



The Ram and Ewe

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What's there to lose?

I lost my job in April 1982 with two weeks pay. Larry had called me that morning to his office in downtown Calgary and I knew that it was not to have a cup of tea. As a successful entrepreneur in a junior oil company, he liked to invest in or buy out smaller businesses. I was the CEO or, as I preferred to call myself, the General Manager, of a plastics research and development company that was pioneering a sophisticated ski transportation case.

My original employers were a group of businessmen who had formed Futura to design plastic parts using new technology. The company was failing and, with the exception of Larry, the other partners were so much in debt that they had borrowed against their mortgages. I had convinced the struggling partners to sell their share of the company to Larry and reduce the risk of losing their homes. He jumped on it.

That was in 1980 when Calgary was in a boom and the Federal Government was eyeing Alberta's growth and assets. In 1982, the villain of Alberta was back in power and with his middle finger raised high, he introduced the National Energy Policy and crippled Alberta, especially the junior oil companies. What short memories we have.

I did not expect a bowl of cherries when I entered his office but I certainly left with the taste of sour cherries. Dismissed immediately with two weeks'

pay and a shrug blaming Trudeau for my termination.

Well, at least I had a farm, three hundred sheep, my youth and lots of vitality. Sue was stoic about the turn of events though the future did not look good. Our mortgage, a preferential rate through the AFSC, stood at 11%. There was a family to feed and sheep requiring feed and medication plus other domestic bills and utilities. We adopted the motto, "When the going gets tough, the Tough get going." Cold comfort really. Without some financial resources, the Tough kept sliding downhill and going nowhere.

Sue's training in pharmacy landed her a job in one of the local pharmacies. I received unemployment benefits most of which went to the caring and maintenance of the flock. Smarter people would have sold the flock and the farm and moved on. The decision we arrived at was just the opposite. I still wonder to this day, thirty-four years later, that if we had a crystal ball to see the future, would I be here telling this story.

By July, our meager resources were finished. We bought some wool from Custom Woolen Mills using the three thousand odd pounds of wool sheared that spring from our flock. We made these into horse blankets and sold them at the local farmers market. Then we invested in tanned sheepskins which were well received by the public and complemented our wool products.

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Our fortunes took a turn when we stumbled onto a company that made and sold sheepskin moccasins. Nobody had yet sold these beautiful, comfortable and unique slippers in Alberta. The company supplying them was small and situated in the Huron Village outside of Quebec City. Now we had a niche market. Very quickly, our product line grew to include different styles of moccasins and slippers as well as sheepskin articles, socks and sweaters.

By this time, we were doing as many markets as possible. To be able to transport the family and the product, we bought an old van. The most difficult and yet the most lucrative was the Red Deer market on a Saturday morning. The merchandise was loaded the day before. We had to all get up at three thirty and there was a chorus of grumblings and invectives as the family crammed into the few spaces that were not occupied with product. The trip to Red Deer was an hour and then we had to scramble for a good spot. Business was brisk between eight and twelve when the market closed. You could tell the time when a few final shoppers would shamle across to our stand, inspect the moccasins as if trying to commit the pattern to memory and ask the same question, "How much?" and when told, the same reply, "That's too much. Do you give discounts?"

In 1983, we exhibited at the Calgary Stampede and barely covered the costs. I had no idea how to build a display stand as it was very different from the Farmers Market. The contraption I built would have secured an enraged rhino. I think it also intimidated potential customers by its formidable appearance. Since that year, we also exhibited at Spruce Meadows called Equifair. It was just a small tent about forty by twenty feet, and our booth was located under the grandstand.

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CELTIC NIGHT

Sat. 19th March 6pm to 10pm

On Saturday 19th March we are celebrating the Vernal Equinox also known as Alban Eiler, which means "Light of the Earth". This takes place on or about the 20th of March. Crops were typically sown at this time. This rare balance in Nature represented a powerful time of magic to the Ancients.

LIVE CELTIC BAND

MENU

Mussel Stew, Oat Cakes, Whole Wheat Soda Bread, Fried Smoked Salmon Cabbage Salad, Samit (curds with garlic). Colcannon (mixture of Potatoes, Cabbage and Shallots, Irish Lamb Stew, Apple and Saskatoon Pie. Bread and Butter Pudding

\$48.50/person includes service on the meal. GST not included

RESERVATIONS ESSENTIAL

403 337 2800

SHEEP MANURE

No Smell - Composted for 3 years

Dress your garden with Sheep Manure

Be ready for the spring and have a few bags in the potting shed for a great mix with potting soil. Phone first to make sure that bags are available or that there is a tractor operator if you are buying by the truck load.

Price is \$5 per bag or 11 bags for \$50

I remember it rained buckets never letting up for a moment. Rushing past the grandstand and only a few feet from our booth was a formidable torrent of water that no grown man would dare to cross. The second day was worse and the torrent considerably larger. Overnight, the wind had destroyed the Equifair tent. It was worse than grim, but there was a silver lining. There was this English fellow that I still know today and consider as a friend. To bring some warmth to our bones, I had brought a couple of thermos flasks containing hot mulled wine. We sat in an unoccupied booth maudlin away the hours wondering if we could canoe down the torrent. Sue drove home.

Our merchandise line had grown considerably and we did shows and fairs from Montreal to Vancouver. During November and December, we would set up in shopping malls. In 1990, we had two Christmas fairs in Red Deer, one in Southridge Mall, two shops in Bankers Hall and a beautiful boutique on the Farm as well as doing Christmas craft shows. It boggles my mind just thinking of it now. We went on to win numerous awards for the quality of our displays, and in 1991 and 1996, we were the overall top exhibit of all categories at the Calgary Stampede.

Stampede taught me a great lesson. No matter how hard you work and how good you are at what you have chosen to do, the nouveau riche or the establishment have aspirations of aggrandizement and look down on those who work with their hands to make the show a flourishing reality. By the same token, those who have worked hard, rolled up their sleeves and built an enduring legacy, do respect those, no matter how big or small, who make the effort. To this end, I salute Spruce Meadows and the Southern Family.

PaSu Sunday Buffet

WHERE FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEET
FOR A SCRUMPTIOUS FEAST

Roast Lamb, Beef and Chicken
Served with Hot Vegetables and
Truffle Gravy, 4 Fresh Salads,
Soup, and our own Artisan Bread,
Gourmet Pate,
Assorted Pickles and Cheeses,
Four Original Homemade Desserts
Price \$34.50 per person

Children under 10 half-price. Two and under free.

Sunday Seating from 12 to 1pm

Reservations Required

Or

Afternoon Tea starting at 2.30

Try PaSu Scones with Devon Cream,
a bowl of fresh cut fruit and world class
loose leaf teas. Scones are baked to order.

Seafood Evening

Saturday April 9th

A gourmet 8-course meal including fresh Oysters, Lobsters, Prawns and other succulent seafood delights. Our Seafood is flown in fresh from Granville Island, therefore this will be a ticketed event.

RESERVATIONS ESSENTIAL

\$85 per head. Includes
service on the meal.

Tickets are
non-refundable.



South African Barbeques

Our South African Barbeques have become very popular and some Saturdays have already been booked for private functions. Reservations are essential. Arrive at 5.30pm, enjoy our appetizers and a refreshing drink on the patio whilst enjoying a spectacular view of the Rocky Mountains. The fare consists of Sirloin Steak, Lamb Ribs, Tandoori Chicken and Boerewors (a special South African Sausage), sometimes a shell fish or seafood dish and accompanied by salads, various hot dishes, freshly baked cornbread and traditional South African desserts. Menu subject to change.

This is a wonderful way of entertaining summer guests, especially those from out of province.

\$48.00 per person

Arrival 5.30 pm and dinner served at 6.30 pm

Starts the 28th May

RESERVATIONS ESSENTIAL

FOOD TO GO

We have a delicious assortment of small batch cooking using the very best natural ingredients with no MSG nor food preservatives. They are then quick frozen and displayed in the restaurant. There's a variety of soups, curries, stews, pies, broths and desserts. Our portion size is for two people. Next time you visit, try a few. They are very good.

Restaurant News

During the week

We are open Tuesdays to Saturdays for lunch and afternoon tea. The grill is on from 12 to 2. Light lunches and afternoon tea are served from 2 to 3. Desserts are from 3 to 4 only.

On Sunday

Carvery will be served if we have 15 or more reservations, otherwise it will be off the menu. Seating from 12 to 1. Sunday afternoon from 2.30 to 3.45 we serve tea, coffee, alcoholic libations and desserts.

PLEASE REMEMBER

That we book up very quickly for

Easter Sunday - March 27th

Price \$34.50

Mothers Day - May 8th

Fathers Day - June 19th

Price \$34.50

Reservations are essential for the Restaurant on Sundays and for special events and also recommended during the week.

WE DO

WEDDINGS, ANNIVERSARIES.

PRIVATE FUNCTIONS,

DAY SEMINARS

Ask us for a quote.

You will find us very reasonable.