

Pete

From P. 5

seven years old. No one happened to be around to fix the windmill that had broken so he climbed up three and one half stories, taking a replacement part with him. Near the top of the windmill he found himself on the outside of the structure and slipped and started to fall. He managed to grab a truss with one of his strong milking hands. (He was forced to milk cows since age five at the farm bought later by the Blair family). He managed to flip up on to the windmill platform and then climbed up on the inside and sat there thinking about how stupid he had been . . . why didn't he think this thing through? he asked himself. Then he made a vow to visualize or "derch denke" before he acted on events for the rest of his life.

He fixed the windmill and climbed down a mature young man although he had gone up as a carefree boy.

He went four miles to attend Rosenheim school even though he lived very close to Luxemburg school where all his friends were. The school board would not allow him to change schools because he was not in the school district—even though he could not speak any English. The teacher asked his name and he knew only the English words "Tom Tinker had a dog, it said bow wow." He also took in a German school during the summer holidays in local homes where he learned to read and write German. Beginning at age six he was attacked and bullied by some students including having his front teeth knocked out. In the winter he was a favourite target for snowballs but he could out-dodge most of them since he was in such good shape. The boy completed Grades 4 and 5 in one year and then finished Grade 6 at the school. In Grade 7 he went only some of the time because his injured father needed him to help build a farm at Glenbush, Sask. He however passed Grade 7 and could not go to Grade 8 because there was not enough time—but since he picked up more knowledge in the one room classroom, he wrote the Grade 8 exams which he passed. He was, says Stewart, the number one speller in the school and he also excelled at mathematics.

He became stronger by working on the farm and then he was fighting back against his tormentors.

His father eventually lost the farm by investing in futures around 1929 yet the family managed to work the farm a few more years, but in 1932 they left for Glenbush, Sask. where they were helped by other Mennonites. They moved a year later to Yarrow, B.C. When Friesen was 15 years old he saw an electrician at work. Later he said he wanted to wire the barn and was given permission. He went into town, came back with supplies and wired the entire barn.

Later during war years, Friesen as a Mennonite was a conscientious objector so would not bear arms but did serve his country, working in forestry, built railways, and looked after military records in New Brunswick. He married Edith, an Anglican, which was not popular with the other Mennonites and back home in B.C. after the war, they were forced to leave the church. Friesen later traded his chainsaw with a neighbour for a house moving business and after flooding in the area he suddenly had hundreds of houses that needed to be moved. He then told his men that he was going to change the old method of jacking up buildings one jack at a time by inventing a unified hydraulic jacking system. People laughed at first. And then he perfected and patented his new system that is still in use today. He later built pre-fab houses for Montreal's Expo 67, producing 48 pre-fab houses per day with only 57 employees. After publicity over the success, the Government of Quebec flexed its muscles and wanted a majority of the business he had built up. He was stubborn, and after a fight Friesen was forced into bankruptcy. Although he was a founding father of Trinity Western University, he was no longer welcome on the board. The television show will illustrate how Friesen then wound up sleeping on the concrete floor of a friend's garage after his wife took the children to stay with relatives in Vancouver. But then a phone call from Chicago came and an engineering corporation wanted someone who could

move a lot of fragile and historic buildings. After searching throughout the United States the firm concluded they needed the inventor of the unified hydraulic jacking system and Friesen was offered a lot of money and U.S. residency status if he would come and supervise the moving division of Belding Engineering. By that time—1970 Friesen had moved 5,000 buildings.

One of his famous moves was the two story brick Highland Park Fire Station that weighed in at 1.4 million pounds. Guinness World Records recorded the feat. Another move he did was the Lieberman Jewelry Store which attracted movers and others from all over North America with some betting large sums of money the building could not be successfully moved. It was. Another famous move involved one of the only houses to survive the 1871 Chicago fire. The Widow Clarke House—Chicago's oldest was moved by the former Provost lad 27 feet up, and then across the elevated railway commuter line and 27 feet safely back down. Other moves included: the Fairmont Hotel in San Antonio, Texas (another Guinness record) as the heaviest structure to be moved on wheels. It weighed in at 3.5 million pounds and Friesen moved it five city blocks; the Gem Theatre in Detroit set another Guinness record when he moved it away from the wrecker's ball. Weight of the theatre: 5.4 million pounds. Next Friesen broke his own record in Minneapolis when a fragile Shubert Theatre at almost six million pounds was successfully moved; in 2000 Friesen found himself moving the Newark, New Jersey air terminal building which was 280 feet long, 70 feet wide and two stories high plus the control tower weighing in at 13 million pounds. He used 167 rubber-tired dollies with 1,312 wheels. When one of Friesen's moving team members and him were on the roof of the building sizing up the job, he said "Pete, it's too big." Friesen replied "Jerry, think of it as a small job that needs more equipment to do it." Friesen visualized the job and then did it. He also was involved in the moving of entire lighthouses inland from the sea that was eroding banks including the famous Cape Hatteras and others that were in danger of being swallowed up by the waves against crumbling banks.

Friesen spoke to *The Provost News* in a telephone interview on Monday morning, March 27, (which is being re-printed here), verifying much of what Stewart is going to broadcast.

Provost News: Did you get beatings by your father?

Pete Friesen: My father viewed me as a servant. He was frustrated and took it out on me. Yes, I was beaten, I would get punched in the face, wherever, but the good thing was he was not very strong because he was an aristocrat. If he was strong I would not be

alive.

PN: We understand your IQ is 167 (90 - 109 is deemed average and is held by 50 percent of the population; 110-119 is high average, 120-129 is superior and 130+ is very superior with 2.2 percent of the population attributed with that ranking.—Ed.).

PF: Well, let's say it is over 160. When I was in the army I had the documents and saw them.

PN: Do you have any relatives living here now?

PF: Not that I have been in touch with.

PN: What do you remember about Provost?

PF: When we hauled a load of wheat to town it was to the Pool elevator. There were five or seven elevators in a row. I remember one time someone was giving away slingshots when I went to town and I remember we used it to shoot out the insulators on telephone poles. I was around 10 years old.

PN: Who are a few of the people you remember?

PF: The Gansers, the Kisslingers, Dorothy Wagner . . .

PN: You had four world records?

PF: Yes, I am not sure if they are still standing, I have not looked into that. It's not important.

PN: Your way of looking at life was formed or defined here by climbing that windmill?

Interview Concludes, Pete, P. 10

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