunkhouse stood. We took the cans from the wagon and from the bunkhouse to the county dump, and much to our disappointment, they were not recycled.

As times changed and recycling became a part of our lives, I still ripped the labels off the cans.

“At our house, you don't have to rip the labels off,” my son-in-law said.

But I cannot stop myself, it is a habit I have acquired at a time in my life when I

valued recycling and I felt like a trendsetter. I guess I will be ripping the labels off forever.

As far as the burning barrel is concerned, we used it until we moved from the farm.

Where I live now, on an acreage, in Lacombe, Alberta, the paper, cans, and light cardboard all go in one bin, to be separated later. We separate corrugated cardboard in a separate bin. Pop and liquor cans and bottles, and milk cartons go to the bottle depot for a return deposit. We save these items for children who come to our door to raise money for hockey teams, dance studios and school trips.

The kitchen scraps, rhubarb leaves, and garden waste go into the compost to be used in my garden. The city has large dumpsters for grass clippings and leaves to be composted and used for city landscaping projects.

We have come a long way with recycling, but our scrapheaps are much larger, now called landfills.