

**THE PEMBINA VALLEY WATER CO-OP INC.**

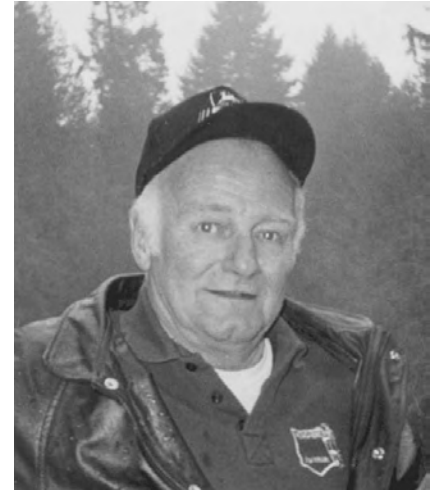
*Pump house and water stand in Lowe Farm.*



*Pipe installation underway in 1998.*



*The new water station in Morris.*



*Jack Klassen, project supervisor for the first town water system.*

While Lowe Farm was experiencing all kinds of water difficulties, a high tech state of the art water treatment facility was being built in Morris. Being unable to compete with a good quality of water would ultimately bring about the demise of "Lake Lowe Farm".

In the late winter of 1998, the R.M. of Morris and the Pembina Valley Water Co-op invited residents of Lowe Farm and surrounding area to a meeting to discuss a new source of water for Lowe Farm. In attendance at the meeting held at the Lowe Farm Community Centre were Sam Schellenberg, project manager of the Pembina Valley Water Co-op, Reeve Herman Martens, Councillor Ralph Groening, and 52 interested area residents.

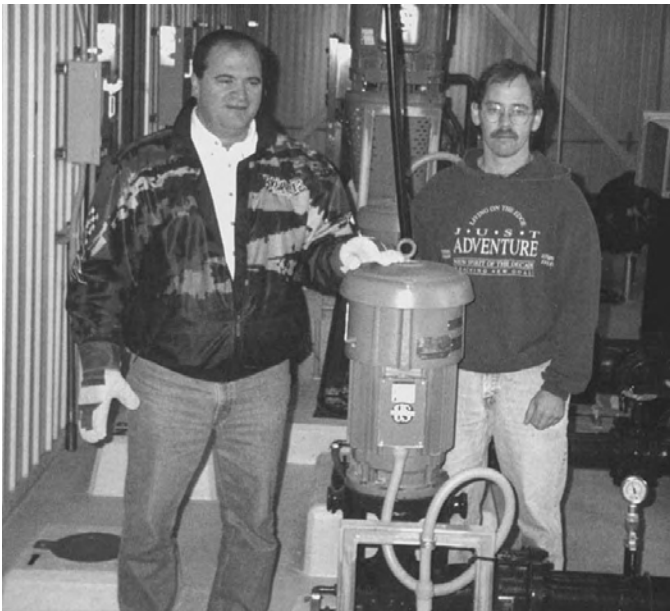
Sam Schellenberg outlined in detail the aims and objectives of the P.V.W.C., along with the benefits it would create, not only to Lowe Farm, but to the entire Pembina Valley. Reeve Martens and Councillor Groening outlined the cost and benefits to consumers. The municipality would purchase treated water from the P.V.W.C., and in turn sell water to area residents, including rural residents if they so chose. The elimination of the reservoir meant a reduction in the cost of filling the reservoir in the spring, purchasing

chemicals and maintaining equipment. The filtration station would still be used, but by accepting treated water, it would merely act as a distribution point for supplying water to the town site.

After a lively question and answer period, a vote was taken and by a margin of 47 to five, Lowe Farm and area residents voted in favor of joining the Pembina Valley Water Co-op.

In early July of 1998, work began on laying the water line. A 12 inch line following Highway 23 was installed between Morris and Lowe Farm. After installation was complete, the newly installed line was cleaned and tested. Once the "bugs" were worked out, the pumps were turned on at the treatment plant in Morris and on September 18, 1998, Lowe Farm began receiving water from the P.V.W.C., thus ending the 16 year existence of "Lake Lowe Farm"

With the closing of the reservoir or "Lake Lowe Farm", another chapter in the history of Lowe Farm closed as well. Perhaps it should be left to lie in state as a reminder of the importance it has played in the viability and growth of our community, as did "the old waterholes" which preceded it.



*Richard Dupuis and Byron Klassen,  
water technicians in Morris.*

**LOWE FARM HOUSING  
CORPORATION INCORPORATED  
PRAIRIE VIEW APARTMENTS**

*Submitted by Peter G. Unrau*

On March 7th, 1978, a committee of four members representing the local Chamber of Commerce and three local churches held a meeting about providing low rental housing for Lowe Farm. The committee consisted of Anton Dyck, President; Cornie Reimer, Secretary; Ben

Braun and Ed Groening.

On March 10, 1978, a letter was posted at the Lowe Farm Post Office canvassing the area for prospective tenants.

The first board meeting of the newly formed Lowe Farm Housing Corporation was elected at a meeting in August of 1981. The board consisted of two members each representing the three local churches and one member at large. These members included Anton W. Dyck, Cornie W. Reimer, Ben Braun, Ben G. Wiebe, Jake H. Gerbrandt, Dave E. Penner, and Peter G. Unrau. Elected Chairman at this first meeting was Anton Dyck. Cornie Reimer was elected Vice Chairman and Pete Unrau elected Secretary-Treasurer.

The board spent many hours at meetings and on the road that first year travelling to see other projects like the one planned for Lowe Farm. Meetings were also held with Federal and Provincial officials to obtain information on what, if any, grants might be available.

The board received information that they could obtain a grant from the Province of Manitoba through the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation, as well as the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. These two levels of government would subsidize the project in effect to the amount of interest paid, less two per cent. This grant money was obtainable if the community could raise \$20,000 of their own. The community joined together and held a fund raising supper. Pledges from individuals helped raise the needed money. In June of 1982 the Lions Club of Morris, with President Bill Fulford, presented a cheque in the amount of \$4,000 to Prairie View Apartment representatives Anton Dyck and Ben Braun.

Prior to the opening of the apartments, a contest was held to name the new facility. All entries submitted were placed in a drum and the winning entry was selected. "Prairie View Apartments" was the name submitted by Merelyn Hunkin. The winning prize was \$50, which Merelyn donated back to the Lowe Farm Housing Corporation.

The first mortgage was obtained through the Credit Union. This first mortgage consisted of a three way split between the Lowe Farm Credit Union, the Rosenort Credit Union, and the Credit Union Central of Manitoba.

With the funding in place, the next step was the acquisition of land for the project. This was accomplished by purchasing the north one third area of the Lowe Farm Elementary School grounds.

The ground breaking ceremony for construction of the Prairie View Apartments took place on November 27, 1981. Anton Dyck, Chairman of the Lowe Farm Housing Corporation, lifted the ceremonial sod turning. Also in attendance at the ceremony were Morris MLA Clayton Manness and Dan Thiessen, Councillor for the R. M. of Morris. Ground work started immediately following the ceremony.

Boyle Schaffer was the architect for the project. The



*The Lowe Farm Elderly Housing Corporation Board. Sod turning for the Prairie View Apartments: (l - r) Cornie W. Reimer, Dave E. Penner, Bernard Wiebe, Jake Gerbrandt, Ben Braun, Peter G. Unrau, Anton Dyck and MLA Clayton Manes.*



*The Prairie View Apartments.*

general contractor was A. K. Penner and Sons. Construction foreman was Peter Derksen.

The building was completed in July, 1982, with all 18 units ready for occupancy.

The Prairie View Apartments grand opening took place August 5, 1982. In attendance at the opening ceremony were Anton Dyck, Chairman of the Lowe Farm Housing Corporation; Les Fereudenberg, of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation; Herb Dubowitz, of the Manitoba Housing and Renewal; Mrs. Annie Ariss represented Lisgar Member of Parliament, Jack Murta. Also in attendance were Morris MLA Clayton Manness, RM of Morris Reeve Alvin Rempel, and area Councillor Dan Thiessen. During the ceremony, which was attended by 150 interested observers, Les Fereudenberg presented Anton Dyck with a plaque on behalf of the Government of Canada. Jake J. Peters had the distinct honor of performing the ribbon cutting to officially open the facility.

The first tenant to occupy an apartment was Mrs. Nettie Klassen. Mrs. Klassen was followed in turn by Jake J. Peters, Mr. and Mrs. Henry



*Nettie Klassen, first resident of the new Prairie View Apartments.*



*Ribbon cutting for the Prairie View Apartments August 5, 1982. (l - r) Norm Blatz, Jake Peters, and Anton Dyck.*

Klippenstein, Mr. and Mrs. Ed Martens, Mr. and Mrs. John Martens, and Mrs. Anne Unrau.

Prior to the opening of the Prairie View Apartments, five Lowe Farm women's organizations along with two members from the Berghaler Church and one each from the Emmanuel Gospel and Sommerfeld churches along with the Lowe Farm Ladies Curling Club attended a one day charity craft fair. The craft fair was held at Polo Park Shopping Center on May 21, 1982. Mrs. Kay Derksen was chairwoman for this event.

Through the sale of baked goods, homemade crafts, and gift items, a total of \$1,088 was raised. The money raised was used to help furnish the lounge at the Lowe Farm Prairie View Apartments.

The summer of 1997 saw the construction of a car garage for the apartments. Dan J. Thiessen was hired as the project supervisor and foreman. Volunteer labor helped with the construction of the six bay structure. Total cost amounted to \$18,000.

In March of 1993, the Lowe Farm Friendship Centre began sponsoring a program known as the Congregate Meal Program for Seniors, at the Prairie View Apartments. This program falls under the direction of the Regional Health Authority, as well as the Morris Area Service to Seniors Program.

The purpose of the program provides seniors the opportunity to obtain a hot meal at a reasonable cost of \$3. At the same time it encourages residents to dine in the relaxed, friendly atmosphere of the apartment lounge.

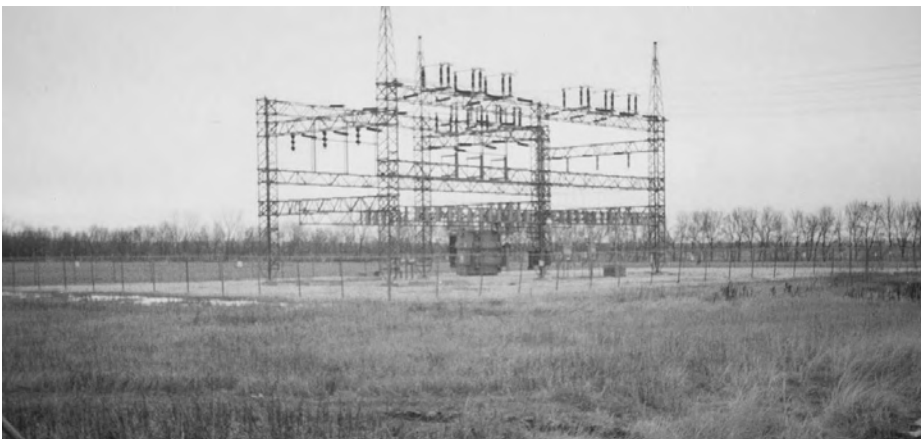
Mary Kehler was employed as the cook until her retirement in March of 1999. Betsy Gerbrandt has since taken over the responsibility of cooking meals at the Prairie View Apartments. Funding for the cooks is provided by the Regional Health Authority. Monday, Wednesday and Friday meal service is provided, with an average of 14 meals being prepared and served. For seniors who find it difficult to dine in the lounge, room service is available. Prairie View Apartments have served seniors well in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

## LIGHTING UP LOWE FARM

*Updated by Paul Joyal*



*Lowe Farm, just before electrification*



*The 115,000 sub station provides power to Lowe Farm and the surrounding area.*

A number of Lowe Farm businessmen got together in 1934 - 1935 and persuaded J. H. Martens and Sons to run a plant providing power for Lowe Farm.

Previously, various businesses had their own power plants. Rosners, J. J. Schroeder, and I. J. Warkentin had small plants that were used in their establishments. But now they wanted it on a larger scale.

This was undertaken by buying a 26 horse power Ruston-Hornsby stationary engine, to which they hooked up a direct current (DC) generator. Once power was provided to the main businesses, the demand was so great that this Ruston-Hornsby generator had to be changed in 1936.

At that time, a Crompton-Parkinson alternator was purchased and was used with the stationary engine. Some homes were also hooked at this time; primarily the ones situated along the main line that was built in the very beginning. When another improvement was needed in service, a 15 horse power Lister stationary engine was procured, and used with the other equipment to provide power.

Problems were numerous, and residents at the east end of town complained about the quality of power. When an average size voltage was sent out, the loss of power was too great over the distance, to provide enough power to use an appliance effectively. This occurrence is referred to as a voltage drop. Adequate current at one end of a line decreases significantly at the other end of a very long run of wire. The problem was resolved by obtaining two transformers. A step-up transformer was installed at the plant, and a step-down was put on the furthest end of the main line. This plant provided electrical power for the people of Lowe Farm for 11 years.

When the power line was erected, it went down the alley from the west end of town to the

east. This being the main line, they had to put in a number of secondary lines. A line was put under the railway tracks to provide power for the pumps at the Consumers Co-operative warehouse. Pete Schroeder assisted in the installation of the power lines. Poles were put in the ground the hard way—with a pick and shovel.

A lot of man hours were put into this project, and in the fall of the year when the wires were strung, the older Martens boys and A. G. Schroeder were kept very busy. Most of the wiring in homes was carried out by Pete Martens and A. G. Schroeder.

After everything was installed and hooked up, the Martens family, who owned the plant, took the responsibility of seeing that everything worked. Since the plant operated from 7:00 a.m. until 12 midnight, one member of the family had to be around all day. Believe it or not, Mrs. Martens frequently was the one to start up the engine in the morning. Since the engine started on gasoline, then switched to diesel, Mrs. Martens had to turn the lever that made the switch at just the right moment!

The fuel that was used was partly refined crude oil obtained from Trump Oil at McTavish. This had to be hauled in for use during the winter and stored. There were problems with this as well. The crude oil thickened up in winter to the point where it could not be pumped out of the tanks. A fire had to be lit under the tanks, and the oil heated and put into barrels which were then stored in the shop.

The rig that was used to haul this fuel was a semi-trailer with a 500 gallon tank mounted on a half ton Ford Model A truck. Hauling was done in fall or early winter on dirt roads; Frank and Jake recall how rain and ice sometimes made these trips eventful.

The consumers of Lowe Farm were urged to use the power for

lights only, though later some appliances were allowed. Ironing for instance was encouraged during the daytime when the loads were light. Engine overload happened mostly at night, when the first sign of trouble was the regular “putt putt” of the engine. Somebody would race down to the shop and babysit the plant until the load decreased. If the illegal load was not lightened by the homeowners, the plant would be slowed down to a point where light bulbs merely glowed. People would start turning of switches and pulling out plugs, which resulted in the load being lightened. Occasionally they would think, “He’s just pulling a fast one”, and as a result, the plant would stall.

Finally, the agreement to provide Lowe Farm with electricity came to an end in April of 1946, when the Manitoba Power Commission took over.

Construction under the farm program began on an experimental basis in 1945, when transmission lines were constructed to serve 674 farms in seven test areas. Southeastern Manitoba was selected as the location for one of the test areas and electrification began in the Roland district. The success of the test proved conclusively that farm electrification was feasible and led the Commission to plan construction to proceed at the rate of 5,000 farms annually. Unfortunately, the post war shortage of line materials and trained men restricted the construction to 1,500 farms in 1946 and to 3,600 in 1947.

Finally, in 1948, the annual goal of 5,000 farms was achieved. The program proceeded at this rate until its completion in 1956.

The Manitoba Power Commission supplied electricity to Lowe Farm via the sub station located in Morris. In the summer of 1969, Manitoba Hydro erected a sub station just to the east of Lowe Farm. This sub station now receives electricity via the LaVerendrye sub station which is located west of the City of Winnipeg. The 115,000 volt Lowe Farm sub station not only supplies Lowe Farm with hydro electric power, it also provides power to a large area surrounding Lowe Farm.

## LOWE FARM FIRES



*Peter H. Penner discussing Co-op Consumer fire with Fire Chief Gordon Dyck, June 1971.*



*Jake Ginter at the scene of the Co-op Consumer Fire.*



*Lowe Farm Consumer's Co-op destroyed by fire June 3, 1971.*

In its early existence, the village of Lowe Farm, like many other small prairie towns, felt the wrath of fires. Without the means to effectively control and extinguish these fires Lowe Farm has suffered considerably from fires over the years.

The first fire in Lowe Farm occurred in 1908 at the residence of C. Nester located on lots Nine and Ten of Block Three. In 1914, the Winnipeg Grain Company elevator was destroyed by fire. Lowe Farm experienced its most disastrous and tragic fire on May 2, 1921, in which three stores, Mr. Rosner's, Mr. M. Altman, and Mr. Frank Groening's, were destroyed. Tragically, on this day, young Israel Rosner lost his life.



*Aftermath of fire which swept through Lowe Farm's Main Street in 1921, destroying the Co-op, Reimer's I.H.C. shop and Johnson's' Garage.*

During the next two decades three residences burned; Anton Funk, Jacob Funk, and Henry Friesen's. In 1940, three businesses were destroyed in one fell sweep; H. W. Reimer's IHC Shop, the Consumers Co-op, and Johnson's Garage. On August 22, 1953, the Manitoba Pool Elevator No. Two was completely destroyed by fire. October 26, 1956, a garage and service station owned by Pete Martens was consumed. Another fire, which burned out of control, occurred on January 31, 1959. It completely destroyed the Red and White General Store owned by Peter Hildebrand.

On November 28, 1963, another fire extensively damaged the Lowe Farm Consumer's Co-op building and the adjacent Co-op store. Fortunately the local fire brigade, together with the Morris, Rosenort, and Altona brigades were able to bring the fire under control before the buildings were completely destroyed. On June 1, 1971, a fire, believed to have started from a grass fire that spread from a barrel of burning trash, caused considerable damage to the garage and service station operated by the Lowe Farm Consumer's Co-op. This fire, thought to have been completely extinguished, continued to smolder in one of the walls. In the early morning hours of June 3, 1971, it re-ignited, bursting into flames and destroyed the building, inventory, and two vehicles.

In the early evening hours of March 10, 1982, the Emmanuel Gospel Church, located on First





*Spectacular early evening blaze at the Emmanuel Gospel Church, March 10, 1982.*

Avenue, was completely destroyed. This fire was started by spontaneous combustion of oily rags left unattended. On December 31, 1986, a chimney fire completely gutted the home owned by Anne Hudson.

Untold damage has also plagued the farming community. Fire has ravaged crops, and destroyed farm machinery, buildings and livestock over the years. In the period from 1988 -1998, a total of 62 fires were recorded by the fire department.

## **THE LOWE FARM FIRE DEPARTMENT**

*Submitted by Paul Joyal*



*The first fire engine was a 1946 Ford 3 ton truck. Volunteers here are Ben Thiessen, John Remple and Frank Martens.*



*A 1965 Ford was Lowe Farm's second fire truck. It is scheduled for replacement in 1999.*



*The third fire truck in Lowe Farm was a 1958 International pumper, pictured here with Ron Unrau.*



*State of the art 1990 GMC topkick Fire Engine, the department's newest acquisition.*



*First Fire Hall in Lowe Farm. Built in 1952.*



*The Lowe Farm fire hall today.*



*This 1983 3 ton truck, to replace the aging 1965 Ford, was under construction by the Lowe Farm Fire Department in the winter of 1999.*



*The 1988 Ford fire truck built by members of the Lowe Farm fire department.*

As noted, subsequent to the 1950's, fire has wreaked havoc on the community of Lowe Farm. With no means of its own for protection, Lowe Farm would certainly continue to fall prey to the destruction caused by fire.

In April of 1952, the Lowe Farm Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution to build a fire hall complete with fire fighting equipment with the cost not to exceed \$6,000. The money for the fire hall, truck and related equipment was obtained from the Municipality of Morris council repayable at \$1,000 per year, interest free. The cost of repayment was distributed over the entire ward.

At the Chamber of Commerce meeting of April 22, 1952, a committee of four members, John Green, Henry Voth, Diedrich Heppner and Jacob S. Schroeder, were appointed for looking after the building and purchasing materials for the proposed fire hall. Ed. Braun and J. Green from the Chamber of Commerce, along with local residents Pete Martens and Pete Brown acted as the building committee.

In 1952, a lot 50 by 120 feet was purchased for the sum of \$500. A further \$2,174.25 was spent on materials and labor, for construction of the 24 by 28 foot firehall.

In the beginning, the fire truck was filled with water provided from dugouts located within town. It would be several years later before a 7,000 gallon cistern would be installed on the south side of the fire hall with respect to the water needs of the fire brigade.

The first fire engine purchased was a 1946 three ton Ford truck. The water tank was built and installed locally by John H. and Frank Martens with steel sheet metal that was on hand. Total cost of the fire engine was \$2354.21. This amount included the purchase price of the truck, tank and related equipment such as valves and fittings. A further \$121 was spent on purchasing suction hose for drafting water from dugouts and ponds. As time wore on, the fire engine wore out and was subsequently replaced by a 1965 Ford truck which is still in use today.

As the responsibilities of the department grew, so did the need for more and better equipment. In 1983, a new fire hall was built adjacent to the first. The new hall built at a cost of \$60,000 contains two large truck bays, a large meeting room, washroom and shower facilities, and a small storage room. Trucks are now filled with water via the town water system. In addition to the new



hall, a second fire truck, a 1958 International pumper, was purchased from the Kingsville Fire Department of Kingsville, Ontario.

After many years of faithful and reliable service the International pumper was in need of replacement and was subsequently resold to the Kingsville Fire Department, where today it is on display in a museum.

In the winter of 1992, the fire department took delivery of its newest truck, a 1991 GMC Top Kick fire engine. Built by Fort Garry Industries of Winnipeg, this fire truck contains top of the line equipment and will serve the community well for years to come. Along with the truck, newer equipment has also been purchased such as turnout gear (suits), hoses, nozzles, portable pumps and radios, to name a few. On August 27, 1998, a three ton Ford cab and chassis was purchased through fundraising by the fire department. This truck is being built almost entirely by the Lowe Farm Fire Department and is scheduled for completion by the end of February of 1999. Once in operation, the new truck will replace the 1965 Ford that has been in service for many years.

**PERSONNEL**



*The Lowe Farm Fire Department in 1977. Top (l - r): Dan Thiessen, Jake Ginter. Bottom: Cornie Febr, Jake Bergen, Martin Braun, Henry Janz, George Klassen.*



*Gordon Dyck,  
Fire Chief No. 3.*



*Fire Chief No. 4,  
Cornelius Febr.*



*George Klassen,  
Fire Chief No. 5.*



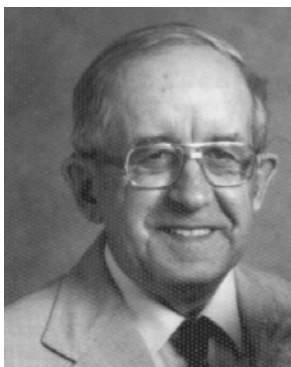
*Larry Gluck,  
Fire Chief No. 6 & 8.*



*Fire Chief No. 7,  
Gerald Klassen.*



*Present Fire Chief,  
Ray St. Godard.*



*First Fire Chief, Frank  
Martens.*



*Second Fire Chief  
Gary Friesen.*



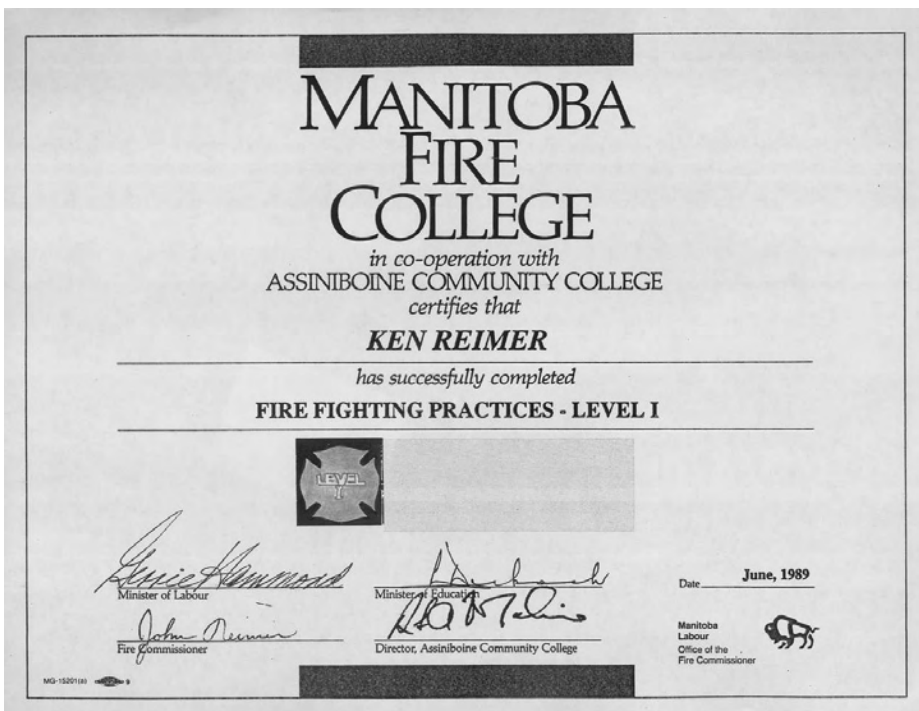
*First Responder,  
Diane Lilke.*



*First Responder,  
Gregg Derksen.*



*Certificate, First Responder.*



*Level 1 certificate.*

Frank Martens served as the first fire chief of the department from 1952 until 1969. Other fire chiefs have included: Gary Friesen, Gordon Dyck, Cornelius Fehr, George Klassen, Larry Gluck, Gerald Klassen, and Ray St. Godard, the present chief.

The entire department is on a strictly volunteer basis. Volunteers are paid a small amount from the municipality, and are also covered under Workers Compensation. Currently Lowe Farm Fire Department has 12 volunteers, and two first responders.

### ACTIVITIES

Fire drills are held the first and third Tuesdays of every month and form the nucleus of fire department activities. They provide the department with the opportunity to plan and exercise strategies while at the same time establishing teamwork, maintain morale, and instill confidence. Through many hours of dedicated practice the fire department has become a safe, reliable and efficient operation. The importance of fire drills no matter how simple or how complicated can never be underestimated.

The goal of any fire department is to protect and serve the communities in which they are located. Lowe Farm is certainly no exception. In the late 1980s, the fire department, under the direction of Fire Chief George Klassen, undertook Level I fire-fighting training. Through the Office of the Fire Commissioner, members of the department were taught basic fire-fighting skills. Level I training serves two purposes: First and foremost, it teaches the fire fighter safety and how to recognize danger. Secondly, it teaches the effective use of the tools and equipment at their disposal. At any fire, knowing what to do, and when to do it, is crucial to winning or losing the battle. In 1989, the fire department was tested by the Fire Commissioner, and fire fighters involved were awarded their Level I Certification. Since



*Current Fire Department:*

*L.R. Peter Klassen, Frank Siemens, Peter Harder, Larry Gluck, Tony Dyck,  
Diane Lilke, Ray St. Godard (chief).*

*F.R. Todd Paetkau, Ken Reimer, Greg Derksen, Ron Unrau, Eric Gluck  
Added: Ron Ginter, Cassandra Knelsen, Ken Ewbank.*



*Members of the Fire Department conduct a search and rescue drill.*

that time, Level I Certification has become standard practice for all new members joining the department.

Another important element of the department is the training of First Responders. First Responders became a part of the Lowe Farm Fire Department in 1993. Marielle Dyck and Diane Lilke joined the Fire Department in 1992 and took the 90 hour First Responder course in Morris that winter, and took the examination in Winkler in May of 1993. The course offers the basic knowledge and skills to ensure the safety of all involved at the scene of an injury or illness. The ability to assess and evaluate a patient's condition, including deterioration, improvements and the monitoring of their status. Utilization of techniques of care is recognized by the nursing and medical staff. They are taught the ability to lift, move and transport the sick and injured in the safest most expedient way. They are also taught the ability to report pertinent information concerning a patient's condition and care. All First Responders must re-certify every three years taking a written exam of 100 questions, and a practical exam consisting of four different stations; childbirth, oxygen therapy, immobilization and body survey that may involve wounds and splinting. Being a First Responder is a commitment to the community in which they live. The First Responders of the Lowe Farm Fire Department now are Greg Derksen (joined in 1997) and Diane Lilke.

Lowe Farm Fire Department, in conjunction with several other fire departments, is associated with Mutual Aid. At Mutual Aid meetings new fire-fighting techniques, as well as planning and strategies are discussed in the event of a large-scale disaster where several fire departments could become involved. Mutual Aid meetings are held on an ongoing basis once a month at different fire departments throughout the Mutual Aid District. Fire fighters are encouraged to attend these meetings.



*A fire drill to keep the fire department in practice.*



*A fire drill to keep the fire department in practice.*



*Fire Fighters with hoses and air packs extinguish a blaze in a drill. House donated by J. B. Harder.*



*Fire Chief Ray St. Godard surveying fire fighting operations.*

## EDUCATION

The fire department has, on occasion, visited area residents discussing the importance of such things as fire extinguishers, smoke detectors and escape routes in the event of fire. They also outline hazards around the house and how to store potentially hazardous materials safely.

In conjunction with the school; they have conducted fire drills, and have given classroom instruction to young students on the dangers of playing with fire. Also, they are shown how to exit a building safely and what to do should their clothes catch on fire. Through education the fire department can help promote a fire safe community.

The year 1997 saw the old system of dialing a seven-digit number for emergency assistance replaced by a new system. Today we need only dial 911 for fire, medical, or police services.

**Although voluntary in character, the Lowe Farm Fire Department has, and we trust will continue, to serve the community with pride, professionalism, and prudence.**

## A CENTURY OF FLOODING

Every spring the flood waters leave the Pembina Hills to cross the plains on their way to the Red River. On the way they are gathered into big spillways some 10 miles west of Lowe Farm and are led due east regardless of their natural courses. As they reach the level ground common to this area, the drop in elevation practically disappears and the water consequently slows down, occasionally overflowing the snowfilled ditches and spreading out into a slowly moving stream at times a mile wide.

One of the first ditches of an extensive drainage system that has been developed over the years was dug by means of a floating dredge in 1904. This ditch, now known as the Shannon Spillway, passes Lowe Farm a half mile to the south. Waters from the Shannon Creek originating in the Pembina Hills are channeled east by the Shannon Spillway which in turn empties into the Morris River by way of the Moyer (Lewis) Coulee. In normal years the ditches and spillways can handle the spring runoff water, but occasionally, in flood years, the water overflows the spillways and dikes and may cover whole farm yards in its path to a depth of three or four feet.

One of worst floods recorded occurred in 1913. The 1920's saw one or two unusually high floods, and in the spring of 1947, a late thaw came suddenly, causing the waters to break their normal bounds and inundate fields and farm yards that had been untouched for years. At these times Lowe Farm appeared to be on an island surrounded by a sea of water covering many square miles. Such was also the case in 1950 when, as the result of a winter with an abnormally heavy snow fall and a late spring, followed by an extended rainy spell, the Red River



*Jake Rempel, John Rempel and Pete Wiebe rescue Susie Groening from the flooded Groening farmyard in 1966.*



*An army cook preparing meals.*



*An army truck is loaded with sandbags on Lowe Farm's main street.*





*Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry, lining up before bidding Lowe Farm adieu.*



*Councilor Ralph Groening receives a plaque for the community from Major Stu Sharpe.*



*Jean Hildebrand, from the "Granny Brigade," receives a plaque from Major Stu Sharpe.*

overflowed its banks to the extent that the river's edge crept up to the road west of the Smith Spur Elevator, just two and one half miles east of the town of Lowe Farm. After the town of Morris had been evacuated and the waters continued to rise, it soon became apparent that the residents of the village of Rosenort and the surrounding area would have to leave their homes. On May 6, the Red Cross designated the village of Lowe Farm as a flood victim accommodation centre, and by 10 a.m. on the morning of May 6, tarpaulin covered trucks were dispatched to aid in the evacuation of the flood victims in the Rosenort area. Before midnight that evening, the village of Lowe Farm, with a population of some 365, had accommodated approximately 370 flood victims. It was one month later that the last of the evacuees left Lowe Farm and returned home.

Other floods over the years have caused equally disastrous results. The floods of 1966, and again in 1979 are two examples of these natural catastrophes; however little would compare to the flooding that occurred in the spring of 1997.

### **WE REALLY DID FEED AN ARMY**

*submitted by Joyce Harder, Marie Hildebrand and Paul Joyal*

The winter and spring of 1997 will never be forgotten by people living in the Red River Valley. Etched into their minds will be the "Flood of the Century".

The winter of 1997 came early, and with it, record amounts of snowfall. Early in January, flood forecasters began to predict concerns about flooding. Compounding these concerns was the fact that North Dakota was experiencing the same record snowfalls. A cool spring that would allow for a gradual snowmelt, would ease the possibility of severe flooding.



However, this was not to be. On April 5 and 6 Mother Nature delivered a crushing blow to southern Manitoba. Instead of the anticipated gradual snow melt, a blizzard hit southern Manitoba, virtually paralyzing the entire region. Many homes in the area were left without hydro, water, or telephone. North Dakotans also felt the wrath that Mother Nature had dumped on southern Manitoba. Flooding was now a certainty, the extent of the flooding would depend largely on the weather. In this year Mother Nature refused to cooperate. The warm spring weather came almost as quickly as the winter snow.

As the Red River began to rise, communities along its banks began to prepare for the possibility of flooding. Shock waves were experienced along the Valley as news came that Grand Forks, North Dakota, with a population of 50,000 people was forced to evacuate because the Red River had exceeded flood predictions and flooded the entire Grand Forks region. With the Red River so high south of the border, what lay in store for Manitoba? Communities along the Valley, stepped up their flood fighting efforts. Dykes were shored up or re-enforced, sand bags laid in place, and emergency plans drawn up.

As the Red River continued to rise it became apparent that evacuation was inevitable. In the days that followed, the communities of Emerson, Letellier, St. Jean Baptiste, Morris and Ste. Agathe would all be evacuated.

The people in the Lowe Farm area knew there was not only the Red River rising, but that water, and lots of it was approaching Lowe Farm from the west. Heavy spring runoff was making its way eastward toward the Red River.

On Saturday, April 19, 1997, volunteers were asked to come out and help fill sandbags at the Lowe Farm Community Centre. Approximately 15 people were sandbag-



*A stockpile of sandbags ready for pick-up.*



*Loading trucks with sandbags for local distribution.*



*The armed forces at ease.*



*Armed Forces helicopter at the "Lowe Farm airport" on Tony Dyck's land, across from the community centre.*



*Every available hand is used to fill sandbags in preparation for the flood.*



*Seventeen local farm trucks were pressed into service during the flood.*

ging when someone suggested during a coffee break that this was not a job for only men who were over the age of 40. (This was the approximate age of those in attendance at this sandbagging party.) It was suggested that perhaps an announcement could be made at church services for the need for volunteers. On Sunday, April 20, at all the church services in Lowe Farm, the announcement was made. That afternoon approximately 200 volunteers converged on the Community Centre to aid in filling sandbags. People of all ages, from seven to 70, gave a helping hand. Many of the volunteers present were from the Kane area, west of Lowe Farm.

This was the beginning of the monumental role Lowe Farm would eventually play in battling the flood of the century. The Lowe Farm Community Centre would be transformed into the flood headquarters for the entire area. Because of the very limited access to Morris and Rosenort, the Rural Municipality of Morris, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Manitoba Emergency Management Organization (MEMO), the Department of Highways, Department of Natural Resources, Ambulance Services and the Lowe Farm Fire Department would all be headquartered at the Community Centre. The Lowe Farm School assisted by providing Internet access, which supplied the flood control centre with flood up-dates and maps. In addition, the local clergy were available at all times to offer support. The Lowe Farm Fire Department was responsible for the entire operation.

Many farmers brought their trucks for use in the flood fighting effort. At first the volunteers would fill, carry and load sandbags onto the trucks by hand. Later, a front end loader and three fork lifts would be used to load sandbags onto the trucks. The total number of bags used each day as well as the amount of sand was tabulated.



*Army personnel and local "cooks and bottlewashers" became fast friends during the flood.*



*Susie Groening and Beth Braun cook during 1979 flood.*

The sand was first obtained through the R.M. of Morris, but as the crisis escalated, it was brought in from wherever it could be obtained.

When farmyards and homes were in danger of being flooded, sandbag loaded trucks along with volunteers would be dispatched to the stricken area. In a few hours they had the house protected from the threat of flooding. Also, when grain bins were in danger of water, the farmers would rally together with several trucks and grain carts to remove the grain.

Once the threat of the overflowing waters of the Tobacco Creek, located north of Lowe Farm, and the Shannon Ditch to the south began to subside, the community turned its efforts on protecting yards to the east of Lowe Farm.

On April 23, 1997, Lowe Farm would become invaded - not by the rampaging waters of the Red River,

nor by the flood waters to its west, but by 120 soldiers of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry, under the command of Major Stu Sharpe. For the next 20 days the men and women of the PPCLI would call Lowe Farm home. During their stay in Lowe Farm, the armed forces were housed in the basement of the Emmanuel and Bergthaler Churches. Fully equipped for emergencies, the army was quick at setting up weather and communication depots.

During the flood, Lowe Farm even acquired an airport. Set up across the highway from the Community Centre, the airport was used by the Armed Forces, MEMO, Natural Resources, and the RCMP. Helicopters could be heard landing in Lowe Farm at any time of the day or night.

In addition, a group of town ladies set to work on feeding the throngs of people who were assisting in the battle to beat the Red. The Lowe Farm Co-op made many contributions throughout the flood with donations of food and supplies, the use of coolers and freezers, and a staff who were always available when needed. The communities of Kane, Horndean, Carman, Morden, and Winkler, and as far away as Crystal City and Pilot Mound provided meals in one form or another. Penner Foods of Winkler, and Pauline's Kitchen of Morden also delivered several truckloads of food.

At the height of activities the "Granny Brigade," as they would be referred to affectionately by the armed forces, were preparing meals for approximately 300 people a day. The food operation ran 24 hours a day with hot meals available until very late at night. Refreshments, sandwiches, dainties, and a variety of fruit were available at all times.

As the flood crisis began to diminish, the community of Lowe Farm held a barbecue in honor of the men and women of the Princess Patricia Canadian Light Infantry in appreciation for their much needed services. The barbecue was held on Sunday, May 4, with nearly the entire community of approximately 350 in attendance.

On May 15, 1997, the friendly invasion of the Canadian Armed Forces into Lowe Farm would come to an end. Before leaving, however, the commanding officer of the PPCLI, Major Stu Sharpe, presented a plaque to Ralph Groening, area councillor, recognizing the efforts Lowe Farm had made in helping with the "Flood of the Century". The commanding officer also made another presentation. A plaque was presented to Jean Hildebrand, on behalf of all the ladies of the "Granny Brigade," who had provided the army with the much appreciated home cooking.

A total of 17 farm trucks were used in a variety of ways throughout the flood. Delivering thousands of sand bags, supplying food to volunteers sandbagging at flood threatened homes, the untiring efforts of these gentlemen is truly remarkable. In areas where it was not possible for the farm vehicles to access, the armed forces were on hand to provide assistance.

The community of Lowe Farm, the Armed Forces, along with scores of volunteers, filled approximately 148,000 sandbags. Of this total approximately 138,000 were put into actual use. A total of 59 homes were sandbagged, and of this number, only two were lost to flood waters. The combined efforts of many people made possible a victorious flood fighting effort.

Cell phones have been used for a number of years, however, this was one of the first times they were used and tested in a major emergency. In many areas, the telephone lines were out of order and cell phones were the only means of communication.

Special thanks are extended to the students of Lowe Farm and Morris Schools who did so much of the back breaking work of filling and laying sandbags, and the loading of sandbags onto pallets.

The people of our community volunteered many hours of service in the victory over the "Flood of the Century." One could not begin to mention the names of individuals who so generously donated their time, food, equipment or whatever was required in this very special time of need.

The community of Lowe Farm received recognition in feeding and sheltering victims of the 1950 flood. It's nice to know that this same co-operative spirit was repeated 47 years later by another generation.

## BLIZZARDS

*Submitted by Paul Joyal*

Countless stories may be written about the snow, the cold and of course the inevitable blizzards of any Canadian winter. Even the smallest amount of snowfall combined with a gusting wind can create blizzard-like conditions. In reality, such is life on the flat open prairie of the Great White North. Only the foolhardy or the daring would venture out in such conditions.

Blizzards, at their worst are



*Spalding house in Lowe Farm, winter of 1943 - 1944.*



*Snow covers a chicken house, winter of 1943 - 1944*



*Stormed in at Lowe Farm.*



*This Lowe Farm street won't be passable for some time.*



*Lowe Farm business with vehicles in front*





*Aerial photo from east looking west.*



*Lowe Farm 1959.*