

SATURDAY LIFESTYLES FEATURE

Sowing seeds of change

It's no secret that farm families from coast to coast are going through difficult times. There's stress on the farm — whether it's a Prairie grain operation, an Ontario tobacco farm, or a B.C. fruit grower.

Business, family or communication issues are weighing many farm families down.

Elaine Froese is helping them get unstuck.

The Manitoba farm wife — who's also a speaker, writer and personal coach — encourages families to learn how to "connect, communicate and celebrate."

"I encourage people to think about how they can run their lives, to make them more meaningful, and to be a gift," Froese explained during an interview following a presentation to farm women at Regina's Western Canada Farm Progress Show, the largest dryland farm technology and equipment show in Canada.

Anything & Everything
BY IRENE SEIBERLING

"What do you as a farm woman really want?" she asked the packed audience at the Heartland Women's Expo.

She asked the farm women in the audience to list the 10 most important things in their lives.

A show of hands indicated that 'God,' 'husband' and 'children' appeared at the top of most lists — including Froese's. Noticeably absent from the top 10 list was the farm women themselves, Froese pointed out.

That needs to change, she said.

Farm women need to shift their attitudes. They need to recognize the importance of looking after themselves. "When we care for ourselves, we have the strength to care for ourselves," she pointed out.

Froese encouraged the farm women to adopt "extreme self care." "Go for a massage," she recommended. "And get some sleep."

And Froese repeatedly emphasized the importance of having some fun. It can be as simple as relaxing in the yard with a cold drink, enjoying the beauty and bounty of the surroundings.

Like the women she was addressing, Froese admitted to personally feeling like a Slinky toy at times — stretched too far.

"We can't keep getting stretched to the limit without something giving," she cautioned.

Via her presentations, columns, book and CDs, as well as her Web site (www.elainefroese.com), Froese offers practical tools to tackle everything from releasing stress (including living with positive uncertainty) to discussing the undiscussable (such as whether the farm is terminally ill) to planning for change (including what to do at 62, 72, 82 and 92).

Froese was quick to point out that she is not a counsellor or a therapist; she's a personal coach. "Counselling is about recovery; coaching is about discovery," she explained.

"I'm working to help them not dwell on their past, but to look forward to what they have to look forward to in their future."

"That's why coaching is leading from behind, helping people discover what they want their lives to look like," she added.

Froese refers to herself as "an encourager." As a professional speaker, writer and personal coach, she works to plant seeds of encouragement and hope wherever she goes.

"My passion is to encourage farm families and prairie people to be intentional about the choices they make for their lives," she said — words that are echoed in her book *Planting the Seed of Hope: A Celebration of Prairie Life* (\$26). The 188-page paperback was born out of 10 years of Froese's columns in the farm paper *Grainews*.

"When I work with families, I encourage them to use conflict resolution as a business risk-management strategy. That's training just like you'd get training for anything else you do on your farm — your business," she explained.



BRYAN SCHLOSSER/Leader-Post

Farm wife, speaker, writer and personal coach Elaine Froese spoke to women at the Heartland Women's Expo about taking time to look after themselves.

Froese can relate to the farm women who flock en masse to hear her speak.

"Because I'm a farmer, just like they are. I drive a combine. I watch the sky for hail clouds. I'm sad when things don't work out as we want them to," she pointed out.

And like many of the women in the audience, Froese felt compelled to work off the farm, as well as on.

For more than 25 years, Froese has been sharing her practical, from-the-heart approach with farm families. Speaking engagements and personal coaching provide her off-farm income.

"I do these things at a professional level, so my coaching fees are the same as a tax specialist, and my speaking fees are professional fees," she said. "When I leave the farm, it's for an intense period of time, but it's a good business decision."

Today's farm families tend to be more willing to seek help, Froese said.

"I think it's a generational thing. I think that the (baby) boomers and the younger boomers are

probably more quick to accept outside help," she said.

When it comes to farming, "the rules are changing," Froese pointed out. "Hard work is no longer a guarantee for success."

That's why it's crucial for farm families to learn the skills needed to survive, and thrive, even in difficult times, she said. Froese can be contacted at elaine@elainefroese.com or at 1-866-848-8311.

Other resources Froese recommended include: ■ *Difficult Times: Stress on the Farm*, a booklet available online at www.iareh.usask.ca, or from the Agricultural Health and Safety Network Institute of Agricultural Rural and Environmental Health at the University of Saskatchewan by calling (306) 966-8286 or by e-mailing aghealthandsafety@usask.ca

■ Publications and online material produced by Saskatoon-based life balance expert Patricia Katz, including www.pauseworks.com, which offers tips on bringing balance and perspective to your life.

CD REVIEWS

Clarkson unloads too much emotion

My December
Kelly Clarkson
RCA
★ ★ ½ (out of five)

If *My December* is an in-depth look at Kelly Clarkson's soul, then the former *American Idol* winner needs to lighten up. Reportedly written after the collapse of a relationship, Clarkson filled *My December* with bitter and morose songs. Gone are the polished and edgy pop tunes from *Breakaway* and *Thankful*, replaced with anthems to her angst.

Clarkson decided to take complete control with this album, co-writing all 13 tracks with members of her band. I'm guessing her bandmates had a larger hand in the music because the lyrics have Clarkson's emotions all over them. The opening lyric of "Never Again," the album's first single, literally sets the tone: "I hope the ring you gave her turns her finger green/I hope when you're in bed with her you think of me." Clarkson's lyrics display her anger, her frustration, her depression. While the emotions may have motivated Clarkson, the purging is too much.

Clarkson's voice — once described by Simon Cowell as the best of any *Idol* contestant — is wasted on *My December*. On too many of the tracks she either mutters the lyrics with a throaty moan or her voice is overwhelmed by the music.

— Jeff DeDekker

Lost Highway
Bon Jovi
Mercury Records
★ ★ ★ (out of five)

Have you heard the rumour about Bon Jovi putting out a country album? Don't believe it for a moment. Although *Lost Highway* does have crossover appeal for country fans, it is a pop album. Bon Jovi picked up a Grammy and a No. 1 hit on the country charts with "Who Says You Can't Go Home Again," a duet with Sugarland's Jennifer Nettles.

Although some of the songs on the disc have a similar feel, they aren't enough to christen *Lost Highway* as a country album.

Adding to the confusion are the contributions of Leann Rimes ("Till We Ain't Strangers Anymore") and Big & Rich ("We Got It Goin' On"). Throw in some steel guitar, mandolin and fiddle on some of the tracks and it's understandable how a person might think this is a country album.

Granted, this is a kinder, gentler version of Bon Jovi but that can be attributed to the band's maturation and evolution. Jon Bon Jovi's voice is still as good as ever and his harmonies with Richie Sambora are sweet. There aren't any screaming electric guitar solos from Sambora this time around but that doesn't mean he doesn't get to display his skills — his acoustic contributions on guitar and mandolin are impressive.

— Jeff DeDekker

ACADEMY AWARDS

'A Mighty Heart' beats with Oscar buzz

LOS ANGELES (Hollywood Reporter) — There's no official starting gun to the annual Oscar race, and the finish line for the 80th Annual Academy Awards isn't until Feb. 24. But a number of races already have begun — some quietly, some not so quietly.

This weekend, Paramount Vantage is launching *A Mighty Heart*, director Michael Winterbottom's re-creation of the kidnapping and murder of *Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl at the hands of Pakistani militants. Starring Angelina Jolie as Pearl's wife Mariane, who led the search for her husband, the film debuted in May at Cannes.

As of Thursday, the documentary-like thriller rated an 80-per-cent positive rating on RottenTomatoes.com, but higher-end critics have been even more positive.

Vantage isn't being shy about using the "O" word: Print ads quote Ben Lyons of E! Entertainment proclaiming, "The early favorite for best picture at this year's Oscars," while TV ads also invoke its Oscar-worthiness.

Actually, months from now, when the Oscar campaigns are in high gear, *Heart's* awards hopes probably will co-



Angelina Jolie

alesce around Jolie's performance as the actress succeeds in the tricky job of capturing a real-life woman whose tragic story made headlines in 2002. But a nomination isn't automatically guaranteed since this year's best actress field is one of the strongest in years.

Lionsgate already has released Sarah Polley's *Away From Her*, a portrait of a couple coping with Alzheimer's, starring a luminous Julie Christie as a woman battling the dis-

ease, which could earn the actress the fourth nomination of her career.

Picturehouse recently launched *La Vie en Rose*, starring French actress Marion Cotillard as chanteuse Edith Piaf.

At the Seattle International Film Festival, which concluded last weekend, Cotillard was rewarded with the audience award for best actress, a harbinger of future trips she could well make to the winner's podium.

Next weekend, another possible contender enters the field when Focus Features debuts *Evening*, Lajos Koltai's screen adaptation of the Susan Minot novel. Vanessa Redgrave stars as a dying woman looking back over her life.

And that's just the best actress heat, which is destined to get more crowded as the year progresses and other films — like Universal Pictures' *The Golden Age*, in which Cate Blanchett reprises the role of Queen Elizabeth I, which

earned her an Oscar nomination for *Elizabeth* in 1999 — enter the field.

At the same time, other categories are just beginning to take shape. Next weekend also will see Disney's release of Pixar's *Ratatouille*, which is earning rave advance reviews.

Although just nine reviews have been posted on RottenTomatoes to date, they have registered a resounding 100-per-cent approval rating.

There's still a wide array of animated films to come: among others, 20th Century Fox's *The Simpsons Movie*; DreamWorks' *Bee Movie*; and Sony Pictures Classics' *Persepolis*, which uses animation to tell a very grown-up story of a young Iranian woman caught up in the Islamic Revolution. So *Ratatouille* isn't necessarily a shoo-in, but by summer's end, it's likely to have established itself as the animation frontrunner.

However it ultimately fares at the box office and with critics, Michael Moore's *Sicko*, which also moves into wide release next weekend, is sure to kick-start discussions about the documentary race. The film itself already has elbowed its way into the national conversation.

MORE INSIDE

■ *Sicko* has connections to London, Ont.

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TV INTERVIEW

'No' to Hilton

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) — Paris Hilton appeared to be a celebrity without a spotlight Friday after two major U.S. television networks snubbed the hotel heiress they initially fought over for a first post-jail interview.

An ABC executive said his network declined interview offers from the multi-millionaire socialite after Hilton and her mother, Kathy, personally sought to secure a deal in a flurry of telephone calls to ABC News veteran Barbara Walters.

Meanwhile, rival network NBC issued a statement saying it, too, had informed Hilton's representatives that it was "no longer interested in pursuing an interview with her."

Contrary to reports of a \$1-million deal in the works, NBC said it was "never going to pay them any money."

CBS News, which had not been deeply involved in the initial tug-of-war for a Hilton interview, likewise said it was not interested.