Published with permission from The Bancroft Times, February 21, 2024

RANDOM REFLECTIONS: Feeling Fairly Foolish!

By Kathryn Wishlow

This reflection is very personal. But, I hope that by sharing my vulnerability, someone else out there will be spared this humbling experience.

Many times I have heard of stories about people who were conned in some way. Maybe a foreign love affair that turned out to be non-existent, and ended up being a demand for money. I had a friend that had that scam pulled on her, requesting help to pay the hospital bills for a tragic accident her new on-line admirer had suffered. I was delighted she had NOT fallen for that one!

Once I got a call from a relative named “David” who was in jail and needed me to bail him out since his wallet had been stolen. That was a really easy racket to spot since my only relative named “David” was a judge, and I was very low on the list of people he would ever need help from! I was fortunate to have avoided that situation. Many people might actually have a relative named “David” and might get taken in by that plea for help.

Perhaps you might get a phone call from someone claiming to be from Revenue Canada, and threatening dire outcomes if you do not pay your taxes. I got that very call once. It was hilarious for me, because I had just returned from the post office with my income tax refund check in my hand, when the phone rang. I am sure the person at the other end did not expect my explosion of laughter at such a ridiculous ploy. Talk about Divine timing!

However, even my skepticism and untrusting nature did not protect me from a recent scam. On February 2nd, I got a phone call from a young lady claiming to be from Bell Canada promotions department. My sister had told me a few months earlier that I should call them to get my services bundled for a better price. I had called in mid January, but no special discount was available at that time.

So I was delighted when the caller, who first identified herself, helped me spell her name correctly, and then gave me her employee ID number. She said that Bell appreciated my long time customer loyalty (true) and now that I had recently added the new Vibe Five television services, she could bundle it with my landline and internet, and bring my monthly bill down to a total of $145.00 plus tax with a two year contract. That was a decent discount.

We talked for nearly half an hour while she went over which area the savings were coming from, promised there would be no changes in my existing services, and then verified my email address in order to send a copy of the agreement. She also said I would get a package in the mail within the next five business days, outlining my services in detail. My new monthly rate would show up on my next billing cycle. All of this sounded legitimate to me.

Then at the very end she thanked me for my patience, and wanted to credit me $30.00 on my last bill, but needed a credit card number. I told her “No, I do not give out that information over the phone, so please just credit my account.” She said, that “the billing department is totally separate from the promotions department, and that she did not have access to my credit information.” That made sense to me. So I told her to forget it, I was very pleased with the new prices.

Again she gave me her name, employee ID number and the phone number to call her back with any questions that might arise, or if I wanted to add more channels to my basic package. I gave in and gave her a card number, waited for her to verify it, and she said the credit went through perfectly.

I meant to go check my computer to see if the email had come through, but being a Friday, and time to start dinner, I got busy and forgot to check until Monday. No email. I felt uneasy. So I called the phone number she had given me. The person who answered said “Bell Promotions Department.” I asked for the girl by name, they asked for her employee number which I provided, then said she only worked from 8am to 3pm, and since it was after 4pm, she was gone for the day. That sounded logical to me. Then they asked if they could help me, and I told them I did not get my confirmation email yet. They informed me she would resend it the next day.

Then I waited to see if the package came in the mail. It dd not. I was away the next two days, and when I returned, my new Bell bill had

Continued onPage 2

Published with permission from The Bancroft Times, February 21, 2024

RANDOM REFLECTIONS: Feeling Fairly Foolish from pg 1 Continued

By Kathryn Wishlow

arrived. There was no discount. I called the phone number again, but an automated voice told me "Your call cannot be completed as dialled." I called again in case I had misdialled. I got the same recording. I felt sick!

I called the OPP and found out there was a Bell scam circulating, but to call Bell and double check the promotions department. I told the whole story to a Bell employee who documented everything, and said there were no discounts or record of a promotion applied to my account. I called my bank and told them what had happened. They recommended I call Visa and cancel the card as no credits or charges had happened yet. I was on the phone for over three hours.

I was annoyed that I had been scammed. Everyone I talked to said I had done everything correctly by documenting dates, times and all of the details. They all said it was a very sophisticated operation. That was no comfort! So far, I was fortunate that nothing had happened, or was I? Besides feeling fairly foolish at being duped, I am left with an uneasy, vulnerable feeling in the pit of my stomach. Please do not let this happen to you!

(*Kathryn Wishlow belongs to White Pine Writers Inc., a local group of like-minded authors who encourage and support all facets of writing and publishing efforts. Follow them on FaceBook or*

www.whitepinewriters.ca)