

## Ormand Family Activity

### October 2011: Alberta Trip

One of the major projects I've been on at Raytheon lately is the Launch-Boost-Sustain demo, wherein an alternative rocket motor arrangement for the TOW missile with three stages (adding a sustain motor) is intended to make the missile get to current targets much faster and potentially be able to attack targets further out. After more than three years, we have built our test missiles and we're ready to try them out. Raytheon and the Close Combat Weapon Systems (CCWS) office at Redstone Arsenal are partnered with the Canadian Department of National Defense. The Canadians haven't been able to provide funding, but they *are* able to provide use of their firing range for free. So our team is en route to Canadian Forces Base Suffield, in Alberta, near Medicine Hat.

We arrive at the Calgary airport, get our rental four-wheel-drive SUV cars, and set off through Calgary. Upon leaving the rental garage, I make a terrible mistake. Never, NEVER "temporarily" put anything on the roof of your car while you fiddle with the door, your keys, your jacket, or anything else. You will forget about it, drive away, and lose it. Stopped in construction traffic, a friendly Canadian runs up from behind, knocks on my window, and tells me he saw it fall off a few kilometres back. I circle around and look for it, but to no avail - I've lost my camera.

More than slightly aggravated at myself for violating one of the First Rules of Travel, I resume my trip, wend through the city, and get on the Transcanada - Route 1. It's more than 300km to Medicine Hat, so I see a lot of Alberta. Pretty much the same as Wyoming and Montana, which of course Alberta borders. Rolling grasslands, prairie. Lots of cattle and wheatfields, and a fair number of oil pumps. It occurs to me later that Alberta is the source of the oil sands and the controversial pipeline. To say nothing of the Edmonton *Oilers* hockey team!

The Transcanada runs alongside the Canadian Pacific Railroad track, and there are constantly trains running by pulling loads of hopper cars and flatbeds with lumber... and Chinese shipping containers. I'm a bit surprised about one characteristic of Canada's Highway One: In the US, significant highways go past or through cities and towns direct, with

off-ramps and on-ramps for local access. In Canada, the highway goes through towns and encounters stoplights and intersections. So at 110km/hr (which sounds fast, but it's really a pokey 65 mph), it's something like four hours before we arrive at Medicine Hat.



Medicine Hat is "Gas City" because of all the natural gas industry in the vicinity.

At the hotel, I discover that I am in a room with a little kitchen. Surprising, but fine by me. There's also a vanity sink outside the bathroom. Three sinks total.



Hotels in this part of Alberta pride themselves on having waterslides. But then, popular hotels in Denver have waterslides. They just don't advertise them so prominently. But at least part of the reason for this became clear the next weekend, when the hotel was filled with young families staying over so their kids could have birthday parties in the hotel conference rooms and play in the pool and the waterslide. Lots of thumping and bumping in the halls and the room over my head that weekend!



The next day, we met with the entire team - eight from Raytheon Tucson, four from the CCWS program office in Huntsville, and four from Redstone Test Center (to work the radar, the US cameras, and the launcher instrumentation). Presently we met our Canadian host Kevin and his Luxembourg helper Bruno at the base. Getting onto CFB Suffield

was so much easier than any US facility - see the rent-a-cop gate guard, and if your name is on the access list, just put your car license plate number on a carbon-copy form, sign it, and you're in. Now, it turns out that CFB Suffield (a *huge* facility) also hosts the British Army for training - BATUS (British Army Training Unit Suffield, [www.forces80.com/batus.htm](http://www.forces80.com/batus.htm)). So while we stood outside the base headquarters building while the boss-types made the arrangements, we watched a squad of British soldiers on a field across the street doing some odd P.T.: wrestling, and running while carrying each other. Shortly, as we enter the range, we pass an installation marked by a sign reading "1st Battalion Scots Guards".

Eventually, we were ready to go on the range. But the range is *big*; too far away from any lunch provider, so we go into the base canteen (run by Aramark - same outfit that runs the BX on US bases) and buy a lunch to go. We can tell we are not going to want to do this every day, so after a short day in which nothing much happens, we return to Medicine Hat and go shopping.

I'm going to want some cash for this, so I stop at the teller machine in the hotel lobby. My US bank card works, and I get some \$20 CDN bills - very colorful, with a silvery metallic stripe, and a picture of the Queen. I'm going to need some coins for the laundry machines this weekend, so I ask the desk clerk for change. She asked me, "How many Loonies and Twonies?" As I stood there blankly, her coworker mutters, "he's from the States", so she explains: Loonies are one-dollar coins, and Twonies are two-dollar coins. Okay, I understand "*twonie*", but the reason for "*loonie*" escapes me, and I didn't get a chance to ask anyone. The smallest paper bill is \$5, with a picture of some historical prime minister.

Then it's off across the street to Walmart to get some bread, lunch meat, cheese, and mustard. It's Walmart, all right; with one difference: all the packages are in English and French. Later, we would go to Subway, and the bag they put the sandwich in proclaimed "Eat Fresh! Mangez Frais!". Canada is officially bilingual (thanks to Quebec), but nobody I encountered in Alberta was francophone. I never got the chance to ask if they had to study French in school. So I gather that at least Western Canada is officially but not functionally bilingual, as opposed to Tucson which is functionally but not officially bilingual.

After I put my lunch stuff in the full-size refrigerator in my kitchenette-equipped room, I go off again to look for a replacement camera, and for Canadian touristy-type stuff like postcards, which my friend Hans Tees always likes to send back to his grandchildren. The Medicine Hat Mall is nearby.

There is a Tim Horton's shop outside the mall ([www.timhortons.com](http://www.timhortons.com)). There are Tim Horton's shops *everywhere*.



Tim Horton was a hockey player who started (or lent his name to) this chain of coffee shops. Rather like Starbucks. In fact, while there are two Starbucks here (and two of the girls with us have to get their daily Starbucks fix), Tim Horton's outnumber them three to one. I could never get the girls, or any of the other coffee drinkers, to try some Tim Horton's and judge between them and Starbucks. They also had baked goods and sandwiches and soup, but we never tried it. Mostly because usually we went to



Original Joe's ([www.originaljoes.ca](http://www.originaljoes.ca)), a sports bar type place that had big televisions everywhere, because the boss types with us had to keep up on the Green Bay Packers and other football games. I noticed a Calgary versus Saskatchewan football game playing, also, and an American NASCAR race, but it was clear from the framed jerseys on the wall (AND the magazines in the drugstore... AND the articles in the newspaper... AND the sponsors on television...) that *HOCKEY* is the real fixation here.

But that's okay. It was at Joe's that I was first exposed to two Canadian characteristics.

First, the accent. The young woman serving us had an accent with

rounded vowels (for example, anything with "out" became "oot"), and just like the stereotype, she frequently converted her statements into throwaway interrogatives by appending "eh?" or "hey?". I noticed the accent was very strong with the elderly gate guard at CFB Suffield - almost a burr. But most of the Canadians I listened to very closely (such as hotel clerks) had a very faint accent.

(In fact, one of the girls with us lived in southern France for a while, and learned French by immersion. She said southern French has an accent relative to northern (Parisian) French. The only time I heard French spoken was on the return trip aboard an Air Canada jet, and the attendant was required to give the spiel in both languages. My friend said their French had an accent! So English *and* French in Canada has an accent!)

The other characteristic Canadian item I encountered at Joe's was *poutine* - French Fries with gravy and cheese curds. Very tasty. Not very healthy, doubtless.

But that was lunch on the weekend. For dinner one night, we went to Montana's for dinner ([www.montanas.ca](http://www.montanas.ca)). An excellent steak; of course, there were *many* steakhouses in the area, all promoting "Alberta Beef", since it is after all a major local product. The entertaining thing about Montana's was how they did birthday celebrations. At the Texas Roadhouse steak place here in Tucson, the birthday person sits in a saddle on a sawhorse dragged up for the purpose. At Montana's, it was a fuzzy helmet with moose antlers!



Now, as a matter of fact, the way things worked out, I was in Canada for my 50th birthday. In fact, we were at Montana's on the night of my birthday! I briefly entertained a notion of suggesting it to my workmates, so I could get a photo out of it. But in the center of the room was a table full of young men with large mugs of beer. From their accent, it was obvious they were British soldiers from Suffield. One of them had a birthday, so out came the moose helmet, and after the waitresses sang their little song and clapped their hands... one of them shoved a pie in the birthday boy's face! After observing this, I suppressed my information.

(But when my friends found out about it, they express indignation to this day that I deprived them of the opportunity!)

So a great many things I've seen in Canada thus far are an extension northward of American culture. McDonalds. Wendy's. Burger King. Walmart. But there are many Canadian unique institutions here as well. Tim Horton's. Montana's. Original Joe's. In fact, as I walked around the Medicine Hat Mall, I didn't see very much that was US at all. It was almost entirely Canadian.



Including a real surprise: We all learned about the Hudson Bay Company from our American history. *It's still around!*



[www.hbc.com](http://www.hbc.com). The "Hudson Bay Company" part of the corporation

is also known as "The Bay", and it looks kind of like a Dillard's type of high-end department store, and here it is as an "anchor store" in the Medicine Hat Mall!



Perhaps unsurprisingly, there's not a lot of touristy stuff in this mall. Just a small carousel of postcards in the drugstore. But the lady at the Hallmark store (yes, a US thing) suggested I try London Drug ([www.londondrugs.com](http://www.londondrugs.com) on 13th Avenue. Later on, I did, and was amazed. Everything that Walgreen's would carry, plus a large electronics and computers area, and furniture and office equipment. In a "drug store" (which, yes, they sold drugs as well).

Oh, and I did find a camera, a current-model Olympus, at a "Best Buy" sort of electronics store at the mall. Much better at night photos than my old one (RIP).

We spent the rest of the week, and the first two days of the following week, with our very successful missile firing test. We even spent much of the weekend working up a presentation for the managers back in Tucson over the weekend. But we reserved some time on Saturday to check out "Historic Downtown Medicine Hat".

By this time, I've studied enough online maps and tourist guides and driven around near the Mall that I've got an idea where things are. [tourismmedicinehat.com](http://tourismmedicinehat.com) was a help. I've also learned that Medicine Hat is *here* because this is where the Canadian Pacific Railroad crossed the South Saskatchewan River. The railroad set up a camp for the workers, the camp developed into a town supported by the railroad, the town was "successful", but still the railroad, and the expansive switchyard, is

still at the heart. This old-fashioned but still functional rail terminal is part of Medicine Hat's past and present.



The Monarch is the oldest movie theatre in Alberta. Still playing movies; in fact, it was "Horrible Bosses" (which we all winked at each other when we saw this, in light of our recent experiences with the managers in Tucson and their remote-control expectations). Kind of like the Fox in Tucson, but not as flashy, and not obviously subsidized by the city like the Fox is.



There are two bridges over the South Saskatchewan for autos. The old Finlay bridge was refurbished not long ago. I drove across it once; the lanes are uncomfortably narrow.



Some of us walk out a ways to look at the river. The Zonies are fascinated; this is a *river*, bigger than the Hassayampa or the Verde. The Alabaman with us is not impressed. This eastern view includes the railroad bridge that started it all.



Here's the western view on the other side. Very pretty. Even in October, it's too early for the leaves on the trees to change.



Right next to the Finlay bridge is Veteran's Memorial Park, with monuments commemorating the war casualties from Medicine Hat. It includes this historic CPR locomotive, rather like the old Southern Pacific steam locomotive which resides at the Tucson depot.

Next to the locomotive is a Sherman tank used by Canadian forces in WWII. I think how even a Basic TOW would make short work of something like this.



We walk around a bit, but (1) the manager types are anxious to get to Joe's for the Packers game, and (2) "Historic Downtown Medicine Hat" is somewhat disappointing. There are several cafes and pubs (which would have been more interesting for lunch than Joe's, but oh, well), three tattoo parlours, a few clothes stores, a candy store... and not much else.

I note that, in keeping with "The Gas City", the streets are lit by - gas lamps.



I would have liked to go through the Esplanade, which is Medicine Hat's cultural center, and includes some historic and art exhibits. Here's part of it behind the oldest brick house in Alberta.

I peek into the Medicine Hat Public Library, which is very nice (and, like our libraries, the stacks are mostly unoccupied because all the people are at the public computers). Next to the library is the largest outdoor chessboard in Alberta. There are supposed to be big teak pieces, but it's clear that the club puts them away for protection when the club is not present. Although I would rather have expected them to be out on this beautiful Saturday. But then, it's after 5:00.



(Which is puzzling. Last night, some of us drove downtown to see what it looked like at night, and there was a fair bit of commerce - on Friday night. This time on Saturday, the place is dead. Maybe things will pick up after nightfall, but we won't see it... we'll be at Joe's watching the game(s).)



On the other side of the chessboard was this interesting building, so I went for a closer look. "Queen's Bench"... guess there's more to being part of the Commonwealth than just having the Queen's picture on the money.

Our original hope - before we got saddled with working through the weekend - was the chance at seeing stuff in Canada. Like the tremendous national parks in the Canadian Rockies, like Banff, and Jasper, and the Icefields. Some of the Huntsville guys (who didn't have to do make-work projects for nervous Tucson manager types) went to a park just to the north of Glacier National Park in Montana. Or to the historic Clay District in Medicine Hat, which once produced china and ceramic goods as a prominent local industry. I might have liked to have looked at the Alberta Badlands or the dinosaur fossil beds near Drumheller. Or Police Point park in Medicine Hat, just east of downtown, where the river makes a large bend around a bit of forest formerly reserved for a fort for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. I'm guessing that, while in the US, the Army did most of the organized protection of settlers and law enforcement, Canada had a national police force, formerly North West Mounted Police, now the RCMP, which still exists as a national law enforcement agency (and, per the newspaper, a source of political struggle for control between the provincial and national governments). But back to the point, there are "eco-tourism" sites at provincial and federal parks all over south Alberta. Too bad we were so busy.

But our time in Medicine Hat is over. Tuesday night, I got gasoline for the rental car - something like forty litres. Sounds like a lot for what is really less - rather like kilometres to Calgary.

On the way out of town, we stop at the Saamis Tepee - the "world's tallest tepee". When the Olympics were hosted at Calgary, part of building the usual artsy national-show-off park was a huge steel Indian tepee. When the Olympics were done, Calgary started tearing unwanted stuff down, but a group of Medicine Hat businessmen arranged to have the tepee moved here. It's the most significant "bragging point" for the community. Around the inner periphery are signs with the stories of the Blackfoot, Blood, Sioux, and other "aboriginals" in Canada. Doesn't sound like they had the same sort of



Indian Wars as in the US, plus the treaties were made with the distant British government. An important result of the union of Scots/Irish "mountain men" and the Indian women who actually knew how things in the west worked was the Metis, or halfbreed, which employed themselves significantly as scouts, prospectors, trackers, and in similar frontier roles.

Also at the Tepee is a Visitors' Centre, which has a lot of Alberta tourist info, and a little bit of stuff to buy. Mostly Indian artsy stuff, which isn't really what I'm looking for. But they do have postcards for Hans - 25 cents for a postcard... and more than a dollar for the stamp to mail it with.

Three hours later, and late in the day, we arrive back in Calgary. The first job is to move slowly through all the construction at the airport to drop off our rocket motor expert (Mike Kaiserman, who worked with my

father when they were employed at what used to be Hughes Aircraft Company), who was taking the evening flight home. The second job was to get to our Calgary hotel and wait for our chief engineer to get back on the shuttle from the airport from where he returned his rental car in anticipation of an early flight tomorrow. Together we dined at The Keg (a steakhouse, which I thought might be another Canadian-unique thing, but there's one here in Tucson!), and afterwards it's too late for the chief engineer and our boss (who isn't feeling well). So it is me and the three girls who go on a last-minute to Downtown Calgary.



Our immediate target is the Calgary Tower, at the end of Centre Street, which has a public observation deck and a rotating restaurant, from which the entire city and the not-so-far-off Canadian Rockies can be seen. By the time we get there and ditch the car (free street parking after 6:00), it's after 9:00, and the tower is closed. Phooey.

So instead, we walk around a bit, despite the cool wind and the light rain falling. Just north of the Tower is Stevens Avenue, which is mostly (a one-way, one-lane car route for which use is discouraged but not prohibited) a pedestrian mall, and has all kinds of interesting shops. All closed now, of course.







The great American cultural icon is present. In front are Karla, our mechanical engineer; Tiara, our test engineer; and Leslie, our thermal analyst.

My friend Karla wanted her picture taken under the Unicorn sign. The pubs were below ground level; just inside the door are stairs down to the floor flanked by stairs up to the apartments above.





My companions are shivering. I think it's amazing to have the rainclouds hovering around the towers like this.

Calgary boasts a very nice zoo among its many attractions, and there is a light rail system that threads through the city and the downtown area. Downtown is nestled in a bend of the Bow River, and the bridges that cross it, both rail and auto, are bathed in colored lights. A very beautiful city. Which is puzzling to me, a bit, as Calgary has a population of 1 to 1.5 million and has a well-ordered downtown with on the order of twenty tall buildings and the nice downtown businesses (like a *big* installation of the Hudson Bay Company) and restaurants (yep, more steak places serving Alberta beef) that you would expect to find; whereas, Tucson has almost as many people with an anemic and befuddled downtown.

After walking down Stevens for a way, we enter one of the tall buildings and find an upscale shopping mall. On the floor above we find an "airwalk" to the building across Stevens, and through it, another to the next block, and so forth. There is a network of "airwalks" - enclosed pedestrian routes above the streets between buildings - and, as we learn, subterranean passages, so that people can move about a good bit

of the city without going outside. I saw a bit of this in Minneapolis, and I understand its usefulness in cold and snowy places.

We can't spend a lot of time here, and the others are tired of walking in the wet air and fearful of getting sick for the return flight tomorrow, so we put an end to our visit to Calgary. Sure would be nice to return someday and see it in the daytime (and actually ascend the Calgary Tower) and visit the stores. But the Ormands have a lot yet to see in the Continental US before we can countenance (expensive) vacation trips to Western Canada.



Although honestly, if we ever *do* a trip to see Oregon and Washington, no question we will come ready to hop the border and see Vancouver! And really, going across at Niagara or visiting Toronto is more likely than seeing Calgary. So I'll just be grateful for my own chance to see it.

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When we go to the airport the next day, it is properly *raining* in Calgary. When we fly out on Air Canada to Los Angeles, it is over a solid cloud cover. So my window seat is wasted...



... until we come in sight of the Channel Islands off the Californai coast near Santa Barbara. I attempt some more aerial photography.

Los Angeles International ("LAX") is a terrible airport. If you switch carriers, you must leave the terminal you arrived at, go outside, catch a shuttle bus to the next terminal, and re-enter through the security check. Forget short layovers. But after a while we are back in the air and headed for Tucson. Flights leave LAX over the ocean, bank left, and cross the city to the south. Which gives me a chance to see downtown Long Beach and the Queen Mary, which we visited (and stayed at overnight) just a few months ago.



And also Palm Springs, and the San Andreas Fault valley just beyond. The tram to the San Jacinto peak is on the other side of the mountain.

